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'Bahia Pêlo Negro'

Can the subaltern (subject of raciality) speak?

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ABSTRACT This article revisits the theme of representation by examining the relationship between difference and transparency. I argue that the current purchase of multiculturalism and diversity marks the 'officialization' of the 1980s politics of difference, which refashioned previous formulations of racial and cultural difference without challenging their ontological premises. Through a reading of the Bloco Olodum's 1988s carnival lyrics, I chart the articulation of signifiers of Africanity, as a marker of cultural difference, which writes the black Brazilian as subaltern subject without producing a particular version of a (self-)transparent (interior/temporal) African subject. Instead, in this emancipatory text, Africanity delimits a region of subalternity, one inhabited by Africans and economically dispossessed blacks in the diaspora, which is defined in terms of a political struggle that marks their *existence* in post-Enlightenment social configurations. Not only does the interpretive strategy I deploy show how an attention to social scientific knowledge's role in production of modern (post-Enlightenment) subject is crucial for a critique of the notion of difference informing the global principles of multiculturalism and diversity. More importantly, it also indicates why the logic of exclusion, the prevailing account of social subjection has been now added to the arsenal of racial subjection.

KEYWORDS Brazil ● cultural politics ● exteriority ● globality ● representation ● transparency

We recognize and affirm that, at the outset of the third millennium, a global fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance and all their abhorrent and evolving forms and manifestations is a matter of priority for the international community, and that this conference offers a unique and historic opportunity for assessing and identifying all dimensions of those devastating evils of humanity with a view to their elimination through, *inter alia*, the initiation of innovative and holistic approaches and the

strengthening and enhancement of practical and effective measures at the national, regional, and international levels. (Art. 3, Final Report, 2001 UN World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance)

Cultural diversity is here to stay and to grow. States need to find ways of forging national unity amid this diversity. The world, ever more interdependent economically, cannot function unless people respect diversity and build unity through common bonds of humanity. In this age of globalization the demands for cultural recognition can no longer be ignored by any state or by the international community. And confrontations over culture and identity are likely to grow (. . .). This report makes a case for respecting diversity and building more inclusive societies by adopting policies that explicitly recognize cultural differences – multicultural policies. (Overview, 2004 UNDP Human Development Report)

Both the Final Report of the 2001 UN World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and other Related Intolerance (2001 WCARF Report) and the 2004 Human Development Report (2004 HD Report) indicate a shift in the human rights agenda. Not only has the global become the official referent for the social justice programmes, cultural difference now shares with racial difference the blame for the fracturing of humanity, the ethical figure which is to be restored (if not mended) by the ‘holistic approaches’ the 2001 WCARF Report proposes and the multicultural policies the 2004 HD Report recommends. Nonetheless, each document deploys these social descriptors as if they encompassed different populations. This is not a mere bureaucratic division of labor. I think it reflects the additive model as the prevalent social scientific tool and its corresponding explanation for social subjection, the logic of exclusion. Consistent with the liberal and historical-materialist ontologies, both conceive of the social subject as a composite: an interior thing, one whose particularity is *actualized* in its temporal trajectory and *expressed* by its exterior (bodily and social) configurations. Further, both assume that these exterior attributes constitute the basis for social unity/identity and differentiation/exclusion), the *causes* of the exclusionary ideas and actions – the fuel of juridical domination and economic dispossession/exploitation – plaguing post-Enlightenment social configurations. Little over 20 years since the announcement of the entry of subaltern ‘ontologies and epistemologies’ into the scene of representation – to many, marking the demise of universality and its ‘subject’ – these global documents announce the ‘officialization’ of the politics of difference when they add another item to the list of exclusions, namely cultural difference.¹

My goal in this critique of the politics of difference is to highlight how the additive model and the logic of exclusion constitute a limited basis for a radical analysis of post-Enlightenment mechanisms of social subjection. Through a reading of the 1988 song lyrics produced by the black Brazilian

cultural group Olodum, I attempt to capture something missed by cultural politics scholarship.² While like many cultural groups created in the 1980s it actively engaged in cultural politics, Olodum took a distinct path, one which neither centered upon cultural exclusion nor viewed cultural praxis according to the logic of resistance.³ When deploying signifiers of Africanity, it did not represent the black subject as a minor transparent 'I' – a purely *historical* thing – the resisting selfsame (interior/temporal) subaltern subject which actualizes itself when naming the (oppressive or repressive) mechanisms of racial exclusion operating in Brazilian society. Instead, its lyrics narrated emancipatory struggles in Africa and black Brazilians' economic dispossession to produce a *global-historical* subaltern subject, one which inhabits the place of affectability, i.e. the social position which post-Enlightenment scientific accounts of human differentiation have consistently assigned to the 'others of Europe'.

This reading of Olodum's lyrics introduces an alternative to the additive model and its logic of exclusion as it shows how it neither stacks nor aligns race, class, and culture as discrete moments of subjection.⁴ Instead, the lyrics deploy these social scientific signifiers of human differentiation to produce the economically dispossessed black Brazilian as a self-consciousness emerging in the place of affectability – a subaltern social position which these social scientific tools capture only because it is produced by them. Nevertheless, precisely because the scene of representation these lyrics assemble is a product of these social scientific (exterior/spatial) signifiers, the *global* constitutes the privileged ontological horizon. For the black subject these lyrics describe remains fully in exteriority; in Africa as in Salvador it emerges in contention, struggling for emancipation, fighting European colonization, enslavement, and economic dispossession; in short, this black subject is neither an *actualization* nor an *expression* of an African 'essence', but a modern political figure, an *existing* thing, which can only be re/assembled with the tools of knowledge that carved its place of emergence.

Neither the (scientific) 'discovery' nor the (historical) 'unveiling' (of Olodum's own perspective of racial subjection), my goal here is to suggest a distinct view of the relationship between the three notions, representation, transparency, and difference. Two concerns animate my return to these themes here. First, I find the politics of difference limited because it did not include the necessary epistemological excavation, an account of the regimen of production of the signifiers of human (moral) difference it deploys. Second, I read the recent ascension of cultural difference – i.e. of principles of multiculturalism and diversity – to the center of the global justice agenda as the consolidation of the 1980s politics of difference (or politics of recognition, or politics of representation, or cultural politics). Both concerns, I should add, derive from my view that much like the racial concept that initially fulfilled this task, the cultural also produces human

difference as an effect of scientific universality: its mapping of the present global configuration leaves the subaltern regions it has instituted outside the scope of the ruling ethical principles. Understanding how the racial and the cultural perform this political role is all the more urgent now that the ascension of cultural difference marks the addition of the logic of exclusion itself to the apparatus of social subjection.

THE 'RETURN' OF REPRESENTATION

Neither the 1980s 'cultural turn', the onset of the politics of difference which marked the entry of suddenly speaking 'others' on the scene of (political) representation, nor the 'global turn', the 'officialization' as announced by the 2001 WCAR and 2004 HD reports' justice agenda, reflects a fundamental onto-epistemological shift. Neither, that is, displaces the writing of the subject as a transparent 'I'. This is so not just because both assume post-Enlightenment philosophical and social scientific formulations of modern social configurations and the ethical principles they actualize, namely self-determination and universality. My contention here is that the politics of difference, which sustains both the 'cultural turn' and the 'global turn', advanced a limited critique of representation. The critique of universality has been productive but is not enough. Lacking still is a critical work which addresses the relationship between difference and transparency, which shows how, because they assume the irreducibility of the difference between post-Enlightenment European and their 'others', the social scientific signifiers informing prevailing accounts of social subjection undermine the very project of global justice they animate.

Perhaps following Foucault's (1994) declaration that representation has no place in the modern episteme, the framers of the politics of difference announced its 'return' without double-checking whether it had a place in the narratives of Science and History authorized by universal reason.⁵ When advancing this claim,⁶ they attribute the event to the emergence of subaltern 'ontologies and epistemologies' claiming their place in the kingdoms of 'Being' and 'Truth'; there is no question this 'return' was the work of culture, a tool of the texts of Science and History which had seemingly broken loose. Nevertheless, the critical gesture further supported by postmodern anthropology's liberation of the cultural from the responsibility of producing universal truths has suffered from the failure to address culture's ontological and epistemological roles. For instance, when describing his critique of 'ethnographic authority', James Clifford summarizes this incomplete emancipation of culture when noting that the fact that writing has been a hidden dimension of anthropological work 'reflects the persistence of an ideology claiming transparency of representation and

immediacy of experience' (Clifford, 1986: 2). Nevertheless, this challenge of transparency addressed primarily the figure of the 'western' subject of anthropological (social scientific) knowledge while *his* objects were left alone with their difference, seemingly beyond the reach of the questioning of transparency, representation, and experience. This is all the more clear in Clifford's following statement. 'Ethnography', Clifford proceeds, 'is actively situated *between* powerful systems of meaning. It poses its question at the boundaries of civilization, cultures, classes, races and genders. Ethnography decodes and recodes, telling the grounds of collective order and diversity, inclusion and exclusion' (*ibid.*, italics in original). In this statement, it is evident how the additive model and the logic of exclusion assume that collectivities 'identified' through the deployment of the social scientific arsenal have an autonomous existence; that is, as if their existence as such – as 'races, classes, cultures, genders' – preceded the concepts manufactured to comprehend them. More importantly, as Joan Scott (1999) and others have argued, the socio-historical trio – namely, transparency, representation, and experience – informing most of critical writings about subaltern 'cultures, classes, races and genders' (and sexualities) have the un/expected effect of reconfiguring these 'others' as types of minor versions of the transparent subject of representation, the subject of History and Science.

What I am suggesting is that the problem with the politics of difference derives from how the transparency thesis still remains the privileged ontological presupposition. That is, it sustains the assumption that through their recognition and inclusion (in the political babble) of their 'voices', the subjects of cultural difference would be recuperated, brought back into the universal reservoir of humanity.⁷ Beyond the challenge of the subject's claims for transparency, I think, the critical text should include an examination of the signifiers informing this conception of difference. Such critical work would include an examination of how social scientific descriptors of human difference, such as the concepts of the cultural and the racial, produce the socio-historical experience when they name bodies, social configurations, and global regions. To carve this critical ground is crucial if one is to understand why the 'officialization' of cultural difference in global agendas premised upon the multiculturalism and diversity seem so well-suited to the juridical and economic programmes of neoliberalism. Why and how, one should ask, could that which had been for such a long time a monopoly of the subject (transparency) so immediately be attributed to its subalterns, the excluded 'others'? What are the conditions of possibility for such speech, i.e. the articulation of cultural difference? What renders it possible and intelligible? Which grammatical rules does it follow, and to which reservoir of meanings do its words refer? Answering these questions requires a critical examination of the cultural, which addresses the relationship between transparency and difference and indicates how the latter enables the racial/cultural subaltern's entry in the scene of (political) representation.

In 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1994) offers a challenge to the thesis of the 'speaking' subaltern which, I think, helps to situate this necessary critical work. Here I am interested in the distinction between the two meanings of representation Marx deploys, *vertreten* [juridical-economic] and *darstellen* [symbolic], which guide Spivak's critique of (self-transparent) French intellectuals' – Michel Foucault's and Gilles Deleuze's – celebration of the appearance of the 'speaking' subaltern. For Spivak, this notion of consciousness misses Marx's distinction, which allows him to identify a subject which does not presume an immediate correspondence between desire and interest. She argues:

Full class agency is not an ideological transformation of consciousness on the ground level, a desiring entity of the agents and their interest (. . .). The projects of class consciousness and of the transformation of consciousness are discontinuous [for Marx]. Conversely, contemporary invocations of 'libidinal economy' and desire as the determining of interest, combine with the practical political of the oppressed (under socialized capital) 'speaking for themselves,' restore the category of the sovereign subject within the theory that seems most to question it. (1994: 72–3)

From this, Spivak advances her thesis of epistemic violence which describes how French (but also non-western) intellectuals re-place themselves in transparency, by putting 'the economic "under erasure"' (1994: 75) in that they are complicit in the economic (re)production of the 'other', which they find emancipated in discourse, in speech. Spivak's recuperation of these two moments of consciousness interests me here because it cautions us against the tendency towards all too easy Hegelian rendering of the historical materialist arsenal. I read her demand that critical intellectuals recognize their own placing in the stage of subjection as an invitation to attend to how relationality – exteriority – defines the political.

Here, however, I would like to explore another possible reading of the distinction between *vertreten* and *darstellen* by relating them to the Hegelian distinction between the moment of consciousness in-itself and of consciousness for-itself. This exercise takes two moves. First, I reject Hegel's transparency thesis, which conceives of consciousness for-itself, in which representation has the sense of *darstellen*, as the sole moment of emergence of the subject (self-consciousness) – the assumption that marks historical-materialism's own investment in transparency. That is, I propose a strategy for reading political texts, as contexts of subjectification in which social scientific signifiers produce a subject that emerges in the moment of in-itself, i.e. one in which representation has the sense of *vertreten*. Not, of course, as Hegel states, in 'simple universality', unaware of what lies besides it-self, but a subject which emerges in existence, here conceived as already an effect of the appropriation of 'actual conditions of existence' by social scientific signifiers. Relationality, as Derrida (1976) suggests, constructs becoming as a spatial process, where the subject can only emerge because

it is before an 'other', who is also an 'other' subject – as such the subject remains from beginning to end a social, i.e. political thing. With this, I displace historicity as the privileged ontological descriptor, the one which cannot but help but produce transparent (interior/temporal) 'I's. Second, I propose a notion of *globality* as an ontological horizon instituted by the social scientific signifiers which, when gathering material (bodily and social) markers of human difference, mapped the global space itself, inscribing it as a site of *expression* of the operation of the laws of reason which produce human (mental) differentiation and a site of *actualization* of the different kinds of consciousness these laws institute (regulate/produce). That is, I have chosen to engage Science as a moment of production of the tools that manufacture modern subjects. This is enabled by a particular reading of the trajectory of modern thought itself, of which I will now provide a brief (and lacking) summary.⁸

Throughout the last two centuries, transparency and the ontological descriptor it authorizes, historicity, has governed modern ontological accounts and provides the ethical basis for conceptions of justice. This ethical supremacy of transparency results from Hegel's (1977[1807]) notion of the Transcendental Subject (*spirit*) that consolidates modern representation. This resulted from an account of the trajectory of reason as the path of a self-producing/self-revealing sovereign which locates its 'ends' (goals, designs) in post-Enlightenment Europe where human beings have social configurations which actualize the principles reason authorizes, namely universality and self-determination. Besides consolidating the transparency thesis and *historicity* (interiority/temporality) as the privileged ontological horizon, Hegel's resolution of reason into freedom had two other crucial effects. First, it rewrites the subject as a desiring thing, one that emerges out of a movement of engulfment of extended (exterior/spatial) things, which now become but vanishing moments that will be resolved (reduced/sublated) as the subject moves towards transparency. Second, when it *places* post-Enlightenment European minds and social configurations safely in transparency, Hegel's statement enables, as Foucault (1994) argues, the writing of *man* as the sovereign subject and privileged object of knowledge; that is, his resolution both necessitated and enabled the formulation of scientific projects which attempted to capture how reason operates in the actual 'conditions of (human) existence'.

Elsewhere (Silva, forthcoming), I describe the manufacturing of the arsenal, the *analytics of raciality*, assembled by the sciences of *man* and society, which transform the human body and social configurations as products/effects of universal reason. I show how the assembling of this arsenal became possible when the writers of the Science of Life, George Cuvier's 'laws of conditions of existence' and Charles Darwin's principle of 'natural selection', delimited a whole sector of nature, i.e. the domain of living (self-producing and self-moving) things. With this, they introduced

another version of reason, namely productive reason, which combines Hegel's Transcendental (self-producing) Subject with the scientific version of reason as a regulative force of the universe. Put differently, the Science of Life enabled knowledge projects which addressed self-consciousness as phenomena, in the Kantian sense. These projects attribute the mind's unique abilities – thought, language, representation itself – to the exterior regulation, to how universal reason governs the mechanisms (organic structures and functions) necessary for the emergence, maintenance, bodily and social (re)production of human life. Following the lead of the Science of Life, the 19- and 20-century sciences of *man* and society would manufacture another ontological horizon, namely *globality* (exteriority/spatiality). When their arsenals addressed bodily and social configurations found across the surface of the globe, they produced these configurations as signifiers of how the tools of productive reason institute – as they produce and regulate – human (moral and intellectual) difference. Nevertheless, as they already presuppose Hegel's resolution, these knowledge projects always already assumed that post-Enlightenment Europe was securely *placed* in transparency.

Their leading tools, the concepts of the racial and the cultural, consistently reproduce these assumptions when they address the mind as a product and effect of outer-regulation. In the 19th-century, the racial would enable statements that write the difference between post-Enlightenment Europeans and their contemporaries as irreducible and unsublatable. Such accounts of human difference result from how the Science of Man's toolbox, through the examination of brain forms and functions and the theses of permanence of characters and hybridity, mapped bodily and social configurations seeking to reveal how exterior forces, i.e. 'the laws of conditions of existence', institute distinct kinds of human minds. In 20-century anthropology and sociology of race relations, the cultural would play this role. Here, however, the focus would be upon the variety of social configurations, the origins of which Franz Boas attributed to the 'laws of thought' and action and Radcliffe-Brown described as *expressions* of the basic structures of representation (Silva, forthcoming). When producing the global as a modern (scientific) signifying context, the racial and the cultural circumscribe the *places* of both (a) the transparent 'I', when they describe the privileged trajectory of the European 'I' (the subject); and (b) the affectable 'I', the 'others of Europe', whose (bodily and social) markers they write as the *cause* of their subaltern trajectories in modern social configuration. This is not a dismissal of the politics of difference. Not only do both, the racial and the cultural, *re/place* post-Enlightenment European minds and social configurations in transparency, as each finds that European bodily and mental configurations express the superior mental powers that enable the manufacturing of the principles of universality and self-determination, the ones that testify to the realization of the 'ends' of reason. When doing so, each also firmly *places* the 'others of Europe' in affectability,

as each describes their bodily and social configurations as expressions of a mind which is subjected not only to the exterior tools of universal reason but which, because of that, would not resist the force of the post-Enlightenment European civilizations.

The deployment of the productive tools of raciality reconfigures modern representation which, from the mid-19th-century on, would include two sets of productive (ontological) tools: historical and scientific (signifying) strategies and their respective rules of signification, namely interiority and exteriority. On the one hand, Hegel's resolution consolidates *historicity* as the privileged ontological context. Here the subject emerges as a fundamentally interior/temporal thing, as a self(inner)-determined thing – as Hegel postulates, as consciousness for-itself, *darstellen*. That is, the transparent (interior/temporal) thing which recognizes that all that exists outside of itself is always already a particular manifestation of its being, the one which postmodern writers said could not resist the force of subaltern speech. On the other hand, the tools of raciality delineate *globality*, the ontological context in which the subject emerges as an exterior/spatial thing. Here 'becoming' remains in the moment of actual (conditions of) existence, as the subject emerges in outer-determination – an affectable (exterior/spatial) thing. That is, it is an effect of both the productive force of universal reason and the relationships between the things its tools (the racial and the cultural) produce/regulate. Nevertheless, while both tools refigure exteriority, the cultural holds the advantage of also belonging to the historical arsenal – a peculiarity which, I think, explains why postmodern writers could so easily embrace its ontological role without attending to the epistemological presuppositions it inherits as a social scientific tool. That culture is also a historical signifier explains why it would sit comfortably in 1980s political statements – something the racial has never enjoyed. Nevertheless, because it is also a scientific signifier, the cultural conjures up a conception of irreducible and unsublatable difference, which cannot be immediately resolved in either liberal or historical-materialist social ontologies.

That has resulted, I think, in what St Louis and Ang in this volume name the 'predicament of cultural difference', which I interpret as its inability to bring about the kind of transformation those who celebrated its emancipation in the 1980s hoped it would. While it has prompted programs for the juridical and economic inclusion of the 'others' of the subject, namely people of color, postcolonials, women, and homosexuals, it could take us that far because the recognition of cultural difference also entails its addition to the list of ills to be resolved (reduced or sublated) if social/global justice is to be achieved. This, I claim, derives from the fact that much like its half-sister racial difference, cultural difference constitutes a mode of representing human difference whose primary productive effect has been to create a moral landscape in which the traditional signifiers of *man* –

Europeaness, whiteness, maleness, and (hetero)sexuality – monopolized the ethically privileged ontological descriptor – transparency – which is the attribute shared by self-consciousness and social configurations ruled by universal reason.

My reading of the fragment of racial subaltern speech deployed by the Afro-Brazilian cultural group, Bloco Olodum, describes an emancipatory text which does not seek to locate the emerging racial subject in transparency. Instead, it deploys the racial and the cultural to delimit a region of subjection (moment of consciousness in-itself) from which the subaltern subject represents (moment of consciousness for-itself) without resolving the signifiers, the ‘others’ that demarcate its particular (subaltern) position back into itself, as either an earlier manifestation (the moment of alienation), or final *actualization* of its ‘essence’. When in 1988 Olodum introduced to black Brazilians, in Salvador and elsewhere, a legion of African warriors, it produced a connection between subaltern regions which avoids the additive model by recuperating Africa to signify at once ‘race’ and ‘class’. When doing so, Olodum’s lyrics invite a critical analytical strategy – with its corresponding theoretical and methodological tools – which avoids the pitfalls of the logic of exclusion, the newest mechanism of racial subjection. For not only does the logic of exclusion sustain the view that the inclusion of black persons in the privileged moral region brings about global justice, it also enables appropriations of blackness and brownness to justify (by displacing denouncements of racism) political projects which subject the majority of the ‘others of Europe’ in the West and elsewhere to more subtle but nonetheless effective forms of total violence.

‘BAHIA OF ALL AFRICAS . . .’

Much has been written about the centrality of blackness and Africanity in writings of the Brazilian nation. For the most part, these critical accounts focus upon (physical and cultural) miscegenation when attempting to capture this country’s particular mode of racial subjection. In my own work, I have argued that, rather than marking a rejection (as the hegemonic writers of the nation advocated) or the denial (as their critics insist) of race (i.e. racial difference), miscegenation institutes a mode of racial subjection predicated upon the necessary obliteration of the racial subaltern subject. For as miscegenation is deployed as a historical signifier, one that captures the temporal trajectory of the Brazilian subject, it produces narratives that describe the process of the elimination of African and Indian bodily and mental traits as the national subject continues towards transparency, which is signified in whiteness and Europeaness (Silva, 2001a, 2002, forthcoming). Many social analysts have captured the economic effects, the

materializations, of this logic of obliteration by showing how it has sustained programmatic accounts of the Brazilian social configuration whose main effects have been the economic dispossession of black Brazilians (Hasenbalg, 1979; Hasenbalg and Silva, 1993; Rezende and Lima, 2004; Sheriff, 2001; among others). This coexistence of a celebration of miscegenation and socio-economic indicators of blacks' economic dispossession has puzzled students of racial politics in Brazil and, very recently, animated a very productive debate about epistemic violence. At the core of this, I find an indication of how the transparency thesis persists within post-modern critical analysis in the assumption that the racial subaltern emerges as a transparent 'I'. More importantly, this uncritical connection between experience and representation (as *darstellen*), presupposed in postmodern writings of the subject of cultural difference, has led to the argument that, with the exception of activists and intellectuals, black Brazilians lack racial consciousness both in-itself and for-itself.

In this reading of Olodum's lyrics, I indicate how their particular (re)appropriation of Africanity as a signifier of (black) cultural difference indicates the advantages of a critical analytical strategy which chooses *globality* as the privileged ontological context. On the one hand, it displaces the transparency thesis which informs postmodern writings of the subaltern. As such, it extends Spivak's critique of constructions of the subaltern as a speaking thing, which do not attend to earlier and contemporary political-economic and juridical determinants of this speech. Nevertheless, it assumes that the speech of the subject of cultural difference is always already an effect of scientific strategies, the productive weapons of modern representation, which institutes them as affectable 'I's. Both the cultural and the racial produce subjects of cultural difference as modern subjects whose destiny is to perish before the fundamentally powerful transparent 'I', the ones the tools of raciality locate in a particular *global-historical* corner, namely the (spatial/temporal) confines of post-Enlightenment Europe. On the other hand, my reading of Olodum's version of the black Brazilian subject also captures how the subaltern subject of raciality emerges in representation as consciousness in-itself (*vertreten*) but always already *before* – in an irreducible relationship – with similarly constructed 'others'. That is, my answer to Spivak's question 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' is 'Yes'. Only, however, because I am also convinced that the *analytics of raciality* manufactures the political text in which the racial/cultural (white/European) privileged subject (as a transparent 'I') and its affectable 'others' emerge as such, as subjects of outer-determination – here, as consciousness-in-itself, emerging *before* 'other' (racial/cultural) subjects, the privileged racial subject necessarily fails to actualize transparency.

My claim is that the anthropological formulation of culture, the one presupposed in accounts of the 'cultural turn' and the 'global turn',

institutes subjects *in* outer-determination, in *globality*, in a political relationship with 'other' subjects with whom it shares this context of emergence. For this reason, I argue, the pair multiculturalism and diversity could so easily become the main goal of the neoliberal agenda for global justice. What this accomplishes is 'officialization' of cultural difference, the human marker social scientific knowledge produces, the inclusion of which now becomes the ethical goal of projects of economic and juridical reconfiguration. Nevertheless, this officialization renders it possible to capture the effects of power precisely because multiculturalism and diversity are predicated upon the irreducibility of cultural difference – the presupposition enabling recent writings of the affectable (dangerous) subjects to whom the global justice agenda should not apply as 'evil'. Consequently, any critical account of these neoliberal political/symbolic strategies will have to begin with the acknowledgement that, because cultural difference refers to *globality* (exteriority/spatiality) as an ontological context, its mapping of its effects of power cannot ignore its subjects' material (bodily, social, global) conditions of emergence. In the following, I show how Olodum's deployment of Africa to write the black Brazilian subject, to recuperate Africanity from the historical waters of the Brazilian nation, places the subaltern subject of raciality in representation only because the available signifiers institute the subject always already in a relationship with that which it is not and yet is crucial for the determination of its 'being.'⁹

Pelô's Africa

When commenting on black cultural politics, Stuart Hall proposes a cultural politics 'which engages rather than suppresses difference' (1996: 446). While he does not engage in the de/constructive exercise that would re-signify difference itself, Hall suggests alternatives to much of the 1980s accounts of diasporic cultural politics, which attempted to keep the historical subject, the transparent 'I'. That is, while the politics of difference did get rid of the transcendental waters where it was born, it rewrote the black (historical) subject continuing on its spiritual journey towards transparency.¹⁰ In Olodum's 1988 lyrics, I find an appropriation of Africa which forfeits both the transcendental waters and the historical baby, namely consciousness for-itself. For it is precisely because black Brazilian cultural politics could not immediately appropriate Africa as a historical signifier, and because Africanity already establishes the historical (cultural) particularity of the Brazilian subject, the project of cultural politics had to do without transparency.¹¹ Hence the strategy here was the reverse. Instead of deploying an Africa which already encapsulates the black 'being', an already emancipated historical subject, consciousness for-itself – Olodum introduced in the Brazilian imagination an Africa of 'becoming', a signifier of existence by

privileging the struggles ensuing as an effect of the moment of consciousness in-itself, in which representation refers to the juridical and economic moments of subjection.

Though my goal with this exercise is to displace *historicity* as the site of emergence of political subjects, I will mention two bits of 'history' which will help situate Olodum's re-signification of Africanity. The first concerns the role of Bahia – more particularly, the capital city of Salvador – in hegemonic constructions of Brazil's national (historical) particularity. At the closing of the 19th-century, Brazilian anthropologists and social commentators, concerned with the reconfiguring of the country as a modern polity (a nation state), turned their eyes to that north-eastern state where European travelers found the most daunting expressions of the dangers, a large population of African descent and uncontrolled miscegenation held for post-slavery/post-colonial societies. Not only did the framers of the Brazilian nation find there a majority black population (according to the last census this is still the case: Bahia's population is 80 percent black and mixed-race), they also noted an African presence in religious rituals, cuisine, clothing, carnival groups, etc. At this moment this 'Africanization' of Bahia was met with the fear that it would, as the scientists of *man* had predicted, lead to moral and intellectual degeneration (Augel, 1980; Nina Rodrigues, 1900), a view locals echoed (Butler, 1998). A few decades later, when anthropologists once again turned their eyes to Salvador, they found 'residues' of African culture, specimens of an African *spirit*, which they argued responded to the Brazilian nation's particular version of European, modern culture (Silva, forthcoming). Precisely these fragments of Africanity, as myself and other analysts have noted, have been appropriated in the hegemonic version of the Brazilian nation – *racial democracy* – which describes the national subject as a transparent 'I', whose touches of Africanity and Indianess enabled his/her successful building of a 'modern civilization' in the tropics.

The second concerns the Olodum's trajectory and its placing in the festivities – carnivals – which many have described as a unique moment in which to appreciate the peculiarities of Brazilian culture. Most historical accounts of Brazilian carnival give a special place to the cities of Rio de Janeiro and Salvador. While in both the festivities involve the whole population but primarily the black population, social analysts differentiate them in terms of the nature of this participation. For instance, Risério argues that, 'Rather than being a spectacle for the public (like Rio de Janeiro's), the Bahian Carnival is a prodigious and frenetic festival experienced by all' (1993: 249). Though many may dispute this commentary, it is irrefutable that since the last decade of the 19th-century, black Bahian cultural groups have been major participants in this 'prodigious and frenetic' experience (Butler, 1998). This participation, however, has not been consistent. For most of the 20th-century, black carnival and religious groups have suffered from police

persecution, which many attribute to the desire to clean up Bahia's streets from unruly residues of Africanity (Butler, 1998). In the 1970s, however, carnival groups returned to the streets, a shift which has been named the re-Africanization of Bahia's carnival (Risério, 1993; Rodrigues, 1993). During this decade, Risério describes:

The so-called *afoxés* and *blocos afro* expanded. They were organizations comprising primarily of black-mestizo youth, using African names and including waves of people dressed in smocks and playing music to the sound of songs that referred to other black cultures, especially Yoruba tradition, which was transformed into a sort of central code of the symbolic manifestations of black African roots. (1993: 250)

The watershed event in this 'process of re-Africanization' was the founding of the exclusive dark-sinned blacks-only *bloco afro*, Ilê Aiyê, in 1974. Formed by Vovô – whose mother was a famous *canbomblé* leader, a recognized holder of the fragments of African 'essence' 1930s anthropologists identified in Salvador – in the economically dispossessed neighborhoods of Curuzu, Ilê Aiyê's explicit claim for racial (black) exclusivity was unprecedented and unimaginable. For Ilê Aiyê's agenda proposed a view of black consciousness informed by the US black power movement and the anti-colonial intellectuals from the Portuguese colonies in Africa. A few years after the founding of the Ilê, as the group was known throughout Brazil in the 1980s, the overwhelming black and economically dispossessed city of Salvador watched the creation of another *bloco afro*, Olodum, which, unlike Ilê Aiyê, welcomed whites, blacks, and mestizos. According to one of its founders, Rodrigues, Olodum 'was founded in 1979 by prostitutes, homosexuals, people associated with the *jogo do bixô*, (*animal lottery*) dope smokers, bohemian lawyers, and intellectuals' (1993: 47). Definitely, unlike the religious-based founders of Ilê, this crowd met in the regions of Pelourinho e Maciel. Salvador's poorest neighborhoods could not immediately claim an African 'essence' but they could claim something which its carnival lyrics consistently communicated. 'Olodum's work', Rodrigues describes, 'is a form of nonviolent guerrilla warfare. At all moments we are engaged in politics. (. . .) At all moments we are thinking about taking power in order to create the concrete conditions for us to share the wealth of a country' (1993: 48–9).

In the 1980s, Olodum's lyrics produced a political subject which, rejecting the prevailing articulations of Africanity, recuperated an Africa which had never before attracted the Brazilian imagination. Abandoning West Africa, where anthropologists have located the 'originals' of black Brazilian culture, these songs call upon Madagascar, Egypt, Abyssinia and Ethiopia, places which do not belong to Bahia's Africa and for this reason never circulated in writings of the Brazilian subject. In Olodum's songs, however, they become the sources of the African heritage that spreads in

the economically dispossessed sectors of Salvador, such as Pelourinho (Pelô) and Maciel.¹² For instance, a song about Madagascar, which stresses the fact that the island was colonized by black Africans and Arabs, claims that its peoples have their 'culture impressed' in a Salvador black neighborhood: 'Flourishing in Pelourinho the *Malgache* fruit, divine and colossal/ Which the Divine Olodum disseminates in Carnival.' The concept of the cultural cannot capture the collective memory this and other songs produce. For what they bring into representation are events in the trajectories of peoples who (successfully or not) resisted European colonization. Madagascar, Ethiopia, Egypt, and Abyssinia, and Pelourinho are, the lyrics proceed, 'culture which constitute a link of knowledges'. 'Knowledges', here, refer not to a shared 'essence' but the experience of the struggle to overcome oppression: 'Struggle and win mischief reality provides/In solidarity we advance our truth.'

Against the grain of much of 1980s cultural products, these songs tell a history of resistance, but not of cultural resistance, as it is appropriated in anthropological and Afrocentric writings of Africa. It privileges the struggle. The political subject emerging in these lyrics does speak, but the meanings it conveys, the signifiers that delimit its place of emergence, describe a political position, the place of affectability, inhabited by black Bahians and the 'other' African (racial/cultural) subjects who fought against colonialism and slavery. My point is: Olodum's lyrics introduce to Bahia another Africa, which is not that of *orixas* (the celebrated Yoruba divinities) but that of emperors and slaves, anti-colonial and other revolutionary struggles. Names of gods and pharaohs are recalled because 'Olodum comes to narrate to all universe the Egyptian kingdom and show its customs to this beloved people/Oh Pelourinho the Afro Olodum sings to its greater god and brings the streets the accomplishments of the pharaohs/Afro Olodum the like that unites all of us.' Who is this 'we'? While black, Olodum's 'us' lives in the dispossessed neighborhoods of Salvador:

The power of the trinity and Bahia Pelô Negro/. . . /Olodum's illogical royalty/
The hope of the Rastafarian nation Ayle Selassie/Make the Negro sovereign
emperor Adis Abeba ruled/. . . /Pelourinho evoking negritude's greatness to
rupture the system/Angels announcing the trumpets Olodum messenger is you.

Bahia Pelô Negro This trio does not recall Bahia of *canbomblês* and *afoxés*; this black Bahian lives in Pelourinho and Maciel; Pelourinho, whose cobblestones still today remind one of the blood of those tortured during slavery, and whose people's economic dispossession reveal that history has not come to an end.

People brought from Africa made the Pelourinho/They brought the first, the
second, and the third and there were so many heads/They spread the negro
throughout the world/Stop, stop, stop lying to us/Stop, stop, stop lying to us/. . . /

Pelourinho people always suffer, children crying/Suffering this people will
 always Olodum teaches struggles/Only your singing can Olodum end this fear/
 Show your weapons because it is necessary to fight/The lie will end/And the end
 of famine which destroys hope any day will happen.

Olodum's self-defined task is then to teach how to struggle. What is necessary to that effect? Struggle institutes a political subject as a people – as Hegel's and Marx's versions of self-consciousness describe, it emerges in the moment of recognition of its situatedness, in contention, before an 'other', an 'other' self-consciousness which it does not recognize as the same as itself. Unlike the subject described by the transparency thesis and by historical-materialist ontological account, the subject of raciality – as Fanon (1967) has reminded us – does not overcome this initial moment, the moment of exteriority. For the irreducible and unsublatable difference instituted by the productive tools of raciality, the racial and cultural difference indicate another ontological context, *globality*, where they always-already situate blackness and Africinity in subalternity. What I am suggesting is that, by deploying a struggle against oppression (juridical domination and economic dispossession/exploitation) to link Africa and Salvador, these links deploy blackness and Africinity as signifiers of shared material conditions of existence. Nevertheless, this link is possible not because these conditions of existence express or actualize a black or African *spirit* but because they result from a political *relationship*, a contention, experienced by both blacks in Pelourinho-Maciel and the African peoples the lyrics name. That is, the signifier they articulate necessarily institutes the subject that emerges in the moment of consciousness in-itself, in becoming, *before* another subject which does not need to be named to be recognized, as also a racial/cultural 'being'. In these lyrics, blackness signifies a subject in exteriority, inhabiting a social mark, a global (juridical and economic) region of subalternity, which Olodum delineates by linking black Bahians' economic dispossession to the struggles of African peoples who do not belong in the Brazilian symbolic universe. When doing so, it produces a memory determined by raciality, one which does not rehearse the transparent subject of historicity, but connects Pelourinho and Ethiopia by showing how these distant geographic places inhabit the same subaltern region.

Nevertheless, those who witnessed Olodum's performance of Africa in the late 1980s Carnival, knowledgeable as they were of cultural politics, would decode a different text. Olodum's performance of Africa is mediated by precisely the appropriations of Africinity it seeks to displace, as the combination of customs, dance, and beat is read with the prevailing meaning of Africinity circulating both in the Brazilian national and in 1980s black diasporic cultural politics. The Africa represented in lyrics refigures a subaltern position – economic subjection – never articulated in the hegemonic account of the Brazilian subject, and which until recently had but a minor place in black Brazilian emancipatory texts (Silva, 2001b). As such, it is

promising, as it requires a critical strategy which does not simply resolve to accomplish just another articulation of Africa as 'a spiritual' signifier. In the 1988 Bahia Carnival, Olodum occupied the streets with kings, queens, and revolutionary warriors, whose ability to represent black Brazilians derived not from their power to actualize a transparent (interior/temporal) black subject, one which preceded and survived colonialism and slavery. Instead, their productive force, their ability to bring economically dispossessed black Brazilians into representation derived from the fact that they emerged in contention. For it is precisely because they enter and remain in the scene of representation fighting against subjection that they constitute exterior/spatial signifiers; the subject they write emerges in exteriority. That such a reading is possible results from how Brazil's racial situation troubled the embrace of the centrality of African culture in the writing of Brazil's national particularity and the mode of racial subjection that ensued, rendering cultural politics a precarious emancipatory strategy. What I find in these lyrics, which I read as fragments of subaltern speech, is not self-consciousness, as the subject figured in historicity – i.e. consciousness in the moment of achieving self-determination, the transparent thing coming in representation. Instead, Olodum's lyrics institute a kind of subaltern self-consciousness, a black subject, which is necessarily situated, a spatial thing which inhabits a subaltern region it shares with all peoples who have engaged in political struggle against juridical and economic subjection.

BLACK LIBERTY

As it so happens, however, the very things that continuously change always manage to remain the same. Although the language in Article 9 of the 2001 WCARF Report is not even programmatic and the 2004 HD Report is very recent, they consolidate a shift of the last decade's rapid advance of multiculturalism and diversity to the center of the global political discourse which has affected racial politics everywhere.¹³ What interests me here is another consequence of this ascension which shows how these signifiers of cultural difference still retain the writing of the 'other of Europe' in affectability.

For almost 100 years, Lady Liberty greeted the hungry from Europe and elsewhere with the promise of streets paved with gold and a future which could not even be imagined before. Now, however, she promises to spread her wings across the surface of the earth; she no longer waits for seekers of freedom; she promises to bring it to them. As we learned last November, embodied in the person of the newly appointed US Secretary of State, Liberty now has a history – slavery and segregation – and, unlike her twin, Lady Justice, she is neither blind, deaf, or mute. Lady Liberty is now a black

female. Unlike the Cartesian subject, the only existing thing that knew her intimately, she is thoroughly social, always-already determined by something which lies outside of her, but without which she would not be able to be, to fulfill her calling to ensure that Freedom and Democracy remain the sole guides of social existence. Whether or not one was following the trajectory of the politics of difference, whether or not one was paying attention to the political purchase cultural difference had acquired in the early 1990s when it guided neoconservative claims of a cultural war that was once again redrawing the internal boundaries of the United States, the last three years have revealed to all of us its significance as we watch the redrawing of the cultural (moral) boundaries of the Free World. Beyond and before this new articulation of good and evil which relies on the assumption that cultural difference precedes political encounters, that there is something in culture that determines the possible places contending subjects will occupy, however, lies the question of how this line is made after all.

How and why could blackness as a signifier of cultural difference, a marker of departure from self-determination, as Fanon (1967) reminded us not even half a century ago, become a signifier of freedom? Contra President Bush's suggestion, I think that there is nothing intrinsic to blackness that warrants this mighty placing. Such appropriation is a lasting gift of the 19th-century, the one scientific reason ruled, when – as Foucault (1994) has showed us – the positive, the exterior, the existing, was finally resolved as a dimension of the sovereign, both a historical and transcendental thing, a knowing subject. My point is that blackness could only become a signifier of the foremost western principle because from its initial articulation as a scientific signifier it has always been a refiguring of the cultural. Of course, as we all know, in its initial articulation in post-Enlightenment texts, blackness signified something, an 'other of the west.' Yet, precisely because it captured an 'other' way of being and existing as human beings, it can now play the role of a signifier of westernness. That is, it is because it is a signifier of cultural difference that blackness can mark the difference between 'freedom-loving' Christian westerners and 'freedom-hating' Islamic Arabs and Africans as cultural. This is a role it plays quite successfully because, when a member of a racial subaltern group advances policies that harm members of its own or of another racial subaltern collectivity, it cannot be immediately named an instance of racial injustice because it escapes the logic of exclusion. As the appointed US Secretary of State's blackness cancels out the additive model – she is a woman (gender) who is a granddaughter of a sharecropper, as George Bush highlighted in his appointment speech – it reinstates transparency which now is a monopoly of white and non-white subjects of freedom.

My point is that this new role of blackness cannot be immediately captured if one focuses upon its trajectory as a political signifier of (a marker of a subaltern *place*) in the US social configuration. For it is only

recently, since the late 1960s, after the victories of the civil rights movement, that it made its way into the political discourse as a marker of distinct socio-historical trajectories. As we began to enjoy these recent accomplishments, the 1990s neoliberal/neoconservative talk about 'cultural wars', and the policies and legislation it sustained, marked the consolidation of the cultural as a signifier of human difference. Then, already it was evident that the hegemony of culture inaugurated the deployment of new mechanisms of racial subjection. While there are many instances of its dramatic consequences, it is not too early for us to engage in the critical task which will provide the necessary strategies for the writing of emancipatory projects which will more adequately prevent the cultural from repeating – on a scale even larger than lynching and the holocaust – the racial's most horrendous political works.

Notes

- 1 When commenting on this new reconfiguring of the political, Lisa Lowe (1996), for instance, describes culture as 'the medium of the *present* [and] the site that mediates the *past*, through which history is grasped as difference, as fragments, shocks, and flashes of disjunction' (p. 6, italics in original).
- 2 The library stacks dedicated to cultural politics – which include most if not all cultural studies titles – already hold an absurd number of titles and will continue to grow. At the same time, both rejections and attempts to reframe the concept also deserve a category of their own. Many of these titles are referenced in this article but I will not comment on them individually. Among them, Said's (1978) ground-breaking text, as well as Appadurai (1990), Gilroy (1987), Lowe (1996), along with Stuart Hall's work and the body of work produced by those working on British Studies, constitute the best specimen of the cultural politics scholarship.
- 3 For a critique of identity politics see Lipsitz (1998), and for a recent critical appropriation of the idea of cultural resistance see Viesca (2000)
- 4 I have excluded sexuality from the list because it has yet to achieve the degree of 'officiality' enjoyed by the other four concepts.
- 5 Most accounts of the nation, which is consolidated as a political principle in the late 19th-century, such as Herder (2002), Renan (1994), Anderson (1983), Hobsbawn (1994), Gellner (1983), Bhabha (1994), Chatterjee (1993), Chakrabarty (2000), among others, stress its refiguring of a collective unity at the level of the symbolic, which is expressed in language, religion, and cultural products.
- 6 The most cited ones are Lyotard's (1984), Jameson's (1991), and Vattimo's (1992).
- 7 Parekh (2000) offers an attempt to reformulate multiculturalism without the pitfalls of liberalism and difference.
- 8 For an expanded version of this argument, see Silva (2001b).
- 9 Partly agreeing with Gilroy's (1993a) claim that black culture is an integral part of the discourse of modernity, I part company with him in that I believe that

what has been defined as peculiar to black culture is but a product of the historical and scientific strategies that compose the modern text.

- 10 Hall's proposal is in contrast with what Gilroy (1993b) calls the ethno-absolutist, exemplified in texts such as Asante (1987) and Collins (1990).
- 11 See Silva (1998), (2001a), and (2002) for analyses of appropriations of Africa in hegemonic versions of the Brazilian nation, which has been an integral part of what Mudimbe (1988) terms the 'invention of Africa'.
- 12 For an account of how the racial maps the city of Salvador and of the dire situation of economic dispossession facing the majority of its black inhabitants who make up 80 percent of the city population see Perry (2004).
- 13 For instance, in Brazil, both Fernando Cardoso's and Luiz Lula da Silva's administrations dramatically departed from previous governments' response to black Brazilian demands, which created institutions dedicated to the protection and promotion of Afro-Brazilian cultural practices. From 1995 onwards, however, there has been a shift in legal and policy responses to racial exclusion, something unthinkable under the construction of Brazil as a 'racial democracy'.

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