



**SOUL FOR THE SOULLESS: ANTHROPOLOGICAL THEOLOGY
ESSAY BASED ON AN ARTWORK FROM THE EXHIBITION
ASSENTAMENTO (SETTLEMENT) BY ROSANA PAULINO AND THE
IDEA OF COUNTERMEMORY IN THE WORK OF DISMANTLING EVIL
IN THE THEOETHICS OF EMILIE TOWNES**

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DESMANTELAMIENTO DEL MAL EN LA TEOÉTICA DE EMILIE TOWNES

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ABSTRACT

This work deals with the daily difficulties of black people and the strategies that help them recover their dignity. In order to dismantle the evils that still objectify and reduce the existences and bodies of black people to their racial condition, as if they had no values or importance, we invite Rosana Paulino with her method of refazimento and Emilie Townes with her notion of countermemory to dialogue. Paulino and Townes, while working to defeat the universal narratives that despise black existence, suggest subversive places that reformulate these “universal truths”. The method of refazimento combined with the work of dismantling evil through countermemory not only presents new narratives about who black people/bodies are but also rediscovers them as a provocation to theology and its new way of considering anthropology.

Keywords:Theological; Anthropology; Refazimento; Countermemory; Dismantling Evil; Black Bodies; Black People; Rosana Paulino; Emilie Townes.

RESUMO

Este trabalho trata das dificuldades cotidianas das pessoas negras e das estratégias que colaboram para a recuperação de sua dignidade. Para dismantlar os males que ainda objetificam e reduzem as existências e os corpos dos negros à sua condição racial, como se não tivessem valores e importância, convidamos ao diálogo Rosana Paulino com seu método de refazimento e Emilie Townes com sua noção de contramemória. Paulino e Townes, ao mesmo tempo que trabalham para derrotar as narrativas universais que desprezam a existência negra, sugerem lugares subversivos que reformulam essas “verdades universais”. O método de refazimento combinado com o trabalho de dismantelamento do mal por meio da contramemória não apenas apresenta novas narrativas sobre quem são as pessoas/corpos negros, mas também as redescobre como uma provocação à teologia e sua nova maneira de considerar a antropologia.

Palavras-chave:Antropologia;Teológica; Refazimento; Contra-memória; Dismantelamento do mal; Corpos negros; Pessoas Negras; Rosana Paulino; Emilie Townes.

RESUMEN

Esta obra aborda las dificultades cotidianas de las personas negras y las estrategias que les ayudan a recuperar su dignidad. Para dismantlar los males que aún cosifican y reducen las existencias y los cuerpos de las personas negras a su condición racial, como si no tuvieran valor ni importancia, invitamos a dialogar a Rosana Paulino con su método del refazimento y a Emilie Townes con su noción de contramemoria. Paulino y Townes, mientras trabajan para derrotar las narrativas universales que desprecian la existencia negra, sugieren lugares subversivos que reformulan estas «verdades universales». El método de rehacer combinado con el trabajo de dismantlar el mal a través de la contramemoria no sólo presenta nuevas narrativas sobre quiénes son las personas/cuerpos negros, sino que también las redescubre como una provocación a la teología y a su nueva forma de considerar la antropología.

Palavras chave: Antropología; teológica; Refazimento; Contramemoria; Desmontando el mal; Cuerpos negros; Personas negras; Rosana Paulino; Emilie Townes.

1 INTRODUCTION

On the occasion of the Black Catholic Theological Symposium (BCTS) held at the University of Notre Dame of the 2021 edition, Shawn Copeland, Ph.D., a retired American womanist and theologian, professor emerita at Boston College, said:

When Pope Francis exhorts us academic theologians to leave our desks to do theology from within the field hospital posted at the frontier, he reminds us that institutional Christianity — that the Catholic Church — has no exclusive claim on doing theology artists, poets, novelists, film directors of theology, of public theology, and the architects, organizers, demonstrators, and members of Black Lives Matter and perform theology publicly in the public square (Copeland, 2017, p. 17).

Although this work is not necessarily about Copeland, her collaboration inspires me and sheds light on what I will say next. The statement she addressed to the theological community at the BCTS regarding the fact that theological production is not necessarily exclusive to this community has a density in this work. In other words, Copeland invites us to consider the dedication and work of those who, even without doing theology from the classical understanding that this might suggest, perform theology in the public sphere through their productions of art, writing, music, painting, etc. Artists, musicians, writers, and others make their cries for freedom, justice, and equity themes with which all theology must be concerned.

This work focuses on putting into dialogue an artwork from the exhibition Assentamento (Settlement) and the refazimento method by Afro-Brazilian artist Rosana Paulino and the collaboration of Afro-American social ethicist and theologian Emilie Townes based on her idea of countermemory in the work of dismantling evil. I want to present how the collaborations between Paulino - not a theologian, but a performer of theology in a “public square” - and Townes contributed to an anthropological theology.

To do this, I first present a reflection on how black lives have their existence reduced to the racial element. To develop this topic, I evoke the theme of the ancient pseudoscience physiognomy and its similarities with the later reduction of the human

subject to the racial element. Second, I talk more directly about the objectification and caricature of black bodies using two images: a 19th-century photograph taken to reinforce the idea that black people are an inferior race and the caricature image of Mammy (Aunt Jemima) that stereotypes and reduces black women's bodies to certain features. Third, considering that objectification relegates the black body to places of marginalization (non-place), I discuss the re-signification of this (non-)place as a space of creativity and non-conformity. Fourth, I present a piece of art from the exhibition by Brazilian artist Rosana Paulino and her technique of *refazimento* as one creative way of resignifying the (non-)place to which black bodies were reduced. Fifth, I place Paulino's artwork in dialogue with Emilie Townes' idea of counter-memory and make inferences on how there is solidarity between them in dismantling evil. At the end of this upward journey, I discuss how black *refazimento* and its counter-narratives are crucial for revising and re-elaborating anthropological theology.

2 THE DEFINITION/REDUCTION OF THE OTHER AS A “BLACK” BODY

In the work *Sight and Blindness in Luke-Acts: The Use of Physical Characteristics in Characterization*, Chad Hartsock dedicates a session on physiognomy that helps us introduce the theme of defining/reducing the person to their physical characteristics, which is the theme of this first part.

In the chapter entitled “An Introduction to Physiognomy”, Hartsock reports that, as a “science”¹, physiognomy is commonly attributed to Hippocrates. However, its practices predate any physiognomy manual and were proposed as such to “diagnose” a person's character based on their physical characteristics. Among the physiognomic practices were the zoological, racial or ethnographic, and another based on facial features.

In the zoological method, a person's characteristics were derived from their similarities to certain types of animals. The racial method would be determined by applying the zoological method to a group/race (and not exclusively to the individual), with the possibility of this group also being influenced by climatic and geographical conditions.

¹ The author describes it not as a science in itself, but attributes Physiognomy to the category of a pseudoscience (cf. Hartsock, 2008, p. 10).

The third method, in turn, would be based on the person's facial expressions since the features close to the eyes would be the most revealing and least misleading.

As time went by, the purposes of physiognomy expanded. Its use was no longer only used to understand the “inner character of the person” (Hartsock, 2008, p. 9) but also with the purpose of ridiculing, subverting, or being used as an instrument of rhetoric “especially when it came to discrediting opponents” (Hartsock, 2008, p 16).

Hartsock does not offer ground that allows us to infer with conviction that that pseudoscience resulted in what we now know as racism or any form of discrimination based on physical characteristics. However, given the influence of the West in the formation of human thought and behavior throughout history, this is also not a possibility to be ruled out, considering that the practice of physiognomy may have been decisive in the process of enslaving Africans. We question, for example, how the biblical interpretation/instrumentalization by the West was not imbued with physiognomic methods when establishing that those with dark skin were heirs to the curse of Ham and, therefore, marked with the inheritance of servitude². Or as the inferences about Hagar, whose biblical descriptions are few, but who “became a black figure” as a result of her condition of servitude and fertility, therefore anticipating the intersectionality of gender, ethnicity, and status in her body³ whose losses affect poor black women today.

The reason that leads us to begin this work with this approach to the theme of physiognomy comes not only from the interest in knowing how and why dark skin has been and continues to be the target of so much harm. Our interest is also because, even though it may have no direct connection to one element with the other, black people continue to be defined/reduced by their physical characteristics.

Shawn Copeland echoes the pain and abandonment of Senegalese Fatima Yusif, who, at the age of 28, gave birth to her son in the open air as an immigrant in Italy while she was vilified by the indifference of white people who reduced her to the status of black (cf. Copeland, 2023, p. 84). Many other examples can be given. Because of his dark

² David M. Goldenberg in *Black and Slave: The Origins and History of the Curse of Ham* helps to understand how dark skin became a symbol of sin, disgrace, curse, and servitude.

³ Nyasha Junior in *Reimagining Hagar: Blackness and Bible* helps us understand the issues surrounding interpretations of Hagar.

skin, Brazilian soccer player Vinicius Júnior was repeatedly called a monkey verbally or gesturally in gigantic soccer arenas. Both Fatma Yusif and Vini Júnior - or any other dark-skinned person - see their identity associated and defined, not as the result of “membership in an ethnic-linguistic group or from relationship to a family and clan, but from race” (Copeland, 2023, p. 84). Both have their lives defined/summarized by a physical characteristic: their skin color.

We could go on to give countless examples of how people of dark color came to be reduced, as Copeland tells us, to their “racial condition.” However, a word needs to be said about the motivations/justifications behind this demotion/relegation of the other to racial status and, therefore, alleged superiority over this other.

To do this, I would like to remember Ota Benga, aged 23, brought in 1906 from the Kasai River, Congo Free State, Central Africa, to the United States, where he was placed on display at the Bronx Zoo, New York City. Sharing a cage with an orangutan, displayed “every afternoon during September” as a piece of what was called “The Missing Link”, his presence next to the animal (dis)informed that, evolutionarily, Africans like Ota Benga were closer to monkeys than to white Europeans. In the understanding of white supremacy, black people like Benga would be the missing link in the process of evolution due to their “similarities” more to the animal than the prototypical white man.

The white superiority fantasy believes that for it to have an argument over or be superior to this other, it is necessary to animalize the other. It was through this fanciful conviction that Ota Benga was reduced, exposed, made a source of laughter, mockery, and fright until he could no longer bear it and found suicide with a shot in the chest, the alternative to put an end to it in 1916. It is this fanciful conviction⁴ that white superiority still uses to belittle black people. I.e., the more the other person is human, or if they look like “me” (a model of whiteness), the more difficult it is for me to criticize them and justify my prestige over them. Therefore, black subjects are objectified and animalized so that white people feel in power over them. Because they are objects, they can lose territory, be exported, exposed, and represented as animals.

⁴ Called by Emilie M. Townes in *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil* as “fantastic hegemonic imagination” (Townes, 2006, p. 7, 9, 13, 18, 21).

As a consequence of the animalization of the “dark-skinned subjects”, everything was stolen from them without the slightest remorse: land, family ties, religion, language, and soul (animals don't have souls!). In the next part, we will see two more examples of what we introduced in this first moment regarding the objectification and creation of stereotypes about black bodies.

3 BLACK BODIES: OBJECTIFICATION AND CARICATURE

With the arrival of the Portuguese crown in Brazil and the decision to produce consumer goods in Portuguese America, the slave trade towards that part of the New World was not long in coming. Considered without soul, philosophy, history, and beauty, and also because they were fierce and savage, black bodies became the target and prey of exploitation and enslavement. They even became the object of scientific study to prove their inferiority in relation to white people. This was what happened on the expedition financed by Nathaniel Thayer in 1863 when the famous naturalist and founder of the Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology, Jean Louis Rodolphe Agassiz (1807-1973), arrived in Brazil to look for elements that would prove his interest in creationist theory and, therefore, contrary to Darwin's theory of evolution.

Agassiz obtained photos of African and Chinese people in Rio de Janeiro that were taken by his commissioned photographer, Auguste Stahl. Using the anthropometric technique⁵, the photos “had the purpose of supporting comparative studies of the human race. It was then (19th century) believed that the observation of possible physical differences between the various races could scientifically prove the theories of racial superiority” (Ermakoff, 2004, p. 252). The commissioned photos, while having the purpose of justifying the white fantasy, also served to reaffirm the dehumanization of black people. The front, side, and back poses, used for a long time in prison systems, served to belittle and dominate black bodies. Those bodies were forced to expose their

⁵ “In the mid-nineteenth century, the emerging field of study of anthropology eagerly embraced the equally new practice of photography as a tool for a total survey of its subjects. The individuals captured in these photographs were profoundly entangled within an exploitative, marginalizing political and economic context and interactions with photographers were very often part of the colonial encounter. The practice of anthropometry used photography to mimic scientific representation by isolating subjects against plain backgrounds or using grids in order to superficially measure physical characteristics. These images were then integrated into the pseudo-scientific project of classifying people according to racial categories.” (Royal Anthropological Institute, 2023).

nudity as something that has no value or subjectivity. Luana S. Tvardovskas tells us that “the histories of black women and men exhibited in scientific expeditions and in human zoos of the XIX Century speak of the perpetuation of an imaginary and misogynous imaginary in which racism justifies the oppression against subjected lives” (Tvardovskas, 2015).

The photo below, taken in 1865 by Stahl, was one of thousands of images that were part of the collection of Agassiz to support his “ideas on the superiority of some races and on the consequences of ethnic mixing” (Ermakoff, 2004, p. 252).

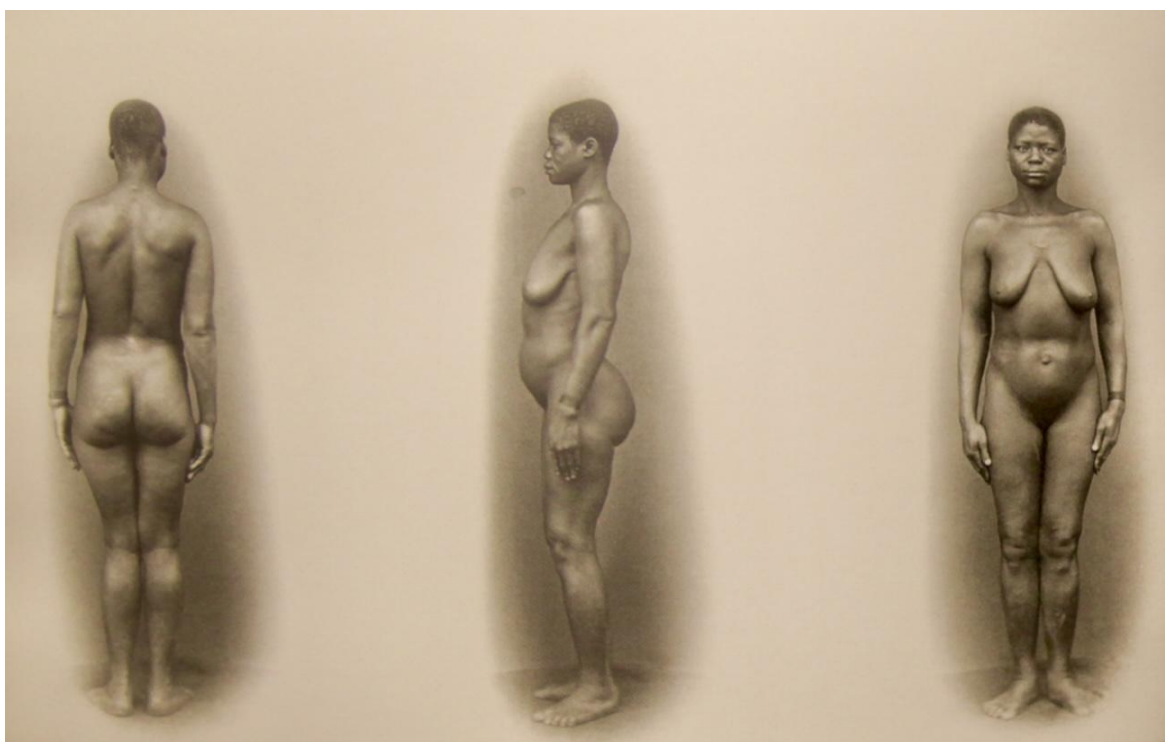


Photo taken by A. Stahl in 1865. Unidentified/Unnamed person. (Ermakoff, 2004, p. 252)

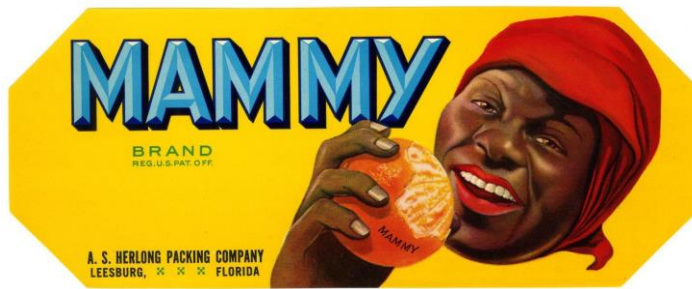
In this record, we see the naked body of a woman whose expression shows the embarrassment of someone uncomfortable in the face of the white-devouring ambition and pretension that reduces her to an object of scientific exploration. We don't know her name, her origin, whether the photos were taken with or without consent, or whether she was given the right to choose to have her body exposed. She was there. A body exposed in the rawest intimacy as an object to be exploited and to reinforce the inferiority to which she was already relegated. That unprotected black woman was there, silenced... “a negress” with subjectivity disregarded.

Reduced and objectified, black bodies, like the unnamed person above, went from ideas of inferiority to imaginary representations of inferiority. Exotization of black bodies prevented them from being projected as something good, beautiful, and attractive. The ideals of whiteness in commercials and advertisements have been used purposely to convey a message of security, trust, and value. Placing a black person in whose imagination a negative and discreditable charge was projected would be a sign of disqualification. The black population was seen as not worthy of trust, competence, or capacity, which is why their representations were limited to stereotypes that only affirmed their inferiority in relation to white people. Images, characters, and stories were created to reinforce this (non-)place of black people.

Emilie Townes, in her book *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*, works with five of these images that caricature and stereotype black bodies in the United States. Such images, according to her, reinforce the myths of the dominant racist culture in its quest to maintain the status quo, what she calls the cultural production of evil. Townes considers “how the imagination works within [the interplay of history and memory as critical frame] to create images that buttress evil as a cultural production” (Townes, 2006, p. 7).

For example, Aunt Jemima, one of the images used by Townes, has its origins in the caricatured Mammy. This image is a symbol of the black, fat, and sexually unattractive woman who sacrifices herself and prefers the white family for whom she cooks and does housework to the detriment of her own children (cf. Townes, 2006, p. 31-32). This stereotype “was used to prove that Black women (and by extension children and men) were happy with their enslavement” (Townes, 2006, p. 31).

Aunt Jemima or Mammy was built with the association of black people with household and kitchen services: kitchen ornaments, cleaning, and hygiene products, as well as food products such as pancake batter and others (see images below). The association of blackface images with such services acts in real life as a manipulation that merges “race with myth and memory to create history. It includes caricaturing Black life and, in some cases, Black agony, to sell the product” (Townes, 2006, p. 44).



Mammy Brand Orange Label (AS Company, 1930)



Mammy kitchen item (Brown, 2019)

Townes says, “Although the historical Mammy is suspect, the imagined and the mythological that springs from the fantastic hegemonic imagination - the re-membered one - is alive and well. It served the needs of nostalgic White southerners seeking to make sense of and defend slavery and segregation” (Townes, 2006, p. 33). Images like this generate “the commodification of bodies mutated into the commodification of identity [...]. Black identity as property means that a community of people has been reduced to exchange values that can be manipulated for economic gain” (Townes, 2006, p. 44).

The unnamed woman used as a scientific experiment, Mammy, the caricature of the black person reduced to domestic services and commodified, as well as many others, are examples of how specific images (myths and fantasies) can be sold as true history and reinforce the status quo of the white supremacy based on black people as inferior. Such images sold as history marginalize black people and reduce them to (non-)places in society. We will discuss the rediscovery of this (non-)place below.

4. RE-SIGNIFYING THE (NON-)PLACE OF MARGINALITY

James Baldwin, in *Too Many Thousands Gone*, says that “what it means to be a Negro in America can perhaps be suggested by an examination of the myths we perpetuate about him” (Baldwin, 1955, p. 27). This statement is not a statement of conformity. Baldwin does not talk about a simple analysis of the Mammy myth or the analysis of the black woman's body in photography as an object of scientific speculation. What Baldwin evokes regarding the myths and fantasies that were created around the figure

of black people is a desire to overcome such fantasies based on counter-narratives that state that black bodies do not belong to the place in which they were placed. They are not how white supremacy defines them, and the memories that have been created about them are not their memories, etc. Overcoming objectification and caricature involves rediscovering the place where black people were placed and, therefore, rediscovering themselves and their bodies based on a new narrative no longer defined by white supremacy but based on themselves.

As a consequence of the fact that black bodies were “bought and sold, used as defiled, discarded, quite literally, as refuse” by slavery (Copeland, 2023, p. xi), it is inevitable not to affirm that the same bodies were marked by that fateful and dramatic event in human history whose shadows still haunt black bodies in the present. That is why Copeland says that “the most vivid reminder and remainder of slavery, then, remains the black body” (Copeland, 2023, p. xii).

Although marked by the shadow of slavery and, therefore, marginalized, the new narrative is created with the rediscovery of this place. Not as an act of conformity to it but as nonconformity and subversion. Townes helps us understand this when she says that

Though marginalization can be a lonely place, it can also be a place that encourages creativity in thought, word, and deed. This space is where counterhegemony has its birth as the marginalized can begin to develop and enact pithy analysis and trenchant cultural critiques to dismantle the cultural production of evil (Townes, 2006, p. 52).

The rediscovery of the place is a process of subversion and dismantling of what Aníbal Quijano calls the coloniality of power (cf. Quijano, 2005, p.117-142), which seeks to perpetuate colonialism so that black people continue as objects and are not subjects and protagonists of their own history. Townes calls these devices of belittling and disqualifying the person the production of evil.

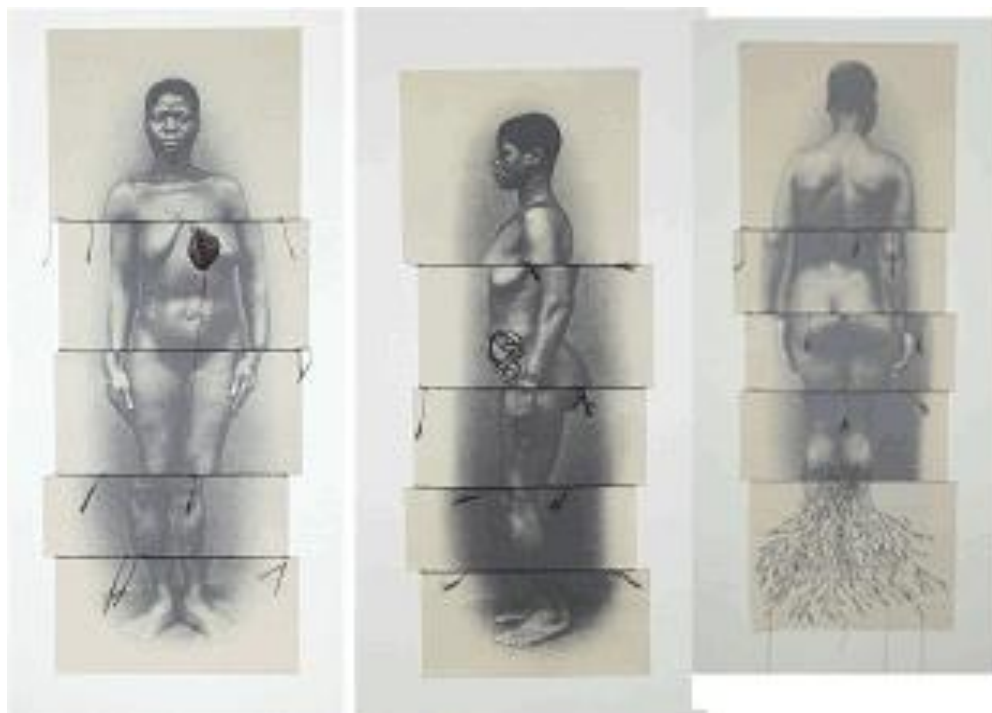
Shawn Copeland recalls that there has always been a lack of conformity with the non-place occupied by black women, obviated in their subjectivities and violated in their bodies. The search for freedom has always been present. “Black women began the

healing of their flesh and their human subjectivity in the there-and-then, in the midst of enslavement” (Copeland, 2023, p. xiii). This process of healing and searching for freedom was done strategically and creatively.

Several examples can be given when searching for “making a way out of no way” (cf. Coleman, 2008). These new paths involve struggles to overcome oppression, the pursuit of wholeness and justice, and human agency as new ways emerge into the future. In the next part, we will dedicate our reflection to a piece of work by Brazilian artist Rosana Paulino, whose art we read as a creative transformation of the unfair and oppressive reality under which the black body was placed.

5 ROSANA PAULINO AND HER METHOD OF REFAZIMENTO IN ASSENTAMENTO

Rosana Paulino is a black Brazilian artist with a PhD in Fine Arts from Escola de Comunicações e Artes da Universidade de São Paulo (School of Communications and Arts of the University of São Paulo) (ECA/USP) with a vast collection of works and exhibitions, including the Assentamento (Settlement) exhibition. In this installation, among the pieces of art displayed, Paulino manipulates the historic photo of the woman - objectified by scientific experimentation - which we have already presented above. This time, however, “the artist presents the same photograph taken by Stahl, only now printed on cloth, life-size, measuring approximately six feet, with sewn interventions and etchings of a fetus in the womb still, roots and a heart” (Tvardovskas, 2015).



Assentamento (Settlement) (Paulino, 2018, p. 117-119)

Although without knowing the person's identity, Paulino says that the choice of this image “in addition to having a strong symbolic charge, [...] portrays the anonymity of someone in a past time [which] makes us think, in comparison to the days today, in the power of the image as a constituent of people’s identity” (Paulino, 2013, p. 3). When asked why the images were stitched together in a mismatched way, Paulino says that this makes her think about how enslaved people had to remake themselves when arriving in a world completely unknown. She says:

Imagine, one day, being surrounded by your family and friends and, on another, being on a slave ship, completely unhealthy, with people of different ethnicities who don't speak your language. When disembarking in strange lands, there is still the trauma of enslavement. These people had to remake themselves, but this “refazimento” is never complete! The marks of this adaptation process remain marks that were often also transmitted to their descendants. Hence, the mismatched seams show that a complete remake is an almost impossible task (Paulino, 2013, p. 3).

This seam is a suture that was not made in an apparent and straightforward way but in a heavy, rough way, and that was never totally completed. Paulino's work denounces the abrupt rupture and forced adaptations that never favored real incorporation into the previously unknown reality. However, despite the violent rupture, black people

managed to plant deep roots in Brazilian culture and have influenced it since their arrival until the present day. However, without giving credit to the influences of those who inherited the country on their shoulders with blood and sweat, Brazil, which was seen as a storehouse of fauna and flora, resulted in an unequal society placing black people as the shadow (negativity) and in the scum of society.

By using *refazimento* as a method for her art, the artist rehearses the return of this merit and also of the memory, the soul, and the dignity of the black subject, represented in the image sutured with the heart, the womb (fetus), and the roots (veins). The affections, virtues, values, history, and memory that are obliterated by slavery and injustice are returned to the black body. That's why "Paulino defines her project as a process of *refazimento*" (Araújo, 2019, p. 67). She "rebuilds a narrative that allows for a critical inquiry on colonialism" (Araújo, 2019, p. 68).

When speaking of the reconstructed image, Tvardovskas tells us:

If this image was intended to determine the racial differences, serving the objectives of better to control and dominate, Paulino originally produces a radical inversion of the discourses in showing this fragmented body, whose sutures are of impossible integral reconstruction. Besides producing an acid critique of the violence of slavery, the artist, with this installation questions the settlement of African experiences in a Brazilian common ground and the subjective and spiritual reconstruction, even when faced with historical violence (Tvardovskas, 2015, p. 37).

Flávia Santos de Araújo, in turn, when analyzing the *refazimento* process, says that "Rosana Paulino deploys, in her visual representations of the black female body, iconographies that (re)define hegemonic historical narratives and liberate the black body to become a sign of plurality and agency of meaning production". Furthermore, with her method of artistic creation, Paulino repositions "the black female subject-self as a storyteller" (Araújo, 2019, p. 69).

In a process that Araújo considers "a methodology of artistic creation guided by sensorial principles of investigation that humanizes the black female body and brings her closer to the artist's personal memory," she says that "Paulino's *refazimento* process of art-making can also be understood as a process of memory restitution because her work redresses the violations perpetrated upon the black female body by

re-signifying and reinstating the figure's humanity and personhood" (Araújo, 2019, p. 74). Paulino, with her method of *refazimento*, acts with radical and transformative creation in a "critical fabulation"⁶ which possesses a "polyphonic capacity [that] also invites the viewer to explore the ancestral and spiritual dimensions of black women's subjectivity" (Araújo, 2019, p. 75).

With these layers of reconstruction of the black woman, giving her back the right to tell her narrative and affections through her insides and roots, Paulino fulfills the function of a supportive counter-narrative in dismantling evil. We will explore this topic further in association with the idea of countermemory worked by Emilie Townes.

6 PAULINO AND TOWNES: SOLIDARITY IN DISMANTLING THE EVIL

When working with the image of Aunt Jemima (the Black Mammy) that we presented above, as well as the images of Sapphire, the Tragic Mulatta, the Black Matriarch (Welfare Queen), and Topsy (pechaninny), Emilie Townes says that these images, by stereotyping black people, represent the production of systematic and structural evil in the status quo. However, "they evoke not only memory but also history and countermemory as tools and possible strategies for discovering the truths found in the interior life of evil - how it is created, shaped, maintained, dismantled" (Townes, 2006, p. 13).

To dismantle evil, Townes works with the "subversive place/space," which is countermemory as something that "seeks to disrupt ignorance and invisibility" (Townes, 2006, p. 22). Countermemory focuses on localized/particular experiences of oppression to "refocus dominant narratives by touting narrow lenses into a reframing of what constitutes the universal" (Townes, 2006, p. 23). Townes adds:

Countermemory can open up subversive spaces within dominant discourses that expand our sense of who we are and, possibly, create a more whole and just society in defiance of structural evil. The universal, then, is created in the creolization of discourses, not in the austere terrain of monochromatic abstract conceptualizations

⁶ Artistic method developed by Saidiya Hartman whose "intention here isn't anything as miraculous as recovering the lives of the enslaved or redeeming the dead, but rather laboring to paint as full a picture of the lives of the captives as possible." (Hartman, 2008, p. 11).

springing from the fantastic hegemonic imagination (Townes, 2006, p. 23).

The dynamic of countermemory is not the denial or rejection of history but its reconstitution once it has been manipulated. Reconstructing history involves reformulating narratives to reveal the version that was and continues to be obliterated and disregarded as a necromemory or memoricide.

When juxtaposing Michel Foucault and George Lipsitz on the treatment of microhistories, Townes says that while Foucault suggests that particular stories should be considered in isolation, Lipsitz argues that a particular story should be understood in relation to other stories. He says that unless we recognize the collective legacy of human ideas and actions, we cannot judge the claims of truth and justice found in each story. Referencing Lipsitz, Townes says that “countermemory practices a delicate negotiation between local, immediate, and personal experiences and global, indirect, and social realities” (Townes, 2006, p. 24).

Therefore, the dynamics of countermemory try to play memory against history as “a new synthesis that can offer dignity to all people without forcing them into 'an imaginary identity constructed from a top-down perspective on human experience'” (Townes, 2006, p. 24). Countermemory is, therefore, a tool and strategy for dismantling images that defame and suffocate the well-being of the black community.

The deconstruction and eradication of evil systems, in addition to requiring us to get involved in exposing the truth of the multiple structures that form us, also requires solidarity work. Townes tells us that

for countermemory to succeed as a strategy, it must resonate with the experiences and feelings of those whose microhistories it purports to represent and be an advocate of. It must address the collective memory - however partial and incomplete and socially constructed - of those who have experienced real historical oppressions and memories (Townes, 2006, p. 24).

Returning to the function proposed by Rosana Paulino's work *Assentamento*, we can see that her production matches this dynamic place of new re-configuration of

meaning⁷. In this way, her work adds to this collective of memories and microhistories that demand justice.

Townes says that countermemory “can provide hope in the midst of degradation, and strength to continue to put one foot in front of the other in movements for justice” (Townes, 2006, p. 47). By recomposing the photographed woman and restoring her heart, womb, and roots, Paulino is regenerating (remaking) her from violated dignity and subjectivity. Paulino is not rejecting history but reconstituting, suturing, or amending it.

In the same way that the five images worked by Townes challenge the stereotypes that were/are passed as history about black people in the United States, Paulino's work challenges the false generalization of black people as an inferior race to white people in the Brazilian context. Both Townes and Paulino, through solidarity work, refazimento of objectified and stereotyped black bodies in the different locations where they carry out their work, contribute to what Townes calls the dismantling of evil. This work of solidarity contributes much to the production of theological anthropology. This is the topic of the last part of this work.

7 BLACK REFAZIMENTO AS PIVOTAL TO THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

In bell hooks’ work “yearning: race, gender, and cultural politics,” she says:

It seems to me that racial healing is really about us as black people realizing that we have to do more than define how racism rages our spirit (it has certainly been easier for us to name the problem)—we have to construct useful strategies of resistance and change (hooks, 2015, p. 227).

Having approached Paulino's artistic production, which we associate with an expression of countermemory developed by Townes, these attempts to dismantle evil are what bell hooks calls strategies of resistance and change. Such strategies aim to re-elaborate negative narratives about black people in such a way, whether through

⁷ Townes says that “countermemories are dynamics and spark new configurations of meaning” (2006, p. 48). This can be seen plastically in Paulino's method of refazimento. She recomposes the piece, giving it a new meaning.

art or theoethics, that is capable of reorienting the vision of what black people and their real memories and versions of history are.

Speaking more explicitly in theological terminologies, we can say that Paulino's work helps us to rediscover the black body as a “deep theological value” (Copeland, 2010, p. xi), as expressed by Copeland. Paulino helps theology to rediscover the “physical body as a primary symbol and source for theological reflection” (Copeland, 2010, p. xi). It is not possible to do anthropological theology without considering the bodies damaged by the marks of slavery and perpetuated in history as objects, characters, and stereotypes.

If we consider that the process of construction and representation of black bodies binds everyone, the resignification, and refazimento of these bodies is also a consequence of a process that affects all areas, including theology. In this sense, theological elaboration is not only responsible for identifying the wounds that black bodies carry but also for helping them to incorporate/embody freedom and autonomy. In this way, theology needs to be supported by what we began talking about in this work. In other words, theology needs to consider those who, although not theologians by training, produce theology in public squares and who are moved by the recomposition of life, and in this case, black lives whose bodies continue to be objectified and stereotyped.

These external resources (artists, poets, musicians, etc.), in addition to provoking theology, to revisit its reflections to assess whether they go towards valuing threatened lives, also help/force theology to be a space where these people narrate and recreate images and epistemologies about themselves through countermemory.

To give an example, we can use Paulino's artistic method, which, in addition to placing the objectified black body at the center of the narrative, gives a chance through the technique of refazimento for this black body to express itself as a subject of affection, will, and roots. From this, therefore, how can theology learn from Paulino and make black people stop being objects of representation/signification (stereotypes) to subjects of representation/remade capable of telling their own truth and story (countermemory) in the process of theological elaboration?

The process of refazimento confronts the historical and cultural legacies of representations of dehumanized black bodies. This is done through the resignification present in the resistance of these bodies. Such resignification is quite complex and plural because it necessarily involves the review/reorientation of language, representations, and projections. It is a decolonial process. In this sense, how has theology been open to remaking itself and its images, representations, and projections of black people? How has it decolonialized itself from the status quo proposed by white-Eurocentric supremacy?

In this sense, Townes' theoethics proposition gives us important keys through the path of justice and hope that values an ethics of life above an ethics of death. With this, Townes can be useful by making theology question what strategies have been used by theology to dismantle evil. To this end, an anthropological theology once concerned with answering what the human being is “must pay attention to what is happening around us and look beyond (both above and below) the surface of events, theories, or positions” (Townes, 2006, p. 6) in order to realize the evil that is being perpetrated against black lives and black bodies. From this perception, it is up to theology, in its expertise, to understand people's spiritual and existential experiences and establish strategies on how to dismantle this evil.

Since theology's field of vision, like that of any other science, is limited, it needs to exercise solidarity in the search for individuals and groups who can help it broaden its vision of the complexity of the problem from different perspectives and join forces with micro or macrohistories and narratives, as well as groups and sciences, in dismantling the evil that threatens people's lives. As Townes says:

An increased awareness, appreciation, and respect for these diversities, I believe, can guide us down theoethical pathways that can dismantle systematic evil - evil as cultural production - by providing us with even more articulate resources and strategies to tackle such a large task. We no longer depend on ourselves alone but lean into a richer and more diverse web of creation (Townes, 2006, p. 7).

In the fight against evil, it is necessary to recognize, let it echo, and give space for the voices of those who have been historically silenced to speak for themselves loud and clear. Their narratives need to be decisive for the creation of strategies and actions in the process of dismantling evil. These counter-memories are essential to not leave

black lives and bodies out of reflection and theological analysis since, as we have seen, they occupy the centrality in this matter.

When quoting Brazilian theologian Ivone Gebara, Townes summarizes what we mean in other words, “actions and relationships change depending on our style of knowing” (Townes, 2006, p. 113). I would add that the way of doing theology will also change if it opens up to the knowledge of other narratives, whether those of those who are directly the victims of evil or those, included or not in this group, who dedicate their lives to creating new representations of the silenced bodies in their dignities and subjectivities.

8 CONCLUSION

When I titled this article “Soul for the Soulless,” I was moved by intuition and the desire to make visible the strategies that exist and collaborate in the process of re-dignifying black people and their bodies as a return of what slavery took from them, that is, freedom, autonomy, and even the right to have a soul (anima). This search also has to do with confronting the attitudes, gestures, and words of a society marked by the fanciful image of white superiority that reduces the black human subject to its racial condition and is not sensitive to its complexity that involves affection, value, quality, virtue, in short, the right to be human.

We find in Rosana Paulino's artwork, with her refazimento technique, a counter-narrative of how the return of rights to black people can be done as a restitution of affections, values, virtues, roots, and relationships. This restitution is implicit in the sutures made by Paulino in records/photographs once used to justify white supremacy through scientific racism that objectified black bodies and considered them inferior or as “missing links” in the chain of evolution.

We place Paulino's art in dialogue with Emilie Townes' idea of counter-memory in the search for dismantling evil. In other words, the evil produced by fanciful white supremacy to maintain a status quo that disregards black bodies can be dismantled by rediscovering the place of marginality as a creative place to confront this evil. It is from this (non-)place that the necessary tools are born to place memory against the fantasy history that objectifies and stereotypes black bodies through caricatured images such

as Aunt Jemima and others. In this sense, Paulino's work can be considered as one of those counter-memories that grant marginalized bodies the right to speak for themselves, also granting them their once-violated subjectivities and animas.

The method of *refazimento* combined with the work of dismantling evil through counter-memory not only presents new narratives about who these bodies are but also rediscovers them as a provocation to theology so that it also can be revised and remade if needed. In other words, while concerned with answering who/what the human being is, anthropological theology can learn considerably from those who, in the ordinary course of life, respond to this through a counter-narrative of what the human being is expressed in art, poetry, music, etc. Such counter-narratives awaken theology to not only diagnose the different ways of being human but also to allow itself to be transformed, giving space and visibility to the marginalized who live in the non-places of existence but who have their own narratives and challenge the dominant status quo through their creative strategies for survival and liberation.

Paulino's work, combined with Townes, shed light on how anthropological theology can and has to allow itself to be "remade" and fulfill its role in the task of dismantling the evil that both in the past (through slavery) and in the present (through denial, objectification, and characterization) belittles and marginalizes black bodies seeking for respect and liberation.

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