
ARTICLE

Who made you aware that you are black?**Quem lhe fez saber que é negra?**Nírive Weza¹ ORCID iD 0000-0002-4643-7051Michela Tuchapesk da Silva² ORCID iD 0000-0002-6298-1137**Abstract**

This article echoes concerns that culminate in an ongoing thesis that focuses on the processes of subjectivation that organize education. These concerns are expressed through post-structuralist writing policy, the creative fabulation, a concept assembled by the philosopher Gilles Deleuze. This writing is an exercise in active micropolitics that seeks to challenge the power and knowledge relations that subjectify the bodies of minority groups, rendering them useful bodies. In this process, a physics teacher becomes the conceptual character. Racism haunts her relentlessly. Encounters occur in a physics teaching degree course: 'The problem is that you have gaps in your knowledge', thus generating (de)colonial debates in postgraduate studies, encounters (aligned) with the (de)colonial debate. And in teaching: 'Are you the one who puts whiteboard markers in the classroom?' In light of this, an excavation into the entrails of racism is undertaken by academics who refute hegemonic history, denying the Western view that established a yardstick to measure and segregate this body called humanity. Far from providing ready-made answers for ending racism in education, they unravel the lines of force of the machinery of power, paving the way for lines of events.

Keywords: Creative fabulation. Physics teaching. Racism. Decoloniality. Processes of subjectivation.

Resumo

O presente artigo reverbera as inquietações que desaguardam em uma tese em andamento, que se debruça sobre os processos de subjetivação que organizam a educação. Tais inquietações são expressas por meio de uma política de escrita pós-estruturalista, a fabulação criadora, um conceito agenciado no filósofo Gilles Deleuze. Essa escrita é um exercício para uma micropolítica ativa, que busca tensionar as relações de poder e saber que subjetivam os corpos dos povos minoritários, tornando-os corpos úteis. Nesse processo, uma professora de física se constitui na personagem conceitual. O racismo a persegue de fio a pavio. Encontros ocorrem num curso de licenciatura em Física: "O problema é que vocês têm defasagens", assim são engendrados debates (de)coloniais na pós-graduação, encontros(afinados) com o debate de(colonial). E na docência: "é você que coloca canetas de lousa na sala?" Diante disso, uma escavação às entranhas do racismo é realizada por acadêmicos que refutam a história hegemônica, negando a visão ocidental que estabeleceu uma régua para medir e segregar esse corpo chamado

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humanidade. Longe de fornecer respostas prontas para o fim do racismo na educação, desfiavam-se as linhas de força da maquinaria do poder, abrindo caminho para linhas de acontecimentos.

Palavras-chave: Fabulação criadora. Ensino de Física. Racismo. Decolonialidade. Processos de subjetivação.

1 Introduction

This writing seeks to highlight the lines of force of racism that contribute to the maintenance of a hegemonic system that normalizes the Western white man as the standard and naturalizes the view of non-whites, especially Black people, as degenerate. In this sense, the identity of Black people emerges, as the white person does not recognize them as a reflection of themselves and classifies them as the Other, another thing, separate from this body called humanity. Metaphorically, one can consider that the lines of force of racism extend continuously through space-time, (de)forming human relations, gravitating through institutions of knowledge, and even the school, which illuminates students' skills and competencies, composes this diagram. Considering this, we seek to discuss the processes of subjectivation that engender the relationships involving a woman-black-physics teacher. Thus, in an exercise to promote a writing policy inspired by creative fabulation, the aim is to explore other paths that allow for escape routes, the creation of territories within rhizomes (Deleuze; Guattari, 2011).

Seeking a form of writing that sets in motion the lines of force produced by the educational machinery that strains a *body-woman-black-and-Physics*, this text is driven by creative fabulation. This concept is assembled through the thought of the philosopher Gilles Deleuze, which constitutes an active micropolitics that exposes, bends, twists, and problematizes power relations engendered by racism. If, in the fable, the animals or created objects are summoned to represent human behavior and to produce a moral lesson, the *fabul(action)* sets the fable in motion and questions pre-established truths (Cammarota, 2015). To fabulate is to profane the hegemonic territory and invent zigzag paths—beforehand, on the razor's edge, recognizing that no passage is linear. It is to peek at the diagram and move slowly, listening to the signs of the environment, recreating oneself in the process, without the ambition of what will be achieved in the future, so as not to frighten the becoming.

To fabulate-in-action is to create oneself actively in the process. For this reason, it is a violent act, since it requires that one's body, one's great reason, be perforated, to release the lines of potency, which are described here as the process of folding the lines of force in society. A conceptual character, a Black physics teacher who expresses how she is affected by the processes of subjectivation during her schooling, drives the fabulating. She is traversed by

racism from the outside in. Instead of becoming, racism imposed a duty upon her: to be degenerate; to be ground down by the white man; to represent her race, the Black duty. And this led her to react. Racism could not prevent her from living and realizing her dreams.

And she checked off the list. She studied. Studied. Studied. Got a low-paying job. Entered university. Got a job. Graduated. Got a good job. Physics teacher at an elite school. Provided for the financial needs of her father, mother, and siblings. So, she got there, to the top she was allowed to reach. And from there, from the very bottom of the social pyramid, the *ought-to-be-black* captures her: "You quota students have deficiencies." *And-again-ought-to-be-degenerate*. Now, at school, in the exercise of teaching: "Are you the one who puts the whiteboard markers in the classroom?" *Owed-to-be-ground-up-by-the-white-man*. She feels like a yo-yo string in the meshes of power and knowledge, sometimes stretched to the depths of her limit, sometimes pulled into the hands of an educational system that will decide when her next move will be. In this sense, this *writing-story* aims for a boundary-experience, which makes visible the lines of force that subjugate the character, tightening the strings that guide her like a puppet.

2 Trigger: privileged-squared

I organize the papers on the table to begin planning the lesson. Content: Oscillations. Theme: Simple pendulum. I started solving an application exercise that has the following statement: If the pendulum's oscillation period doubles, by how many times will the length of the string increase? I try to solve it in my head. The equation says that the oscillation period is given by $T = 2\pi(L/g)^{0.5}$, where π and g are constants. Therefore, if the period (T) is doubled, the length of the string (L) will be multiplied by 4, since it is inside a square root. I consulted the answer key. There is no answer 4 among the alternatives. *Did I get it wrong?! I am a physics teacher at an elite school; the teachers are highly qualified, and I cannot get a physics exercise right?! I feel like a fraud, an imposter. As if I were not intelligent enough to be a physics teacher.* Some shadows populate my head. Most of my fellow graduates were white men, very few women, and I was the only person with black skin. Are the racist voices that tell me that black people have suffered irreparable intellectual degeneration right? How can this racist outcry override my thinking, after years and years of dedicating myself to the anti-racist struggle? If they find out, I got this exercise wrong, my life's journey will be discredited... First trigger.

During my undergraduate physics course, I went to a professor during a review of my

electromagnetism exam and asked him if it would be possible to have some points recalculated on the question I failed. Begging for a grade was a common tactic; almost everyone did it, but when it was my turn, it backfired: "Are you a quota student?" "Yes," I replied very timidly. "I entered the university through the racial quota system." "Then, the problem is that you (plural) have many deficiencies; it's better if you retake the course." I am ripped from within myself. It is as if the ground slips from under me and humiliation swallows me whole. I fall silent. I do not know what to do with my exam. Whether to swallow it, in an attempt to hide the shame that has overwhelmed me, or abandon it as if it didn't exist, since I won't be able to carry it with me. I want to vomit, not what I ate, but the life I have lived. It is as if I have been hit by a hammer and am looking at the world from the depths. Everyone else is tall, and I am tiny, still dizzy from the hammer blow. *Vertigo*. Any discussion about my performance on the test was forbidden; after all, disadvantaged people like me have shortcomings. What shortcomings are we talking about? I imagine they are not cognitive issues, since my performance was not below that of most. On the contrary, my grade was above the class average; I obtained a 4.0, only one and a half points below the highest grade; the class average was set at 2. Even so, no one managed to reach the minimum required to pass the subject, which was 6.0. Could the aforementioned shortcoming refer to a deviation from an original standard, considering that the white man from privileged classes is the yardstick by which all human beings are measured?

My heart races. My lips dry out. My hands and feet sweat. Cold sweat. I rage. After years and years of dedicating myself to Cartesianism, daring to be a Black woman recognized as good at physics, someone strips me bare and reveals my Blackness. Second Trigger. Poverty + years in public school + Black + father a war survivor + mother a domestic worker + favela + Blackness + work and studies = lag. I leave the room speechless, leaving my test on the table, unable to refute the thesis announced about me. And how could I? Western-centric historical forces have established that he is the standard for all measures, at least in Brazil, while people like me are deviant cases. He, my professor, is a physicist; he did his doctorate at USP (University of São Paulo), two post-docs, one in Hawaii and another at MIT – *royal science-to-the-third power* – and works as a researcher at one of the most important particle accelerators, the LHC (Large Hadron Collider), located in Geneva. His life equation was: very white skin + doctor father + musician mother + top student in high school + professor at a federal university before age 30 + zero hunger – born in the Global South, since not everything is perfect = privileged squared.

2.1 Trigger-squared: the ruler that measures humanity.

Oyěwùmí (2021, p. 29) prompts us to realize that Western culture has established that sight is the sense that stands out above the others, being used as a parameter to differentiate the privileged from the *wretched of this Earth*. “The differentiation of human bodies in terms of sex, skin color, and skull size is a testament to the powers attributed to seeing.” In this restricted cosmos, the gaze scans the stories bodies tell, seeking to hierarchize them according to the rules established by those in positions of power. The subjugated gaze of the electromagnetism professor condemned me to the position of cognitively inferior, as if the standard procedure, in exam views, did not contemplate a degenerate. Thus, the white, cisgender, Western, neurotypical, non-disabled, heterosexual, bourgeois man, as the white-man represents the most polished product of evolution, while non-white people, women, people with physical or intellectual disabilities, the socially disadvantaged, and gender and sexuality dissidents are seen as different and, at worst, as degenerate.

Thus, there exists an apartheid within humanity: the *white-man* is seen as the default and others as different. The privileged group moves easily through spaces of power and defines itself as the representative of reason. In contrast, others are cast as ‘the body,’ associated with desire and the senses, seen as averse to reason (Oyěwùmí, 2021). In this framework, I represent *the body to the third power* and challenge this system by studying Physics—a field established by white-men for the intellectual enjoyment of other white men. This experience made me feel its disorienting effects, vertigo.

While during my undergraduate studies I lacked the racial literacy necessary to properly consider the electromagnetism professor's statement, in my master's program I decided to understand how racism manifests itself and impacts science education. Therefore, I enrolled in a course on the history of science in Brazil, and one of the readings suggested by a colleague, a sociologist, was Grosfoguel (2016), a thinker whose dialogue will be fruitful for our argument.

Grosfoguel (2016), I confess that I experienced unease upon reading your article. It is not fair to hold you responsible for this, nor to denounce Nietzsche (2017), who argued that rumination, that is, the consideration and reconsideration of ideas, constitutes an important intellectual work. Following Nietzsche's suggestion, I read your article numerous times, scrutinizing the 15th to 19th centuries to understand what went through the mind of the white-man as he waged war against this precious body called humanity. It is an antisocial disorder that has never been observed.

Colonialist narratives claim that our portion of the Americas was discovered at the end of the 15th century, when Christopher Columbus and his gang invaded our land, believing they had reached the Indies. Upon encountering the Native Americans, they named them *Indians*, meaning the inhabitants of the Indies (Grosfoguel, 2016). In his '(cosmo)vision', Columbus considered that the humanity of the native peoples had not been perfectly embodied, classifying them as *without religion*. Not having religion in that context implies the absence of a personal God; therefore, the absence of a soul, which at that time was used as a criterion to differentiate human beings from other animals (Grosfoguel, 2016). Not having a soul implies that the body is a public institution that can be violated, even enslaved. And with this, a presupposition arises for the enslavement of indigenous peoples, something that continued in the following decades, under the justification that they were not people.

The *Indians* were not considered people. The Jews were subjected to cultural genocide, since the Spanish Christians said they worshipped a false god, which is strange, since Christianity, the religion of this people of slaughter, has deep roots in Judaism. Furthermore, the little men of God burned libraries in Spain to eradicate the memory of the Moors, who were as African as they were Muslim, and perhaps more African than Oriental. And to redeem themselves, they instituted the Valladolid tribunal, which ultimately decreed that the indigenous peoples had souls, despite being barbarians; therefore, it was a sin before God who apparently sees everything, to enslave them. They continued enslaving the indigenous peoples, but called it *encomienda*. However, the Moors who were forcibly converted to Christianity were classified as soulless and subjected to slavery in Granada in the 16th century. They replaced indigenous slavery with black slavery, through plunder, kidnapping, and rape of the womb of the world, Africa, under the assumption that African peoples had no soul, therefore, no possibility of salvation. They colonized and emptied the souls of our ancestors and used the white-blond-blue-eyed Jesus to belittle our blackness and emphasize their own whiteness.

2.2 Trigger warning: the descendants of Ham

When I was five years old, a little girl told me: "Black people don't go to heaven." I was only five years old. Five! I did not even know what it meant to be black or white, but she pointed to my skin and told me, "Black, the color of condemnation and sin," and this happened in a church. Almost five centuries after the '(de)souling' of minority groups, a little girl keeps this discourse alive, demanding a performance from me. I went to the church washbasin and

scrubbed my arms with soap, hoping to exorcise the burden of my race, and after that frenzied washing, my blackness remained with me, to my suffering. Upon returning to church, the congregation sang fervently: "If washed in this blood, I shall be whiter than snow." How could I obtain this blood of Jesus to become cleansed of my blackness? I prayed. I prayed for years! Nothing makes sense. From the age of two, I sang in church; I dedicated my soul to Christ, the One we love, for He loved us first, and behold, I discovered that black people will be barred from the heavenly gates. And with that, we already have the third trigger, and I haven't even reached the end of your article yet, Grosfoguel (2016).

Given the fervor that reading Grosfoguel (2016) caused me, I felt compelled to share my concerns in the history of science course. After all, the word *decolonial* was mentioned in several meetings, and I thought it would make sense. I was dissatisfied with the affective aberrations of *white-men*. They invented the identity of a people, stripped them of their humanity under the assumption that they had no religion, and condemned them to eternal humiliation. The course instructor, a historian, told me: "We need to have a little empathy. Europeans were just men of their time. It is true that they made some excesses in describing different people, but how many of us do not make these mistakes when we look at someone who is not a reflection of ourselves? Perhaps they had no idea what this prejudiced view could cause." Could a prejudiced view be compared to the 'en(covering)' of a people's humanity to enslave them and propel this predatory hunt called capitalism?

They placed the burden of race upon our shoulders. They invented the concept of 'black' and associated it with every conceivable form of degeneracy. They condemned our ancestors to a living death. And it fell to us, the *whetched ones on this Earth*, to bear the responsibility of emerging upright from the anger caused by colonization; after all, we are co-responsible in this system of oppression, to be quite Foucauldian, and yet they ask for mercy. If we were talking about the millions who were murdered under the absurd accusation of witchcraft, would otherness be mentioned? You mention this tragic historical event in your article, Grosfoguel (2016), and it made me aware that this fourth epistemicide (murder + annihilation of knowledge production) was carried out so that the white man could flaunt his place of power and epistemic privilege. Look at the burdens your academic and humanities colleagues, excited by the '(de)colonial' concept, place on our shoulders (Grosfoguel, 2016). Difficult and laborious times.

I disagree that the *white-men* who instituted the systems that caused eternal humiliation did so unconsciously. This primitive racism, which found in religion the justification for the

hierarchization of human beings, did not become entrenched over the years. On the contrary, it has become more sophisticated and currently attacks certain forms of existence (Fanon, 2021). If in the past, the *black* was cursed for being a descendant of Ham, the son of Noah who supposedly mocked his father's nakedness when he was drunk, in the 19th century, we were conceived as an evolutionary stepping-stone between primates and white men. The human evolutionary scale was therefore linear, beginning with primates, passing through the great hominids, and lightening skin tone with each generation. *From darkness to its precious light*. This was the story that those subjugated by racism told themselves in the sciences, the arts, and even to their descendants, in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries—the supposed *centuries of enlightenment*—in which the white man bore the burden of illuminating the world with his whiteness, to dispel the world's darkness. And when metaphysics became incompatible with the dynamics of the modern world, science entered the scene. In the following lines, these men of science will be relegated to the status of *little men-of-sciences*, highlighting, in diminutive terms, the magnitude of their actions on the scale of humanity.

2.3 What can the body do?

Dissection. Measurement of the epidermis, ribs, skull. Morality and intelligence could be traced through the reading of texts written on bodies. Larger skull, greater intelligence. Even the length of the knee, the distance between vertebrae, and the thickness of the epidermis became standards for differentiating intellectual capacity (Gould, 2014; Fanon, 2021). What would René Descartes say if he could witness such blasphemy from his successors? The philosopher infected the Western and Westernized world with the division between body and mind, classifying our body as a collection of organs whose death should not be lamented, since it would liberate the soul from the sensible world. Like Socrates, Descartes considered the transcendental world to be more valuable than life itself, since the soul would be emancipated to penetrate the intelligible world, free from the sensory constraints of an irrational body—this in the 17th century (Borges, 2008). In this sense, life was useless, a search for the reason for death. And who would have thought that, at the end of the 19th century, the *little men-of-sciences* would be excavating the tomb of the soul in search of hierarchies in humanity? What was the prevailing conception of the body in the centuries of the dark sciences, the 19th and 20th, to the point that the little men of reason considered it a way to measure the soul?

If, in the past, the soul was linked to the intelligible world, making the human being a

metaphysical being, in the 19th century it became tied to brain function, making the human being a purely physical being (Perrin; Anderson, 2013). By making intelligence tangible, the human being stands out from other animals. And, by racializing intelligence through craniometry, the *white-man* becomes the norm, the standard, while others are conceived as deviant, degenerate cases. In this sense, it is worth questioning: what can the body do? If, in standard Western culture, the body leaps from an inert shell that imprisons the soul and becomes an object to biologize human differences and establish a social hierarchy, we argue that the body is a territory of passage for affects, impulses, and instincts. We learn through the body. We feel through the body. We make decisions through the body. We are subjectified by the body. Thus, the body is a complex system composed of organs, cells, and tissues that together create who we are (Borges, 2008).

Moreover, Nietzsche points out that the body is constituted by a multiplicity of impulses that war with one another and determine whether it is healthy or sick. A sick body, therefore weak, is one that possesses impulses at the same level of potency. The philosopher considers that those who despise the body, who deny corporeality, humanity, and life, possess a sick mind, since they have been contaminated by an impulsive disease (Borges, 2008). In contrast, a healthy body presents a hierarchy among impulses, so that the strongest dominate the weakest. It is considered that a healthy body opens itself to becoming-animal, learning from animal intelligence, rather than overcoming it and defending the view that human intelligence is the only one that expresses reason.

Regarding studies on skull measurements, it was already found in the 20th century that Caucasians had larger brains, followed by Native Americans and Chinese, who were characterized as Mongoloids. Black people are at the bottom of the list. In some illustrations, the skulls of chimpanzees are depicted as larger than those of black people (Gould, 2014, p. 40). Even from the supposed place of evolutionary springboard for white people, black people were deprived. Some manipulation was carried out to make these results possible. Samuel G. Morton, the scientist responsible for this study, removed from the analysis the skull of a large Chinese person and some skulls of small Indians, as this would compromise the Caucasian average (Gould, 2014). They used only male skulls to measure English intelligence. However, some samples of female skulls from Hottentots, the name given to the Khoi-Khoi people who reside in Southern Africa, were used (Gould, 2014).

Paleontologist Stephen Gould (2014), who analyzed studies conducted at the height of scientific racism, or rather, the *dark sciences*, found considerable inconsistencies, but argues

that Morton did not consciously commit fraud. The scientist in question did not erase data nor conceal the final results; he published them all. Gould (2014) considers that the scientists who defended scientific racism in their research were men of their time who, driven by the prejudice of the era, misinterpreted the data collected in their research. A question arises: What were these gentlemen, after all? Men of reason or infants of a hegemonic culture who had not reached intellectual maturity?

According to Kant, the Enlightenment represents the passage from a minority, the Dark Ages, in which the white-man was subservient to another who was not himself, to a majority, the age of reason, in which there is accountability for his actions, according to his reason (Pimentel, 2010). Moving with the Kantian concept, we can consider that qualifying these gentlemen as mere masters of their time, unaware of their actions, is to reduce him to a state of minority, to a suckling child who unreflectively absorbs Western culture. Despite the seductive discourse of condemning the white man to the place where my ancestors were condemned, *petit negrit*—after all, Africa was classified as the childhood of the world, as Fanon (2008) states—I will not engage in this game. History itself will reveal my point.

In the 19th century, some voices in academia argued that German brains were much larger than French brains, consequently making Germans cognitively superior. Paul Broca, a French physician, investigated this issue and found that the average German brain weighed 48 grams more than the average French brain (Gould, 2014). Based on this, a series of conjectures were made to argue that the French were not intellectually inferior to the Germans. It was considered that brain size is linked to body size and decreases with age, and that most brain samples collected from the French were from older, shorter individuals than those collected from the Germans (Gould, 2014). It was observed that the meaning of brain measurements was reinterpreted, so that the descendants of the Enlightenment could occupy the place of reason without being haunted by German superiority. However, when the brains of white women were measured, it was observed that they were smaller than those of white men, which created a stalemate (Gould, 2014). A similar outcome to that observed with measurements of the brains of Germans and French was to be expected. However, Broca argued that, in addition to physical inferiority, women also possess intellectual inferiority, as studies indicate (Gould, 2014).

I agree with you, Grosfoguel (2016). For the white man to be able to say "I think, therefore I am," it was necessary to align "I conquer, therefore I am" with "I exterminate, therefore I am." In other words, for them to assert themselves as holders of reason, it was necessary to invent that the white-man is the yardstick by which all human beings will be

measured and classified as similar or different. And for my electromagnetism professor to enjoy his privileged position, it was necessary that people like me, Black, woman, and socially disadvantaged, desprived to the third power, did not occupy university seats. The becoming of the white man is associated with the *duty-to-be-Black*; this system feeds on itself. For the dominant system to remain, everyone must occupy their *natural places*, so that the *natural place* of a white man is producing knowledge, while that of a Black woman is *duty-to-serve-the-white-man*, for the maintenance of the ego of this false elite. Perhaps this is why the elite of backwardness were outraged by the implementation of racial and social quotas in universities, hiding their astonishment under the assumption that the poor and/or black people would lower academic quality (Souza, 2021). Even with statistics from the Polytechnic School of São Paulo (Unifesp), UnB, and UFMG showing that quota students perform better than non-quota students, the presence of diverse groups is still not legitimized at the University (Silva; Xavier; Costa, 2020).

Still, faced with the simple pendulum exercise that's part of my lesson plan, I wonder: Was the electromagnetism professor right about me? I feel that instead of folding the lines of force of racism, I am being folded by them, stripping me of the physics professor, the academic, the woman who defied the system studying Physics. Shattered. How could I not have gotten this exercise right? Shattered to the second power. Thinking about it, I remember my continuous effort to show the world and myself that Physics is for me. I had to swallow the exhaustion of the grueling routine of work, scientific initiation, and studies. Furthermore, I had to overcome the panic attacks that plagued me day after day; after all, I needed to win at all costs. To do so, I violated my body, replacing becoming with duty, the duty to be good enough for this perverse system.

How many sleepless nights to perform well in a field of knowledge forged by the grandchildren of the *filthy beast*, who classified me as if I were an object among other objects. How much I squeezed myself to fit into this Western physics. I died a few times. This person's writing is one of the versions of me that was forged, not long ago, on the ground of resistance, to slap this system that violates me threefold. Three hours of sleep a day. Six hours on the bus/subway. Routine humiliations in an elite school, whose salary allows me to support my mother and financially support my siblings. "If a physicist tells me that my exercise is wrong, then I will accept it...", a student told me, refuting my correction of her test. "For your information, I am the physicist!" On second thought, am I really? Even if I profess a discourse of truth because I am a physics teacher, my discourse is not validated; it is not even capable of

convincing a spoiled student in a test debate.

They say quotas are a form of historical reparation; personally, I would prefer reparation for the trenches my ancestors lived in and those I still live in. Perhaps that was the demand of the Black social movements, but the federal government chose another path. But: “Never have so many Black people entered universities as under leftist governments!” That is what they told me. And the whisper I hear is that historical reparation came from a leftist hand, not a right one. In both leftist and rightist governments, the genocide of Black souls persists. Is a Black life in university worth more than the Black lives murdered in the trenches? The social ascension I experience has not freed me from racism. And it will not free me either. *Nausea*. I feel like I do not exist. Is thinking about a world free from racism a matter of immanence, or does it constitute a reactive becoming?

One, two, three, four... at each trigger, we are dragged into memories that overwhelm us. Then comes another question: How can a simple pendulum exercise have such power to dig into my guts, to the point of making me feel like the poorest of creatures? I venerated Cartesian rationality for years, proclaiming to both the physical and spiritual worlds that my ancestors assist me, that physics belongs to Black people. Yet now, unable to get an exercise right, I suddenly feel like an imposter. This ungrateful system! Scoundrels.

Wait! The problem statement asks how many times the wire should be lengthened, considering that the initial length is L and the final length is $4L$. Given this new interpretation, the answer is 3. It's the correct alternative. It is as if, for a moment, my dignity is restored. My dignity? No! Perhaps that of the System. The little men-of-sciences are cunning! They maintain a machinery of power that convinces us that this is the only access to rationality. I bought a ticket for this vessel and enrolled in the University, but my entry was barred on the assumption of a still-existing lag in skull measurement.

But we broke into the entrance; we accessed the boat clandestinely. And all this to prove that the *invention of the Black* says more about the white-man than about who we actually are. Even so, the lines of force of the white-man bend my lines of events. And I bend that bend. Perhaps this is the active becoming, an eternal bending-bending. Bending the lines of force, generating lines of life that will be bent by the meshes of power, twisting, recreating, frustrating, in a continuous effort to move with power. Well, it is getting late; tomorrow is another day.

2.4 Are you the one who puts the whiteboard markers in the room?

I wake up at 5 a.m. I go to the bathroom. Blood. Teachers should only menstruate on weekends. Could the triggers I relived the previous day have anything to do with this hormonal ‘(im)balance’? Actually, this is a false problem, one of those that leads nowhere. What really matters is that I have a triple challenge: teaching with pre-menstrual tension and its resulting discomforts; not letting my irritation leak out; nor letting the insecurity of not having gotten the simple pendulum exercise right the previous day be picked up by the students.

I arrive in the classroom promptly at 7:00 AM, and while the students get organized, I access the PHET platform, which offers interactive simulations of various natural science phenomena, and select one that lets you observe the movement of a simple pendulum. At one point, I realize that the supplementary material, the list of exercises, is in the teachers' room, so I go to get it. In the hallway, a 12th-grade physics teacher approaches me: "Are you the one who puts the whiteboard markers in the room?" And the individual did not even say good morning and gave me a blow like that, with a dagger and all. I am speechless. After debating with a racist perspective the previous day, a colleague considers that the most I can be in this school is someone who puts whiteboard markers in the classrooms!

I was exhausted. ‘(Dis)armed’ with my empowering speech. I just wanted to get to the teachers' room, and I was intercepted with such an affirmative question! I took a deep breath. The blood that should be rushing through my womb changes direction and flushes my face, or at least tries to. I replied that no, I am not the person who puts pens on the blackboard; *I am a teacher* at this school. I suggested he seek the services of Anelice, who was sitting near us; she is the inspector. “Oh, sorry, I think I confused you with someone else, who isn't Anelice”. I look him in the eyes, intimidating him. The white man is lucky; he says what he wants, to whoever he wants, and it is we, the group that has been relegated to minority status, even though we are the majority in this country, who must restrain ourselves, so as not to be perceived as angry.

In silence, I process the anger over these intrusions. May my body forgive me for such blasphemy. The hormonal imbalance alone is challenging enough; racism has no right to break down the windows I reinvent every day. For a moment, I think my colleague may have confused me with Jucélia, the other school inspector, a short Black woman who wears glasses, while I am a tall Black woman with colorful dreadlocks, without glasses. Inside, I was saying: leave me alone, you vultures! On top of everything, they create yet another duty for Black people: the duty to have the same face. I did not let my indignation spill over beyond myself, out of respect for myself. I was not in the mood to hear a half-hearted apology, one of those that blame

structural racism and make racism everyone's problem and nobody's problem.

The previous week, a colleague was distraught. He was in the classroom, sitting, distracted by grading a student's notebook when, suddenly, he felt someone touching his hair, his long dreadlocks. It was a female student. She was opening his dreadlocks, undoing his hairstyle, and smiling, saying that she was trying to kill lice. He was distraught by the invasion of his privacy. Imagine what would happen if it were the other way around, a Black man undoing a white student's hairstyle, saying he was looking for lice. Indignation overwhelmed him; he stood up and, pointing a finger at the student, said firmly, "Do not touch me. Stay away from me. You don't have that right." She was startled. She apologized, saying she had no idea her gesture was disrespectful. The class mobilized; the boys thought the teacher's reaction was disproportionate: "he is unbalanced!" "Oh my, it was just a joke."

In subsequent classes, he was characterized as the stressed-out one. "It's best not to ask him anything; otherwise, he'll freak out like he did that time." He took the matter to the school administration, which blamed structural racism and said that an explicit fight against racism was not convenient, since identity politics issues have little or no effect. In other words, once again, they hid the lines of force of racism, hoping that the students would educate themselves in other ways. The teacher confessed that he wished he could have controlled his emotions, but he could not. And how could he? He had already allowed so many silences with his body, in the face of the violence caused by racism. His body could not take it anymore. It overflowed, and the flood that spilled from him inundated worlds. In the next class, he apologized to the student. She also apologized to the teacher. But a heavy atmosphere remained in that class for months and months.

The week after my physics colleague asked me if I was responsible for putting whiteboard markers in the classrooms, I received an audio message from him: "First of all, I owe you an apology. I have many Black friends, so I can imagine how you must be feeling. I should have known you were a teacher at the school, even though I was hired this year. Today I ran into the inspector I confused you with, Jucélia, and only then did I realize my mistake. I am so sorry. I know racism is structural, but I will be more careful so this kind of thing does not happen to you again, or to anyone else!" His voice was trembling, stuttering at times; perhaps he was afraid. I could take the case to the school administration, report him for racism—after all, we live in the era of canceled culture. I chose a different path, one that involves bending the expectations of a Black person fighting racism. In my reply, I said that I accept his apology; in fact, I was very bothered by the confusion. Besides skin color, Jucélia and I do not share any

other characteristics that would justify any resemblance. Still, I am glad that he is reconsidering this.

The retraction could end there, but it usually continues: “look, in the afternoon I administered your test; you also teach physics and English to the sophomore students! That is when I realized I had been inappropriate by making that absurd comparison. I feel ashamed; please forgive me.” And at that moment, I feel myself being pulled down to the lowest possible trajectory on the yo-yo, and before the system captures me and pulls me back into the clutches of power, I break the thread and say goodbye with a dry “okay, goodnight.”

The next day, I logged into my LinkedIn profile and saw that my colleague had peeked at my profile but had not sent me an invitation, as other teachers at the school usually do. Perhaps he felt belittled by international exchanges and his ongoing doctorate at USP, since he is older than me, does not have a doctorate, and does not speak English. It was curious that he considered the comparison between Jucélia and me only absurd when he saw my qualifications, but that is not the point. He felt ashamed because he attributed to me the duty-to-serve-white-men role, while I positioned myself as a scientist, which possibly caused him to stutter.

A heavy burden was placed on our shoulders, yet we squeezed ourselves to forge a version of ourselves that was not defined solely by our pain. A loving bond with ourselves. Loving bond:

I dream higher than drones. My kind of fuel? Hunger. To unleash like a cyclone. So that tomorrow isn't just yesterday with a new name. The vulture circles, eager for the fall. I end the sorrow, man; I'm more than this shit. Body, mind, soul, one, like Ayurveda. Like water, I run amidst the stones. In the plot, all the drama is murky; I'm a playwright. It calls for moving away from the mud, while inflaming the world [...]. So fight back, say it. Allow me to speak. Not my scars. They are supporting characters. No, better yet, extras. That shouldn't even be here. So much pain steals our voice. Do you know what's left of us? Targets walking around. If this is about survival. To reduce me to survival. Is to steal the little good I've lived. To think that these afflictions define me is the worst of crimes. It's like giving the trophy to our tormentor and making us disappear, then (Emicida; Vassao; Duhé, 2019).

3 Speech from the extreme middle of the crossing

What can a body do when it has been reduced to a carcass by the dominant system, and is no longer content with reactive becomings that merely constitute a means to an end? The conceptual character fulfills the checklist. In the expectation of serving as an example for her people, she becomes entangled in the meshes of reactive becoming, which keep her bound within the structural lines of racism. This results in life becoming a struggle for transcendence and recognition, rather than embracing life's transience. Hence, desire, rather than generating

psychosocial universes as Rolnik (1989) proposes, becomes dialectical—a tension between Eros and Thanatos, creation and destruction, underscored by a sense of lack. The ideal world, therefore, is disconnected from the plane of immanence; the pursuit of fulfillment becomes utopian, and active becoming is lost.

Active becoming refers to a continual process of transformation in which an individual embraces positive encounters and creative experimentation, while rejecting imposed models of existence created by systems of power and knowledge. According to Fuganti (2007), active becoming means actively reshaping oneself during this process, removing from within anything that suppresses potential and leads to anger and lethargy. The lines of racism complicate active becoming, since the black duty is an expectation that black individuals occupy ‘natural places’ assigned by dominant social systems within power structures (Hasenbalg; Gonzalez, 1982). Experiencing active becoming requires rejecting the Cartesian idea that humans cannot learn from animals. Instead, it involves engaging with creative experiences, as in animal becoming—a process in which a person learns from animal intelligence and behaviors. This mode of becoming is marked by attentiveness, continual self-reinvention, and gradual progress, much like spiders patiently weaving their webs.

A spider's web is a framework that allows spiders to lie in wait while they must protect themselves and simultaneously feed, that is, ensure their survival. Some spiders build webs collectively, such as cribellates, where the agitation of a fly captured by the web emits vibrations in all directions, which are captured by the spiders as they feed on the prey side-by-side (Ades, 1986). There are groups of spiders, such as orb-weavers, that build so-called geometric webs composed of straight, converging rays, if we use the lens of the Western mathematical curriculum. These webs are woven from dry silk threads that absorb the impact of prey and require the least possible energy expenditure.

Moreover, ‘geometric webs’ are built and destroyed quickly, allowing greater mobility between habitats (Ades, 1986). When starting to build a web, the spider has no idea what the final product will be, nor whether there will even be a web; it depends on the supply of silk and environmental conditions. It is the web that provides the spider with information about its construction, enabling these elements to modify the spider's behavior during the web-building process. An eternal weaving is perceived, in which the silk threads spiral to ensure the spider's survival, in a world where becoming is the journey and not the completion itself, since the web is ephemeral and will not last long. The web is a world created by spiders, another world, since it transforms the spiders in the process and, at the same time, recreates itself in a continuous

movement of differentiation.

In other words, becoming-animal teaches us that the an-other world is not a reproduction of an already existing world, but rather a world that creates its maker and also recreates itself. When confronted with the lines of racism, immersed in the environment, the conceptual character modified the *modus operandi* of constructing its web. It did not ‘(de)humanize’ the environment that had ‘(de)humanized’ it, out of respect for its body. Whether the aggressors will become aware is unknown, just as the spider is not certain whether its web will be completed. The process will tell, paraphrasing Guimarães Rosa (2019, p. 52), "the real appears to us in the middle of the crossing." Creative power lies in the in-between, not at the beginning, nor at the end. For this reason, this article does not attempt to provide a way out of the diagram, but rather to empower other worlds that can emerge here and now, from the ‘(un)raveling’ of the skein that contains the lines of force that manipulate us and manufacture our desires.

Committing to providing a way out is a maneuver of Platonic recognition, which teaches us to follow paths contrary to experimentation insofar as it is necessary to reproduce a model, which constitutes a means to obtain a result, the reactive becoming. In other words, the black duty that was constructed by contingencies removes from the black person the eternal-becoming and demands that they occupy the ‘natural place’ that was assigned to them. Subjectivation processes that contribute to the maintenance of power relations that manufacture docile, useful, disciplined bodies, reproducers of the structures that ‘(re)organize’ racism. This indicates that fabul-action requires a double transgression: with the system of power and knowledge that instilled the recognitive fold in us; and with the subjectified body that is still phobic of the outside, resistant to the processes of differentiation within us.

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All authors contributed substantially to the conception and planning of the study; to the acquisition, analysis, and interpretation of the data; to the writing and critical revision; and approved the final version to be published.

Data Availability

The data generated or analyzed during this study are included in this published article.

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