SPECTERS OF COLONIALITY-RACIALITY AND THE PLURAL TIMES OF THE SAME*

Espectros da colonialidade-racialidade e os tempos plurais do mesmo

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ABSTRACT

The article proposes a discussion on historiography as a practice of encoding "other" pasts, of synchronizing subaltern subjects and plural temporalities, forged as one of the arsenals of representation managed for social struggles for recognition, justice, and historical reparation. Despite their contextual variations, the collective demands for inclusion and visibility emerge as permanent challenges that highlight the excluding and hierarchical effects of the temporalization policies of disciplined history, signaling a litigious coexistence in the present of "unpayable debts" from the past. The central argument I intend to explore is that, in these cases, the spectrum of coloniality-raciality remains a vector of hierarchization, subalternization and temporal (dis)synchronization, to the same extent that it shuffles historical discontinuity or any rigorous temporal distance. between the past and the present.

KEYWORDS

Historiography. Coloniality. Raciality.

RESUMO

O artigo propõe uma discussão sobre a historiografia como prática de codificação de passados "outros", de sincronização de sujeitos subalternos e temporalidades plurais, forjada como um dos arsenais de representação mobilizados nas lutas sociais por reconhecimento, justiça e reparação histórica. A despeito de suas variações contextuais, as demandas coletivas por inclusão e visibilidade despontam como desafios permanentes que evidenciam os efeitos excludentes e hierarquizantes das políticas de temporalização da história disciplinada, assinalando uma coexistência litigiosa no presente de "dívidas impagáveis" do passado. O argumento central que pretendo explorar é o de que, nesses casos, o espectro da colonialidade-racialidade se mantém como vetor de hierarquização, subalternização e (des)sincronização temporal, na mesma medida em que embaralha a descontinuidade histórica ou qualquer distância temporal rigorosa entre o passado e o presente.

PALAVRAS-CHAVES

Historiografia. Colonialidade. Racialidade.

> Visibility is a trap, and representation is a blind alley.
> (Jota Mombaça & Michelle Mattiuzzi, 2019, p. 23)

As I was penning this text, the audio transmission of the TV news announced that we are heading towards a climate hell. The warning was voiced by the United Nations' Secretary General in the opening session of the climate summit COP 27 in Egypt (G1Notícias, 2022). Looking at the computer, my first thought was that the news was not that bad. After all, in November 2022, we were still heading towards a climate hell, but Luís Inácio Lula da Silva had been elected president of Brazil and was about to begin his third mandate. After four years of misrule by an extreme right group with explicit fraudulent, fascist and authoritarian activities, this idea now appeared to be quite naïve as definitive solace. However, it at least corresponded to the comforting sensation of knowing that, for the time being, in a journey towards the goal, one could count on a freshwater canteen in the backpack. In order to continue amid the problem of "joy, terror and generative collective thought", as Donna Haraway (2022, p. 68) recommends, it was time to envisage the best possible prospects in the present and minimally shared worlds in which we may coexist, by selecting readings, authors and theoretic company for dialoguing in these times when "urgency is in charge" (Hartog, 2022, p. 133).

This also happened with the choice of this paper's heading, extracted from the prologue to the work of philosopher Denise Ferreira da Silva (2019), *The unpayable debt*. Signed by Jota Mombaça and Michelle Mattiuzzi, the "Letter to the black female reader at the end of times" by no means resembles the conventions of a preface, since it consists of short, randomly numbered sentences, as if they were loose annotations or aphorisms to be read in a shiny billboard. Despite its arguably nebulous and esoteric meaning, one of these sentences seemed adequate to me as an inspiration and a frame for the reflections below.

Far from being overwhelming expressions or utterances circumscribed to certain disseminated uses in the digital media and social networks – in particular, in clashes linked to struggles for recognition (Fraser, 2006) and identitarian policies (Engelke, 2017), visibility and representation have always served as implicit categories for justifying knowledge in the vast field of humanities. If, on the one hand, human sciences are based on the empirical rationality that forged modern European *episteme* (Foucault, 1999, p. 477), on the other, it is certainly a paradox that since then, the markers of the distinctions ascribed to the bodies such as race, gender and sexuality function as predominantly descriptive conceptual tools.[1] Thus arose, in general terms, the explicatory arsenal of the subalternization-phenomenon as an effect or logical outcome of socio-historical processes of exclusion – as if such logic sufficed, in and of itself, for grasping what makes the subaltern condition continue at play on a global basis. It is not by chance that the explanatory topics based on the structural processes linked to the subaltern condition have been dominant vis-à-vis the forms of violence and increasing precariousness – whereas, amid its insidious repetitiveness, scientific and historical knowledge has been unable to produce a more radical ethical or epistemological crisis (Silva, 2022, p. 51).

It is around this dilemma with implications at once political and epistemic that I develop the reflections below, based on a few points: (a) as a practice of synchronization of "other" subjects and plural temporalities, historiographies serve as one of the representation-arsenals available for use in the social fights for recognition, justice and historical redress; (b) beyond being merely petitions for inclusion and visibility, such collective demands stand

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[1] The criticism of the descriptive uses of the gender-category, for instance, was one of the incisive points in the reasoning of Joan W. Scott (1999 and 2008) in her successive theoretical appraisals, in which she drew attention to subject-orthodoxies and policies of historical time. Based on these references, see the discussion on the limits and uses of the concept as an analytical grid and a way of interrogating history in Oliveira (2019).

out as permanent challenges to the excluding and hierarchy-prone effects of the policies of temporalization of history structured as subjects, thereby pointing to a litigious coexistence, in the present, of "unpayable debts" coming from the past; (c) in this process, the coloniality-raciality specter continues to be a vector of hierarchization, subalternization and temporal (de)synchronization, to the same extent in which it intermingles the historical discontinuity or any rigorous temporal rift between the present and the past.

TEMPORAL DE-SYNCRONIZATION AND THE SPECTRAL DEBTS OF THE PAST

History has never lacked evidence that its investigation and writing emerged from the interplay of differences established in the Western world's knowledge about "others" – the savage, the past, the people, the madman, the new world –, which started being denominated as marked, genderized and racialized *objects-subjects* by the historiographies. Therein lies the act that has always been a *conquering writing*, to cite the famous expression of Michel de Certeau (2000, p. 9), which characterizes the indelible linkage between writing history and conquering the world, between spelling and dominion, between the inscribing of a text and the sovereignty imposed on bodies, peoples and territories (Rufer, 2020, p. 276). Founded as heterology, historiography assumes the cleavage between an epistemic subject and their objects, i.e., the divide between a form of knowledge translated into a discourse and the body that sustains it (Rufer, 2020, p. 15).

In the nexus between writing and the political monopoly of the means to produce meaning, historiography also converts itself into an arsenal of disputes for recognition, and into their outcomes in the social struggles for justice and reparation. In the present, such disputes follow the profusion of investigations on history that emerge in response to the increasing demands posed by the duty of memory in relation to the sensitive pasts and to the assertion of collective identitarian differences, therefore using history's foremost vocation as an effective antidote for various forms of forgetfulness. Since they challenge the excluding effects of the forms of temporalization of disciplinary history, the social demands around unfulfilled emancipatory promises also imply – as Rodrigo Turin (2022, p. 88-90) accurately points out – a recognition of "other" temporalities, such as the times of native peoples, racialized groups, women, LGBTQIA+ persons, workers in precarious conditions and the times of nature, as well as the time of resentful individuals and neofascists.

The contentious coexistence of such times would point to the unequal forms and conditions in which these social groups relate to the legacies of the Nation State-project, as well as with the temporal singularity that enabled it. Thus, for Turin (2022, p. 88), we stand before "other times and bodies that were always present, but never did fully fit into semantic space and time proposed by concepts such as "citizenship", "representation" and "sovereignty".

Considering the "conflicting de-synchronization of the times" (Turin, 2022, p. 90), it is worth asking whether the project in which history itself has served as a tool for stitching disparate temporalities as a means to forge the "conceptual phantasm of Nation-State (Derrida, 1994, p. 113) was able to maintain the desired conciliation of heterogeneous elements amid the tense hierarchization of times and bodies that constituted it. In the Brazilian context, it is also worth asking: for what groups and social sectors has this temporal synchronization been (or could still be) effective, advantageous and convincing, since, through its multiple points of tension and fissure, we have always been haunted by the unpayable debts of our slaver colonial past and by the specter of the dictatorial regime's atrocities, in addition to the 2016 coup, which ousted an elected president from her position,

and the recent coup-plotter and antidemocratic acts of January 8, 2023? Beyond being a mere succession of events in the nation's history, would they not amount to receding *debts* that must be honored and, thus, not forgotten, before we begin to conceive forms of collective coexistence and shared futures outside the confines of repetition?

To dwell further into this issue, I shall comment on Ethan Kleinberg's proposition of a theory of history as an inherently polyphonic endeavor. In a text published in September 2022 in the blog *Hypotheses,* Kleinberg puts forward some reflections based on his argument of *Haunting History* (2017), in which (inspired by Jacques Derrida), he defends the haunting nature of the past, i.e., its aporetic status of a presence/absence similar to a specter. Since the past bears a latent and fleeting ontological condition, rather than a more realist or tangible one, the ways in which it manifests itself place us in agreement with multiple and polysemic bygone times that haunt our present one, just like an unexpected visit.

The basis for such fantology can be seen in Derrida's proposition (1994, p. 27) that "a specter is always a returning one", which points to the recurrence-issue, inasmuch as "there are no means for controlling its comings and goings". As part of its aporetic nature, the specter "is the frequency of a certain visibility, albeit a visibility of the invisible" – and, in this regard, "*it seems to* present itself during a visitation". Just like an apparition, "the specter *sees us* first", that is, "it views us even before we can see it". And in its recurrence or re-apparition, this may mean a "severe inspection or violent scrutiny" (Derrida, 1994, p. 138). In short, the visit or presence of a specter may be an anguishing experience, precisely because it is the past that returns, but, in such return – as Kleinberg (2017, p. 326), remarks, it is "emptied of its physical properties and disobedient to the rules of time and space".

In addition to the fantology of the presence / absence of the pasts, in Kleinberg's polyphonic theory of history, the innovative element is perhaps the emphasis in the uncommon possibilities of grasping the ways in which such past, amid its phantom-like and spectral condition, may remain audible / inaudible in the form of many sounds and silences manifested in the present. In contrast to a monophonic history, the polyphonic theory of history, according to Kleinberg, has the potential to make audible the subjects previously silenced and insidiously kept apart from the domain of disciplinary history.[2]

Thus, it is to be noted that Kleinberg's polyphony-argument evokes a sonorous and auditive metaphor, indicating a detachment from the primarily visual metaphors of narrative perspectivism, which provides a basis for configuring the temporalization of histories in a collective singular (Koselleck, 2006, p. 161-188). Such detachment also characterizes not only a polymorphous but, above all, polyphonic status of the past, beckoning towards a theory of history that is more mindful of the "dissonances, the jarring clashes", as well as of the "strange or unfamiliar". Such listening would make us more "attuned to multiple possible pasts, rather than disciplining them into *history of a single note*" (Kleinberg, 2022). As it happens with hauntings, also dissonant and unfamiliar voices from the past – which we usually do not grasp – would evoke other times and temporalities, and "more than memory. They are the past surging into the present and pushing us toward the future". In short, such hauntings would mark the rhythms of history's polyphony.

Despite the countless issues this proposition could elicit, it may be opportune as a first argument, since it brings us to the problem of plural historical subjects and possible

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[2] It is worth highlighting that since the reasoning of Michel-Ralph Trouillot (2016) about the "unthinkable history" of the Haitian Revolution, the metaphor of history' silences points to a historiographical problem that is not to be confused with an idea of absence, loss or gaps to be bridged. Instead, it regards the political-epistemic uses of silence as an erasing action in the present over the lived pasts, within certain vistas of intelligibility that make their representations either possible or not. For additional reflections on this issue, see Oliveira (2018; 2022).

futures of historiographies. And, differently from what it might suggest, the polyphonic theory of history-proposal seems to be diverse from the usual and decanted topic of "inclusion" by multiplying subjects, objects and approaches for historical writing. Should Kleinberg be correct, the wager on polyphonic and spectral forms of the past may allow us to reflect on the ways how historiographies produce the field of subjects deserving of recognition and representation through temporal synchronization-approaches.

We may extract critical consequences therefrom, which are aimed not only at the intelligibility arsenals that, based on history's example, are used to describe, and produce a "field of truths" (however open to objections) on bodies and subjects marked as "others" (Butler, 2016, p. 197). In this sense, the inclusive openness-gesture that characterizes the multiplication "miracle" regarding their objects was the pre-condition for the development of historiographies such as those about women, the enslaved, Afro-descendants and Indigenous peoples.[3] However, if on the one hand, any of these histories represents an inclusive solution for subjects who have always haunted disciplinary history, on the other, they still reproduce a form of capture and imprisonment. For Kleinberg (2017, p. 340), this happens because these historiographies are still guided by *ontological realism*, that is, by the predominant disciplinary principle that, even when submitting to various degrees of approximation and epistemological certainty, one may still access a firm ground of past realities through the controlled use of the sources and guarantees endorsed by a universally valid empirical proof-method.

It seems evident that the principle of ontological realism also renews a certain "representationalist belief" (Barad, 2017, p. 8), which, in disciplinary history, corresponds to the belief in the historians' ability to (re)construct depictions and explanations about past events and pre-existing subjects. Within the chasm between the present and the past, on which modern historiography is founded, there is also an implicit cleavage between a *transparent* epistemic locus from which historians produce their discourse and the "silent opacity of the reality you want to know", mediated by the distance from their object (Certeau, 2000, p. 14).

The problem of resting content with this pair, which was so accurately described by Certeau in regard to historiographies and their objects, is that in a hasty reading, they still reinforce the world's division into distinct ontological and epistemological domains of *words* and *things*, *discourse* and *reality* – leading, therefore, to an understanding that knowledge is to be found in the gap in the connection of an assumed correspondence between these domains (Barad, 2017, p. 17). And basically, there is a *rift* between materiality and discursivity; between the tangibility of the world's phenomena, on the one hand, and the practices that represent and construct meaning for such phenomena, on the other. In this case, representations perform the function of mediating between independently pre-existing entities and phenomena. Further, as a result of the emphasis on such ontological separation or rift, there emerges the issue of accuracy or precision between discourse and things or their referents.

My interest, here, is less to engage in the well-known debate between scientific realism and social constructivism, than to remind that there is an alternative "exit" to representationism by means of *performative dimension-approaches* in the production of knowledge, which have enabled a shift of focus from the issue of a correspondence between

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[3] Despite its successful efforts in recovering the voice, the leading role and the agency of subalterns – particularly, in the academic historiography practiced in Brazil after 1980 –, social history is still faced with a paradox. As André Ramos has pointed, in antidemocratic political contexts such as the one we have recently witnessed, maybe we have never before been so intensely "haunted by the specters of social hierarchization found in the writings of Varnhagen, Silvio Romero, Gilberto Freyre, Oliveira Vianna and many others, which we believed to have been exorcized" (Ramos, 2021).

depictions and the reality to epistemic subjects and discursive practices, as well as to the issues of materiality, agency and causality (Barad, 2022, p. 16). Heading toward a post-humanist definition of performativity, the feminist theoretician and physicist Karen Barad has put forward an "agential realist ontology" with a focus on the materialization of "human" and "non-human" bodies, and on the material-discursive practices through which their differential attributes are marked. This implies grasping the relationship between discursive practices and material phenomena, as well "human and non-human" forms of agency, "that takes account of the fullness of matter's implication in its ongoing historicity" (Idem). Following an agential realist account, according to Barad (2022, p. 18):

> it is once again possible to acknowledge nature, the body, and materiality in the fullness of their becoming without resorting to the optics of transparency or opacity, the geometries of absolute exteriority or interiority, and the theoretization of the human as either pure cause or pure effect while at the same time remaining resolutely accountable for the role "we" play in the intertwined practices of knowing and becoming.

Drawing from the opportune challenges that the discussions on agential realism can provide us, let us proceed with the issue I have sought to delimit so far: to what extent is it possible (or convenient) to conceive historiographical operations outside the *blind alley of representation* and beyond the ambitions of a *realist ontology* that sets the foundations of the ambitious and successful project of disciplinary history? How did we get into this dilemma, and how do we get out of it?

THE OTHERS AND THE PLURAL FORMS OF THE SAME

As mentioned above, because of the *conquering writing*-vocation, the modern historiographical regime was always prolific in multiplying objects and synchronizing plural temporalities (Jordheim, 2014; 2018) based on an arsenal of intelligibility and epistemic artifices that serve as foundational bases for the discipline. The existence of multiple historical times has broad political and social implications, manifested in "expressions are representative of an entire vocabulary of delays, lags, and accelerations, used consistently to conceptualize global orders and disorders" (Jordheim, 2014, p. 513). Among the effects of synchronization-practices, the "colonial" and "post-colonial" may also be thought about as markers of a political and, above all, historical condition, inasmuch as they have been submitted to a chronological order claimed as a global and universal time (Oliveira, 2022, p. 67).

Therefore, historical research and writing has not lacked noble and successful ambitions to give voice and recognize protagonist roles and agency to history's excluded and silenced ones.[4] And it would be aimless to say that if the historiographic field does not yet surprise us for its robustness and productivity, maybe this is due to the fact that it has become notoriously inclusive and convincing in persuading us about its efficacy in codifying "other" pasts and synchronizing diverse temporalities, under the cloak of a universal historicity mobilized as a privileged ontological-epistemological descriptor of the human experience (Silva, 2022, p. 127).

However, less than the indisputable efficacy of historiographies in giving a body and voice to their "others", what still deserves to be discussed are the adverse epistemic effects

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[4] About the Brazilian context, Francisco Gouvea de Sousa (2017) considers that the inclusive openness to the "vanquished ones" and to "new subjects of history" from the 1980s on is one of the answers of academic historiography to the country's political and social re-democratization experience.

of historiographical production in generating what Brazilian philosopher Denise Ferreira da Silva (2022, p. 58) identifies as "subjects captured in historical difference". After all, as Silva points in the book *Homo modernus – toward a global idea of race,* representation meets its limits in the very condition that enables it", that is, in the assumption of this representation's universality. Paradoxically, despite the fact that it has never fully prevented "the possibility of participation by subalterns in the rituals of modern democratic political existence", this same representation-modality has largely contributed to keep these subjects alienated or *without taking part* in the rights and privileges that democracies presume (Silva, 2022, p. 339). It is precisely in this argument that the political dimension of representation as a *blind alley* emerges (Spivak, 2014, p. 37-41).

Here, we do not stand before an unprecedented finding, but before a recurrent dilemma of postcolonial criticism regarding the possible existence of subaltern subjects as a "clean slate" waiting for an identitarian inscription (Spivak, 2022, p. 34). It regards the writing of history on the Western world's "others" beyond the reference frames of subaltern pasts in a homogeneous and empty historical temporalization, which adds these subjects to history, but does so under the sign of a double cultural and historical *difference*, in a time *before* contemporaneity. That is, such temporalization locates the non-Western "others" at the distance and within the *not yet* of modern history. This dilemma is an obstacle to the visibility and recognition of these subjects as participants of a *now*, and turns them into *non-parties* in the *present* time-scene of modern representation. Hence the ethical impasse that holds hostage even the good-intentioned options of "provincializing" Europe – which, in Denise da Silva's view, fail as projects to describe "other" particular historical subjects, since they do not deeply investigate how their particularity makes sense within the syntax of modern thought, which institutes it (Silva, 2022, p. 334-336). In other words, we are standing before plural forms of the same under the guise of its "others".

It is worth noting that within this syntax, in Silva's words, an "analytics of raciality institutes the historical subjects" and this "historical subject is an *always-now racial I*; they emerge in located form, as an *always-now* produced by the historical and scientific arsenals of signification" (Silva, 2022, p. 355, emphasis added). The *always-now* racialized "others" have no existence before this operation, and only rise to the status of subjects-objects as an outcome and expression of a particularity under the productive symbolic regimes that institute a difference among bodies by design of a sovereign and allegedly universal reason. It is no coincidence that here we see the argument of Frantz Fanon (2008), as he describes the black man's experienced realization of discovering oneself as "an object among other objects" – thus, as someone divested of their ontological status as a human being.

Perhaps more radically than Fanon, Denise da Silva (2022, p. 77) unsparingly criticizes the category of historicity as a privileged universal descriptor, by asserting that "historicity is not able to dissipate the effects of its own power". This leads to what she describes as a *historical veil* covering up the ontological, epistemic and political foundations of racial subjugation. Under the raciality-analytics, such *historical veil* serves as a metaphor for designating the ways in which slavery and segregation processes from the past frequently play the role of explanatory keys for the racial problem in the present as an effect of a social and historical exclusion-logic. While reverting such logic by means of *inclusion*, one still maintains an assumed subject who is pre-existent or *previous* to violence of racialization itself. In the Silva's words (2022, p. 79):

> The desire to lift the veil with the intention of revealing an original self-determined black subject [thus, an "untouched" one, or one who is pre-existent to racialization] fails for not considering a crucial issue: how did whiteness start to signify a transparent I, whereas blackness came to signify

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> its opposite? It is precisely because the veil-metaphor does not ask this question, that it replays the socio-historical logic of exclusion, i.e., the critical strategy that inscribes both blackness and whiteness as 'raw materials' and not as effects of modern power-strategies.

Therefore, in the narrative representations that explain racial subjugation as an outcome of historical and structural conditions of *exclusion* for racialized subjects, the problem lies in the assumption that, in these subjects, "one finds a transparent I buried under the historical debris", waiting for strategies of *inclusion*. Further, such strategies are considered sufficient for removing the burden of material, epistemic and symbolic violence from the negative representations of the modern hegemonic racial discourse (Silva, 2022, p. 78).

However, in facing the structural logic of exclusion, the *inclusion*-antidote shows that its efficacy is permanently obstructed by the "repetitions of the racial event" within the frameworks of the global processes of contemporary, finance-based capitalism (Silva, 2016, p. 407). This is due to the fact that, less than residues or adverse "survivals" of a colonial past allegedly distant and traversed by the temporal arrow of modernization, racial hierarchization has maintained itself as one of the key vectors of social markings. In addition to gender and sexuality, it sets up the enabling conditions for the processes of the capitalist and patriarchal modern world-system.[5]

COLONIALITY-RACIALITY AS A SPECTER AND VECTOR OF SYNCRONIZATION

At this point, even though Denise da Silva's raciality-analytics does not assert it, the analytics of coloniality inevitably becomes a more far-reaching point of inflection for understanding the violence of racial subjugation. This is because raciality is the brutal side of coloniality, understood as a "global logic of de-humanization", which, in turn, is a constitutive element of modernity and produces material and symbolic effects in the spheres of *knowledge*, *power* and *being* (Maldonado-Torres, 2018, p. 42-43).

One may consider, therefore, that coloniality operates as one of the temporal synchronization-devices within the project of universalization of the Western, European experience, by imposing categories such as human/non-human, primitive/civilized, and modern/savage. In its epistemic dimension, decolonial criticism intends to reach beyond the denunciation of the Eurocentric character of knowledge to connect itself to the axis that Aníbal Quijano (2010, p. 113) identifies as the articulator of global capitalism's domination/exploitation/discrimination relations – and, therefore, as the decisive level in the struggle against the coloniality of power, which is the *materiality of the bodies*.[6]

In this regard, there is not a shortage of incisive inquiries that further extend the questions posed by Frantz Fanon and Denise da Silva and link the analytics of raciality and coloniality to the planetary issue, in order to overcome the usual cleavage between colonial history and our world's environmental history. One of them is the decolonial ecology of Malcom Ferdinand (2022). In the analysis of the Martinican author, the body of racialized and generified subjects is the place of anchorage not only for social exclusions and historical inequalities, but also for the very degradation of the planetary climate ecosystems. Considering what Ferdinand identifies as modernity's *double fracture*, with its colonial and environmental facets, the task of "forming a body in the world" would be the path to confront

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[5] For a recent discussion on the linkages between capitalism and racial oppression, see Fraser (2022).
[6] Regarding the so-called "decolonial turn", see Ballestrin (2013), Segato (2021), and Oliveira (2022).

the "the material and imaginary relations through which our bodies are the *trace-bearers* and the *tracers* of a world beyond the modern double fracture, and in making the body the starting point for an engagement with the world" (Ferdinand, 2022, p. 205, emphasis in the original text).

As a space-time synchronization-vector, coloniality also requires understanding a logic that is not necessarily one of temporal succession, or one that establishes points of linear connection between events from "former times" and "now". With coloniality, we are far from any type of "permanence" of the past. And even if we think about it as a repetition, this is not merely the onset or re-apparition of the *same*. As I see them, coloniality and raciality constitute the returning **specter** that manifests itself in the disobedience of any linear temporal logic, to produce forms of *fracture* in space-time. However, these are by no means ordinary fractures; instead, these fracture forms are also a *condemnation*, for subalternized colonial subjects are out of the human space-time – which means that they are *objects* of the colonial intrusion, considered as *non-human* parts of the territories they inhabit in (Maldonado-Torres, 2018, p. 44).

This is the trait pointed by Silvia Wynter (2003, p. 268), when she states that "one cannot 'unsettle' the 'coloniality of power' without a redescription of the human outside the terms of our present descriptive statement of the human, Man, and its over- representation". For the Cuban thinker, therein lies the fallacy of the "over- representation (outside the terms of the 'natural organism' through which a human continues to be conceived" as if it were a way of being that exists in a relationship of pure continuity with that of organic life" (Wynter, 2021, p. 79-80).

Denise da Silva (2016, p. 410) no less disquietingly affirms that "the racial event is necessarily *without time*, as a result of the way in which racial differences reconfigure the colonial realm", by incarcerating natives and enslaved ones "out of history". This is because the usual explanatory temporalizations that link the slavery-past to the present time of racial subjugation are based on the "presumed separability and sequentiality", that is, they consider the "previous times" and the "distant times" as constitutive elements of the *here* and *now*, as well as of what is yet to happen. Hence the need to overcome the temporal thought that seeks to capture racialized and generified subjects through unilinear causal logics, while heading toward a fractal, poetic or compositional thought that may identify less the logical-historical sequentialities of subjugation and ways in which such subjugation operates by reiterations and standards that compose themselves and reappear in different scales in a global space-time (Idem). Here, I am evidently evoking Silva's proposition in a quite rudimentary way, with the intention of emphasizing how much she demarcates a removal of any idea of "crisis", so that we may face what has become "normalcy for global capital".

The argument that European intrusion in the New World and colonialism have marked an "ontological, epistemological and ethical catastrophe" has been highlighted by postcolonial thought-authors. It is worth recalling that in his *Discourse on Colonialism*, Aimé Césaire (1950, p. 78) defined the colonial project as a moment in capitalism's long history, which would be the precursor of the Nazi disaster and catastrophe in the 20th century. On his turn, Achille Mbembe (2017) argues that from several standpoints, the *plantation*-system and the set of colonial exploitation/expropriation devices were a sort of "test laboratory" in which the world's black becoming that we see today was tested, and which may be called "coloniality in global scale".

The British geographer Kathryn Yusoff (2018) puts forward a provocative point that goes in the same direction, by demonstrating how the current debate around the Anthropocene as a "new" geological epoch usually overlooks its connections with the historical processes of colonialism, expropriation policies, racialization, slavery and

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extractive economies. Thus, less than concentrating one's concerns on a dystopic future, and despite the argument that we are living in a moment of "unprecedented" changes (Simon, 2019), the current discussions should take into consideration previous historical extinctions experienced by Black and Indigenous groups, which Yusoff calls "a billion black Anthropocenes".

Whereas the corporeity of black subjects was not ontologically established, their status was preannounced in conquered and colonized territorial spaces, in the syntactic rules of extraction:

> Black and brown death is the precondition of every Anthropocene origin story, and the grammar and graphia of this geology compose a regime for producing contemporary subjects and subtending settler colonialism (Yusoff, 2018, p. 72).
> The very "matter" of territorial impulse that materially comprised the Anthropocene is anti-Blackness; it is racialized matter that delivers the Anthropocene as a geologic event into the world, through mining, plantations, railroads, labor, and energy. While Blackness is the energy and flesh of the Anthropocene, it is excluded from the wealth of its accumulation. Rather, Blackness must absorb the excess of that surplus as toxicity, pollution, and intensification of storms. Again, and again (Yusoff, 2018, p. 87-88)

Considering this complex set of issues, one may ask whether we can still believe in the efficacy of history's temporalizations in producing more than realist *descriptions* of the oppressive pasts that haunt our present, either through the empirical framings of the historical acquis, or by the broader intelligibility-determinations regarding what may or may not be thought and narrated as history.

This paper began with a heading about the threats of visibility and the blind alley of representation, from which I considered an inevitable return to the seminal idea of historiography as *conquering writing*. As I redo its path, I am interested in the possibility of destabilizing a certain unchallenged status of history as a "humans making machine", to quote a provocative expression by Donna Haraway (2022, p. 80). That is, a device that produces racialized corporeity-forms and plural forms of their non-human "others". This is because in the variable and persistent ways in which history produces alterities, the temporal ruler and compass of the dominant voice is maintained. And such dominant voice is one of a sovereign subject over-represented as a singular collective of the human.

Is there any experience, or radical form of alterity, which does not end up in the domestication of the "other" times, or which does not destabilize the historiographical operation deployed by the "we" who asserts itself with the humanity-idea – this failed fiction that we imagine to be? Is it to be found in the notion of planetarity (Spivak, 2003, p. 71-74) as a form of alterity not derived from such "we" and constitutive of the planet's unpredictable, unfamiliar and contingent operations – going, therefore, beyond any attempt of human agency? Where are the paths of escape from the blind alley of representations, in ways that they would not consist in replication-forms of the *same*, through anthropocentric and monophonic histories of a "single note" haunted by the specter of coloniality and raciality?

Saidiya Hartman (2020, p. 18) has quite incisively and sharply dealt with this issue as she asked about the possibility of revisiting the subjection-scenes of the past without replicating the violence-grammar in the present. In this writer from the United States, we also can sense a glimpse of future, or, at least, an ethical and political imperative for historiographies. Such challenge would not be so strongly present in the belief of its inclusive and spontaneous emancipatory effects, but, above all, in the assumption that all efforts to explain and reconstruct the past must also be, in Hartman's words, "an attempt to describe

obliquely the forms of violence licensed in the present, that is, the forms of death unleashed in the name of freedom, security, civilization, and God/the good" (Hartman, 2020, p. 31).

Finally, in *Lose your mother. A journey along Atlantic slave route*, Hartman (2021) narrates that she did not travel to Ghana only to take stock of the past's inheritance, however much this would be a good place to reflect on what has remained from slavery. In her visit to Cape Coast Castle's dungeon, now a museum in the African Gold Coast, she encountered the entrance sign that exhorted visitors and tourists to "celebrate the dead, remember the anguish of ancestors to prevent crimes against humanity from happening again". On that spot, used as a post of "storage" for enslaved individuals until the 17th century, it was necessary to "give the dead their due rights". But as Hartman soon realized, five minutes in a dungeon can undo the noblest and most beautiful aspirations. Since it served as a "human cargo storage" [..], "knowing what had happened there could not remedy the oblivion or lessen the suffering of the dead", because "that empty space defeated any certainty about the power of memory to prevent future crimes [...]. In the dungeon there were traces, but no histories that could resurrect the dead"– except those histories that one may invent (Hartman, 2021, p. 147-148).

Wandering through a space that once served as a storage for the traffic of enslaved persons, Hartman concludes that she was there less because she expected to find out *what really happened*, and more to find what is still alive (Hartman, 2021, p. 165). Thus, for her, the main issue was not only a possibility of alleviating the burden of the past, but also the ways in which the ethical and political challenges of past histories still haunt us in the present. After all, if the specters of slavery, coloniality and raciality are suddenly and constantly irrupting in the present, maybe this is because our explanatory arsenals, however much robust and consistent, are still keeping us far from exiting captivity.

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