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Decolonial methodologies: Indigenous literatures in knowledge production

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Abstract: This essay aims to discuss how decolonial methodologies and ancestral epistemologies can contribute to the decolonization of knowledge production, to the representation of Indigenous voices in contemporary literature, and to the expansion of the field of Literary Theory. Collaborating in the elaboration of knowledge for the construction of possible plural worlds. Unlike a sterile multiculturalism, we focus on contemporary ancestral epistemologies for the analysis and understanding of contemporary issues. We propose how decolonial methodologies and Indigenous literatures act in the creation of new systems of knowledge production, in order to discuss a theoretical basis for the decolonization of research practices, as an epistemological alternative to the monocultures of Western thought, with a focus on the appreciation and recognition of the multiplicity of scientific understanding and practice.
Keywords: decolonialities; decolonial methodologies; Indigenous literatures; Indigenous literary theory.

1 Introduction

> We seek knowledge that we may turn it to our own use. Don't be surprised when I tell you that your knowledge is not the only knowledge we seek.
> Lee Maracle

As I begin this text, I salute our ancestors, our elders, those who paved the way for our journey. And I salute those who will come after us and continue the path. This text seeks to speak collectively – "us" instead of "I" – because I do not exist alone and I do not write alone. Words have power. Aware of this, it is important to begin our discussion by presenting two words that will be present in this work and that have been used in a decolonial praxis of reclaiming identities and territories, producing epistemologies, and dismantling coloniality, in a "game of countering colonial words as a way of weakening them" (Bispo, 2023, p. 13). They are: *Abya Yala*, an expression in the Kuna language that means "Mature land," "Living land," or "Land in bloom," used to replace America (continent); and *Pindorama*, a Tupi expression meaning "Land of palm trees," a designation for Brazil. We rewrite our cartographies of belonging, our decolonial reclaims, fighting against the colonizer's Adamic impulse to name and take possession through words and language, of territories, bodies, and minds.

It's also important to explain that references that present Indigenous authorship using the name of the respective people will be accompanied by the initials of the author's personal name (first name and, when applicable, surname). For example: Ailton Krenak in the citation as Krenak, A.; Eliane Potiguara, as Potiguara, E.. This approach was adopted to prevent the name of the Indigenous nation, which represents ethnic belonging, from being treated as mere a surname. The *Associação Brasileira de Normas Técnicas* (ABNT), in item 6.1.5 of its Brazilian Standard (NBR) ABNT NBR 10520/2023, addresses authors with the same surname and publication date, suggesting the addition of the author's first name initials. However, the standard does not address the distinction here presented, which is the case of Indigenous authors who use the name of their people, which is not the same as a surname. Thus, in this way, we aim to avoid generalizations in the name of an entire Indigenous people and, at the same time, facilitate the identification of authorship. This is a step in the very discussion proposed here on decolonial methodologies.

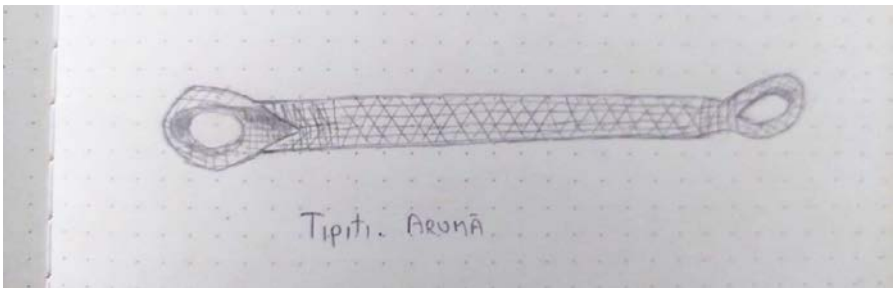
In the movement to dismantle coloniality, we focus on decolonial and Indigenous research methodologies, literary theory, and innovative perspectives in the production of epistemologies that escape the monoculture of Western thinking. The social change we hope to create necessarily involves all fields of knowledge, including literary criticism and forms of academic research.

Western research methodologies can (re)colonize traditional knowledge, in addition to reinforcing the hierarchy of knowledge imposed by the West, where Western knowledge is considered the only scientifically rigorous. It is as if Western research methodologies acted as the only possible *tipiti*, squeezing out what's supposedly useless, extracting a thick, lethal, decolonial broth of traditional knowledge for disposal, and preserving the edible part, which they would then transform into flour. What the West fails to consider is that this broth, cooked and processed, is a delicacy: *tucupi*. *Tucupi* is a very tasty, yellowish sauce made from *manipueira*, the residual liquid generated by processing cassava. It is highly appreciated and characteristic of northern Brazilian cuisine.

The *Tipiti* (Figure 1) is an Indigenous technology for processing sweet or bitter cassava, one of the oldest foods cultivated in *Pindorama*. The *tipiti* is a cylinder woven from plant fibers, such as *arumã* or *jacitara* vines, with reinforced ends and available in various sizes. Grated cassava dough is placed on one side and then pressed by the

tool to extract the liquid, which, in the case of bitter cassava, is a yellowish broth that is toxic to humans before it is processed.

Figure 1 – Sketch of a *Tipiti*



Source: The Author, 2025.

We question the notion that only certain single-track paths are considered valid and rigorous for the production of knowledge. We also question why other epistemological paths are excluded from the scientific journey. We question the foundation of the so-called reason and how to achieve it. When we think about knowledge production, specifically in the academic environment, we usually project the application of Western research methodologies, disregarding other possible perceptions and processes, such as forest pedagogies[1], the wisdom of the plant teacher *Uni* (Shanenawa, E.G.A., 2024)[2], or the wisdom of dreams, as exemplified by the Yanomami[3].

This is also a direct result of compulsory schooling processes that still promote Western knowledge as the only knowledge capable of fostering social mobility within the colonial/capitalist system. This limits curricula and the access to traditional knowledge, directing the development of thought toward a single form of epistemological construction. Thus, for the most part, we were educated in a (colonial) system that values only Western rationality and marginalizes others. In turn, we reproduce this exclusionary system and constantly foster the barrier between Western/Westernized knowledge and traditional and/or community knowledge.

[1] To better understand forest pedagogies, I recommend reading *Saberes da Floresta* (2020) by Márcia Wayna Kambeba.

[2] To better understand the pedagogy of the plant-teacher *Uni*, I recommend reading *Nukẽ Xikari Inũ Matxurihi: a dança e a bebida tradicional do povo Shanenawa* (2024), a master's thesis by Edileuda Gomes de Araujo Shanenawa.

[3] To better understand the wisdom of dreams, I recommend *A queda do céu: palavras de um xamã yanomami* (2015) by Davi Kopenawa and Bruce Albert. I also recommend *O desejo dos outros: Uma etnografia dos sonhos yanomami* (2022) by Hanna Limulja, illustrated by Davi Kopenawa.

2 Knowledges in conflict

The forced schooling of Indigenous peoples in the colonial period, as observed in the *Directorio, que se deve observar nas povoaçoens dos indios do Pará, e Maranhaõ : em quanto Sua Magestade naõ mandar o contrario* (1758), usually known as *the Pombaline Directory* (*Diretório Pombalino* - a legal document from the colonial period that-regulated actions in relation to Indigenous people between 1757 and 1798). The *Diretório Pombalino* prohibited the use of Indigenous languages (including by colonizers), imposed the Portuguese language (system of thought) as the basis of supposed civility and reinforced the notion of school as a mechanism of forced assimilation and part of the colonial project of domination of territories, bodies and minds, as clear attempts at genocide and epistemicide:

> [...] there will be two public schools in all towns, one for boys, in which they will be taught Christian doctrine, reading, writing, and arithmetic in the manner practiced in all schools in civilized nations; and another for girls, in which, in addition to being instructed in Christian doctrine, they will be taught to read, write, spin, make lace, sew, and all other ministries appropriate to that sex. (Directory, 1757, our translation)

Hence, it is important to consider that, even recognizing the resistance of the Indigenous peoples of Pindorama in surviving the colonial project, we cannot deny that there was a genocide (Cunha, 2012; Xakriabá, C., 2018) and an epistemicide (Xakriabá, C., 2018). Both still ongoing, considering, for example, the numerous land conflicts and invasions of Indigenous territories and the threat of withdrawing guaranteed rights[4]. We can understand epistemicide as the process, in whole or in part, of (attempted) silencing, inferiorization, and/or exclusion of knowledge. Genocide, according to Article II of the 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, "[...] means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group" (United Nations, 2024, s/n): namely: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; and forcibly transferring children of the group to another group (United Nations, 2024). Thus, we

[4] I recommend visiting the Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (APIB) page for more information: https://apiboficial.org/marco-temporal/?lang=en

affirm that genocide and epistemicide occurred and that, at the same time, we resisted and survived them. Both statements are true.

The attempts to silence Indigenous languages in the Pindorama territory are part of the colonial project of silencing identities and Indigenous systems of thought, eliminating ways of perceiving and understanding the world, and ways of producing and recording memory, history, and science, among other fields of knowledge. Only in the late 1980s, after the terrible period of the Civil-Military Dictatorship (1964-1985), the right to a differentiated education for Indigenous peoples was guaranteed in the *1988 Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil (Constituição da República Federativa do Brasil de 1988)*, known as the Citizen Constitution. Differentiated education was regulated by subsequent legislation, such as Law No. 3934/1996, which established the Guidelines and Bases of National Education (*Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional*, LDB), and Resolution CEB No. 3 of 1999 of the Basic Education Chamber of the National Council of Education, which established the National Guidelines for the operation of Indigenous schools and other provisions. and such as Decree No. 6861, of May 2009, which provides for Indigenous School Education, defining the organization in ethnoeducational territories (TEEs) and other provisions, among other regulations and legislation.

TEEs Decree and the Convention No. 169 of the International Labor Organization (ILO) on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, to which Brazil is a signatory, currently guarantee that Indigenous School Education is structured with the participation of Indigenous peoples. It is worth noting that Indigenous School Education is a formal teaching model within the context of the school as a state institution and coordinated by public policies, such as those of the Ministry of Education (MEC), with states and municipalities responsible for guaranteeing this constitutional right. Indigenous Education refers to the traditional processes of knowledge sharing that occur in Indigenous territories, independent of the school system. As Márcia Wayna Kambeba reflected:

> [...] in indigenous education we seek to create space and actions of interaction between cultures, between worlds, always in constant dialogue, without losing our own identity references, such as the native language, a strong element of cultural affirmation and resistance. (Kambeba, M.W., 2020, p. 28, our translation).

Despite some progress and transformations, we draw attention to the fragility of Indigenous school education, which, in addition to scarce resources, is under constant threat, as it is the case right at the time this text was being written. In the state of Pará (G1 Pará, 2025), with the enactment of Law No. 10820 in December 2024, regulating the Statute of Public Education in the state of Pará. The Law No. 10820/2024 made no mention of Indigenous school education and repealed previous legislation, such as Law No. 7806/2014, which regulated and operated the Modular Education Organization System (SOME), creating legal uncertainty. Modular Education aims to expand educational opportunities in Basic Education for students in communities where regular education is not available. Thus, fearing that the new law would result in the replacement of in-person classes with the implementation of recorded classes using digital platforms, Indigenous leaders from various peoples, such as the Arapium, Borari, Munduruku, Tembé, Tupaiú, and Waiwai, occupied the headquarters of the Pará State Department of Education (Seduc) in Belém, Pará, to protest the withdrawal of their rights. In February 2025, the repeal of Law No. 10820/2024 was published in the Official Gazette of the State of Pará (Diário Oficial do Estado do Pará), and previous laws, such as Law No. 7806/2014, were reinstated (Pará, 2025).

Still considering School Education, we focus on the thinking of Lee Maracle (Stó:lō), cited as an epigraph in this text. Maracle reinforces that schooled knowledge is not the only possible knowledge: “We seek knowledge that we may turn it to our own use. Don't be surprised when I tell you that your [Western] knowledge is not the only knowledge we seek” (Maracle, 1996, p. 87). That said, we are concerned with “how Indigenous students can access the benefits of Indigenous knowledge and Western knowledge in the Western educational system without the process being an act of colonization” (Goulet; Goulet, 2014, p. 197, our translation) and how to break the hegemony of Western knowledge in order to contribute to the improvement of society and to the search for solutions to contemporary problems, sown by the colonizers’ caravels as early as 1492.

In 2003, Law No. 10639/2003 added Article 26-A to the LDB (Brazilian Basic Education Law), making teaching Afro-Brazilian history and culture mandatory in both public and private elementary and secondary schools. Five years later, Law No. 11645/2008 updated the same LDB article, adding the teaching of the history and culture of Brazilian Indigenous peoples. The aforementioned article then came into

effect with the following text: "In public and private elementary and secondary schools, the study of Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous history and culture becomes mandatory" (Brazil, 2008). Both laws specify that the programmatic content referred to in Article 26-A of the LDB must be taught throughout the school curriculum, especially in the areas of Art Education and Brazilian Literature and History.

Nilma Lino Gomes, referring to Law No. 10639/2003, warned:

> It is important to emphasize that the law and guidelines are more than a pedagogical gain. They are the result of the political struggle for a school and curriculum that incorporate diversity. Therefore, they go hand in hand with other political and pedagogical initiatives demanded by social movements and now incorporated – with limitations and contradictions – into the Brazilian educational context, such as: the training of Indigenous teachers, the establishment of Indigenous schools, inclusive education, rural schools, the training of rural teachers, environmental education, among others. (Gomes, 2008, p. 84, our translation).

Unfortunately, we still lack profound and interdisciplinary curricular revision in both Basic Education and Higher Education, specifically in teacher training curricula, to effectively comply with the legislation. Although Opinion CNE/CEB No. 14/2015 addressed the teaching of Indigenous themes, as of this writing, there is no Ministry of Education resolution or national law mandating the inclusion of Indigenous themes in Higher Education curricula (Brazil, 2015). Regarding the training of teachers who do not work in Indigenous School Education, the Resolution of the Higher Education Chamber (*Câmara de Educação Superior*, CP) of the National Council of Education (*Conselho Nacional de Educação*, CNE), Resolution CNE/CP No. 04/2024, which establishes the National Curricular Guidelines for Initial Higher Education Training of Basic School Education Professionals (undergraduate teacher education programs, pedagogical training courses for graduates without a teaching degree, and second degree licensure programs), also does not directly mandate the inclusion of Indigenous themes, mentioning issues of ethno-racial diversity in a broader and more generalized manner.

Furthermore, Resolution CNE/CP No. 04/2024, in its art. 8, aimed at initial training courses for basic school education professionals for Indigenous School Education, Rural School Education, and Quilombola School Education, determines as one of its guidelines that "[...] the initial training of teaching professionals for basic school education in Indigenous School Education must consider the appropriate curricular norms and frameworks and legal system, with intercultural and bilingual

teaching, aiming at the full appreciation of the cultures of Indigenous peoples and the affirmation and maintenance of their ethnic diversity" (Brasil, 2024, p. 6, our emphasis). Thus, we still lack a curricular guideline for Higher Education that unequivocally and explicitly includes Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous themes in teacher training curricula, as required by Laws No. 10639/2003 and No. 11645/2008. Therefore, it is necessary to break the cycle of hegemony of Western knowledge not only in Basic Education but also in Higher Education, so that we have an increasing number of critical professionals promoting a decolonial praxis in education, in the arts, and sciences. It is imperative to break the cycle throughout the entire process and not just at one end of the formal education system.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), beyond their function of training professionals, have the objectives of producing, systematizing and disseminating knowledge and they can be spaces for epistemological disputes. The university, with its three pillars (teaching, researching, and ongoing education), can be a place for promoting debate, disseminating culture, stimulating reflective thinking, and fostering the scientific spirit. It can open space for Western knowledge and traditional, ancestral, and community knowledge. This environment has the potential for research that does not reproduce colonial violence but celebrates the multiplicity of knowledge and practices. Specifically, considering that

> […], the term ‘research’ is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism. The word itself, ‘research’, is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world’s vocabulary. When mentioned in many indigenous contexts, it stirs up silence, it conjures up bad memories, it raises a smile that is knowing and distrustful. It is so powerful that indigenous people even write poetry about research. (Smith, 2012, p. 1)

Therefore, when we talk about research methodologies, we think about the structure that guides the research process, the systematic processes that guide us to questions about what, how, where, how much, why, and when research is conducted. We question the Western monoculture of being and thinking, proposing that we open our horizons to other methodologies and how these contribute to the decolonization of thought and the production of scientific knowledge, inviting Indigenous voices into these dialogues. This is not about completely abandoning Western knowledge, as if it had nothing to contribute, since this line of thought is colonial in itself. It is necessary, in addition to questioning the foundations of Western science, its past, and how we got

here, to consider the present of this production and how we can move forward from here to tomorrow with plural forms of scientific practice. This is especially true because Western knowledge, since 1492, has been permeated by the traditional knowledge of *Abya Yala*.

The "Contact" (a euphemism for the colonial invasions) affected both parties. Not in the same way, not in the same fashion, never with the same violence. But we cannot say that Western sciences, in many fields, were/are not profoundly influenced by the knowledge of Indigenous peoples and their ancestral sciences. An example of Indigenous earth sciences is *milpa*, an ancient strategy for the sustainable cultivation of corn, beans, and squash. The word *milpa* comes from the Nahuatl language *milpan,* from *milli* "seeded ground" and *pan* "on top of."[5] Another example is that the Amazon rainforest is not and untouched forest, but domesticated by Indigenous peoples, something that has been claimed by Native people for centuries and that was recently confirmed: “Our analyses indicate that modern tree communities in Amazonia are structured to an important extent by a long history of plant domestication by Amazonian peoples.” (Levis *et al*., 2017, p. 925).

3 Decolonial Emergencies and Literary Narratives

It is urgent to break the persistent colonial (il)logic that holds that Indigenous knowledge is unscientific and the fruit of common sense devoid of method and procedure; spontaneous, unsystematized knowledge, the result of a sterile, ignorant empiricism. As if ancestral thought were a tradition frozen in the colonial past, rather than an avant-garde way of thinking, rather than a tradition that is constantly renewed and reimagined. Culture in constant motion. Ancestral thought is always contemporary, especially when we consider that today humanity seeks sustainable ways of living and new relationships with nature, practices that Indigenous peoples have upheld long before the arrival of the caravels.

Colonial (il)logic extends into coloniality, but not as a simple continuity, but as an unfolding, as patterns of power that define

[5] See more at: MEXICO. *Milpa* : *the heart of Mexican agriculture* . Available at: https://www.gob.mx/agricultura/articulos/milpa-el-corazon-de-la-agricultura-mexicana?idiom=es . Access on January 31, 2025.

> […] culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations. Thus, coloniality survives colonialism. It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience. (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 243)

Thus, in proposing a decolonial praxis for knowledge production, we do not simply aim to "[...] disarm, undo or reverse colonialism, [...] as if it were possible for its patterns and traces to cease to exist" (Walsh, 2009, p. 14-15, our translation). We undertake a path of continuous struggle and practice of constructions that dismantle the coloniality in which we all find ourselves today. As we consider our present, contemporaneity, the controversial Anthropocene, and all its many challenges, we need to understand that Western knowledge alone will not provide the answers needed to postpone the end of the world. Nor will Indigenous and traditional knowledge alone suspend the sky. Hence the need for alliances that, in a plural and heterogeneous manner, are capable of devising global solutions. A reflective perspective is needed, one that breaks with singularity and embraces the plural and dynamic data that make up the web of human knowledge. That encompasses the many ways of understanding, narrating, and (re)writing the world:

> Our Tukano, Desana, and Baniwa relatives tell stories of a time before time. These narratives are plural, as are the Mayans and other Amerindians. They are stories from before this world existed and even allude to its duration. Proximity to these narratives greatly expands our sense of being, removing our fear and prejudice against other beings. Other beings *are* with us, and the recreation of the world is an ever-present possibility. (Krenak, A., 2020, p. 70-71, our translation).

Before we continue our dialogues on narrating and (re)writing the world, it is important to open two parentheses to discuss the Anthropocene and Humanity. First, the Anthropocene is a controversial concept conceived in the 1980s by American biologist Eugene Stoermer (1934-2012) and popularized in the 2000s by Paul Crutzen (1933-2021). It is understood as the geological era of human domination, referring to "the time when human actions began to provoke biophysical changes on a planetary scale" (Issberner; Léna, 2018, p. 7, our translation). Here we open the second parenthesis by questioning which Humanity would be responsible for the aforementioned biophysical changes. Not every person is contained in this *Anthropos*, which in Greek means "man" or "human," of this geological era, especially because, "[...] the 'generic human being' can be read as the Western human of capitalist way of

life, since Indigenous peoples, as well as other 'quasi-human' peoples, are excluded from *Anthropos* by Western reason" (Vieira, 2023, p. 134-135, our translation). The notion of *Anthropos* as the entirety of humanity is embedded in the separation between Humanity *and* Nature imposed by colonization, in addition to concealing responsibilities for the profound impacts on the planet and masking inequalities, as it fails to consider which humanity, which human-creature, contributes to global crises and which humanity fights for environmental preservation and other ways of living and narrating itself and the world.

Narratives, storytelling, and narration are part of our constitution as people, as beings. Narratives circulated before the (open) concept of Literature was formed. Before paper and ink. "Our lives are incarnations of the stories we tell, the stories told about us, and the stories we inherit. They are both the process and the consequence of the transformations into the fullness of our humanity." (Justice, 2018, p. 34). In this sense, Literature interweaves diverse discourses and, as a mnemonic and artistic medium, can be a space for the reverberation of diverse voices and the radical imagination of possible worlds.

As a means of cultural memory, narratives carry philosophical/scientific thought and the record of history into the present. As an imaginative space, literature is not limited to the material of the present and can act as a place for constructing what we consider improbable or impossible, as a means of addressing contemporary problems still unsolved, as a methodological tool for elucidation, and as a space for developing alternatives to a world that is not colonial/capitalist. Literature can be like a lucid dream, full of possibilities. Furthermore, according to Erll (2011):

> As a medium of cultural memory literature is omnipresent: The lyrical poem, the dime novel, the historical novel, fantasy fiction, romantic comedies, war movies, soap operas and digital stories – literature manifested in all genres and media technologies, both popular and 'trivial' literature as well as canonized and 'high' literature have served – and continue to serve – as media of memory. They fulfil a multitude of mnemonic functions, such as the imaginative creation of past lifeworlds, the transmission of images of history, the negotiation of competing memories, and the reflection about processes and problems of cultural memory. Literature permeates and resonates in memory culture (Erll, 2011, p. 144).

Despite the omnipresence of literature as a means of cultural memory, not all literature has been and/or continues to be widely present. Like the so-called marginalized literatures, which struggle for wide circulation and a space for their voices

to be heard. They even struggle for the recognition of their productions as literature. The problem is, in itself, a contradiction, since the very definition of literature has undefined contours. Thus, we ask ourselves who constantly try to close the door on what is considered literature to the words of Indigenous Peoples, and for what reason(s)? The disagreement over what is or is not literature is woven from many layers and value judgments that can condemn a work to the status of non-literature or relegate it to one of the possible canons, a direct result of an exclusionary stratification. Despite the many perceptions of what constitutes "literature" as a possible object of analysis and investigation,

> […] for many critics, literature is about written alphabetic texts with particular aesthetic qualities, a form of art that exists independent of social usefulness or value beyond particularly elevated notions of beauty—the idea of "art for art's sake." (Justice, 2018, p. 20).

The invention of the word "literature" does not invent literature itself. Literatures predate theories. Even this Western Adamic feeling, of being the first man, the explorer, of naming to dominate, of dominating to prescribe. Like a movement of "sighted land," of creating a name to justify possession, as Graça Graúna (Potiguara) mentioned when discussing the naming of Monte Pascoal during the invasion period (Graúna, 2013, p. 44). All of this does not invent literature. And the prescription projected by the West for its Literature was imposed to classify and determine non-Western literatures by the same manuals, ignoring non-Western concepts and disregarding, for the most part, multiple and non-hegemonic views on literary creation.

A definition of Indigenous Literature becomes less complex when we consider that it encompasses all literary production by Indigenous people, without restriction of plot, form, or medium. In *Contrapontos da Literatura Indígena Contemporânea no Brasil* (2013), a seminal work in the field of Indigenous Literary Theory, Literary Theory, Cultural Studies, and studies of Indigenous literature in Pindorama, Graça Graúna proposed that the written literature of Indigenous peoples has a close relationship with the literature of oral tradition, and that "denying the existence of Indigenous literature or labeling it *orature* (as the Eurocentric view demands) are forms of literary prejudice" (Graúna, 2013, p. 172, our translation). Graça Graúna's work offers fundamental insights, contributing greatly to a field of study that, more than ten years after its publication, still has research gaps and little inclusion of Indigenous literatures in school curricula and teacher training programs.

We learn from Graúna that “the Indigenous word has always existed” (Graúna, 2013, p. 173, our translation). However, the volume of Indigenous literature published on dead-tree paper before the end of the 20th century is limited, reflecting the processes of violence and erasure, as well as the resistance of Indigenous peoples, considering that Indigenous literatures have endured (and continue to do so) centuries of oppression and have still flourished. Since the late 1990s, we have observed an increase in the number of Indigenous publications in the publishing market and, specifically in the 21st century, in the amount of academic research on Indigenous literatures.

We associate this increase with several factors: the end of the Civil-Military Dictatorship in Brazil, the 1988 Constitution, Indigenous School Education, Affirmative Action Programs, the Quota System, and Law No. 11645/2008, for example. However, all of these likely factors are intertwined with Indigenous leadership in the fight for rights (Figure 2).

Figure 2 – Second Indigenous Women’s March (Brasília, 2021)

Source: The Author, 2021.

The same Indigenous protagonism that motivates the increase in the number of publications and research is what drives the mobilization for the transformation of compulsory schooling, which still follows models that tend to homogenize its students rather than celebrate diversity and equity. It also fosters the transformation of the Sciences themselves, with Indigenous protagonism in the Arts, Education, and research. According to Márcia Wayna Kambeba, “in the 21st century, our bow and

arrow are education and literature" (Kambeba, M. W., 2020, p. 29, our translation). Thus, Indigenous narratives are form and means of fighting for rights and of intellectual work in safeguarding and constructing memories and knowledge.

4 Epistemological Arrows

Indigenous narratives bring to contemporaneity, whether orally or written in the Latin alphabet, ancestral wisdom and knowledge, which resisted countless silencing attempts during colonial processes (still unfolding under coloniality). These narratives carry with them diverse understandings of the world that even touch Western sciences, such as knowledge of geography, history, philosophy, and biology. Indigenous literatures possess systems of thought, theories, and understandings unique to their productions, which should be observed and honored. Such as the narratives and songs in the Yaathe language of the Fulni-ô people. Or like the *monanîto' eremuukon*, traditional dances and songs of the Macuxi people, with their own categories, such as *Simiitin*, *Pariisara*, and *Tukui*. The *monanîto' eremuukon* are poems/songs that address a variety of themes. The *Pariisara* is related to "[...] the abundance of harvests, the arrival of plentiful hunting or fishing, and festive occasions" (Fiorotti, 2018, p. 19, our translation). The *Tukui*, in turn, "[...] means hummingbird and consists of chants generally connected to the wisdom of shamans, used to perform interventions in nature [...]" (Fiorotti, 2018, p. 30, our translation). Finally, *Simiitin* is a Christmas celebration observed since before the invasion of Pindorama, as taught by master Tereza Macuxi (2024):

> [...] *simiitin*, historically it is a Christmas celebration, as it was presented by the elderly grandmothers Mônica and Bernaldina. It is a dance that was practiced since before contact with non-Indigenous people. [...] The basis of the *simiitin* dance is to step on the head of evil, called *makui* in Macuxi, which can manifest itself during Christmas and New Year period. (Souza, 2024 p. 40, our translation)
>
> [...]
>
> *Pariisara* is a song that uses musical instruments such as the flute made of embaúba, *sanpura' (*zabumba), *kewei* (stick with a rattle on the end) and *kaate kaasa* (Amazonian bamboo loincloth). It is a dance practiced by everyone on occasions such as parades, hunter's reception, pregnant women. The *pariisara* challenges with *tukui* (another song/dance that does not use clothes, uses *kamaîn* (flute) and the color of the paint is *tawa* (white clay)." (Souza, 2024, p. 42, our translation)
>
> [...]

> *Tukui* is the hummingbird dance, and its theme is the beauty of birds and artistic values and creativity, dance and songs of enchantment and longing. (Souza, 2024, p. 44, our translation).

According to Souza (2007), “making literature an object of questioning or problematization implies the construction of a theory.” (Souza, 2007, p. 8, our translation). Thus, questioning and researching Indigenous literatures implies theoretical and methodological construction, in a continuous effort to avoid colonizing literary production and allowing it to speak for itself. We propose not only a rethinking of methodologies, but also an Indigenous Literary Theory for the study of Indigenous literatures, especially considering the specificities and theories that emerge within the literary texts themselves and the knowledge of Native peoples. Researching Indigenous literatures implies theoretical construction. Indigenous literatures determine the paths of their theories and should not be chewed on by Western theories, that impose how to shrink Indigenous literatures into Eurocentric concepts. This movement seeks not to (re)colonize Indigenous literatures by limiting them to Western literary expressions and classifications.

Far from proposing theories and methodologies that do not admit questions or theories of a prescriptive and universalizing nature for Indigenous literatures or solely discarding what is established in Eurocentric literary theory. The proposed movement is not simply to replace Western literary theory, but to seek to understand that it is essential to construct knowledge based on Indigenous epistemologies for the description and study of literature. Especially without adopting an anti-theoretical attitude toward the study of literature. Graúna (2013) reminds us to the specificities of Indigenous literatures and that "[...] despite the intrusion of dominant values, the way of being and living of Indigenous peoples endure through time: the literary tradition (oral, written, individual, collective, hybrid, plural) is proof of this resistance" (Graúna, 2013, p. 15, our translation). And this resistance, in turn, calls for literary theory and criticism with its feet grounded in the territory, whether within or beyond the reservation.

It is evident that Indigenous literatures are a form of art with aesthetic value and also a means of self-expression. Notwithstanding, Indigenous literatures break with the one-dimensional notion of “art for art's sake” because their existence is, in itself, an act of resistance with social impact, representing a rupture in the colonial fabric, regardless of theme and/or textual genre. Indigenous literatures resist a historical rupture and have endured over five centuries of colonial war and attempts at silencing and

colonization. The Indigenous literary tradition can be one of the possible guiding threads for dismantling coloniality, especially considering that it is not confined to the limits of Western literary production.

Indigenous literatures break with dominant sociocultural narratives that not only portrayed/portray Native sociocultural identities and expressions through a colonial lens but also projected/project an expected model for Indigenous literary production, based on exoticism and the Other of the colonial equation (Sant' Anna, 2021, p. 143). Native literatures of *Abya Yala*, with their individual and collective voices, beyond the drawing of memory, are ethical and aesthetic creations that act to fill the historical rupture, update tradition, rescue languages, and reinscribe identities within their territories. Whether in fiction or nonfiction, Indigenous literatures (re)create realities, interweave diverse discourses, and expand possibilities for de-Westernizing the reader's perception.

When we approach literature as a research tool, as a space for methodological and theoretical production and epistemological elaboration, we challenge Western reason and its singular path of knowledge production. In doing so, we create space for other forms of knowledge and expression that have been historically marginalized. An attitude of epistemological resistance not only enriches the diversity of perspectives but also fosters a transformative understanding of the world. As Márcia Wayna Kambeba (2020) teaches us,

> [...] literature also presents itself as a tool for strengthening Indigenous education, recording memory through the drawing of thought, transformed into words and sounds. With their literary writing, Indigenous peoples demonstrate their ability to echo their standpoint in the city, disseminating their culture and envisioning a better world where well-being among Indigenous and non-Indigenous people is possible. (Kambeba, M.K., 2020, p. 29, our translation).

In this context, Indigenous literatures become fundamental to decolonizing knowledge and building an academia concerned with sociocultural and epistemological plurality and capable of promoting *Buen Vivir*. In short, *Buen Vivir*, or *Bem Viver*, or *Sumak Kawsay*, or *Suma Qamaña*, or *Teko Porã,* is an open and living concept. It is an understanding that rejects Humanity *versus* Nature dichotomy and the Western notion of a singular, linear, and evolutionary temporality. It is about living in harmony with the fabric of the world's existence, about respecting the Earth as a living organism, of which we are a part of. It is about belonging to the Earth, not possessing it. It is

rejecting extractivist/capitalist thinking. It is (re)establishing relationships with *Pachamama*, with “Mother Earth.” It is important to emphasize that this concept only seems like an “impossible plan” because we live in Capitalism, and our imagination is so immersed and suffocated that we cannot perceive or imagine another viable alternative. This manner of living (yes, Capitalism long ago ceased to be an economic system and became a *modus vivendi*) has existed for just over five centuries, considering its beginnings in the decline of Feudalism and the "great navigations" (read: invasions) in the 15th century. In many instances, we can imagine the end of the world, but not the end of Capitalism. Our imagination is infiltrated with microplastics, devoid of air, like a river choked with mining waste, experiencing the fall of the sky in contemporary times as an imagined reality.

In this sense, Literature is a potential tool for radically imagining the present and investigating the possibilities of other ways of life. Literature can be a research methodology for constructing alternatives to the current state of affairs. As a magnifying lens for unresolved contemporary issues, a way of filling the historical rupture caused by colonialism in a movement of radical imagination of the past. Literature can be a device for reflecting on viable futures. According to Lander (2005),

> The search for alternatives to the profoundly exclusionary and unequal structure of the modern world demands an effort to deconstruct the universal and natural character of liberal-capitalist society. This requires questioning the claims of objectivity and neutrality of the main instruments of naturalization and legitimization of this social order: the body of knowledge we know globally as the social sciences. (Lander, 2005, p. 8, our translation).

We expand the body of knowledge mentioned by Lander beyond the Social Sciences and Humanities to consider the many fields of knowledge that have been used as instruments to maintain colonial systems of oppression. Furthermore, research methodologies are understood not only as research techniques but as practices deeply rooted in specific cultural and historical contexts.

In her work *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (2012[6]), Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Ngāti Awa and Ngāti Porou and Tūhourangi , Māori) proposed a strong critique of Western research models, pointing to the need for an approach that values Indigenous voices and perspectives, in the understanding that social justice-oriented research configures an intellectual, cognitive and ethical project,

[6] Originally published in 1999.

to improve the conditions for justice (Smith, 2012, p. 215) and seeks to contribute to a more inclusive, just and equitable world.

Smith (2012) discusses the intersections between Imperialism and research, specifically examining the ways in which Imperialism is embedded in areas of knowledge and scientific tradition as “regimes of truth” (Smith, 2012), often producing justifications for systems of oppression. For example, the theory of Social Darwinism, pioneered by the English philosopher Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), inspired by the theory of natural selection proposed in the seminal work *On the Origin of Species* (1859) by the English naturalist Charles Darwin (1809-1882). Social Darwinism was used as a justification for territorial invasions and to legitimize Imperialism and (neo)colonialism.

Thus, following the thinking of Smith (2012) and Graúna (2013), we propose engaged understandings that collaborate not only with the academic community but also with the Indigenous identities that are the subject-authors of the research. In a commitment to “speak with” rather than “speak for,” as well as collaborating with the surrounding society. This contributes to the decolonization of thought and curricula, and to the development of epistemological currents that overflow in plurality of thought, which is urgently needed for contemporary times and the transformations necessary to sustain life on Earth.

5 Final considerations

The comparative approach, which encompasses different territories of knowledge, contributes to global Indigenous dialogues across the boundaries of physical geography and the geography of social relations. By deeply engaging with Indigenous methodologies and theories to challenge dominant structures in knowledge production, we contribute to scientific, artistic, cultural, and innovative development. Indigenous literatures are living territories of (r)existence, places for (re)writing epistemologies in flux. Rethinking academic practice based on ethical, collective principles rooted in Indigenous knowledge systems, rejecting the extractive logic that characterized (and still characterizes) scientific practice. Indigenous literatures constitute a methodology in themselves, opening paths to other forms of knowledge production: such as oral narratives, dreaming, forest pedagogies, and plant teachers. This reimagines science as a space for multiple dialogues between Western and

Traditional knowledges. A plural world can only be built outside the Western monoculture mentality of being and living. Far from proposing a sterile multiculturalism, merely as a given, we propose it as a fact of reality, of experience, as a way of acting, intervening and transforming social dynamics.

The decolonial methodologies proposed by Graça Graúna, Márcia Wayna Kambeba, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith, among other Indigenous thinkers, provide powerful pathways for decolonizing knowledge production and valuing Indigenous voices in contemporary literature. These methodologies promote not only a critique of Western research models but also the construction of alternatives that recognize the plurality of knowledge and experiences, which are essential for developing solutions for contemporary times. Literature is also used as an investigative tool and research methodology.

Therefore, in order to contribute to the expansion of the field of Literary Theory and the construction of an Indigenous Literary Theory, we open space for epistemologies that break with the hegemony of Western thought and reaffirm the importance of ancestral knowledge in the contemporary world and beyond. *Maracá* epistemologies that shake up knowledge systems and resonate with possible futures and new ways of being in the world. *Tucupi* theories, for the study of Indigenous and non-Indigenous literatures from new, non-reductionist, and non-merely prescriptive perspectives.

Breaking with the hegemony of Western knowledge is a challenge present, even in this text. Considering the domestication of ideas in a rigid format that struggles between accepting and rejecting deviance not only in content but also in form, we still make room for the words we hear around the fire, for the literature between the lines, for the teachings of community exchanges, such as protests, marches, camps, and the classroom floor as a revolutionary space. Breaking with the hegemony of Western thought does not mean abandoning Western sciences altogether but rather reflecting on what we need from them and how to use them in conjunction with ancestral and traditional knowledge.

Proposing new ways of producing knowledge and how to approach literature as tools for constructing epistemes encourages us to overcome the monoculture of thinking and doing and challenges us to learn how to think and produce in a pluralistic

way, proliferating multiple knowledge systems that dialogue and intertwine into a vast web of knowledge.

As we confront the urgencies of the present and its multiple questions, we understand that Indigenous epistemologies are fundamental systems of knowledge that, in alliance with other forms of knowledge (including Western ones), collaborate in the construction of pathways to possible futures. Healing colonial wounds and undoing coloniality, perpetuated in contemporary times, is a fundamental part of the process so that we, as a society of human-beings and other beings, can achieve *Teko Porã* .

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