

Infamous biographemes – traces of teaching lives^{1 2 3 4}

Biografemas infames – rastros de vidas docentes

Biografías infames – huellas de vidas docentes

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Abstract

This article presents a research with teachers from public schools in the Southeastern region of Brazil, having teaching as object of analysis. Thus, it aimed to think about ways of doing education based on the biographematic method, inspired by Roland Barthes' formulation on biographemes. The online interviews were conducted and the resulting reports indicate the relevance of narrating stories, putting them in dialogue to rethink teaching practices. The act of narrating favors the act of thinking and, by exercising thought, forces the experience of recreating oneself, repositioning teachers in their practices and thus enabling the invention of other ways of being a teacher.

Keywords: Educational politics, Teaching work, Biographemes

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Resumo

Este artigo apresenta uma pesquisa com docentes de redes públicas de ensino da Região Sudeste do Brasil, tendo a docência como objeto de análise. Dessa forma, objetivou-se pensar modos de fazer educação por meio do método biografemático, inspirado na formulação de Roland Barthes sobre biografemas. Foram realizadas entrevistas remotas e os relatos indicam a relevância de narrar histórias, colocando-as em diálogo para repensar práticas docentes. O ato de narrar favorece o ato de pensar e, ao exercitar o pensamento, força a experiência a se recriar, reposicionando os docentes em suas práticas e possibilitando, assim, a invenção de outros modos de ser docente.

Palavras-chave: Política educacional, Trabalho docente, Biografemas

Resumen

El artículo presenta una investigación con profesores de escuelas públicas de la región sureste de Brasil. Se basaba en la enseñanza. El objetivo fue pensar formas de hacer educación a partir del método biografemático, inspirado en la formulación de Roland Barthes sobre los biografemas. Las entrevistas se realizaron en línea. Los informes resultantes indican la pertinencia de narrar historias, poniéndolas en diálogo para repensar las prácticas docentes. El acto de narrar favorece el acto de pensar y, al ejercitar el pensamiento, obliga a recrear la experiencia, reposicionando a los docentes en sus prácticas y posibilitando así la invención de otras formas de ser docente.

Palabras clave: Política educativa, Trabajo docente, Biografemas

How do things start?

Things are not always already given; they do not happen in advance but through something unusual, a surprise that is updated over some time. The present surprises us whenever it arrives because it escapes us and does not wait for us. It slips, runs away, is untimely. Unpredictability is its destiny. Researching the present was the challenge. Paths were woven, assuming a research stance as a reminder of what we never knew (Rosa, 1993), on the lookout for events. The objective was to draw biographemes (Barthes, 1984, 2003, 2005; Costa, 2021) of the lives of teachers from public schools in Southeastern Brazil. We seek to give visibility to the pedagogical-philosophical gesture (Ramírez, 2009) updated by teachers, which is expressed more in the way of working and less in the result of the work, which privileges less the transmission of knowledge and more the way of doing, investigating, thinking about the exercises one does on oneself (Foucault, 2007). The teaching activity would be meaningless if we did not give it a visible and/or audible statement, an accounting of what is being done

(Foucault, 2000). This is the gesture that constitutes public education, a public education network: publicizing what is known and what a teacher is researching.

We aimed to weave into words experiences, pedagogical-philosophical-public gestures, and intertwined lines drawn along the way, following the incessant and uninterrupted research process. A game was played along an always unexpected path, woven into the conversation, triggering a knowledge that is unknown, as it is not before the very gesture of researching. Research that overflows. It is not possible to contain it in *a priori* ways. How does it start? Does it have a beginning?

Here, an experience will be exposed based on a modest diligence that is “to shift ground, to abjure, if necessary” (Barthes, 2013, p. 28).

The method? It comes as a procedure without aiming to produce decryptions or present definitive and unquestionable results. It seeks to discard established discourses, and it is fair to say that it is also fiction. We aim to sustain a discourse that avoids the traps of fascist strategies that do not prohibit but encourage us to speak (Barthes, 2013). A language is defined less by what it allows or prohibits and more by what it forces people to say. Every word is a watchword (Deleuze & Guattari, 1996). However, it is possible, perhaps, to deceive the language and combine knowledge with a particular flavor, forging freedom and discourse outside of power and its relations. Research as a writing practice starts from a type of semiology that aims to indicate usual ways of enunciating reality. The goal was to get closer to an embroidery of non-imposing correlations that weave education today. A “game with signs,” moving around, being where one is not expected, abjuring, and avoiding the language usage by power, transforming signs into common sense (Barthes, 2013). The methodological undertaking thus assumed that data production did not occur in a neutral and disinterested way, as a collection of pure and solid, fixed data, but rather as elements that disappear. A method that tries to get away from the

nonsense (Deleuze, 1987) that hinders connections, drifts, and the creation of other ways of life. The option was for a deviant method (Gagnebin, 2006a), unrelated to any previous school or model. Instead, it is laborious work on a self that is other and does not fear deviations, does not fear wandering. Research projects are utopian sketches of the course of a problem so that time is not reduced to its *chronos* dimension – linear time that induces a mistaken idea of causality – but also embraces *aión*, creation of novelty and, “above all, ‘kairós,’ opportune time, of the occasion that is taken or left, of the unforeseen and the decisive” (Gagnebin, 2006a, p. 1). When something happens along the investigative path, it can suddenly be a real issue, so it is worth taking the time, stopping, giving a break, describing the impasse, and realizing that something is beginning to be gestated. We do not know what to name it. Research that is not afraid of wasting time does not gain time either (Gagnebin, 2006a, p. 1).

Research in transformation, in a frankly impersonal dimension, creates a changing experience, with deviations; forges narrative strategies whose objective is not subjection but trickery with language: “This salutary trickery, this evasion, this grand imposture which allows us to understand speech outside the bounds of power, in the splendor of a permanent revolution of language” (Barthes, 2013, p. 27).

Research-experience, like an uncertain, dangerous journey, does not intend to faithfully match what happened: “And truly it little matters what I say, this or that or any other thing. Saying is inventing” (Beckett, 2014, p. 113). Experience travels, crosses a region during a trip, is a mode of relationship that opens up to the common dimension. Narration is how the transmission of this experience is effective. The purpose was to avoid considering the experience of the teachers who participated in the process as limited to the private dimension, which could lead to a closure on this particular (Gagnebin, 2006b). In the latter case, the narration begins to be enunciated through possessive pronouns: “your ineffable experiences, your feelings, your women, your children, your house, and your personal objects” (Benjamin, 1983, p. 51). We privilege a type of narration “like a picker of crumbs, a ragpicker, a garbage collector who picks up the pieces, not to transmit any totality, but only the fragments collected during their brief existence (Gagnebin, 2006b, p. 53).

“In fact, experience is a matter of tradition, in collective existence as well as private life. It is less the product of facts firmly anchored in memory than of a convergence in memory of accumulated and frequently unconscious data” (Benjamin, 2000, p. 103).

Experiences are transformative (Foucault, 1987); they are “how . . . human beings have become the sort of subjects” (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1995, pp. 231-232) and focus on modes of subjectivation, ethics, modes of governmentality, in addition to expressing a web of discourses and practices through which gives shape to who we are. We pay attention to concrete conditions that favor the formation of a unique mode of historical experience of a particular subjectivity. Research that started from concrete situations, from ethical-political experiences of a becoming-another

. . . at once close to us, and different from our present existence, it is the border of time that surrounds our presence, which overhangs it, and which indicates it in its otherness; it is that which, outside ourselves, delimits us... it now bursts open the other, and the outside (Foucault, 1987, pp. 150-151).

“Every time I have tried to do a piece of theoretical work, it has been on the basis of *experience* . . . I saw unfolding around me. It was always because I thought I identified the cracks, silent tremors, and dysfunctions in things I saw, institutions I was dealing with, or my relations with others, that I set out to do a piece of work – a fragment of *autobiography*” (Foucault, 1994, p. 82).

The (hardly) beginnings of research: true uncertainty

The work project emerged from a problematic field that had as its backdrop the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 in Brazil. With physical distancing practices in place, classes were canceled at both universities and elementary schools. Numerous online meetings emerged to continue the task of managing educational work. A period of uncertainty and indeterminacy began, and we lived through the pandemic – a word whose Greek etymology refers to “that

which is placed upon the people” (Amador & Barros,2020). This situation was just one of the many scenarios of contemporary problems regarding teaching work since we are experiencing disinvestment in public education in different dimensions. Thinking about the effects of the pandemic on the worlds of work in education has emerged as an essential problematic field.

How do things start?

Roland Barthes’ work (1977, 1984, 1998, 2003, 2005) on biographemes encouraged us to provoke educators to narrate their experiences as an intervention strategy in the dystopian present, as writing-narrating-reading produces other ways of living. Barthes forges the expression biographeme as a subject’s details, tastes, and inflections and focuses on the mobility of living outside any destination, which could infect some future body. In this sense, the biographeme is a concept that aims to express empty spaces, “a bumpy life . . . like an old-fashioned film, in which there are no words and whose flow of images is interrupted, like sobs, by the writing of the intertitle, the unbridled irruption of another signifier” (Barthes, 2005, p. 17). Biographeme takes something from the life of the person being biographed, transforming it into a sign. It does not represent something from a given framework of possibilities (Deleuze & Parnet, 2004). However, it concerns percepts and affects – a creative factory expressing encounters that constitute a life. A biographematic research (Barthes, 1984) engenders a fragmentary perspective of the subject and seeks to find key-life elements that go beyond the subject’s life. This research aimed to explore the biographical traits of education professionals that could enchant us like a beautiful photograph. Biographemes, taken as fragments, illuminate details and are writing centered not on the self or the other but on a life (Deleuze, 2002).

The act of narrating favors the act of thinking and, by exercising thought, forces one to think about what is created during the experience. Biography sometimes aims to be a faithful expression of life, which we consider an impossible and, above all, undesirable process. Biographical material, processed in the act of narrating, becomes something else when it simply seeks to express what has been experienced in a movement of self-invention that becomes something else. It launches subjects into multiple interferences, and they move, reposition

themselves, and constitute themselves as creators, fablers of reality. Biographeming was a strategy to think about the lives of teachers open to the possibility of creating what is said and what is lived. Saying is inventing. Invent other ways of being a teacher.

Female teachers from a public elementary school network and a university professor were invited to participate in the process, launched by reading articles on biographemes (Costa, 2021), followed by a debate on the methodological proposal.

Scheduled meetings, the idea was to compose biographemes through online conversations and exchanging letters.

The one who writes letters, signs, and leaves, in an active disappearance that is also the desire to share a secret of what is most personal to them – what there is is a sealed paper that, through enigma, is launched for reading and invites response. This does not necessarily mean an ode to intimacy, nor the obligation of confession, but the affirmation of writing as inappropriate (Fenati, 2012, p. 32).

The destiny of the letters is to leave and, in addressing them, escape the limits of oneself and differ concerning the other. In this game, we have a decisive double indeterminacy: erasure of the origin and uncertainty of the destination.

Many points in the stories met: experience with racism, machismo, loneliness, and sadness, but also joy and strength to face a perverse daily life. Searching for answers for each life was not attractive, much less looking for packages that promised salvation. The idea was “to produce lives in the life that was and that, when looked at beyond mere sensory vision, becomes present because it encourages us to talk about ourselves” (Fonseca & Costa, 2010, p. 14).

Let us talk about Dressa, NegraHelô, and Carlos. Talk to them. Infamous (Foucault, 2003) of our times?

Writing with lives that are not ours, not out of obligation or order, but out of a desire, is the clue that the biographematic method offers us. It is, above all, research into what influences life, makes it proliferate, and invests in what it ends up being attracted to. The writing of the result of the research occurred in the form of fragments, and thus, the biographematic also became biofragmentic. The chosen order did not comply with any *a priori* requirement. It could be another. There could be several. What inspired us were the lives they told us.

Fragments carry the discomfort of incompleteness and can generate discomfort (Preciosa, 2010). Fragmented thoughts do not ensure an evident exposition of a specific methodological path. “A fragmented text, in pieces, insists on meeting what is episodic, discontinuous, dissipatory, effervescent, almost formless” (Preciosa, 2010, p. 23), which may frustrate some. “However, if accepted, the fragment could surprise us. . . . In it, enthusiasm prevails for the aggregates of meaning that emerge due to the urgency of existing” (Preciosa, 2010, p. 23). Biofragmentic text, a bet.

Dressa

Surface, Drifts, Borders

Listening to life stories stripped of (pre)conceptions, not seeking balance and rationality, nor coherence, getting rid of the aseptic white coat in us, and depriving ourselves of desires for truth or completeness is not always easy. However, that was the gamble.

Among five brothers, Dressa was the only one with “a different skin color,” dark skin, and they always showed this difference in games: *steel wool hair, little Black girl found in the trash, little Black girl*. Dressa describes a feeling of unrest regarding these comments. However, why did this upset her? “*I internalized the image that to be ‘beautiful’ and accepted by my brothers, I needed to straighten mine, as I understood that my hair was not as beautiful as what you see in magazines or on the shelves of cosmetics stores.*” The family insisted: “*Why don’t you straighten your hair? Tie up your hair because it’s very voluminous; I know good products that can improve that. I felt ‘inferior’; I was ashamed of my hair and skin. I*

cried and asked myself: Why was I born like this? What did I do to deserve this punishment?" (Account by Dressa). "Punishment" experienced in silence, in the solitude of shame. I had no language to name this situation; only later did I begin to name it RACISM.

Dressa, bright eyes, haughty posture. Hair curled, tied high on the head. *"Thank you for this invitation! It makes all the difference to have someone who can listen to my story,"* she says firmly.

Born in Minas Gerais, 34 years old, daughter of a *single mother*, domestic worker, life marked by poverty. She juggled to face everyday challenges. *"We live in a society marked by inequality... my mother suffered the hardships of being a woman in a chauvinist, sexist, exclusionary, and racist society"* (Account by Dressa). Life in a peripheral neighborhood, public school student. *"I encountered, along the way, all the difficulties of a Black girl, inserted in an environment of extreme social inequality* (Account by Dressa)." A solo mother, like a tightrope walker, danced on a tightrope, and at every step of that line, she could get hurt, but hope is a tightrope walker; hope dances on a tightrope and knows that the show must go on (Blanc & Bosco, 1979)⁵.

Today, Dressa, unlike her mother, is poised not to face an institutionalized civic-military dictatorship but contemporary fascism, which has expressed itself in different forms of racism and misogyny. Facets, just a few, of fascism that is multiplying in geometric proportions in the Brazilian social fabric: the ox, the bible, and the bullet blocs in the two legislative houses, fundamental indicators of the resumption – or constancy – of fascism among us (Ferreira et al., 2022), in addition to the head of government. Fascism marked, yes, by a State with totalitarian pretensions, but mainly as a daily and impersonal flow of modes of existence. Micropolitical fascism "inseparable from molecular foci, which swarm and jump from one point to another, in interactional" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1996, p. 92). Fascism is therefore also done as microfascism.

⁵ The *Bêbado e a Equilibrista* is a song composed by João Bosco and Aldir Blanc, performed by Elis Regina on the LP *Essa Mulher* from 1979. It became an informal anthem of the amnesty and decline of the civic-military dictatorship period.

Kilomba points out: “A Black woman says she is a Black woman. A white woman says she is a woman. A white man says he is a person.” (Mostra Internacional de Teatro de São Paulo, 2016).

At 13, she also worked as a domestic worker, caring for a lady’s house. [...] I came to think I was in a job analogous to slavery – the Black girl, the slave girl, the girl exploited by racism and capitalism. Joana jumps on her lap in the middle of the conversation. Who is this, mommy?

Her mother encouraged her to study. “*You are beautiful, daughter!!! Don’t straighten your hair.*” Dressa weaves a trajectory. Public university. . . . a new challenge. There were many obstacles. However, . . . “*a source of pride for my mother: her Black daughter was now a university student*” (Account by Dressa).

At university, she participated in affirmative action policies. Being part of these groups enabled a subjective repositioning: pride in being Black. Career at the university marked by *cultural studies in a multidisciplinary manner*. Racism? Shame? Punishment? The creation of other worlds begins: I began to see myself as *BLACK*. No longer straightened hair – *a revolutionary gesture*, she says. How to become Black? You are not born a Black woman; you become one – an essential inflection in Beauvoir’s words.

When Joana falls asleep, she tries to complete the readings proposed at the university. She soon falls asleep, too. Tired body. She dreams of female and male teachers. She dreams that her dreams would fit into a world she insistently creates. Her dreams drive her. In dreams, we can constantly change place and angle.

Raises her voice. A place for us, Black women, is not defined exclusively within the scope of Law. Dressa narrates her own stories not as *othernesses* of the universal but as a participant in a multiversal humanity. Her motherly wisdom enchants her. Her eyes shine, and her voice changes whenever she talks about her. The mother's wisdom emerges from the conjunction of yesterday, today, and the future. Dressa's narrative brings together (re)existence and hope.

Between dialogued meetings – popular knowledge and practices and academia – it affirms and enhances *sociocultural aspects of popular communities*. A function is born: to form and transform young lives, *especially mine* – she says with an open smile. Immersion in the formative-inventive processes of teachers, training of young people from peripheral communities and, mainly, their (formation) or action, becoming another: becoming a woman, becoming Black. Traces paths; obstacles are not impediments but propulsive factors. A tightrope walker like her mother, she knows the show must go on.

My daughter's voice/travels through all our voices/collects within itself/the silent voices/choked in our throats. My daughter's voice/collects within itself/the speech and the act. Yesterday – today – now. In my daughter's voice/the resonance/echo of life-freedom will be heard (Evaristo, 2020b).

Mother's death: My world fell apart. Loneliness. Helplessness. However, my mother's teachings have always resonated with me. It was necessary to return to the place that transformed me, brought me concerns, and brought me more questions than answers: primary education. The place that changed my way of looking at the world – a place of significant transformations.

Master's degree completed. The search for debate and reflection continued, especially concerning education processes involving subjects who experience poverty or extreme poverty. I understood my reality – a peripheral Black woman who has experienced racism and machismo throughout her life. Working in primary education was a laboratory for this Black teacher –

school is an environment that has always moved me. In this environment, she found herself with questions about teacher training, relationships with social movements, and overcoming inequalities.

She says that the school environment is contaminated by machismo, veiled or even overt sexism, constituting a secret and silent code that shapes and discriminates the role of a woman/teacher.

Today, she is a teacher at a municipal school system and a doctoral student in the Postgraduate Program in Education at a Public University. Gestures to become a woman, teacher, Black woman, mother, and student. How do things start?

Dressa now reads a lot. It is challenging to read, study and work, be a mother, and study and work, but she insists. Today, she understands *there is no reason to be ashamed of her hair or skin color*. Mother's wisdom is an essential inspiration. Is giving advice becoming extinct in our society, as Benjamin told us? Are we no longer willing to listen and advise others? "The advice woven into the living substance of existence has a name: wisdom" (Benjamin, 1983, p. 45).

"Knowledge from far away finds fewer listeners today than information about nearby events. Knowledge, which came from far away – from the spatial distance of strange lands, or the temporal distance contained in tradition – had an authority that was valid even if it was not controllable by experience. . . . If the art of narrative is rare today, the dissemination of information is decisively responsible for this decline" (Benjamin, 1983, p. 56).

Dressa's eyes gain another sparkle throughout the conversation. The sad and shy eyes of the first moments seem to gain color with the possibility of telling her story. Joana, her daughter, appears on the computer screen once again. She jumps on her lap. "*Who is this woman, Mommy?*" Dressa responds: "*A teacher.*" Joana is surprised: "*Do you still have a teacher? What does she teach you? Button game.*" Teachers and students. Unsymmetrical relationship? Is a teacher's speech more authorized, original, and final? The threat of oppression? No, an invitation to the game. Button game (Perrone-Moisés, 2013). Students return the button that teachers once

placed in their hands. Furthermore, in this game, the button is never the same, but “another turn of the spiral” (Perrone-Moisés, 2013).

We asked Dressa how she has been doing her work as a teacher during the pandemic:

During the pandemic, life changed, especially when it comes to work. It was necessary to adapt to a new reality: remote teaching, and its tools.

They were the worst moments of my life. . . . Fears permeated my thoughts: fear of dying, of not seeing my daughter grow up, of losing loved ones, losing my job always haunted me at a time of so much uncertainty in the country. Time of financial instability. Trying to stay strong.

At home, I was terrified. We had to show the students that everything was ok! I couldn't show this fear to the students!

My home became my new workspace. It was necessary to rearrange the spaces. My daughter started sleeping in my room, and hers became my workspace. She didn't understand; she knocked insistently on the door. Breastfeeding season, and I couldn't give her the necessary attention. My house was no longer my home; it was my work (Account by Dressa).

If one asked my opinion, I would say that the opium of the people is work (Quintana, 2003).

The meetings multiplied: morning, afternoon, and night. We no longer had specific working hours. Participating in more than 25 WhatsApp group chats! Every cell phone ring gave me goosebumps: another task! Another requirement from parents! Another requirement from school coordinators.

I worked at a private school at the first moment of the pandemic. Recorded classes, parents monitoring what we said, frightening control over our political positions. Constant ideological vigilance! People, parents, and coordinators entered the classes, making interventions on what I was addressing. Anxiety, therapy, and medication became part of my

daily life. Permanent feeling of fear. We are monitored on all our social networks. Misogyny was getting worse – I was the only history teacher. Sexist and disqualifying speeches multiplied. I lost two colleagues to COVID.

Furthermore, she continued working, watched, tense, and scared; her daughter knocked on the door.

In the second year of the pandemic, I joined the group of teachers in the municipal education network. Other challenges, other experiences, other demands. I face adversities in public education in this country, the intolerable. Misery, countless families in vulnerable situations, domestic violence, drug use, teenage pregnancy. . .

How to tolerate the intolerable? Furthermore, most importantly, HOW TO DISOBEY?

NegraHelô

Noises, Arrows, Cat's Cradle

We asked Helô how this name came about: NEGRAHELÔ.

It's my social name, my stage name. I was the one who created it.

[...] process of reaffirming my identity, ethnicity, and resistance processes, these struggles conquered and learned from my Black ancestors (Account by NegraHelô).

The cat's cradle game or string game is a game that consists of one participant passing the string or cord between the other's fingers, alternating the figures formed in a procedural practice of becoming-with. By pulling threads, one tries to follow their paths, trace them, and find their tangles and patterns to continue with the problem at particular times and places. A kind of crawl, following a thread, becomes an adventure. The figure of the threads is not traced, but rather the thing in question, the pattern and assembly that demands a response; one must continue, make figures of strings, pass and receive, do and undo, pick up strings, and let them go (Haraway, 1993). NegraHelô's life like a cat's cradle.

The importance of BEING, of existing without any restrictions and becoming a woman, becoming a teacher as she narrates herself. The political function of language, “each word we use defines the place of an identity” (Kilomba, 2020, p. 14). Language creates, fixates, and perpetuates power relations.

The language is neither reactionary nor progressive; it is simply fascist because fascism is not about preventing people from saying things; it’s about forcing them to say things. As soon as it is uttered, even in the subject’s most profound intimacy, the language enters the service of a power (Barthes, 2013, p. 7).

Would freedom in language be impossible? One way to resort to freedom is to cheat with the language. “This salutary deception, this evasion, this magnificent deception that allows language to be heard outside of power, in the splendor of a permanent revolution of language... to emerge from the language and fight it within: this is the path to deception” (Barthes, 2013, p. 17). Displacing words, blurring signifiers and meanings, unleveling enunciation, marginalizing institutional discourse, and subjecting language rules to brief and constant earthquakes (Perrone-Moisés, 2013). This is a strategy of doing a disservice to a power. Within servile language, invent a heteronyms of things.

NegraHelô talks about colonialism, the basis of inequalities, and various types of violence practiced against the Black population. As stated by Kilomba (2020), in the narrative of official Brazilian history, the invisibility of the Black population, especially Black women, prevails. Now, as a doctoral candidate, NegraHelô studies epistemologies that use new theoretical perspectives and invites us to deconstruct. She questions the imposing silence and violent racism experienced today. “*Academic discourse legitimizes a capitalist society and the white, Eurocentric epistemological model. The university needs to emanate an affirmation of difference, but, on the contrary, it has become a stage for violent racism*” (Account by NegraHelô).

NegraHelô seeks to transform the margin, the infamy, into a space for creation and (re)existence. Throughout the conversation, she explains a quest to break racism in educational

practices and with the oppression of Black women, crossing categories such as gender, race, and class through intersectional and decolonial feminism. The first oppression is race, says Helô. Therefore, you cannot talk about gender without talking about race when you want to combat racism. She concludes that Black women have more difficulty accessing fundamental rights and citizenship-affirming policies. “Can the subaltern speak?” Almost a rhetorical question. “the subaltern cannot speak” (Spivak, 2010, p. 126). A “poor and Black” woman meets all the requirements that give her the condition of subalternity: poverty, gender, and color. This condition causes Black women to remain in the demarcated place. A peripheral place. How to free yourself from the subordinate position that women occupy? The silencing of Black women in the epistemic field and its interface with Eurocentric academic thought moves Helô, today as a doctoral candidate at a public university.

The academy is neither a neutral space nor simply a space of knowledge and wisdom, science and erudition; it is also a space of violence (Kilomba, 2020, p. 51).

NegraHelô understands racism from a critical and decolonial perspective, with a view to creating practices that can contribute to the anti-racist fight. She calls herself a militant. But aren't all female teachers activists? – we tease. *Not all of them are*, she says. “*Sermilitante é se engajar em movimentos organizados de luta que resistem a esse cenário necropolítico. Vivo intensamente o feminismo negro. Sou ativista antirracista em cada gesto no cotidiano: na escola, na sede da Secretaria de Educação, no doutorado*” (Account by NegraHelô).

The night will never fall asleep in the eyes of females because from our woman-blood and remembrance liquid, an invisible and tonic thread flows in each drop, patiently sewing the network of our ancient resistance (Evaristo, 2020a).

“No one is born a woman; becomes a woman” (Beauvoir, 1980). No one is born Black, no one is born a militant, no one is born a feminist, no one is born a teacher. Beauvoir's statement mistakes a feminine way of living; it resonates disruptively. It breaks with essentialisms

between the sexes, denaturalizes the feminine model, and does not bend under the dictates of bourgeois and capitalist ways of living. No one is given *a priori*; there are only actions. NegraHelô, teacher, inventor.

NegraHelô cat's cradle. Any attempt at absolute arrangement does not entirely frame NegraHelô. Rotates. Dribbles. Folds. Shuffles the meanings placed. Opens political positions. "Yes, life is a woman" (Nietzsche, 1882/2012).

Do you seek to guarantee political rights? – we asked provocatively. "*No!!!! I want to open paths, a life not framed by naturalisms.*" Her face breaks into a wide smile. Spread out on the armchair. "*My struggles, like those of other peers, seek to be configured as provisional ways of doing things in education. Furthermore, because temporary conditions mark them, they are highly dangerous and fruitful, because living is dangerous,*" as Guimarães Rosa said" (Account by NegraHelô).

Helô says fighting for an existence not measured by hegemonic standards is challenging. The hard forms engendered also constitute existence, serving us in combat. However, sometimes, they insist on surviving in us beyond their uses in the fight for a defensible life worthy of being lived by all. The feminine thinks outside reproductive prerogatives. Unconforming the feminine, unconforming the training of female teaching workers to the prevailing models. After all, the difference is repeated; change is the only constancy that exists. (Deleuze & Parnet, 2004).

Becoming a working-teaching woman who never stops enrolling. The man, the woman, the teacher, or any other essentialities or substantialized interiorities do not serve us in the project of affirming the explosive dimension of living. So, an exercise, a becoming, refers to the multiplicity of affections and circulation of desires outside the systems of binary oppositions. It is not, therefore, a war between genders (Rolnik, 1996). This is not to disregard the importance of confronting discrimination and necropolitical acts occurring today. However, struggles do

not need to imply confinement to an identity, keeping such characters in a place that reinforces identity modes of subjectivation.

Freudian thought found itself challenged in its understanding of women. The ways of being a woman carry creative forces that do not fit into conceptual, academic, or scientific frameworks. In facing an over-coded feminine, we have forces that destabilize identities! Becoming can only be feminine (Deleuze & Guattari, 1996). Becoming as lines that escape through the fissures of a *socius* orchestrated by a way of being man. The becoming-woman slips and avoids the webs of domination. The woman cracks models, resists infinite capture strategies, and undoes coding and overcoding.

Pandemic. Strategies change. The certainty that what moves teaching work is contact, exchange, and interaction is substantial. It's about being together through the trials, the mistakes, and the successes. It is a work of availability for others, even more so in these times when students are not always able to be present and have adequate conditions for study situations. The challenge of teaching becomes broader: How can we maintain a bond or establish one with someone not physically present? – asks NegraHelô.

Having worked in Basic Education for 15 years, she understands teaching as a constant process: each age group, each class, and each school causes changes in how to plan and build knowledge. Inventive education, invention of self and worlds (Dias, 2012). *This unpredictability requires creation, and that is what I like most about teaching.*

Teaching work only exists through contact with others. If it weren't for the other, we, teachers, wouldn't be here. If it weren't for contact, exchange, and the possibility of learning together, teaching work wouldn't exist. Losing daily eye-to-eye contact due to the spread of the virus was not easy. A teaching staff felt. Even though being in front of a screen for hours, the objective of maintaining bonds was still pursued. Little by little, the teaching staff that goes up

and down stairs, changes rooms, changes the atmosphere, organizes materials, and strives to create a learning atmosphere disappears, and a new education format emerges. However, it is necessary to be a whole and whole-body teacher.

NegraHelô-woman. At 40 years old, she says she has suffered a lot. Gestures of violent racism mark her body. History that was created amidst sexist relations. She spends part of the day *participating in many movements*.

She lives in the capital of a state in Southeast Brazil. The neighborhood where she lives is any neighborhood: trees, asphalt, houses, fences, walls, doorkeepers, cars, sometimes an empty street, sometimes a busy street.

Pieces of stories. Pieces of teacher. Pieces of woman. Pieces of children. Violence. Sexism. Remains. Racism. As in a kaleidoscope, pieces connect and intertwine, forming unexpected images. Unprecedented forms emerge in the narrative. With each movement, different combinations emerge. The production itself is kaleidoscopic, presenting varied combinations and interesting visual effects.

NegraHelô is forging herself in a subjective-existential kludge⁶. It's a small amount of each encounter: mother, godmother, father, and boyfriends. Kludge is improvisation, created to face unforeseen situations. Provisionality, patch. Kludges have the power to change. They keep the seeds of novelty, of the unusual. NegraHelô – subjective kludge. Kludge that, due to its dysfunctional use, produces an aesthetic effect. Composition of remains, of pieces. Becoming Black, becoming a teacher, becoming a woman in the composition of strange things, which estrange themselves.

⁶ Expression used by a colleague in a Human Formation class, in the Graduate Program in Public Policies and Human Formation at the State University of Rio de Janeiro (PPFH-UERJ).

The turbans frame her face; they do not imprison her hair; they give space for becoming. Becoming a woman. Helô is serenity and agitation. Living paradox. Attentive to every detail of what surrounds her. Furthermore, this “requires learning to unlearn” (Pessoa, 1991, p. 153). Kludge-in-NegraHelô. Made by many hands. Helo-net, tangles lines.

Helô does not stutter when she speaks. We sigh and take a deep breath. We fidget in the chairs. The conversation flows. Multicolored hair. Pink. Auburn. Black. Colorful or brightly colored turbans. Mouth with crimson lipstick. Lots of necklaces matching the colors of the jacket. In the background is a beautiful painting with a woman’s profile, also wearing a turban. On her right forearm, a tattoo: *an African goddess on the African continent*, she says.

A passenger on the tram of living, Helô intensely experiences the changes in the existential landscape. Her body, often automated in the inertia of asphalt paths, responds to the sudden movements of life: climbs, bumps, falls. Many women touch her hand along this walk. There is contagion.

Helô likes to say that she has done several photo shoots. Essays of other ways of existing-insisting. She likes the way she looks in photos. She does not follow fashions, “*prêt-à-porter*” (ready-to-wear) shapes, or predefined body lines. A woman’s body is whatever she wants. A woman’s place is wherever she wants. Images and words.

Many voices in these voices. Something is forcefully enunciated in these narratives: a society constituted by patriarchal racism, race, and gender. Oppressions of racism and sexism intersect and produce specific vulnerabilities against Black women (Kilomba, 2020).

Carlos Irreverence, Threshold, Boldness

January 26, 2022. Some adjustments to our internet connections preceded the conversation with Carlos.

Tell us a little about your story; we ask. *“Talk about everything???* *We’re never going to talk about everything, right? A life does not fit into a conversation. It overflows, runs, skids, creates bites”* (Account by Carlos).

Firm and sweet voice. Contagious smile. *“I was thinking about what you could ask me. . . . I started thinking what to say. I can’t say everything, but I have a lot to say”* (Account by Carlos).

Carlos begins by highlighting that humor has always accompanied him. We ran to Google: humor is a person’s mood concerning something or at some point. Humor delights the audience. This definition suited us at first. Carlos uses humor to charm students. *“It’s the best strategy for living. I’ve always been a little suspicious of these people who take everything in education very seriously!! It seems that not smiling and not using irony is being a good professional. Sometimes I felt uncomfortable: Am I being negligent, irresponsible?”* (Account by Carlos).

For him, humor constitutes an essential device in educational practices, as it “bends” straight forms, opens paths, provokes new ways of seeing and saying, and calls into question the exclusions made by reason. It can be a way to make us endure existence when no explanation seems convincing. “Laughter is one of the human being’s responses to the dilemma of existence” (Minois, 2003, p. 25). Through laughter, Carlos tells us, *“We can trace paths to transform- understand worlds that serious reason cannot reach.”* The comic makes the infinity of existence shine, banished by reason as marginal and ridiculous (Alberti, 1999). Laughter frustrates expectations

by deviating from the order and, by exceeding the limits of serious thought, launches new pedagogical gestures, indicating an agreement between the human and the unthought.

In 1986, Deleuze was asked whether he and Foucault belonged to “the same team,” to which he replied: “I think so. . . . Being on the same team means laughing at the same things or being silent, not needing to explain yourself” (Deleuze, 1992, p. 109).

Carlos was born in a municipality in a southeastern Brazilian state around the 1960s. In the 1970s, he already lived in the state’s capital, where he was born and still lives today. We asked what he thinks about working in education. Education needs to be cruel!! (Fuganti, 1991), based on a certain irresponsibility, *in a good way* – he says. It is to engender processes that cultivate strength and make mixing races viable. Carlos’s pedagogical project privileges the verbs mix races, mix, amorousness, and intolerance over any attempt to perpetuate metricized standards of subjectivity. Cruelty declares war against the moral values that imprison the struggle in favor of the proceduralism of living (Fuganti, 1991). It does not support guardianship practices.

He talks about his loves with a cheeky smile. When he smiles, it is a life. His romantic relationships also have the mark of irreverence. *I let it happen*, says Carlos. *Homophobia? If there was, I never noticed.*

Carlos has two brothers. He did not know a superhero father, as many of his colleagues said, who takes care of our difficulties and who, in the most challenging moments, is close by to help with any problems in life. Very different from what his friends had as a representation of his father, “*no hero, adventurer, nomad. He was a supporting character.*” Adventures that challenged the usual ways of being the head of a family. “*Once, he came home telling us that he had sold a property and would own a restaurant. Children’s schooling? This aspect did not interest him. I think he died without knowing what they majored in, but that never mattered much, at least to me. He was an alcoholic*” (Account

by Carlos). Mother, grandmother, and godmother were intense presences in the lives of the family's children. "Yes, life is a woman" (Nietzsche, 2012, p. 4).

When he was in sixth grade, he needed a school atlas. This atlas did not arrive. This was not a priority for his father. "*I was left without the atlas despite reiterating the request several times. He said he had forgotten. . . . I was a little erasing his importance in my school life* (Account by Carlos). Mother and maternal grandmother were always attentive; they provided care without tutelage. They take care, always by his side.

He worked in the public school system of the city hall, where he still lives today, in the early 1990s. In 1995, he was approved as a professor at a public university. *My biggest dream!!!*

He states that he focuses on the affective networks of work in education, woven into everyday relationships as a set of ethical dispositions and predispositions in dialogue with others. He highlights the importance of affirming otherness in education: "*No one knows what is best for the other*" (Account by Carlos). Education in the affective network of work. Like threads woven singularly and marginally, a smaller network (Gallo, 2021), associated with other threads, produces broad collaborative, rhizomatic networks without a center and hierarchy, with many different worlds. Proliferating networks. Networked teachers, networked curricula. Networks that increase the power to act, associated with the disturbance of various orders of discourse, also promote differentiation within the network. Teachers who never base their actions on a presumed transcendent place (Rodrigues et al., 2021).

Teacher? ". . . a guy who had a bag where he put everything he found. However, on condition that he himself is put in a bag" (Deleuze & Parnet, 2004 p. 19). Carlos continues to forge collapses in the intolerable aspects of certain life forms, giving way to other sensibilities, "mainly those in which humor and rigor are in no way incompatible" (Rodrigues et al., 2021, p. 157).

What was it like working at the university during the pandemic?

Strategies changed; we had to invent ways of working remotely and with digital tools, but the investment in active micropolitics continued. I believe in the plurality of the world as a mark and not as an impediment to action. Plurality that considers the legitimacy of different subjects and different ways of being and understanding the world. I continued to find ways to escape attempts at imprisonment and pursue minority lines of re-existence (Account by Carlos).

He pursues an educational project implemented through education as a function-criticism that rejects micro fascisms based on the unfeasibility of life as work. Practices that seek to make spirits not centered on obedience but on thought, supporting questions, without pretensions to general and universal answers, conjuring those that pass watchwords and carry with them a death sentence, that overestimates academic knowledge, practices of dominance and violence.

Carlos, a look, a face, tattooed arms, but that does not say who he is. Provisionality. A face exists to be undone. He smiles boldly and irreverently; he says he does not recognize himself in any “*prêt-à-porter*” (ready-to-wear) pattern. Aim for an existence always on the limit. Disarrange himself with prudence to not scare away the event, the chance. He likes to try on a face that is not his own and then undo it, letting it leak out. Skin with open pores, eager for new things, open to the unusual.

How did people live in the city where he was born in the 1960s? These were leaden years in Brazil. The communist threat offered safe conduct and legitimized arresting, torturing, and killing anyone who opposed the established regime. His hometown was not free from this climate. Repressive actions increased increasingly, with the justification of containing the communist threat. People were arrested, and others disappeared. In the city where he lived, there was no reprisal regarding his political position in the state’s interior. However, something unusual happened in the city: every morning, residents found a copy of the communist party newspaper on their doors. How the periodical came into existence was a mystery. People did

not know how the newspaper got to their homes. Who distributed it? Many were afraid of carrying it in their hands and being considered communists. The authoritarianism imposed in Brazil produced silence across the Cachoeira lands as well.

What were your childhood days like? Carlos did not attend daycare. “*At that time, I don’t even know if it existed*” (Account by Carlos). His elementary study was at a leading public school in the city where he lived. Few friends; he remembers only two. Few street games. Second phase of childhood – *return, I came back to live with my parents and siblings in the state’s capital*. Childhood always marked by few friends. “*I created two invisible friends, with whom I played a lot*” (Account by Carlos). Invisible like the newspaper delivery man... Dictatorships, resistance, speeches, and chalices. . . . shut up.

Strength not to fall into faciality processes but to avoid absolute deterritorialization. Pursues the creation of plural meanings for what he experiences. However, how can this exercise be carried out without falling into the trap of identity processes? How not to get stuffed with identity? How can we not crystallize into an impermeable configuration of ourselves but also not run the risk of intense destabilization? Mistakes of a living. The word resentment is not part of his dictionary: *I forget everything that hurts and go on with life wherever it takes me, but I am always in control*.

The conversation continues, and Carlos tells us that he thinks-exercises an education without attachment to identity ways of being and that he creates strategies so that the other becomes emancipated in the teaching relationship, which expands autonomy in the face of the teacher’s discourse, putting an end to a pedagogical relationship of dependence. It is essential to “question our will to truth; restore the character of an event to the speech; suspend, finally, the sovereignty of the signifier” (Foucault, 2012, p. 48). “. . . and, to that extent, I think that you (the students) are completely free to do what you like with what I am saying. These are suggestions for research, ideas, schemata, outlines, instruments; do what you like with them” (Foucault, 2000, p. 4).

“I have never suffered homophobia! And if any practice like that tried to affect me, I didn’t even notice”
(Account by Carlos). A challenge accompanies him: creating an education professional body that vibrates and experiences the subtle forces that run through it and tear it apart.

Strength of the insignificant

The narratives presented, the result of the research process, were woven and contributed to the political reading of historical time. Telling stories can be an instrument for analyzing educational practices that open up to more minor, disruptive struggles. Words have a collective character, as the stories and words of others allow the researcher to look at current affairs. The traces of this encounter highlight “the dissolution of the centrality of enunciation in the speaker’s biography” (Ferreira, 2011, p. 130).

Composing with fragments, with what seems useless to us, and bet on the strength of the insignificant; composing biographemes, writing fiction, was the proposal. “. . . biographematic traits are insignificant details transformed into signs of writing” (Feil, 2010, p. 28), “part of fantasy” (Corazza, 2015, p. 12), overflow and constitute “imaginary scripts” (Corazza, 2015, p. 11). When faced with the real, fantasy can reach the unprecedented, and operating with the biographematic method is assuming a position of attention to the tiny imperceptible in everyday life.

This research sought to link narrativity, storytelling, and pedagogical gestures by creating biographemes of professionals who belong to the infamous (Foucault, 2003) of our times, whose work is marked by precariousness, racism, and machismo. Lives that subvert the usual understanding of power locked between different classes, genders, or races. Lives forged amid assistance, security, education, and social policies, policies constituted by speeches that express

secrets and everyday disputes. Narratives, passions that play “with an uncertainty of truth” (Barthes, 2013, p. 18) and seek to be stubborn by remaining contrary to the fascist power of language, a power that subdues (Barthes, 2013). Playing with signs instead of destroying them, placing signs in language machinery whose brakes and safety locks burst, thus establishing within the very heart of servile language heteronyms of things, seems to us to be an essential path in repositioning practices in education in a dystopian present. This research affirmed the importance of “recovering the body in what is most peculiar to it, its pain in the encounter with exteriority, its condition as a body affected by the forces of the world and capable of being affected by them: its affectability” (Pelbart, 2007, p. 4).

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