




# **STAYING WITH THE SPECTERS: POLITICS OF HISTORICAL TEMPORALIZATION IN A VANISHING PRESENT**

Ficar com os espectros: políticas da temporalização histórica em um presente fugidio

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**DEBATE**  
**TEMPORALIDADE, COLONIALIDADE, RACIALIDADE**  
**TEMPORALITY, COLONIALITY, RACIALITY**  
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## ABSTRACT

In this reply, I return to questions from the article “Specters of coloniality-raciality and the plural times of the same”, in dialogue with the comments of María Inés Mudrovcic, Arthur Avila, Ana Paula Silva Santana, André da Silva Ramos, Allan Kardec da Silva Pereira and Marcello Assunção, to problematize what I call the “inclusive opening” of historiographies in the pluralization of their subjects and objects. I explore the notion of politics of time as a racialized temporal synchronization device that normalizes the alterities of subaltern subjects to, subsequently, discuss the possibility of an ethics of historical representation as a gesture of critical desynchronization of the spectral experience of traumatic pasts. Finally, I argue that coloniality and raciality can be understood as a spectrum, insofar as both designate logics that are not easily grasped by synchrony, succession, or linear connection between times of “then” and “now”.

## KEYWORDS

Historiography. Coloniality. Raciality.

## RESUMO

Esta réplica consiste em uma retomada de questões do artigo “Espectros da colonialidade-racialidade e os tempos plurais do mesmo”, em diálogo com os comentários de María Inés Mudrovcic, Arthur Avila, Ana Paula Silva Santana, André da Silva Ramos, Allan Kardec da Silva Pereira e Marcello Assunção, de modo a problematizar o que chamo de “abertura inclusiva” das historiografias na pluralização de seus sujeitos e objetos. Para tanto, abordo a noção de políticas do tempo como dispositivo de sincronização temporal racializada que normatiza as alteridades dos sujeitos subalternizados para, em seguida, discutir a possibilidade de uma ética da representação histórica como gesto de dessincronização crítica frente à experiência espectral dos passados traumáticos. Por fim, defendo que a colonialidade e a racialidade podem ser compreendidas como espectro, na medida em que ambas designam lógicas que não são facilmente apreendidas pela sincronia, sucessão ou conexão linear entre os tempos de “outrora” e o “agora”.

## PALAVRAS-CHAVES

Historiografia. Colonialidade. Racialidade.



Spectrality is not difficult to circumscribe, because it is what makes the present oscillate...

Fredric Jameson (1999, p. 38).

The ghost is not other or alterity as such, ever. It is pregnant [...] with unfulfilled possibility, with the something to be done that the wavering present is demanding.

Avery Gordon (2008, p. 183).

**H**onored by the editor's invitation to contribute to the Debates section of this journal, I would also like to thank my colleagues who generously provided critical comments on my essay "Spectres of coloniality-raciality and the plural times of the same". Originally written for the opening lecture of the *XI National Seminar on the History of Historiography*, at Unifesp/Guarulhos/São Paulo, the text does not disguise the unbridled euphoria with which we were resuming face-to-face events in the "post-pandemic" moment, although still haunted by many uncertainties and anxieties of the turbulent scenario of the presidential elections in November 2022.

In dialogue with the Seminar issue around "voices, pluralities and possible futures for historiographies in Brazil", my reflections were inspired by Denise Ferreira da Silva's assumptions, in *Homo modernus* (2022), about the absence of a radical ethical and epistemic crisis in the human sciences, in the face of the persistent phenomenon of violence and precariousness that affects historically subalternized subjects. Silva's critique is based on her dissatisfaction with the explanatory arsenal of the racial problem in the social sciences, which, according to her, paradoxically functions as a "productive weapon of global subjugation" (Silva, 2022, p. 30). On the other hand, the Brazilian philosopher proposes what she calls an "analysis of raciality", in other words, a mapping of the conditions of emergence of race in the modern scientific project, which has constituted "man and his others as historical-global beings", through the representation of human differences as "cultural differences" (Silva, 2022, p. 29), which I think it is appropriate to also consider as "historical-temporal differences".

Far from the pretension of an exhaustive approach that Denise da Silva's arguments certainly deserve, I have highlighted these considerations as a starting point for exploring the ways in which history is maintained as one of the arsenals for representing historical and temporal differences and, therefore, available for use in social struggles for recognition and historical reparation. These struggles make tangible the collective demands around settling the "unpayable debts" of the past, putting a frontal strain on the politics of temporalization that regulate disciplined history. A recent example is the opening of an investigation by the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office into the involvement of Banco do Brasil in the slave trade of African captives in the 19th century.<sup>1</sup> In similar legal actions, the possibility of ascertaining and imputing responsibility for regimes of violence and injustices committed in the past challenges the basic assumption of an irreversible temporality which, figured in the metaphor of the arrow of historical time, produces distance effects and inalterability of the past (Bevernage, 2018, p. 30; Scott, 2020, p. 77). Thus, the unfolding of long-term traumatic historical processes, such as those of slave colonialism, can destabilize the irreversibility of historians' time, as well as shuffle the demarcation lines between past and present, erupting

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<sup>1</sup> On September 27, 2023, the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office notified Banco do Brasil of the opening of a public civil inquiry to investigate the institution's involvement in slavery and the trafficking of African captives during the 19th century. The action was proposed by a group of 14 historians from 11 Brazilian universities (Machado, 2023).

as "something uncomfortable, sometimes unjust and morally unacceptable" (Bevernage, 2018, p.33). In this case, less than remnants or random "survivals" of phenomena supposedly overtaken by the temporal arrow of progress and modernization, racial hierarchization remains one of the central vectors of social classification which, along with gender and sexuality, shape the dynamics of the modern-patriarchal-capitalist world-system (Fraser, 2022).

Although the historical reparation emerges as an unavoidable issue in the debate on contemporary challenges to the field of historiography, the point I focused was that of coloniality-raciality as a productive logic of temporal synchronization and mismatch, which operates in the modern historiographical regime.<sup>2</sup> My reflections arose from my suspicion of what I identify as a gesture of "inclusive openness" in disciplined historiography, despite its undeniably successful ambitions to give voice, protagonism and agency to the excluded and silenced subjects of history. Far from dismissing the broader connections of this historiography with social struggles, what seems relevant to me is to problematize the adverse epistemic effects of the historiographical operation as a practice of framing disparate subjects, collectivities, and temporalities under the ruler of a supposedly universal historicity, mobilized as a privileged onto-epistemological descriptor of human experience (Silva, 2022, p. 127).

Alluding to the propositions of authors such as Ethan Kleinberg (2017), my argument is that, less than an effective solution, the right to historical representation and visibility, extended to those who, in various forms, have always haunted disciplined hegemonic historical narratives, such as native peoples, women, the enslaved and LGBTQIA+, can also (re)produce a form of incarceration of these subjects in space-time difference. If, for Kleinberg, the limits of the inclusive openness of social history are given by the disciplinary principle of ontological realism, regulated by the empirical frameworks of the archive, on the other hand, I think that the problem requires taking into account the politics of time, that is, the actions in the present that are carried out on lived pasts, actions that delimit the conditions of intelligibility of what can or cannot be thought of and, therefore, narrated as history.

In order to broaden the issues surrounding the politics of temporalization that operate in the pluralization of the subjects and objects of history, I will highlight below the contributions that I consider enriching to the debate in the comments by María Inés Mudrovcic, Arthur Avila, Ana Paula Silva Santana, André da Silva Ramos, Allan Kardec da Silva Pereira, and Marcello Assunção.

## POLITICS OF RACIALIZED SYNCHRONIZATION

The question in the title of the commentary, "La trampa de las temporalidades múltiples: ¿se puede escribir sin cronología?", refers to the notion of *politics of time*, previously proposed by María Inés Mudrovcic (2019), to designate operations that, in addition to fractioning, periodizing and delimiting the dimensions of past, present and future, also normalize what *is* or *is not* proper and belonging to the present.<sup>3</sup> Such actions on time construct an "other", excluding it diachronically or synchronically from the present, creating relationships and "forms of temporal alterity" (Mudrovcic, 2019, p. 458). One of these

<sup>2</sup> On the notion of "historiographical regimes", see Nicolazzi (2017).

<sup>3</sup> On the *politics of time* as an expression that designates the conditions of dispute that shape the social experience of time itself, another reference to be considered is Osborne (1995). Rodrigo Turin makes use of the notion, arguing that "time cannot be detached from its performative character and that, in this way, different forms of experience require different temporal forms. Ensuring that these temporal forms find their social and institutional anchors implies transforming time into a central theme of politics" (Turin, 2019, p. 47).

alterities can be identified in the well-known metaphor used to define the past as "a foreign country", i.e. diachronically distant from the present. A second form of temporal alterity is to be found in the ways in which contemporaneity itself has come to be conceived as having a certain excluding quality within the frame of universal time, insofar as not all those who coexist in the same simultaneous present are recognized as contemporaries and therefore become synchronically "other" (Mudrovic, 2019, p. 467).<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, taking up Johannes Fabian's argument that "there is no knowledge about the other that is not also a temporal, historical, political act" (Fabian, 2013, p. 40), it remains to be considered how the politics of time affect the struggles for recognition and reparation of historically subalternized subjects. The question proposed by Mudrovic becomes central to the delimitation of the problem: how do we create forms of temporal alterity? This question deserves to be highlighted because it renders problematic the identification of the past with temporal distance and the idea of the present and contemporaneity as chronological simultaneity, based on the variable tensions between spaces of experience and horizons of expectation (Rodrigues, 2021, p. 35-36).

The argument sheds light on the normative mechanisms and exclusionary effects of the politics of time which, under the frame of a linear and supposedly universal time, define what is contemporary not only in relation to the "before" and "after" of a continuous temporality, but distinguish subjects who inhabit the same chronological present and, therefore, *are* or *can be* recognized as contemporary. Thus, denaturalizing the evidence of what is understood as present and contemporary would make it possible to relate the conditions of subalternized subjects to the chronopolitics that normalize otherness.

Among the effects of the politics of temporalization, historiography, as a narrative-discursive modality, presupposes a double meaning of representation. The first, and perhaps most obvious, is that of "presentation/staging" by an epistemic subject that configures and names its objects according to the rules that regulate its own conditions of intelligibility. As Mudrovic points out in his commentary, "the 'historical existent' becomes an object insofar as it acquires meaning within the historical representation that *makes* it *valid* as 'nation', 'revolution', 'social class', 'racialized', 'subaltern', 'women', or 'subjects incarcerated in historical difference'". The second meaning is a direct consequence of the first, making its ethical-political dimension more explicit, insofar as the objects of historiographical representation, in varying ways, acquire greater or lesser value and visibility through a kind of "proxy", in other words, "being represented" presupposes that someone "speaks" *for* and *in* your place.

Furthermore, the double-sided semantic of the term - representation as "staging" and representation as "speaking for" - was at the core of Gayatri Spivak's critique of what she called the essentialist representationism of subalterns as subjects endowed with supposedly "transparent" speech and agency. What the Indian philosopher calls "epistemic violence" is precisely connected to the game that continually shuffles the meanings between "representing" and "speaking for", and through which "the staging of the world as representation - its writing scene, its *Darstellung* - conceals the choice and need for 'heroes', proxies and agents of power - *Vertretung*" (Spivak, 2014, p. 54).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> No less paradigmatic is the temporal alterity that has always been implicit in the relationship with the savage as someone who is not only geographically distant, but also "behind" in time and thus cannot be recognized as a contemporary. According to Hartog (2021, p. 46), the time that marks the distance between us and the savages "also inscribes them in the same temporal horizon, open to a future in which they have a place".

<sup>5</sup> Before Spivak, in her famous article "Racism and sexism in Brazilian culture" (1984), Lélia Gonzalez incisively described the epistemic (and psychoanalytic) dimensions of the speech act of black people subjected to the logic of domination/domestication: "[...] because we have been spoken to, infantilized (*infans* is the one who has no speech of their own, it is the child who speaks of themselves in the third person, because they are spoken to by adults) [...]" (Gonzalez, 2019, p. 239-240)

In a similar way to what I identify as the “blind alley” of representation, the politics of time, according to Mudrovcic, refer to the ways in which historical time carries out sharing and hierarchies, because “the temporal presupposition that underlies history is the one that allows us to operate politically by excluding the alterities that the historical discourse itself makes visible.” Therein lies the pitfall not only of representation, but of the temporal multiplicity that “is born of the violence of wanting to ‘read’, of making others visible with the grammar of the same”.

Therefore, the “multiple times trap” would be at work in the epistemic artifice which, regulated by the ruler and compass of a “one-time-substantive”, synchronizes, incorporates, and encapsulates “other” subjects-objects in the historical difference. As Mudrovcic observes, the history of “the Nuer, the Amondawa people, the Wichis, the Mapuches, the European inhabitants of the Middle Ages” becomes thinkable insofar as it can be narrated as the history of “other” times or “other” temporalities. Thus, the synchronization of “other” times operates by denying coetaneity (Fabian, 2013, p. 40) and by what Mudrovcic calls “relational forms of time”, producing shares, hierarchies, and exclusions. This raises the question of the possible conditions for writing history outside or beyond this *chronological logic*.

Despite the notorious and renewed expansion of research agendas on the problem of temporality in the theory of history<sup>6</sup> what remains scarcely problematized, as Marcello de Assunção warns us, are the links between the politics of time and the related processes of racialization:

The time of whiteness is [...] the time of the denial of the “non-contemporaneity” of the “other” that unfolds in dehumanization, which is embodied in the refusal to give the racialized other agency not only in the historical process, but also in the epistemic construction of the knowledge that represents this same history. For this reason, the politics of the time of whiteness have always been intertwined with the relational construction of the “white savior” and the “suppliant” black man.

At this point in the debate, the question that arises is well formulated by Allan Kardec da Silva Pereira, in his comment: “what to do when inclusion alone is not enough?” In other words, what would be the way out of the paradox of multiple temporalities as a device in the politics of temporalization of whiteness, continually activated in the fabrication of alterities, within the modern project of historical representation of the world? Before any hasty answer, perhaps it would be more productive to expand the question in the terms of Denise da Silva (2022, p. 436), at the conclusion of *Homo modernus*:

how long will it be before [subalternized subjects] finally recognize that the conditions under which they rewrite their own histories are not really their own, that the difference that marks them as subaltern subjects has also instituted the place of those who exploit and dominate them?

<sup>6</sup> For example, two recent special issues: the first, organized by Hélio Rebello Cardoso Jr., María Inés Mudrovcic and Achim Landwehr, “Times of History: an overview of studies on time related to the Theory of History (concepts, issues and trends)”, *Revista História*, v. 42, 2023 and the second, organized by André da Silva Ramos, François Hartog, Temístocles Cezar and Thamara Rodrigues, “Forms of rethinking and experimenting the temporalization of time and historiographic regimes”, in *História da Historiografia*, v. 16, n. 41, 2023.



## ONTOLOGICAL REALISM, ETHICS OF REPRESENTATION AND CRITICAL DESYNCHRONIZATION

In "On ghosts and the (lost) paradise of historians: brief comments on the spectrality of the past and the history of the present", Arthur Ávila disagrees that contemporary crisis with history lies exclusively in the problem of representation. In fact, there is a problem that precedes and cuts across the historiographical elaboration of the past, the implications of which are more ethical than strictly narrative and epistemic. On this point, Ávila points to an approximation between Saidiya Hartman's (2020) recent proposition of "critical fabulation" and Hayden White's (1994) famous argument about the "fictions of factual representation".

The author of *Tropics of Discourse* deserves to be highlighted here, especially as an unavoidable reference for the critical discussion of the disciplinary precepts of ontological realism. In 1973, concerned with delimiting the deep structures of the historical imagination in the different forms, styles, or tropes of European historiography of the 19th century, White (1995) drew attention to the poetic foundations and presuppositions of the different philosophies or theories of history that guided the research and writing of historians. And one of these fundamental differences concerns the ways in which some historians conceive of their work primarily as a contribution to illuminating social problems of the present, while others try to suppress such presentist concerns, with a kind of posture very close to that attributed to the antiquarian, in defense of understanding the past by its singularities or in its own terms (White, 1995, p. 20).

In the introduction to *Meta-History*, there are still valuable propositions about the relationship between historiographies and the present time. When addressing the patterns and strategies of historians' formal argumentation, White points to the irreducible ideological component of historical narrative, justifying it by the fearful - and now harmless - statement for the disciplinary *main-stream* that "history is not a science" in its constitutive configurations (White, 1995, p. 36).<sup>7</sup> Another well-known argument in *Meta-History* is that the formal and explanatory coherence of the historical narrative presupposes certain conceptions about the historical world and historical knowledge itself, which shape not only the ideological dimensions of historiographies, but also the unavoidable ethical component of historians' work. For White (1995, p. 36):

[...] the very affirmation of having distinguished a past world from a present world of social praxis, and of having determined the formal coherence of that past world, implies a conception of the form that knowledge of the present world must also take [...]. *The commitment to a particular form of knowledge predetermines the types of generalizations that can be made about the present world, the types of knowledge that can be had of it and, consequently, the types of projects that can be conceived to change this present or to maintain it in its current form.* [my emphasis].

The "ethical moment" would therefore lie in the subtle articulation between "an aesthetic perception (the configuration of the plot) and a cognitive operation (the explanatory argument)". In this way, no narrative plot and argumentative-explanatory strategy in historiographical texts would be exempt from their ethical and moral implications (White, 1995, p. 41).

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<sup>7</sup> In order to defend the argument that every idea of history has specific ideological implications for the present time, White mobilizes the concept of ideology, following Karl Mannheim (with the basic ideological-political positions: anarchism, conservatism, radicalism and liberalism), as a "set of prescriptions for taking a position in the present world of social praxis and acting on it", whether in the sense of change or maintenance of the current order (White, 1995, p.36-37).

This remains one of the dilemmas of historiographical representation, in that the ethical moment and the ethical-cognitive responsibility of those who investigate and write history remain an ideal horizon that sometimes comes into collision with the realist precepts that regulate disciplined history. These protocols delimit the criteria of credibility and truth, defended by academic historians, within what is understood as an objectivist approach to history, supposedly anchored in the "realistic" representation of the past, free of values, interests, and moral judgments, which can function as an "epistemological straitjacket" (Doran, 2017, p. 248). With this kind of supposedly non-ideological disciplinary amulet, historians' representationalist belief is sustained that it is possible to reliably reconstruct the plots of history from the empirical material extracted from the sources, through a certain degree of methodological "control" of values, interests, political positions, and institutional ties, so that these contingent markers do not leave any traces in historical knowledge.

Although few historians share the naive belief in history as knowledge that flows from documentation in a pure and crystalline form, historiographies remain founded on the principle of "a hierarchical ordering that privileges certain possible pasts while making others inconceivable, unimaginable or impossible" (Kleinberg, 2017, p. 349). In addition to being a regulatory precept for what can and cannot be said and thought about the past, testimonial and documentary evidence is the expression in the practical-methodological sphere of a theoretical conviction that precedes it: that "it is possible to provide the absent past with the same real ontological properties as the present" (Kleinberg, 2017, p. 139).

Kleinberg differentiates between a weaker and a stronger variant of ontological realism. The stronger variant refers to the assumption that there is a past to which we can have full access. This is undoubtedly an assumption that few professional historians would support today. Instead, it is the weaker variant that is of interest because it is more widespread, namely the belief that the past has ontological density (Paul; Kleinberg, 2018, p. 552-553). A low-intensity ontological realism, far from being confused with a naïve belief in access to the reality of the past "as it was", is combined with a posture of vigilant and disciplined caution in dealing with traces of the past and the application of hermeneutic tools controlled by the method of documentary criticism.

Historians' commitment to the epistemic principles of ontological realism, even if it is of low intensity, can not only be on a collision course with the demands of social movements and collective struggles, but it also functions as a trench within which the canonical ideals of disciplinary identity and scientificity of empiricist historiography are safeguarded.<sup>8</sup> I understand that it is from this frontier of disciplinary combat that, in general, the responses to any threat to these principles are triggered, from those coming from the "realm of memory and fiction" (with which history has always fought its battles), to the threats of historical

<sup>8</sup> Among the recent examples of the tension between the realist foundations of historiography is the controversy surrounding the inclusion of Dandara dos Palmares and Luisa Mahin in the Brazilian Pantheon, in March 2019. The debate took place on the pages of the news website *The Intercept Brasil*, in which, on the one hand, historian Ana Lúcia Araújo argued that, despite having long been recognized by the national imagination, Dandara e Mahin could not be honored as properly historical figures, as they would only be part of the "realm of fiction" (Araújo, 2019). On the same website, and in response to Araújo, Ale Santos identified signs of racism in academia in Araújo's argument, claiming that "historians disconnected from black reality question the sources that prove the existence of these women because there are only sparse accounts of their lives". This attitude demonstrated "an immense difficulty in recovering their biographies because there is no effort to catalog and analyze oral tradition as a historiographical source". The inclusion of Dandara and Mahin in the Brazilian Pantheon, concludes Santos, in addition to a political gesture of recognition and reparation for the erasure of these women as historical subjects, would mean a break with a certain historiography still marked by colonial bias, as well as a step towards the valorization of Afro-Brazilian tradition (Santos, 2019). For a discussion of the controversy, see Oliveira (2022).



falsifications and denials, and including the spectres of the untimely past-present of unpayable historical debts such as that of slave colonialism.

In Saidiya Hartman's recent reflections (2020; 2021), as Avila points out, an ethics of historical representation emerges not only as a constitutive moment of historiography, as previously pointed out by White, but above all as an "active gesture" in the face of interpellations in the present, of pasts that have not *been* or *have not passed*. In these cases, the experience of the spectral presence of violent and traumatic pasts, such as that of slave colonialism, confronts and destabilizes the ideal of constructing objectivist historical knowledge, supposedly guided by "antiquarian" interests.

In an even more radical way, the "critical fabulation" proposed by Hartman implies, above all, another relationship with the "founding violence" of the archive (Hartman, 2020, p. 27) and with the empirical sources of traumatic pasts. 27) and with the empirical sources of traumatic pasts, in order to construct a "recombinant narrative" whose intention "is not to *give voice to the slave*, but rather to imagine what cannot be verified", in short, "a history of an unrecoverable past [...] written with and against the archive" (Idem, p. 29-30).<sup>9</sup>

In this sense, it is possible to agree with Ávila's perception of authors who, like Hartman, emerge as "the most radical examples of criticism of the politics of time and the disciplinarily hegemonic protocols of representation", insofar as they propose a "critical desynchronization". In other words, less than "demonstrating the materiality of the enduring legacies of oppression, racialization and subalternization", they take the ghosts seriously and leave the spectres in plain sight, "highlighting the extent to which the neoliberal present reiterates and updates supposedly previous stages, piling them up [...] in a series of renewed catastrophes".

## COEXISTING SPECTERS IN ELUSIVE PRESENTS

In my essay, I highlighted the explicit convergence between the analytics of raciality (Silva, 2022) and coloniality (Quijano, 2010), insofar as these categories can encompass processes, phenomena and devices of what Maldonado-Torres (2018) calls the "global logic of dehumanization", whose effects remain widespread in the spheres of *knowledge*, *power* and *being*. I understand that coloniality functions as one of the vectors of synchronization and temporal mismatch, while raciality repeatedly reconfigures and re-enacts the colonial pact at the ontological, political, and epistemic levels. Both designate logics that are not necessarily apprehended by the succession or linear connection between the times of "once" and "now". If in Denise da Silva's argument "the racial event is necessarily *timeless* because of the way racial difference reconfigures the colonial" (Silva, 2016, p. 410), it is also possible to describe it as a "spectral moment" in Derrida's sense, that is, "a moment that no longer belongs to time, if one understands under that name the chain of modalities of the present - past present, current present, 'now', future present" (Derrida, 1994, p. 12)

Although these definitions may suggest that we are dealing with a- historical manifestations or those of a purely phantasmagorical nature, it is important to emphasize that coloniality and raciality designate concrete *relations of subalternization* between subjects and collectivities, which implies considering the effects of these relational forms in

<sup>9</sup> In response to critical objections that approximate "critical fabulation" with Walter Benjamin's notion of writing history "against the grain", Hartman clarifies that she thinks of the archive "along the lines of Michel-Rolph Trouillot and Michel Foucault as having been produced by power relations" and therefore as constituted by violence. "With this recognition, what does it mean to protect a disciplinary protocol that is based on reverence for these documents, that fetishizes the documents of the powerful as the only basis for true hypotheses? Critical fabulation embraces these forms of violence and domination that produce the field of knowledge and the way in which disciplinary practices reproduce this order" (Silva e Sousa, 2023, p. 11)

their undeniable dimension of materiality. As I pointed out earlier, for Aníbal Quijano (2010, p. 113), the level that becomes decisive in the struggle against the coloniality of power is precisely that of the *materiality of bodies*, as the converging axis of the relations of domination/exploitation/discrimination of global capitalism. From the perspective of a decolonial ecology, Malcom Ferdinand (2022) understands that the bodies of racialized and generified subjects are the anchoring point not only for social exclusions and historical inequalities, but also for the degradation of planetary climate ecosystems.

If, on a material-bodily level, coloniality and raciality manifest themselves in unmistakable forms, even in the less tangible effects of relations of subalternization, how can we understand their spectral dimension? Aren't materiality and spectrality opposite qualities and therefore irreconcilable or contradictory? If coloniality is not to be confused with the simple "permanence" of the colonialist past and raciality does not mean the mere structural repetition of the slave pact under repeated forms of violence and hierarchization, how and why should we take them as spectres?

Spectrality, notion originally proposed by Jacques Derrida in 1993 in his seminal reflection on the legacies and directions of Marxism<sup>10</sup>, cannot be disconnected from the philosophical project of deconstructing the metaphysics of Western presence and its related conceptual foundations, such as the belief in the stability of reality, being and matter. As Jameson observes, these ontological certainties become a target that the notion of spectrality "challenges and cause to waver visibly, yet also invisibly":

Spectrality does not involve the conviction that ghosts exist or that the past [...] is still very much alive and at work within the living present: all it says, [...] is that the living present is scarcely as self-sufficient as it claims to be; that we would do well not to count on its density and solidity, which might under exceptional circumstances, betray us (Jameson, 1999, p. 39).

Far from the modern concept of time as a series of successive "presents", identical and contemporary to themselves, spectrality describes time as disjointed and "out of order" because the spectrum lacks form and synchrony. On the Derridean thesis of the non-contemporaneity of the present with itself, Bevernage comments that the spectre "is not just a piece of the 'traumatic' past appearing in the present; instead, its logic questions the traditional relationship between past, present and future" (Bevernage, 2018, p. 276). Contrary to the notions of "synchrony", "linearity" or a temporal "order of succession", spectrality designates an "order of coexistences" (Bevernage, 2018, p. 273). The aporia of the spectral, therefore, is not reduced to the untimely irruption of the presence of an "absent", nor does it lie in the idea of a past that "haunts" because it "returns" on its own, but rather refers to something that was never present or was alive long enough to die or become absent (Bevernage, 2018, p. 322).

André Ramos' comment contributes to this direction by drawing attention to the risks (and possibilities) inherent in the aporia implied in the spectral. As a strategy for confronting the domesticating logics of difference, the "decolonial sublime" that can emerge in the language of mourning, trauma and healing would, according to Ramos, represent a promising opening to spectral historicities and the emancipating potential of subalternized subjectivities.

<sup>10</sup> As the French-Algerian philosopher himself explains in one of his passages, the title *Spectres of Marx* was intended to refer to "all the forms of obsession" that seemed to dominate the discourses, because, in that context "[...] in which a new world disorder was trying to install its neo-capitalism and neo-liberalism, no denial could get rid of all the ghosts of Marx" (Derrida, 1994, p. 57-58).

For her part, Ana Paula Silva Santana argues that, in elaborating the experience of the spectral, it becomes imperative to treat it not as a mere unwelcome intruder, but to welcome it for a necessary reinvention of our relationships with the present and the past. In *Losing Her Mother*, Hartman's account of her investigative journey along the African coast of the slave trade, "the return of the spectre of colonization was present in the body, in the affections and in the memories that surfaced throughout the author's journey". Still in Silva's words, "the specter was present in the absence and lack of inscription, in the silenced songs of slavery, in the violence of the traffickers and the landlord, in the forced forgetting, in the designation of foreigner - of the *obruni*, of the one who doesn't belong and who asks at every moment to be welcomed and considered. Welcomed as history, as part of it and no longer as an intruder, who wants to be told and who demands another space in language and narrative, even if that space is not yet possible in the language we know."

As dissenting voices to the synchronic logics of history that challenge the limits of our epistemic and narrative arsenals in dealing with their aporetic and "undecided" characteristics, spectres are not panaceas for past or contemporary ethical and disciplinary dilemmas. Nor can they undo or cancel hegemonic historical narratives, oriented by ontological realism and the politics of racialized time. As that which makes the present oscillate, the appearance of the spectres is, above all, "a non-narrative event and [...] we hardly know if it really happened" (Jameson, 1999, p. 43). In short, spectres are neither "spirits" nor "bodies", as Derrida reminds us, but that or those who *look at us* and, therefore, their presumed "presence", alien and indifferent to any look on our part, comes less from what we can see in them and more from what we can recognize through their uncomfortable effects on the present, sometimes as a burden, sometimes as promises to be fulfilled. Staying with the spectres, perhaps, will teach us to be affected by everything that exceeds our capture devices.

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