

# FABULATION AS A PEDAGOGICAL POSSIBILITY: WORKING TOWARDS A POLITICS OF AFFIRMATION

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## ABSTRACT

The wave of student-led protests that have taken place across the South African higher education landscape over the last two years provides us, as teacher educators, with the opportune time to reflect on how our pedagogical practices relate to larger societal transformative imperatives. We engage with the relationship between pedagogical practices and social transformation by attending to questions concerning identity, intersubjectivity, and group relations. We argue that conventional pedagogical practices that work towards social justice are entangled with and regulated by identity politics, and that such a position equates these pedagogical practices with a politics of negation and resentment. By drawing on Deleuze's interpretation of the concept of fabulation and Deleuze and Guattari's argument that desire is a positive social force that enables experimentation to occur, we re-imagine the idea of a pedagogy as a politics of affirmation. Such politics, we argue, makes possible the constitution of new social collectivities that are able to escape the gravitational pull of identity politics and resentment. We posit that, in the midst of student protests, this is an important first step in generating the conditions to experiment with the creation of a different, more socially just future.

**Keywords:** social justice education; desire; desiring-production; identity politics; subjected group; group-subject; *a people to come*; pedagogy



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## INTRODUCTION

Higher education in South Africa has been placed in a state of turmoil. What started in March 2015 as the #Rhodesmustfall (RMF) protest that emerged from the students' frustration with a perceived lack of transformation at the University of Cape Town (Hodes 2015), has ultimately found expression in September 2016 in countrywide student-led protests that have either derailed or led to the suspension of academic activities at various higher education institutions (Mbembe 2016). The trajectory of the protests seems to range from an initial frustration with a lack of transformation, to protests against a proposed increase in tuition fees in October 2015 (Nkosi 2015) and the demand for free and decolonised education since September 2016 (Manjra 2016). Although the #Feesmustfall 2016 movement has led to the temporary closing of some institutions, it is arguably not the abolishment of fees that stands central to universities' becoming sites of struggle. The RMF protest introduced a deep-seated sense of frustration with the lack of transformation in higher education; more specifically, it placed on the higher education agenda issues such as "the 'decolonization of the university', the social composition of academic staff, institutional culture, the inadequacy of state funding of higher education, the level and escalation of tuition fees, student debt, and the question of free higher education" (Badat 2015, 96). However, as higher education institutions have multiplex roles of social, political, epistemological and economic reform (Davids 2016), students' frustration also included a frustration with "the failure of racial transformation, the power of white privilege and the persistence of racial subordination" (Hodes 2015; cf. also Nyamnjoh 2015). This view is also shared by Moseneke (2016) who stated in a public lecture delivered at the University of South Africa that "[t]hrough the demand that fees must fall our youth are invoking a complex grievance about an incomplete and inchoate transition from colonial and racialized injustice to a society prefigured in the democratic project." The #Shimlapark incident of 22 February 2016, when a group of black protestors who disrupted a Varsity Cup rugby match were brutally beaten by white spectators on the campus of the University of the Free State, foregrounded how an assumed semblance of transformation is often underpinned by an ongoing struggle against racism (Nicholson 2016). As highlighted by Davids (2016), student protests not only foreground higher education's moral responsibility to present resistance, but to continuously push towards an unending and unpredictable process of transformation.

The national crisis on university campuses reflects the extent to which higher education has been (un)able "to serve a new social order, to meet pressing national needs, and to respond to new realities and opportunities" (DoE 1997, 1.1). Rather, it seems as if the transformative agenda to "lay the foundations for the development of a learning society which can stimulate, direct and mobilise the creative and intellectual energies ... towards meeting the challenge of reconstruction and development" (DoE 1997, 1.1) has resulted in a mobilised struggle for an *actual* transformation of higher education spaces. For us as teacher educators who aim to orientate our students towards social justice, this crisis re-centres the requirement for teacher education programmes

to “address ... the legacies of apartheid, by incorporating situational and contextual elements that assist teachers in developing competences that enable them to deal with diversity and transformation” (DHET 2015, 2.4). In particular, we are confronted with our understanding of how to teach social justice and how our pedagogical practices might contribute towards socially just transformation. It is in this regard that we, as teacher educators working with first-year, pre-service teachers have made two observations that have significance for thinking about the relationship between our pedagogical practices and social transformation. In particular, our observations stem from our involvement with a 12-credit generic module aimed at enabling first-year pre-service students to critically challenge their own identities in a diverse world by imagining the possibilities that exist for social responsiveness as agents of change.

## RESSENTIMENT AND THE IMPASSE OF IDENTITY

Although we acknowledged from the onset that the students bring to our class their own lived experiences from their upbringing, years of schooling and interactions with social relationships, we have observed that they also enter our teacher education programmes with an involuntary memory that draws on a hegemonic past. During difficult dialogues on issues related to race and discrimination, we noticed how the students tend to claim that since they were born after 1994, they were not part of apartheid. Although this is a valid claim, it was noticeable how some students use this claim as a rationalisation to distance themselves from a past in which certain people enjoyed privilege, while the basic human rights of others were violated—a tendency that Steyn (2012, 21; cf. also Le Roux 2014) refers to as the ignorance contract whereby “different groups have different interests at stake in what they, and others, are to know or take as known.” In general, however, the students seem to be oblivious of how their understanding of themselves and of others is informed by an involuntary memory based on indirect knowledge. Indirect knowledge, however, is paradoxical in the sense that it is mediated and transmitted by those who experienced either the atrocities or the benefits of apartheid, to a generation with no experience thereof (Jansen 2009, 148). Whilst the authenticity of indirect knowledge is seldom disrupted, we have noticed its powerful resonance in the lives of our students. In particular, we have observed how the collective nature of an involuntary memory compels “the regulation of social flows or differences under the strict regime of ... identitarian organization” (Carlin and Wallin 2014, xii). The organisation of affinity and academic groups according to racialised, gendered and language identities, signifies how students regulate difference by upholding their socially constructed identities. By implication, pre-service teachers enter our teacher education programmes as subjected groups (Guattari 2015); as groups who have received their identities from outside and carry with them imposed hierarchical, fixed roles as group members (Bogue 2007, 97). Couched in identity politics and seemingly oblivious of how a (in)voluntary identitarian organisation aims “to include at each moment a certain

number of individuals and to exclude others” (Bogue 2007, 92), the students seem to remain caught up in a present that strongly reminds of the hegemonic past they so desperately want to distance themselves from. In making this observation we remain mindful of the complex and fluid relationship between individual subjectivity and group subjectivity. The distinction between what Guattari (1984) refers to as subjected and subject groups is not absolute but rather emphasises their dynamic nature. Just as subjected groups change into subject groups in “the flash of a common praxis” (Sartre in Genosko 2002, 86), so too does “the dependent [subjected] group permanently represent a potential sub-whole of the subject group” (Guattari 1984, 37).

The second observation entails our pedagogical practices. With regard to our understanding of social justice education and our pedagogical orientation, we have observed a strong entanglement with identity politics. Drawing on the work of theorists such as Beverly Daniel Tatum (2000), Iris Marion Young (2011) and Hardiman, Jackson and Griffin’s *Conceptual Foundations for Social Justice Education* (2007), we tend to engage in the binary logic of agents and targets, oppressors and oppressed, exploiters and exploited. In our social justice practices we use social identity markers such as gender, class, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation to define structures of oppression in society (cf. Quiñones-Rosado 2010). When we proceed alongside our students from a position of subjected groups, we work with the assumption that in order to act against social injustices, we need to identify what is lacking. Thus, by focusing on what is lacking in society, we work with presupposed relations whereby “‘special’ groups are to be recognised as different and thus as meriting special representation, special rights of access to goods and services” (Tormey 2006, 146). In our attempt to orientate our students towards social justice, our pedagogical practices subsequently aim to foreground social exclusion and cultivate a commitment to address economic scarcity and psychological unfulfilment.

Arguably, our understanding of social justice education is premised on “systems of classification” and our pedagogical practices are informed by “a politics of *ressentiment*, one stemming from the reactive desire to ‘catch up’” (Tormey 2006, 140, 146). The equation of desire with lack not only foregrounds acts of representation, but positions difference as ontologically secondary to identity. By implication, we have entangled ourselves in a politics of negation whereby identity can only be constituted through a dialogical process of negation of the other—which is understood as an ontologically separate entity (Braidotti 2013; Deleuze 1994). Subsequently as teacher educators we not only perpetuate identitarian organisation, but we also imprison ourselves along with our students in collectivities regulated by “habit and custom, by those timeworn assumptions, practices and institutions that function like instincts, rendering social life automatic and somnambulistic” (Bogue 2007, 93).

Experiencing a discomfort with “a *passive* pleading by those charged with representing the interests of the oppressed and marginalized group” (Tormey 2006, 146; emphasis added), and in particular with the way the politics of negation finds expression in our pedagogical practices, we started to grapple with the possibility of disengaging

“the emergence of the subject from the logic of negation” by positioning subjectivity as “affirmative otherness” (Braidotti 2011, 323). Based on our observations and in light of the current student protests, two questions emerged for us:

- How can we create the opportunity for us and our students to break from the continuities of intergenerationally received stories and hegemonic histories through counter-actualising the regulation of difference through identity politics?
- How can we move from understanding social justice and pedagogical practices premised on a politics of identity and negation towards experimentation and a politics of affirmation?

## EXPERIMENTATION WITH ESCAPING A LOGIC OF NEGATION

In considering these two questions we want to transform the classroom into an experiential and experimental space that potentially offers both us, as teacher educators, and the pre-service teachers an opportunity to move beyond identity politics and a logic of negation. Serres (cited in Van der Tuin and Dolphijn 2010, 156) points out that “[a]n idea opposed to another idea is always the same idea, albeit affected by the negative sign. The more you oppose one another, the more you remain in the same framework of thought.” With this in mind we are specifically interested in exploring how our pedagogical practices could enable a reconsideration of the centrality of identity politics by “disengage[ing] the emergence of the subject from the logic of negation” (Braidotti 2011, 323). In thinking about identity we endeavour to disentangle ourselves from the *dualism* inherent in the Hegelian logic of negation, which we perceive to inform our social justice education practices, by positing socially just pedagogy as a socio-political praxis that is concerned with forging alternative future collective subjectivities. In the light of this we consider how the concepts of “desire” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 1987) and “fabulation” (Bogue 2007, 2011; Deleuze 1989, 1995) may inform our pedagogical practices and provide the opportunity to disentangle from “the gravitational pull of established identities and practices that unnecessarily limit the question of how a life might be composed” (Wallin 2011, 105).

We start from the premise that philosophical concepts, such as desire and fabulation, can be employed “for productively escaping those impasses of thought and expression to which life is made to habitually conform” (Carlin and Wallin 2014, xxi). In taking Carlin and Wallin’s claim under consideration we thus seek to employ the concepts of desire and fabulation not as a means to attain some truth or provide a “true” representation of reality, but rather to attempt to “create a perspective through which the world takes on a new significance” (May 2003, 142). That is, creating “a world through the active extension of thinking the possible” (Wallin 2012, 150). It is the creation of different perspectives that makes possible new ways of being; of becoming a *different* “collectivity that reconfigures group relations in a polity superior to the present” (Bogue

2011, 77). By drawing on such an understanding of how concepts function, we seek to experiment with the emergence of *different* future-orientated socio-political collectivities that a *different* way of thinking about our pedagogical practices could make possible.

## DESIRE AND BECOMING

In starting to think differently about our pedagogical practices, we take up the concept of desire as an affirmative and productive force (Deleuze and Guattari 1983). An understanding of desire as an affirmative force is a conscious break from a perception of desire as “the negative law of lack, the external rule of pleasure, and the transcendent ideal of phantasy” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 155) developed in the libidinal frameworks of Freud and Lacan. In contrast, Deleuze and Guattari (1987, 155) purport that “[t]here is, in fact, a joy that is immanent to desire ... a joy that implies no lack or impossibility.” Desire is furthermore understood to be a productive force in that it enables connections to be made. For Deleuze and Guattari, “to desire is to connect with others” (May 2005, 124). But since the connections that are made are not pre-given they enable experimentation, movement and creativity and thus are intimately entangled with transformative processes. The transformative possibilities that flow from such an understanding of desire positions it in the realm of *becoming*.

Deleuze proposes becoming as the continual production of “difference in time and as time” (May 2003, 147) and, as such, it is the “very dynamism of change” (Stagoll 2010, 26). For Deleuze (1983, 23), “there is no being beyond becoming” and as such becoming is the affirmation of being—not being as understood in terms “of stable identities but as a matter of whatever it is that founds those identities” (May 2003, 148). Since desire and the connectivity it makes possible stand central to becoming, becoming can be positioned as an affirmative process through which subjectivity (identity) is produced. Such an understanding of the unfolding of subjectivity inverts the more commonplace understanding of identity as stable, self-contained and constituted through the process of negation. It can be said then that as a transformative potential, “becoming is the process of desire” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 272).

The movement of desire, as implied in the preceding truncated discussion, is not dependent on the agency of individuals but is relocated outside the individual as a pre-personal and social force (Deleuze and Parnet 2007; Zembylas 2007). Desire then is defined as machinic and assembled (Ross 2010). It is machinic in that it allows for “continuous connections and intensive relations, incessantly transforming life” (Tamboukou 2008, 366). It is assembled in that it enables “processes of arranging, organising and fitting together” which produce complex arrangements “of objects, bodies, expressions, qualities, and territories that come together for varying periods of time” (Livesey 2010, 18). As affirmative, productive and machinic, the production of desire is understood as the production of the social field (Deleuze and Guattari 1983). In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari (1983) argue that there is no distinction between the

social production of reality and the desiring-production of fantasies that are said to be based on this reality. They aver that the “social field is immediately invested by desire, that it is the historically determined product of desire” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 29). Given this it means that “social production is purely and simply desiring-production itself” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 29). Desire then “is strictly immanent to a plane which it does not pre-exist, to a plane which must be constructed, where particles are emitted and fluxes combine” (Deleuze and Parnet 2007, 89).

## FABULATION AND THE INVENTION OF A PEOPLE TO COME

The second concept that we consider in order for us to move towards a politics of affirmation in our pedagogical practices is that of “fabulation.” The notion of fabulation is first discussed by Bergson (1935, 88) in *Two Sources of Morality and Reason* wherein he describes it as a negative force of “phantasmic representations” that generate superstitions. These representations play a key function in “closed societies” where, Bergson argues, “us and them” thinking is reinforced. This stands in contrast to “open societies” in which universal love for humankind is promoted. Bergson further avers that “closed societies” are regulated by habit, long-held assumptions and practices, and customs. This means that, in such societies, social life is rendered “automatic and somnambulistic” (Bogue 2007, 93). In “closed societies,” fabulation, as a support to religion, functions as a protective illusion that counteracts reason and judgement through “creating hallucinatory fictions” (Bogue 2007, 95). Thus, for Bergson, fabulation entails the act of conjuring myths in order to promote both individual contentment and social cohesion within “closed societies.” As a counteraction to intelligent reasoning, fabulation is posited as a negative force that “emerges in ... a vertiginous moment of disorientation in which images bypass reason and work directly on the senses to induce action” (Bogue 2007, 95). In contrast to Bergson’s negative use of the concept, Deleuze (1989) repositions it as a positive artistic force that enables the invention of *a people to come*. In considering Deleuze’s use of this concept, we will briefly consider three aspects thereof: first, what the act of fabulation entails; second, what the process of fabulation involves; and third, what fabulation produces.

In taking up “Bergson’s notion of fabulation and giv[ing] it a political meaning” (Deleuze 1995, 174), Deleuze employs the concept “to activate the ‘powers of the false’, to falsify orthodox truths in the process of generating emergent truths” (Bogue 2011, 81). As fabulation involves the “falsifying of orthodox truths,” it implies that the process of fabulation has to commence with resistance to the present moment. Such resistance, which is contingent and specific, is in a hope of a better future, although such a future cannot be predicted nor its justness assured. The counteracting of pre-established truths occurs through the invention of a collectivity that does not yet exist, *a people to come* (Deleuze 1989). Deleuze (1989) makes apparent the act of fabulation

through his reference to Rouch's *cinéma-vérité* and Perrault's "cinema of the lived." For Deleuze, the films of Rouch and Perrault dissolve the boundary between truth and fiction as both the filmmakers and the characters constantly become-other as they pass "the frontier between the real and the fictional" (Deleuze 1989, 153). This means, Deleuze argues, that "the Ego = Ego form of identity (or its degenerate form, them = them) ceases to be valid for the characters and for the film-maker, in the real as well as in the fiction. What allows itself to be glimpsed instead, by profound degrees, is Rimbaud's 'I is another' [*Je est un autre*]" (Deleuze 1989, 153). Thus, fabulation should not be understood as constituting either myth or imagery (Mengue 2008) but as an act that invokes the actual. In this instance, the actual is understood as "the process of becoming—that is to say, Other, our becoming-other" (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 112). Thus, the invention of *a people to come* cannot be accomplished by only one party (the filmmaker) but can only be accomplished through a collaborative effort with others (the film characters) (Deleuze 1995; see also Deleuze and Guattari 1987). It is through the process of fabulation, as portrayed in the films of Rouch and Perrault, that *a people* that is not already there (and that does not reterritorialise on the image of a people past) becomes constituted (Deleuze 1989; see also Deleuze 1995).

In considering the concept, Bogue (2011, 87) argues that fabulation is a "temporal process of becoming-other that is open-ended," and that the invention of *a people to come* is "toward some form of collectivity that is simultaneously metastable and temporarily stable, always engaged in the processes of negotiation, dissolution and reformation." The implications of these aspects of fabulation are twofold: first, collectivities that emerge through the act of fabulation cannot be prefigured but are contingent and immanent to the relations, both material and discursive, through which they become constituted. Second, because the space in which *a people to come* is constituted through "processes of negotiation, dissolution and reformation" (Bogue 2011, 87), and as fabulation is a temporal open-ended process, it follows that collectivities that emerge through this process and in this space are always experimental and thus always becoming-other. To become-other means "never to imitate, nor to 'do like', nor to conform to a model ... Becomings are not phenomena of imitation or assimilation" (Deleuze and Parnet 2007, 2).

As a pedagogical in(ter)vention, fabulation is understood to be an affective and creative activity of desiring-production. In recalling the relationship between desiring-production and the production of the social field, it is this desiring-production potential of fabulation that makes possible "a break from the closed circle of what seems possible [in closed societies and for subjected groups] and a disconcerting jump into the apparently impossible, which however, brings forth its own possibility in its very movement" (Bogue 2007, 96). And it is in such a "disconcerting jump" towards new possibilities that *a people to come* is invented. Importantly, Hroch (2014) points out that a people to come does not refer to a collectivity that resides in some distant future, but that the people in the present are already a people to come. For her this concept expresses

the “perpetual potentiality of becoming-other inherent to the present” (Hroch 2014, 50). A *people to come* resonates with Guattari’s (2015) group-subject in that it constitutes active collectivities that regulate themselves and, in so doing, make “new modes of social existence” (Bogue 2007, 97) possible. Group-subjects are transgressive because they subvert pre-established social relations, thus an identity based on involuntary memory and a hegemonic past. According to Genosko (2002, 92), the processes that enable the emergence of group-subjects are “fundamentally and radically social and political” and “require a great deal of courage and trust” from those involved. Furthermore, similar to the immanent emergence of *a people to come* through the act of fabulation, group-subjects are “extremely local, involving a local politics” (Genosko 2002, 92) and, as such, in this instance they are contingent on the pedagogical event.

In what follows we consider the concepts of desire, desiring-production, fabulation, and *a people to come* (group-subject), in relation to our own pedagogical practices. The concept of pedagogy is taken up in a Guattarian sense in that it is understood to be a political practice of counter-signification that seeks to dismantle fixed identities in favour of transversal subjectivities (Wallin 2012). Through our pedagogical practices we seek to do this by experimenting with creating the possibilities, for ourselves and the pre-service teachers, to move towards a politics of affirmative otherness. Such a move, we argue, allows for the invention of different social collectivities that could contribute creatively towards the agenda of social transformation.

## POSSIBILITIES OF FABULATION AS A PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE

When reconsidering our observations and in particular our thinking about social justice education through the lens of fabulation, we start to *re-imagine* our teaching pedagogies. In particular, and this foregrounds the aim of this article, we *imagine* the potential of de-centring identity politics in our pedagogical practices in the hope of forging alternative collective subjectivities. As noted, we have observed how the centrality of identity politics in our classroom practice not only perpetuates the notion of identity as being stable, self-contained and constituted through the process of negation, but that it feeds into a continued positioning of our students on different sides of historical and social divides. Premised on the concept of a divided world constructed in terms of polarities, our social justice pedagogies have thus far been primarily aimed at enabling students “to see the world through the perspective of those who are denied human justice or economic access or social justice” (Jansen 2009, 151). It is this equation of desire with lack and the subsequent assumption that social justice is about a commitment to addressing scarcity that foregrounded for us the somewhat impoverished way in which we have been looking at creativity in our social justice pedagogies. It is in this regard that we, as educators concerned with social justice, are excited about the possibilities of pedagogical practices informed by fabulation.

In relation to our pedagogical practices, we regard fabulation as an opportunity for both us and our students to break from those sedimented identities which are rooted in a hegemonic past and produced through an involuntary memory. For our students, their sedimented identities are *real*; they are *actual* in the sense that they are embodied with so-called empirical events experienced by the transmitters of indirect knowledge and powerfully carried on through identitarian organisation, whilst simultaneously strengthened by classroom pedagogies premised on the politics of negation. It is the act of fabulation that not only makes it possible to disinvest in imposed hierarchical, fixed roles as group members (Bogue 2007, 97), but enables us to redirect our pedagogical practices away from an assumed model for social interaction based on identity politics situated in a “utopian prefiguration of a future” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 112). Realising that our pedagogical practices have been informed by a politics of negation aimed at an *a priori* image of what we perceived as a socially just future, we have been blindsided on two accounts: our teaching pedagogies not only perpetuate a world divided into subjected and “closed” collectivities, but “a genuinely creative future has no predetermined shape and fabulation is the means whereby a creative future may be shaped” (Bogue 2011, 77). As “desire produces reality, or stated another way, desiring-production is one and the same thing as social production” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 30), we have arrived at a point where we have to consider what desire-production our pedagogical practices are rooted in and what desiring they make possible. Drawing on fabulation as a productive force of desire makes “it possible to disinvest the current social field” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 31). We are excited about creating opportunities through our pedagogical practices for students to counter-actualise the regulation of difference through identity politics. We are excited about the possibility to collaboratively fabulate in our pedagogical spaces along with our students different socio-collectivities that are premised on a politics of affirmation; thus to fabulate about “a future that does not simply reterritorialize within an image of the past” (Wallin 2011, 105).

## OPERATIONALISING FABULATION: PROCESS AND IMMANENCE

For us as teacher educators, the operationalisation of fabulation in our pedagogical practices goes beyond merely detaching “ourselves from familiar and cherished forms of identity” (Braidotti 2011, 321). Rather, it is about how the short-circuiting of “those impasses of thought and expression to which life is made to habitually conform” (Carlin and Wallin 2014, xxi) opens the space for creating new opportunities for experimenting with emerging social collectivities. By putting the concept of fabulation to work in our pedagogical practices, we can subsequently aim for our students to challenge the “us and them” thinking associated with subjected groups, whilst simultaneously experimenting with a multiplicity of lines of connections to become *different* socio-

political collectivities; thus to become group-subjects that reconfigure group relations through experimenting with different “ways of seeing, thinking, and acting in the world” (May 2003, 149). Pedagogical practices informed by fabulation potentially allow us to engage students through a praxis of experimentation and creation to generate a future as a community that is radically new and different from the present. As such, in reconfiguring our classroom pedagogies for socially just education, we subsequently place our hope in the potential of fabulation for the emergence of new and different social collectivities that make a different, and hopefully a more socially just, life possible.

However, although we want to be bold and even audacious in generating the conditions for experimenting with a different and more socially just future, we cannot simply ignore the preconceived assumptions we have thus far been working with in order to orientate our students towards social justice. Our entanglement with such assumptions is still very real and we subsequently need to contemplate creative ways for making possible the actualisation of the un-thought (the virtual) which ontologically exists independently of actualisations (cf. Johansson 2016, 446; Wallin 2011, 107). Consequently, we first need to disentangle ourselves and our classroom pedagogies from a prefigured blueprint of a socially just future which assumedly *becomes* possible as we sensitise our students through identity politics and a subsequent politics of negation to *become* socially just teachers who are prepared to address what is lacking in society. In this regard, we need to base our pedagogical practices on an understanding that the creation of the conditions to *become* a different collectivity is not grounded on a predetermined perception of what a socially just society and future ought to look like. The re-creation of our classrooms into spaces in which “processes of negotiation, dissolution and reformation” (Bogue 2011, 87) could constitute new collectivities, should subsequently not be regarded as a model for a socially just future. Rather, as emerging collectivities are always contingent and immanent to the relations through which they are constituted, our classrooms should become *in-between* spaces where we and our students can experiment by means of fabulative conversations about personal and collective futures (cf. Johansson 2016, 446–47). However, as fabulation is always a temporal, open-ended process and since becoming-other means “never to imitate, nor to ‘do like’, nor to conform to a model” (Deleuze and Parnet 2007, 2), emerging collectivities in this space will always remain experimental.

Thus, in thinking about social justice and our own pedagogical practices through the lens of fabulation, we need to emphasise the centrality of process and immanence. We subsequently argue that socially just pedagogical practices should make it possible to shift our gaze from an ideal model for social interaction and a society that is based on identity politics to a praxis of experimentation and creation immanent to the present. Our contention is that fabulation as a productive force of desire in such a praxis of “revolutionary action and passion” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 63) will make affirmative connectivity possible by subverting received truths and destabilising established identities. As teacher educators we need to consider the extent to which our

pedagogical practices enable affirmative connections, the invention of new subjectivities (identities), and the becoming of different socio-political collectivities premised on a politics of affirmation.

## OPERATIONALISING FABULATION: DESIRE AND RESISTANCE

Fabulation is a condition for experimentation and, by putting the concept to work, we seek to experiment with the emerging social collectivities that our pedagogical practices make possible. Our pedagogy should therefore not only provide the “lines of flight” to escape established territory (Johansson 2016, 448), but also the “lines of potential collective development” (Bogue 2007, 98). Intrinsically, fabulation as a pedagogy becomes a means for “separating us from the causal determinations of the past” (Bogue 2007, 105) by creating that which we are in the process of becoming. Because emergent socio-political collectivities are always future-orientated, we need to reconfigure our classrooms into a realm of experimentation. By reading our pedagogies through the lens of fabulation, they should create “a porthole to enter and connect to the not-yet-seen” (Johansson 2016, 447). Experimentation is, however, not a haphazard activity but is contingent on and specific to coordinates of resistance. For Deleuze and Guatarri (1994, 110) fabulation commences with resistance to the present in hope of a better future. As such, resistance through the lens of fabulation is always contingent and specific, and never has an external goal aimed at an assumed ideal. This understanding of resistance is of particular importance for re-imagining our socially just pedagogies.

Couched in identity politics, our classroom pedagogies have indeed been informed and driven by resistance. In this regard we acknowledge how our pedagogical practices originated in a preconfigured ideal of a socially just society and have been aimed at desiring-production that is informed by what is lacking in society. As such, we have proceeded in our classroom spaces from a resistance to present injustices as attested to by the lack of actual transformation at higher education institutions in South Africa and the educational practices that reproduce such injustices. However, resistance in this sense is not contingent; rather it remains permanently reactive as a “special pleading by those charged with representing the interests of the oppressed or marginalised groups” (Tormey 2006, 146). We should therefore be cautious that a pedagogy informed by fabulation emerges not solely from acts of resistance, because this holds the danger of reverting the very act of fabulation to a reactive exercise that falls back into the politics of representation. Rather, resistance should be concerned with enabling experimentation, creation and affirmation through active desire; it should serve as “reference points for an experimentation which exceeds our capacities to foresee” (Deleuze and Parnet 2007, 48). It is in resisting the present moment that we wish—through our pedagogical practices—to experiment, create, and ultimately, affirm difference. Difference here

is not understood in terms of a relation between two bodies (different from), but is understood as ontological and, as such, precedes identity.

By reading our pedagogy through the concept of fabulation, we seek to construct a plane of experimentation, release desire and enable a multiplicity of lines of connection to be made evident. It is within such a teaching context that we believe we can create opportunities, through our pedagogical practices, to establish affirmative connections in order to become-other. This being so, our pedagogical practices should be forward-looking, albeit wholly immanent, in order not to presuppose an image of how life should be. It is in this regard that we can imagine how the operationalisation of fabulation in our pedagogical practices has the potential to intimately entangle such practices with transformative processes. For a concept to enable social transformation to occur, as is the goal of social justice education, it has to enable thought in action and action in thought. The transformative potential that flows from desire through the connections it produces subsequently resides with collective action for establishing productive relationships by *a people to come*. In order for us and our students to become a different collectivity that can reconfigure group relations and establish productive relationships, we need to pass through an “encounter between the virtual (*what might become*) and actual (*what is*)” (Wallin 2011, 107). The actual, thus what is, can be perceived and experienced because it is based on empirical events and subsequently constitutes what our students bring to our teacher education programmes. The virtual, however, is ontological and, because it is independent of actualisations, its status of existing does not have to be experienced (Johannsson 2016, 446). It is within this realm of experimentation that the actual is, for Deleuze (2006, 345), that which we are in the process of becoming. The transformative potential of social justice pedagogies infused with fabulation subsequently lies with the collective action of becoming-other through the creation of a shared present “legended” with reference to the virtual. In this sense, “legending” is real and actual, where the actual is understood as “not what we are but, rather, what we become ... our becoming-other” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 112). It is thus through establishing affirmative relationships that the potential of the virtual becomes transparent in the actuality of the present (Svirsky 2010, 166).

## TOWARDS A POLITICS OF AFFIRMATION

In light of our observations about our own teaching of social justice and given the current dissatisfaction with the transformation of higher education in South Africa, we need to re-imagine our social justice pedagogies. In this regard we place our hope, and audaciously so, in the potential that fabulation holds for both us and our students to collectively and collaboratively separate ourselves “from the causal determinations of the past” (Bogue 2007, 105) by creating new collectivities that are actual, active and self-determining. In re-imaging our social justice pedagogies, we subsequently have to creatively reconfigure ways to counteract pre-established truths, whilst providing “lines of potential collective development” (Bogue 2007, 98). However, as individual

subjectivity remains fluid and continuously shifts within group-subjects, our classroom spaces must become in-between spaces in which we and our students can always remain open to making connections with other groups and subjectivities.

Zembylas (2007) observes that pedagogy should not be understood as practices confined to a teaching context, but that it should rather be seen as the relational encounters between people that make possibilities for growth possible. In reflecting on our own experiences within the context of social justice education and as they relate to the continuing student protests at higher education institutions, we realise that our pedagogical practices very often do not create possibilities for growth as they remain entangled with identity and a politics of negation. By understanding that pedagogy is a practice that enables fabulation, we believe the impasse of identity politics could be broken by creating the opportunity for us and the pre-service teachers to experiment with alternative socio-political collectivities. This is, we believe, paramount in order to move towards a politics of affirmation and actual social transformation.

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