



# Slave Trade Ads in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: Textual Trajectory, Entextualization and Indexical Orders Mobilized on Contemporary Ads

## *Anúncios de comercialização de escravos no século XIX: trajetória textual, entextualizações e ordens indexicais mobilizadas em anúncios na contemporaneidade*

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**ABSTRACT:** The present article features the analysis of the textual trajectory and the entextualizations of two ads concerning slave trade issued in 1854 – i.e., in the 19<sup>th</sup> century – in the *Correio Paulistano* newspaper. It also features the analysis of five ads posted in this century (21<sup>st</sup>) on the *Mercado Livre* website. One of my main goals was to highlight the indexical orders precipitated in those entextualizations. To achieve such goals, I took bases on the notion of ‘textual trajectory’ as it is employed by Blommaert (2010) and Fabrício (2013, 2014); on Bauman and Briggs’ (1990) concept of ‘entextualization’, and on the notion of ‘indexical order’ as Silverstein (2009) has presented it. By tracking both the ads’ textual trajectory and the entextualizations of discourse, it was possible to notice these indexical orders deeply related to black people’s lives: dehumanization, objectification, abjection, inferiority, devaluation, and precarization.

**KEYWORDS:** textual trajectory; entextualizations; indexical order; ads; race.

**RESUMO:** Este artigo apresenta a análise da trajetória textual, as entextualizações de dois classificados de venda de escravos de 1854, século XIX, publicados no jornal Correio Paulistano. Analisa-se ainda cinco anúncios publicados no século XXI no site Mercado Livre. Pretende com este estudo investigar as ordens indexicais precipitadas nessas entextualizações. Desta forma, embaso-me nos conceitos de trajetória textual empregado por Blommaert (2010) e Fabrício (2013, 2014), entextualização indicados por Bauman; Briggs (1990) e ordem indexical proposta por Silverstein (2009).

Durante a trajetória textual e as entextualizações dos anúncios citados, as ordens indexicais encontradas estão relacionadas às vidas das pessoas negras, tais como: desumanização, objetificação, abjeção, inferioridade, desvalorização, precarização das vidas negras.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** trajetória textual; entextualizações; ordens indexicais; anúncios; raça.

“Leaving behind nights of terror and fear,  
I rise,  
Into a daybreak that’s wondrously clear,  
I rise,  
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,  
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.  
I rise  
I rise”

(MAYA ANGELOU, 1978)

## 1. Introduction

According to Gomes (2010, p. 494), racial studies have been raised in and by some Brazilian scientific fields of research. As she herself puts it:

the official and academic researchers have begun to take into more serious consideration some other dimensions and categories beyond the economic aspects. This process does not mean only a scientific change of perspective towards reality. It represents, among other factors, the outcome of the pressure from social movements grounded on identity, and from their subjects, on the field of academic production: black men and women, Brazilian native people, women.

Gomes (2010) states that the challenge for researchers is to focus on the possibility of studying these issues beyond the social and the economic aspects. In other words, it is up to these very types of research to investigate, for example, racial issues intersected by gender and sexuality – in addition to other social markers, such as: schooling, geographic area, and youth) – as pointed out by Sommerville (2000) and Sullivan (2003). By taking this approach, it is expected that the outcome of those investigations contribute to a better understanding of the black population’s identity issues, to the struggle for social equality, and to a meaningful change in Brazil’s economy towards the inclusion of the so-called ‘minority groups’. It is important to mention that such an approach must handle a micro-context, intertwined

with both the historical and the social aspects, with all of these constructed by and in language, whose discursive effects do affect the bodies.

Slavery was officially banned in 1888 in Brazil and laws have been passed since the twentieth century outlawing both discrimination and racist and discriminatory representations, yet some of the same dehumanizing discourses and texts that accompanied slavery are still circulating and are even used to indicate lives that matter these days. Such events as a recent series of ads that harken back to slave discourses have shocked the web and brought about criminal actions. Nonetheless, such events keep these discursive and performative constructions about black bodies alive and in circulation. As applied linguists, it is our responsibility to confront and expose these racist discourses and texts. Based on this presumption, I will examine the origins of these discourses and analyze the forms of economic, political, and inhuman exploitation, as they were part of showing why the current attempts to revive these discourses are so terrible. Thus, these kinds of texts and discourses must be taken seriously and expunged, no matter the intentions and mindset of those who so lightly attempt to use them to shock or to indicate that black Brazilian lives do not matter as much as white lives. Considering language as performance, actions are taken against black people through the circulation of these texts on the web. Therefore, I make three relevant assumptions:

According to Rampton (2006), we have been living in a moment of great self-reflexivity. This means that it is possible to question ourselves, and bring ‘race’ – its performative and bodily speech acts effects – into our research on social and linguistic practices. Studying ‘race’, intersected with other social markers, can help us understand how complex the present times have been. In such regard, particularly in our current days, we have been living an ethical and political crisis, permeated by a general aggressiveness directed at minorities and by the return of silence and censorship in Brazil. By approaching important subject matters like race, gender, and sexuality, researchers are accused of being ‘doctrinators’.

Moreover, a pernicious discourse has been increasing: that whoever delves into racial issues is a ‘racist’ herself/himself, or – equally mischievous – that people who do research on gender are ‘raging’ feminists, as gender became a relevant issue during elections period. Not only does such discourse travel by/through posts on *Facebook*, it also roams spaces, including airports and/or social elevators, stores, universities, schools, and churches.

The following should provide an example: in the city of Rio de Janeiro, a woman who dwells in a building told her maid that, from that time on, she – the maid – had to use only the ‘service elevator’, since we, black people, had been ‘overtaking legitimate lives in the past years’, enjoying spaces that had not been built for us. It seems that the aforementioned building dweller was seriously bothered by the fact that we – black people – had been using the social elevator, spending our money in stores ‘for-the-well-off’, buying our house/apartment, entering universities as students or professors.

The next assumption is that everything depends on discourse, as Santos (2000) argued. In other words, we construct ourselves, others, and the world around us *by* and *through* language, which constitutes us. Or, as Wilchins (2004) and Melo and Moita Lopes (2014, 2015) state, we are the results of discourses – situated in context and history – about ‘this’ or ‘that’ to which we have been listening throughout our lives.

The third and last assumption has to do with the development of the Brazilian economy is grounded in and constructed on the basis of slavery (SOUZA, 2017). This country’s economy depended on the native people’s and black slaves’ manual work for centuries. The Brazilian native people have been constructed by performative speech acts and through history as ‘wild’, ‘untamable’, and ‘naïve’. These can be noticed, for instance, in Pero Vaz de Caminha’s Letter and acclaimed literary works, such as *Iracema*, *O Guarani*, among others. Likewise, black people have also been constructed as ‘animals’, ‘wild’, ‘cheap, non-human, and enslaved merchandise’. Such dehumanization initiates its discursive and performative construction before slavery; it goes on throughout slavery and the post-abolition time; it permeates discourses of racial democracy, miscegenation, and eugenics. Despite the performative speech acts<sup>1</sup> on blackness, which surround and construct us, those dehumanization discourses can still be noticed in everyday social and linguistic practices. In this historical process, the white skin has been depicted as the hegemonic, Eurocentric, and standard race. Moreover, as Mbembe (2015) states, whiteness was constructed as privileged

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<sup>1</sup> According to Melo and Moita Lopes (2014, p. 655): “speech acts as performatives produce semantic effects that make us men, black etc. They are endlessly repeated by the social actors with whom we get along, and in other settings such as school, church, family, media and others. Through iterability, those effects are understood as essences and, as such, they are taken as preexistent to discourse and, thus, crystalized on the bodies” (BUTLER, 2004).

– the main source for the ‘racial conduct’ norms. Simas (2016, n/d) – a white man himself – argues that the white race has “the protection of the skin color”. This status quo must be contested, and this protection must be discussed in comparison to necropolitics, the politics of death, according Mbembe (2018), which acts, since the slavery process, in black Brazilian lives throughout the country.

If we are willing to understand the social practices in the Brazilian context – and if everything is discourse-laden – then the racial issue must be taken as a central marker for our inquiries, debates, and classes. It structures diasporic societies, and it may provide us with a broader comprehension of the complexity of the social and linguistic (discursive and performative) phenomena, and of the power relations in which we are situated – and which we practice. In this Southernmost context in which Brazil is located, as some social science scholars have pointed out, discourses on the dehumanization of black people’s lives and bodies (slavery, miscegenation, racial democracy, and eugenics) circulate via cables and Wi-Fi all over the web – including the social networks focused on trade, as is the case of *Mercado Livre*.

Therefore, it is my goal in this article to analyze the textual trajectory of ads concerning the trade of slaves, issued in 1854 in the *Correio Paulistano* newspaper. I also intend to identify the entextualizations of both ads in part of their trajectory, i.e. in five illegal ads found on the *Mercado Livre* website (21<sup>st</sup> century), and in two pieces of news – one issued in *Veja* magazine and another in G1, an online news website. Finally, I aim to identify the indexical orders precipitated in these entextualizations. To accomplish my goals, I base myself on the notions of textual trajectory – as it is employed by Blommaert (2010) and Fabrício (2013, 2014) – of entextualization – following Bauman and Briggs’ (1990) concept – and of indexical order as it is stated by Silverstein (2009). I have singled out the ads because they point to everyday conceptions, either Brazil’s slavery setting or the present days, of the minority groups, specifically black people.

This text is divided in four parts. The first section deals with the circulation of texts and discourses. The second part presents the research pathway and a brief analysis of the 19<sup>th</sup> century newspaper ads. The third brings the analyses of the ads’ textual trajectories. The fourth and last handles the analyses of the entextualizations of the discourses of the 21<sup>st</sup> century ads posted on the *Mercado Livre* website, which received a ‘like’ on

Facebook,<sup>2</sup> in addition to presenting the indexical orders that organize the process of entextualization.

## 2. Circulation of Texts and Discourses

Globalization has influenced the perspective on how the world and language can be understood. Technological and digital advances have made possible interactions, contacts, intersubjectivities, and communications unthinkable in the past. Among the advances, the web allows many people to do different things at the same time – e.g. – as they go to work, they can listen to music, chat, read and answer emails, etc. In this context of countless information and digital displacements, texts circulate from one corner of the world to another through various tools, facilitating access to other temporal and spatial scales. For example, it is relatively easy to access – from a library or from the web itself – digital collections of magazines and newspapers issued in previous centuries. It is thus possible to know and to investigate other ways of lives, stories, speeches, languages, and chunks of text that travel from other times and spaces via cybernetic gadgets.

In this digital space, mixing and various hybridizations take place: let's take the case of languages that mix in this context, so that different pieces of several of them form a text. Blommaert and Rampton (2011) reflect that these language mixings denature the idea of the purity of a language and its structural composition. As Blommaert states (2010), these texts perform textual trajectories. Fabrício (2013, p. 156) adds that the multiple, versatile trajectories of texts direct us to “exchanges, changes, revaluations and transformations of texts ‘in transit’ through different contexts.”

Throughout these textual trajectories, texts become fluid, are mixed, and are entextualized. According to Bauman and Briggs (1990), entextualization is “discourse’s reflective capacity of being shared in different meaning-making systems and the framing of the text that carries its features to other spaces” (MELO; MOITA LOPES, 2015, p. 60). This process also involves decontextualization and recontextualization, which make the construction of new meanings possible for texts in contexts that are understood as changeable and mobile instead of static and rigid.

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<sup>2</sup> It is possible to notice that ads on *Mercado Livre* bear Facebook’s ‘like’ symbol, which implies that the ads also go around the former social network. Nonetheless, these very ads were not found on Facebook.

In each entextualization, the texts leave a little of themselves and take ownership of the features of the context in which they are recontextualized. In other words: along the trajectory, the texts dialogue with each other, mobilize new meanings and precipitate other meanings – there is a transformation of these texts, that is, they are updated. At the same time, they invoke a chronotope (BAKHTIN, 1981; BLOMMAERT, 2015), which identifies temporal and spatial locations associated with the texts. Along the textual trajectory, people also construct and perform the most diverse race, gender, and other roles. Such a mobility of texts, discourses, and performances index different contexts invoked in the chronotopes. According to Silverstein (2009, p. 756), indexicality is a principle of contextualization, both linguistic and of other signs in use. Moreover, it indicates how semiotic resources point to the contextual conditions employed.

In the past, indexicality was first understood by its reference value and was also analyzed through traditional concepts of deictic reference. In other words, indexicality harkens back to that mentioned above (PINTO; AMARAL, 2016). According to Silverstein (2009), some language researchers, such as Benveniste, Jakobson, and Kurylowicz, realized that the notion of indexicality went beyond the notion of referentiality, that is, it was related to the events of communication.<sup>3</sup> Throughout the studies on indexicality, there is a concern with the sociocultural contextualization of language. Duranti (2001, 2004) and Silverstein and Urban (1996) focus on the analysis of indexicality in all aspects of language and signs in use, specifically, language, focusing on discourse flows, sociocultural frameworks, among others.

In this research, I take Silverstein's (2009) perspective, for whom the indexical phenomenon refers to what happens in social, cultural, and identity terms along the interaction. In addition, and according to Blommaert (2010), indexicality is the gathering point between the social and the cultural aspects in communication. This principle is complex and ordered in two ways: as indexical order and order of indexicality. In this investigation, I am interested in the first way, understood as standards of normativity, or according to Agha (2005), the indexical order is the metapragmatic organizing principle behind what is widely understood as the pragmatics of language. In other

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<sup>3</sup> See Silverstein (2009).

words, it is a metapragmatic principle behind the pragmatics of language (BLOMMAERT, 2010, p. 37). For the author, the different scalar levels are organized on the basis of distinct standards of normativity – which is, even with its complexity, a form of organization that articulates itself by order when precipitating (normative standards) in the most varied texts. The orders of indexicality, from the aforementioned scholar’s perspective, are the values, beliefs, or norms that are hierarchized, stratified, and pointed out in the process of discourse indexicality through local and translocal scales.

### 3. The Research Pathway

To understand the *Correio Paulistano* ads textual trajectory and their entextualization on *Mercado Livre* ads of race and gender that continue to circulate in current internet discourses of race, it is relevant to investigate these ads through the lenses of Silverstein’s concept of indexical order and Blommaert’s perspective of indexicality. In addition, this is a qualitative-interpretative research, since it comprises the search for socio-historical bias, understanding that the production of truths about the objects of knowledge is discursive and situated (MOITA LOPES, 1994, p. 331). Moreover, the present study is based on an ethnographic principle of language analysis on the internet. Based on Evans (2010, p. 12), the role of an ethnographer in a digital context is to analyze the text “on-screen”. Considering this specific context, Hine (2000, 2005), Guimarães (2005), and Parreiras (2010) mentioned the importance of rethinking ethnography on the Internet, since the cyberspace has modified and reconfigured the notions of presence, time, space, and reality in which we live. There is also the possibility of moving to various places without changing our physical and geographic spaces.

Thus, the present ethnographic research on the Internet began in August 2016, when I came across the *Correio Paulistano* newspaper, which published many slave trade ads over the years. It ran in the city of São Paulo from June 26, 1824, but its office was officially expropriated in the Vargas Era, specifically in 1930. After this period, the newspaper resumed its production, and it was definitively closed in 1963. The following picture<sup>4</sup> depicts the front page of an issue:

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<sup>4</sup> All *Correio Paulistano* newspaper pictures were obtained in the digital collection of the National Library (Biblioteca Nacional).

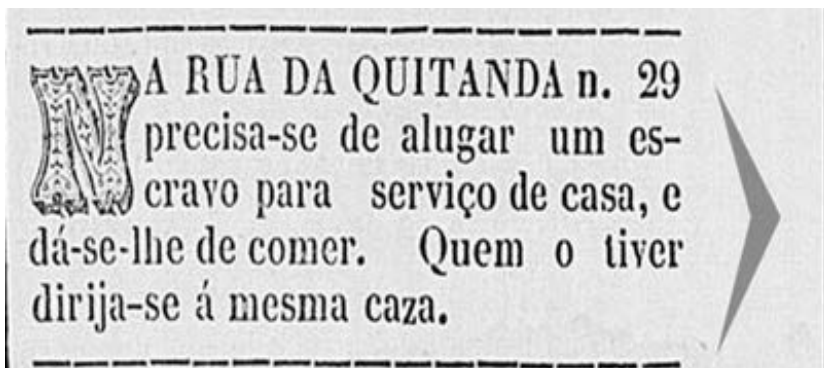


PICTURE 1 – Correio Paulistano’s front page



In analyzing the ads issued in various editions, I realized that this was a much-used vehicle for both the purchase, the rent, and the sale of slaves, as well as to announce their escape. The first ad was printed in the issue of Wednesday, July 5, 1854, Year 1 - Issue 8 – page 4:

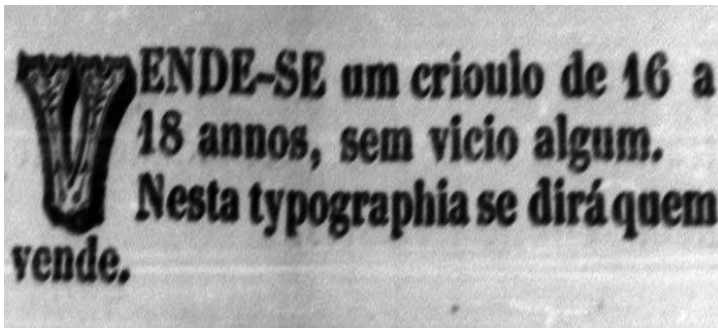
PICTURE 2 – An ad concerning the renting of a slave



The ad reads: “At 29 Quitanda St. [a street in the city of São Paulo], we need to rent a slave to do the housework. He will be fed. Whomever has one, please go to the aforementioned address.”

In the historical context of the time, if we look at the linguistic indices, linguistic features from the perspective of Silverstein (2003), *we need to rent a slave* indicates the slave as a commodity; *housework* shows the ‘task’ that the product should be able to perform; and the payment is signaled by *be fed*. Concerning the form of contact, it is signaled by *whomever has one, please go to the aforementioned address*. In the same newspaper, there is another sales ad published on July 12, 1854, Wednesday, page 4, year 1, number 11.

PICTURE 3 – An ad concerning the sale of a slave



The ad reads: “For sale – 16-to-18-year-old male nigger with no bad habits. The name of the owner will be told at this printing office.”

The linguistic features *for sale* and *the name of the owner will be told at this printing office* show the dehumanization of black people and their construction as objects, in terms of the historical-social context of the time.

The merchandise is qualified as a *16-to-18-year-old male nigger with no bad habits*. Speech acts like these were common back then – 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to Butler (2004, p. 2), “humans are understood differently depending on their race, the breed’s legitimacy, its morphology and the recognition of this morphology (...)” In the case of black bodies, this morphology identifies them as worthless products and not as lives.

Although the end of enslavement dates back to years ago, between December 2016 and January 2017, I came across ads selling black people in a search on Google with the terms “ads + sale of slaves”. These ads were posted in the commercial network *Mercado Livre* in the years of 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015. These years constitute a period governed by the Brazilian Constitution that guarantees the rights of all. There are laws towards the inclusion of African and Afro-Brazilian History in education, as well as a non-enforceable law against racism and slavery, which are considered

criminal offenses in the country. Even with all the aforementioned prescriptions, dehumanized racial morphology is present in the ads that circulated on the cited e-commerce site. These ads and the two pieces of news are the material under analysis in this investigation.

For the analysis of the textual trajectory, entextualizations and indexical orders, I used the linguistic indexes of Silverstein (2003), understood as linguistic features that indicate semiotic actions. However, I stress that such indices are conditioned by the way the participants mobilize meanings based on linguistic conventions (TANNEN, 2005). For the analysis of the pictures, we will follow the proposal of Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996), observing, specifically, the background and the use of color as a racial identifier.

#### **4. The Textual Trajectory of Slave Trade Ads from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

According to Ogot (2010), in ‘white’ Africa there was an ancient tradition of exporting slaves<sup>5</sup> to Arab countries, especially to Sudan. Henrique (2007) says that, in European slavery, until the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it was possible to find large numbers of lists of Arab, Turkish, Greek, Bulgarian, and Slavic slaves, among others. In the 9<sup>th</sup> century, African blacks began to be sold as slaves to the Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, and Asian regions. According to Ogot, this trade was fully ended only in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

By the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, slavery was automatically related to black people. The first ones sent to America were those no longer useful in Europe, specifically in Portugal and Spain. With the intensification of this trade, other enslaved people were transported directly from Africa. In the words of Munanga (1986, p. 8), black people “became an economic necessity before the rise of the machine (Industrial Revolution)”, after this period, that slave was sold and shipped to the Americas.

In Brazil, slavery lasted longer than in other countries, because it had the support of institutions such as the Catholic Church, which agreed with the discourse of salvation, via slavery, of the black animal/people. Many slaves were spread throughout the country to perform various tasks, from farming and mining, to domestic services in towns and on farms. In some

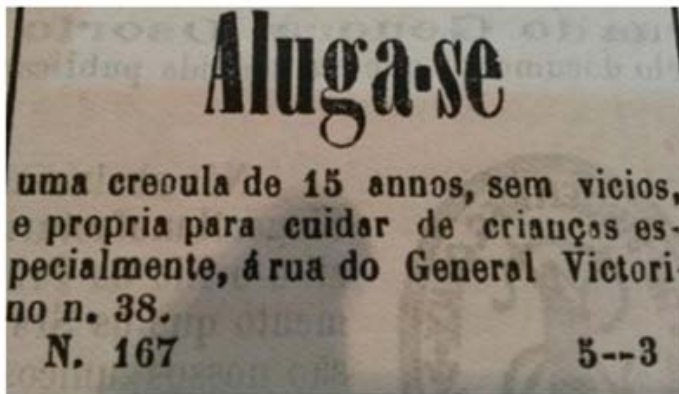
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<sup>5</sup> Slavery did not begin in Africa. According to Ogot (2010, p. 92), historical documents show that this ‘practice’ had already occurred, for example, in the Roman Empire.

regions of Brazil, black people's labor force was exclusive. Having slaves was a sign of wealth at that time: the planter, for example, was 'well-judged' by the number of slaves he had or by the slave entourage accompanying him on the street. Besides the occurring commercialization of black bodies in the slave markets, located in the coastal part of the country, black enslaved people were also traded through newspaper ads, such as those published in *Correio Paulistano* newspaper, specifically pictures 2 and 3, where the textual trajectory begins.

The textual trajectory of the two ads of the 19<sup>th</sup> century begins its course in *Correio Paulistano* newspaper in 1854 and runs through the various editions of the same newspaper until the end of the century. In its textual course, there are ads for the selling/renting of slaves in various editions of the *Diário do Commercio* newspaper, as shown in picture 4 - advertisement published on August 7, 1877, on page 2, number 180:

PICTURE 4 – An ad concerning the selling of a slave in *Jornal do Commercio*



The ad reads: “For rent – a 15-year-old female nigger with no bad habits, and especially suitable to take care of children, on 38 General Victorino street.”

In addition, the ads still ran through *Diário de Porto Alegre* and *Jornal de Pelotas*. In the newspapers, I found ads similar to those exemplified above, with linguistic indexes similar to those previously discussed. Another relevant aspect about the trajectories of the ads is their non-linearity. Using the technological resources that I have and the search carried out on the Google platform with the same linguistic indexes mentioned above, I

did not find ads regarding the sale of slaves.<sup>6</sup> It is a curious fact since it is historically known that enslavement entered the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and many ex-slaves continued to work in the fields, on the farms, or in the city in exchange for housing and food. The documentary *Menino 23*, indicates that such ads persisted in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup> I hypothesize that this ‘absence or invisibility’ of the ads under analysis has to do with the arrival of white-skin immigrants in that century. Moreover, according to Souza (2017, p. 44-45):

To be considered white was to be considered useful to the endeavor to modernize the country, hence the very possibility of whitening, closed in other systems with other characteristics. White was (and still is) an indicator of the existence of a series of moral and cultural attributes rather than the color of a skin. In a Europeanizing society, becoming white means to share the dominant values of that culture, to be its support. Prejudice, in this sense, is the presumption that someone of African origin is “primitive”, “uncivilized”, incapable of performing the activities expected of a member of a society that was “civilized” by European and Western standards.

On the one hand, another reason for this absence of ads during the period mentioned is related to this process of modernization of Brazil and with abolition, this type of ad would indicate backwardness. On the other hand, the dictatorship itself prevented it from clearly handling the racial issue. With the country in the process of modernization or formation as a nation, the discourse of miscegenation was even more recurrent, since it intended to indicate to the world a country in which the mixture of races was harmonious and racism was ‘non-existent’. Added to this is the erasing of a series of documentations and the traces of the enslavement process after it, as if the purposeful silence on it did not bring the wounds to the sidelines. Thus, these kinds of ads would not be allowed in this situation.

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<sup>6</sup> Brazilian Slavery was officially prohibited by Lei Áurea, Imperial Law Number 3.353, which was sanctioned on May 13<sup>th</sup>, 1888. However, it did not change the lives of black people at that moment. In fact, there was no kind of policy to include them into society; they were forced to provide for their livelihoods by themselves, but they were not allowed to study or to vote, for example.

<sup>7</sup> Many documents about slavery were destroyed in the past, and because of that, there is not much information about the slavery business during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, it seems that this kind of business continued to occur, but not in an open market as in the past.

As mentioned above, I came across some ads that were posted in the commercial network *Mercado Livre*, a Brazilian general sales market, in the years of 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015. Although these years constitute a period governed by the Brazilian Constitution that guarantees the rights of all, the textual trajectory of the 19<sup>th</sup> century ads is resumed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and runs through *Mercado Livre*, *O Globo*, *Extra*, *Veja*, *Portal Geledés*, *Blogueiras Negras* and several other online spaces that address the racial issue. In newspapers, blogs, and magazines, texts were found aimed at denouncing the ads posted in *Mercado Livre*, such as that in picture 5, indicating that the trajectory is also conflicting:

PICTURE 5 – News report on *Veja* magazine on January 10<sup>th</sup> 2014



The headline reads as follows: “Government wants investigation on the ad that sold ‘niggers for 1 real’ on *Mercado Livre*.” Even though these ads are prohibited and illegal – as their authors took the risk of facing the penalties provided by Brazilian legislation, they were found along the trajectory in *Mercado Livre* and ‘liked’ on Facebook as mentioned above. As for the site’s metapragmatics, in terms and conditions of use<sup>8</sup> of the *Mercado Livre* platform, there are clauses that prohibit the marketing of people:

<sup>8</sup> For further information, see: <https://www.mercadolivre.com.br/ajuda/991>.

*Mercado Livre*, due to violation of the legislation in force or to the General Terms and Conditions of use of *Mercado Livre*, depending on the situation, may, without prejudice to other measures, refuse any request to register, warn, suspend, temporarily or permanently, a User's account and/or ads, or apply a penalty that negatively impacts her/his reputation. Users are prohibited to advertise or purchase products that are prohibited or violate current legislation, and are considered prohibited products by the site.

Without prejudice to other applicable measures, *Mercado Livre* may warn, suspend, temporarily or definitively, the account of a User, cancel her/his ads or apply a penalty that has a negative impact on her/his reputation, at any time, initiating legal actions and/or suspending the provision of its services if she/he engages in fraudulent or malicious acts.

Although Facebook ads were not found, I also introduce the terms and policies of the social network that indicate the illegality of ads concerning the trade of human life:

You may not use our Products to make or share anything:  
That it is illegal, misleading, discriminatory or fraudulent;  
That breaks or violates another person's rights.

Compliance with law: you represent and warrant that your access to or use of the Facebook Products for commercial purposes is in compliance with all applicable laws, rules, and regulations. You further represent that you will restrict access to your content and applications in accordance with all applicable laws, rules, and regulations.

In the course of these ads on the *Mercado Livre* website, even if not allowed by the law and policy of these online platforms, the ads announce the marketing of black people as slaves. Although the ads have a new design, as we shall see below, I noticed that the discourses on slaves present in the 1854, 1877, and so on, are entextualized in the ads published in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, specifically in the years of 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015. Linguistic indexes, such as 'slave', and a descriptive structure similar to the texts of the past were identified. In 1854, the ebony bodies were considered objects and as such it was allowed to advertise their sale in newspapers. Thus, there is a denotational meaning in the texts.

However, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is a connotative and racist sense in those ads under analysis, even after the abolition of slavery, with the constitution guaranteeing equal rights for all Brazilians, even with Laws

10.639 and 11.645/08 which regulate the teaching of contents at schools, aimed at the reality of black people, the criminalization of racism, compensation for the crime of racism, and the various public policies of including black people in society (health and education for example). These criminal ads indicate a structural racism permeating Brazilian society. I also point out that with the advent of CITs, newspapers and libraries have made various collections available on the network. Thus, with a simple click on the screen, it is possible to have access to various ads about the commercialization of slaves in the newspapers of the past.

### **5. The Entextualizations of Slavery Discourse and Indexical Orders on Online Ads**

To understand the context in which the analyzed entextualizations occurred, I present here some relevant aspects concerning the inclusion of the black population in Brazil. By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of this century, federal, state, and municipal governments had implemented public policies for the black population. In Fernando Henrique Cardoso's government, the first quotas for the Rio Branco Institute were implemented and the Antirracism Law was reformulated. In Lula's government, the first public policies for education were sanctioned as quotas for admission to federal universities, Law 10.639 was implemented for the inclusion of Afro-Brazilian contents in the school curriculum, besides the creation of a specific secretary, Secretary of Promotion Policy of Social Equality, and the formulation of the Racial Equality Statute. Also in that government, there were appointments of black ministers, such as Joaquim Benedito Barbosa Gomes (Supreme Court), Benedita da Silva (Social Assistance), Gilberto Gil (Culture), Marina Silva (Environment), and Matilde Soares (National Secretariat for Policies for the Promotion of Racial Equality).

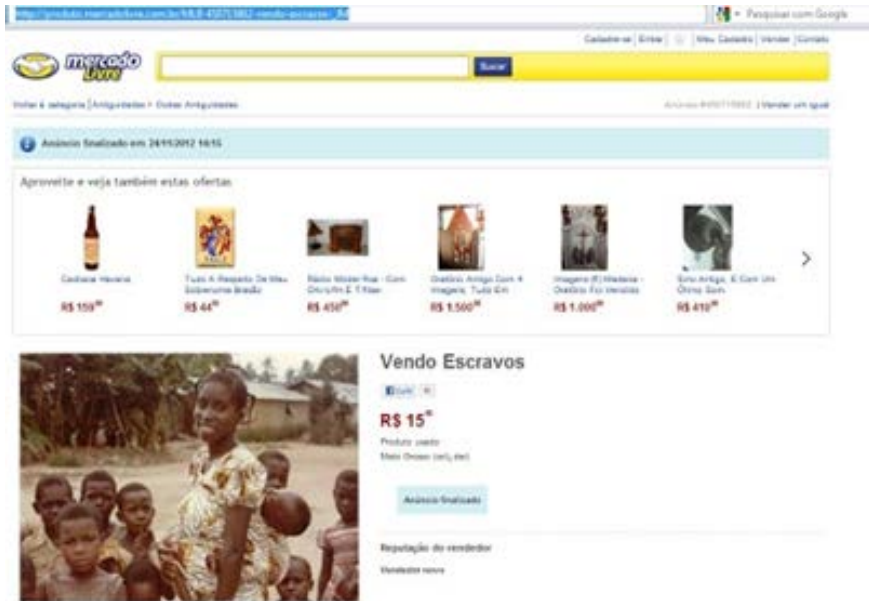
Finally, in Dilma's government, racial quotas were implemented for entering the federal public service and postgraduate programs, as well as specific health policies for the black population and the struggle against racism (Health Unified System without racism) and the appointment of black ministers such as Orlando Silva (Sports), Luiza Bairros (National Secretariat for Policies for the Promotion of Racial Equality), and Nilma Lino Gomes (National Secretariat for Policies for the Promotion of Racial Equality – second term). With these actions, the country had a black



representation in political spaces and power, a rare fact in previous periods and which gave rise to an even more violent racism, since black people began to occupy spaces ‘which are not meant to be theirs or for them’. It is in this context of social inclusion of the black people, as well as of racism, that the ads began to be published on *Mercado Livre*.

The first entextualization of enslavement discourses are found in this ad whose expiration date was November 24, 2012, at 2:45 pm. There is no indication of the exact date of publication. Throughout its circulation, it was also shared and ‘liked’ on Facebook, but the number of ‘likes’ is not visible in the image, just the blue symbol of the social network that also prohibits this type of posting:

PICTURE 6 – Ad 1 – November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2012



The ad reads as follows: “Slaves for sale.” In the foreground of picture 6, the faces of black children from different age groups are exposed, with nine boys and a woman with a baby on her back. Aligned with the photo, there is information about the products indicated by the linguistic indexes “for sale” pointing to the type of negotiation; “slaves” and “used product” show the kind and the quality of the product. The devaluation and dehumanization of people in the photo are reinforced by the price: “R\$15”. The whimsy value marks the value of these black lives, unlike the values of

the slaves at the time of the empire, but the discourse of delegitimation of human life from the past is entextualized in the ad. There is no worry about exposing and sharing the faces of these people with thousands of users.

At the top of the ad, one can see the site's logo in yellow, a color that symbolizes money, and just below in the background, other products that can be purchased. The indices written in blue "category: antiques and other antiques" indicate the sector to which the products – that is, the black people of the photo – belong, further reinforcing the dehumanization and objectification of these lives, in the present times and with all legislation that places them as people, that is, that contradicts these discourses. With the clean design, the goods, that is, the black people, are in evidence.

In the second ad, picture 7, there is only one black boy in the foreground. The focus of the image is on his face. The geographic area covered is written in smaller letters: various Brazilian capitals are listed. In the entextualization, there is also similarity with the ads from 1854, specifically in the qualification of the merchandise, as we will see next. This illegal ad was found on the same business site as picture 6 and was also 'liked' on Facebook. It was posted around March 10, 2013 and it was 'liked' five thousand times on Facebook, signaling the endorsement of this text by an audience that can consider 'natural' the trivialization of human life:

PICTURE 7 – Ad 2 – March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2013



### Negro Africano Legitimo, Unico Dono, Bom Estado De Saude

Curte 5 mil

#### Preço a combinar

Negro Negroso, Bom Para Seniços Domesticos, Braçaiis, Pedreiro E Etc

Anúncio finalizado

#### Área de Cobertura

Acre, Alagoas, Amapá, Amazonas, Bahia, Ceará, Distrito Federal, Espírito Santo, Estados Unidos, Goiás, Maranhão, Mato Grosso, Mato Grosso do Sul, Minas Gerais, Paraná, Paraíba, Pará, Pernambuco, Piauí, Rio Grande do Norte, Rio Grande do Sul, Rio de Janeiro, Rondônia, Roraima, Santa Catarina, Sergipe, São Paulo, Tocantins

The ad reads as follows: "Authentic Black African Guy, Owned just once, in good health. Good for domestic and manual services, bricklayer etc." As in the 1854's ads, the product is described as "Authentic Black African Guy", "owned just once" and "in good health", showing his state and quality. The indices "good for domestic and manual services, bricklayer"

relate to the functions of the merchandise. The linguistic features in red, “Price negotiable”, emphasize the dehumanization and objectification of the boy as in the previous ads. However, as the price is not revealed, it can mean that because he is young, having had a single owner, his price is higher. Another possibility is the seller’s willingness to negotiate the value of the consumer good.

I emphasize that the two analyzed ads move the textual trajectory by incorporating the elements of *Mercado Livre* within the photos, the prices, the forms of payment, the colors of the website, transforming black lives into products and causing racism to emerge. In addition, there are at least two crimes of racism being committed, since Brazilian laws do not allow either the sale of people or racism. The audience also committed and condoned those crimes by ‘liking’ the ads. Furthermore, this audience did not observe the rules of the sites, and took the risk of being suspended from the same. Another relevant point is the smiles in the pictures, suggesting that slavery is a good aspect for black people, such smiles are incoherent with the hard process suffered by the black slaves in that moment.

This same transformation of people into products such as racism is present in pictures 8 and 10. As for the third entextualization, picture 8, the ad<sup>9</sup> was posted on *Veja* magazine on January 10, 2014, at 12:50 a.m., in a news report denouncing the ad, was also found on the same sales site, in the cited social network and had 2.100 ‘likes’ that endorse the sale. In the foreground of the ad is the image of two black girls and a young man with braided hair and smiling:

PICTURE 8 – Ad 3 – January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014



**Negros Com Diversas Utilidades**  
 Curtir (2,1 mil)

**R\$ 1<sup>00</sup>**  
 Produto usado - 14 vendidos - Rio De Janeiro (Rio De Janeiro)

Pagar com **mercado pago** (VISA   | Mais opções)

Envio a combinar com o vendedor.

Vendedor novo

Compra protegida. [Mais informações.](#)

<sup>9</sup> For further information, see: <https://veja.abril.com.br/tecnologia/governo-quer-investigacao-sobre-anuncio-que-oferecia-negros-a-1-real-no-mercado-livre/>.

The ad reads: “Negroes for different tasks.” Just like in the other entextualizations, the linguistic features “negroes for different tasks” and “used product” point to the functionality and quality of the merchandise. “14 sold” shows the quantity already sold and the city of Rio de Janeiro as the supplier of the product. The symbols of payment, delivery, and seller of the site are incorporated in the text along the course carried out by the ad, indicating the appropriation of the platform’s indexes.

According to Melo and Rocha (2015, p. 106), “understanding that language is a repetition of speech acts that has the power to produce or annihilate lives means that what we do with language cannot be separated from materiality.” In this sense, I agree with Butler (2018, p. 35) when she says that “a statement gives existence to what it declares (illocutionary) or causes a series of events to occur as a consequence of (perlocutionary) statement.” During the analysis of the entextualizations, *Mercado Livre*’s ads categorize and turn black people (men, boys, women, children, babies) into goods, products that can be sold on a sales website or ‘be played with’ on the same website. Because performativity can annihilate or produce lives, black lives are annihilated and reproduced as objects and consumer goods in the entextualizations of the enslavement discourses.

On the web, the ads from 1854 go through faster trajectories and emphasize discourses and texts about the inferiority of black people since 1530. On the other hand, the web itself is a contestation space, as the news report shows. Nonetheless, throughout the analysis, one can see the indexical orders of devaluation, dehumanization, and the precariousness of the black lives illustrated in the texts that order the ads. All of these aspects also indicate the slavery heritage that has constructed black lives as inferior for centuries and the structural racism Brazilian people live in. Contesting the discourses that have traveled since slavery requires new narratives and counter-discourse, as one can observe in various blogs, channels, and websites. In the next report, there is a denouncement of the racist ad, which is perceived as a dispute in the process of entextualization and of the construction of meanings, as indicated in picture 9:

## PICTURE 9 – News report contesting the ad

veja

Brumadinho Vale Jair Bolsonaro Revista Newsletter Palavras

### Governo quer investigação sobre anúncio que oferecia “negros a 1 real” no Mercado Livre

Empresa afirma que já passou informações a órgão público para apuração. Autor do anúncio pode ser condenado a prisão, segundo prevê lei

Por Da Redação  
10 Jan 2014, 12h50

Negros Com Diversas Utilidades

f Cartão (2.1 mil)

**RS 1<sup>00</sup>**

Produto usado - 14 vendidos - Rio De Janeiro (Rio De Janeiro)

Pagar com mercado pago ( VISA Mastercard Ma

Envie a combinar com o vendedor.

Vendedor novo

Compra protegida Mais informações

In this report, it is possible to understand that an investigation can be instituted (“Government wants investigation on the ad that sold ‘Negroes for 1 real’ on *Mercado Livre*”). This entextualization breaks with the linear and natural aspects of the online ad circulation by contesting the discourses that construct Black Brazilian people as bodies that do not matter or lives that value less than others. Another relevant aspect is that the requirement for investigation indicates that such racist ads cannot circulate on the online general sales market at the present moment. In the centuries of slavery, black people were constructed discursively as animals; however, according to the Brazilian Constitution, this speech act is no longer allowed. The contesting came from users as the following excerpt highlights and shows the positioning of *Mercado Livre*:

The ad was reported by users of the service and of the social networks on Sunday. According to *Mercado Livre*, the ad was withdrawn from the site on Monday after the service was communicated. “Users who violate *Mercado Livre*’s rules will have their registration canceled”, the company said in a statement.

The company’s note showing the effects of such ads indicated by the linguistic indexes “Users who violate *Mercado Livre*’s rules will have their registration canceled” show the concern of the company in emphasizing the punishment to users who break the policies and the terms, but not necessarily to combat racism.

In this contestation, language is essential, specifically if we understand it as action as proposed by Austin (1962), Derrida (1972), and Butler (1997). The analyzed ads, throughout their trajectory, carried out racist actions against black people, demolishing them, turning them into cheap and devalued goods. According to Butler, the point is not only the action of language, but the way it acts and the fact that “it acts in a powerful way” (BUTLER, 2018, p. 35). The relationship between language and power, discussed by Melo and Moita Lopes (2015), when addressing the black population in the media, can help one to understand the actions and their effects along the textual trajectory and the entextualization of the enslavement discourses:

The negative way in which we are named by nicknames; the rapid relationship between being black and criminal we see in print and television, in social networks and in society’s everyday life; the racist stereotypes and how quickly they are learned by children, through language, and incorporated into the Brazilians’ subjectivity; the association between being black and ugliness, withdrawing us the right to feel beautiful, among others, is a matter of language and has a relation with power, whiteness, racism and inequalities. (GOMES; MELO, 2016, p. 121)

In 2014, I found the penultimate entextualization of the discourses of the devaluation of black people, which appeared in a publication on July 5<sup>th</sup>. This publication received 152 ‘likes’ on Facebook and was legitimized by an audience that can understand such ads as ‘funny’ or ‘jokes’, arousing laughter. As in the first, ad 2, the logo of the sales site in yellow highlights the space where the marketing occurs, that is, it left the slave markets and occupies the web:

PICTURE 10 – Ad 4 – July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2014

The image is a screenshot of a Mercado Livre advertisement. At the top, the Mercado Livre logo is visible in a yellow banner. Below the banner, there are navigation links: "Voltar à categoria | Agro, Indústria e Comércio > Reciclagem" and "Anúncio #53286996". The main content of the ad is titled "Negros Com Diversas Utilidades" and shows a price of "R\$ 1<sup>00</sup>". Below the price, it says "Produto usado - 1 vendido - Rio De Janeiro (Rio De Janeiro)". There are icons for payment methods (Mercado Pago, Visa, Mastercard, Boleto) and shipping options. At the bottom, there is a "Comprar" button and social media sharing icons.

The ad reads; “Negroes for different tasks.” In picture 10, one can see two black children on a dirt or sand floor in the foreground; on the right is the product information, such as the rate – R\$ 1.00 – in red, the payment and shipping methods, which emphasize precarization. As in the previous ad, some linguistic indices repeat themselves, such as “negroes for different tasks”, which also indicate the functionality of the products. The terms “agro category”, “industry”, “trade (recycling)”, “used product”, “R\$ 1.00”, and “payment methods” show, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the dehumanization mentioned earlier. These ads give a “truth-effect of power, knowledge, and discourse plots that are culturally and historically specific” (BORBA, 2014, p. 448).

The same ad in picture 10 was entextualized in a news report by G1. This report shows the effects of this type of publication and crime. The author, as shown in picture 11, was punished. The indexical orders of dehumanization, objectification, abjection, inferiority, devaluation, and precarization of black lives index norms observed in a not-so-distant past. Like any ordering, it can be contested as occurs, for example, in the following entextualization:

PICTURE 11 – News report on G1



The title of the news report (“Author of false ad for the sale of black people to R\$1 is arrested in Rio”), published on January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2014 at 9:07 pm, shows that the racist publication was investigated, and its author found and punished, contrary to the legitimacy of the advertisement signaled by ‘likes’. In addition, the excerpt below shows the type of crime for which the

16-year-old would respond, and because he/she was a minor, the mother was present throughout the testimony:

According to the DRCI's chief delegate, Gilson Perdigão, the minor gave testimony at the unit accompanied by his mother and confessed to being the author of the publication. The content of the interrogation was not disclosed. The case will be referred to the Childhood and Youth Court. According to the Civil Police, he must respond for an infraction analogous to the crime typified by the article of Law 7.716 (Practice, induce or incite discrimination, prejudice of race, color, ethnicity, religion, or national origin).

In the analysis of the two news reports, the entextualization of the enslavement discourses does not provoke the laughter, the humor or the intended 'joke', because they are part of the mentioned indexical orders, part of a set of signs with present and past that legitimize possible statements. Drawing from Butler, (2018, p. 37), I can say "the lived modes of embodiment we have acquired over time [...] can prove themselves ways to reconcile these norms and even break them" as the entextualizations of the analyzed articles show.

Finally, the fifth ad<sup>10</sup> was published in the report (complaint) of *Extra* newspaper on November 6, 2015, and was found in the same online spaces. According to the sales site, the posting occurred at dawn on November 6<sup>th</sup> and was removed at 7:00 am:

PICTURE 10 – Ad 5 – November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2015



<sup>10</sup> For further information, see: <https://extra.globo.com/casos-de-policia/anuncio-do-mercado-livre-com-mensagem-racista-retirado-do-ar-17983873.html>.



The ad reads: “Monkey Baby from Africa. R\$ 1.50. Buy it in Mercado Livre- R\$ 1.50 – You can find more products in Arts and Crafts; Crafts, Stickers, Decorative Products.” In the foreground, there is a black baby sitting and smiling (blurred image to preserve the child’s identity). The linguistic indexes “monkey baby”, “crafts”, “stickers”, and “decorative products” show the dehumanization of the black boy identified in the other texts under analysis. It also shows the slavery heritage that is present and can be observed in Brazilian society today, as mentioned in the third assumption in the beginning of this article. If we observe the multimodal text, the green color can signal the place where this ‘nonhuman’ may live, that is, in the jungle. “Africa” suggests both his origin and the erasure of the several African countries that make up the continent. The price (“R\$ 1.50”) and the form of payment (“12 installments”) show the lowest value of such a life. Racism does not spare even babies.

Considering the empirical material, it is possible to notice that in this mutation of texts, when the discourses of the 1854 ads on the sale of slaves are entextualized in *Mercado Livre*, the ads receive the semiotic indexes of this sale site, such as: product images, form of payment (cards, bills), vendor (new or old), delivery (where and means of goods delivery), and product category (gardening, recycling etc.). On the other hand, these old ads leave, throughout the entextualizations, similar predications and descriptions to the past; in other words, texts carry their features to other texts and spaces (BAUMAN; BRIGGS, 1990). Based on the conception of language according to which it is action, and that by the processes of iterability and citationality, proposed by Derrida (1972), truths are naturalized in these texts. As for the chronotope, it invokes parts of the history of Brazilian slavery, pointing especially to slave trades, the dehumanization of black lives, and the transformation of people into objects. With the potential of the web, there is no way to predict where these ads may have arrived and what effects they can cause.

Another relevant point to be observed is the construction of race that permeates the material under analysis. In the entextualizations, intersected with gender and age, the black race – based on Mbembe’s (2015, p. 10) assumption, that is, race is an invention and constructed – is now constructed by negative, nonhuman, inferior, and objectified performative speech acts. They are sometimes constituted as people who suffer racism that is denounced and punished.

Moreover, studies on race show that addressing the racial issue is dealing with the other, and in the Eurocentric conception, the others are black people, indigenous people etc., but never white people. In this sense, according to Miranda (2017, p. 63), “the rule is not to think about, not to reflect on oneself and on the different other. Inequality is naturalized, internalized as normal in everyday life.” If race is an invention also constructed in language and conducted in performative and corporeal speech acts, they mark us. In this sense, it is essential to investigate and reflect on the white race, especially in the historical, social, discursive, and performative construction of discourses on whiteness and its effects.

According to Piza (2002), quoted by Bastos (2016, p. 225), “white invisibility is tied to an idea of racial neutrality, since whiteness has been taken as a model of humanity. In that perspective, it would be ‘natural’ for white people to be as they are, understanding something they would not need to reflect, precisely because they were within the norm.” Following the same logic, it would be natural to produce ads that portray black people as abject and non-human to those who ‘liked’ the ads – regardless of those black people’s gender and age. Nevertheless, the news reports show the effects of unpredictable entextualizations in this textual genre. Entextualizations are part of accusations and punishments, expected actions considering the socio-historical moment in which such publications were issued. In this light, the reproduction of the material is conflictive, contested, and questioned even judicially.

## 6. ‘Final’ Words

As Mbembe (2015) mentions, there is a gap between the white race and the white ‘lives’ towards the other races and lives. It is also worth challenging the privileges of whiteness that are silenced, though noticeable, in our lives. According to Santos (2000), everything depends on discourse; thus, racism and racist discourses that circulate in social networks, ‘in playful’ ads, erode our society just as the termite erodes wood. It seems essential to me to challenge racism from within racial logics. It is not to invert it, but to gnaw at it, questioning the naturalizations that identify white people as superior and black people as inferior, objects, and inhuman.

According to Butler (1997, p. 5), “someone ‘exists’ not only for being recognized, but also, at first, for being recognizable.” Challenging the

necropolitics implanted for nonwhite lives means to recognize that black, indigenous, gypsy, Asian, and other lives also matter, and to comprehend more deeply the complexity of the discursive and social practices of these times.

In the era of global mobility, texts in transit are those that index previously mobilized norms. According to Mbembe (2018), the state is not the only one that has the right to kill; the army can also regulate and carry out killings. Society can do this, metaphorically, by circulating ads such as those discussed in this text. Hence, it is imperative to contest and denature such texts and discourses. In this sense, language is primordial, since it is possible to do other performances and build a fairer and more diverse society in and through language. The performativity of language, the repetition that fails, can make it possible to break away from discourses that lead to suffering in which the transgressive, the new, and the subversive are possibilities of new paths for a society as racist as ours. According to Angelou (1978), mentioned in the beginning of this article, while necropower and necropolitics try to kill black people's lives, it is important to point out and eliminate narratives that attempt to disempower black bodies.

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