

LITERATURE AS DECOLONIAL PRAXIS, SELF- EXPRESSION, AND *AUTOBIOGEOGRAPHIES* IN BRAZILIAN INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S¹

A LITERATURA COMO PRÁXIS DECOLONIAL,
AUTOEXPRESSÃO E TERRITÓRIO. AS
AUTOBIOGEOGRAFIAS NA ESCRITA DAS AUTORAS
INDÍGENAS BRASILEIRAS

Federica Lupati²

1. This article was written for the project *Literatura de Mulheres: Memórias, Periferias e Resistências no Atlântico Luso-Afro-Brasileiro* (<https://doi.org/10.54499/PTDC/LLT-LES/0858/2021>), funded by the Foundation for Science and Technology/ FCT (Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia).

2. PhD in Portuguese Studies from NOVA University and Researcher at the Centre for the Humanities, NOVA FCSH.



ABSTRACT

Autobiogeographies encapsulate the notions of self-writing and self-inscription within physical, emotional and spiritual spaces, following renewed senses of self and positioning (VIEIRA, 2021). They reappropriate the collective memory narratives so that Brazilian indigenous authors can (re)claim their body-territory. Drawing on Vieira's reflections, as well as on decolonial and feminist theories, this article discusses the writing of Fernanda Vieira, Eliane Potiguara, and Graça Graúna to argue that these Indigenous women writers use their *autobiogeographies* as decolonial praxis to deconstruct the persisting coloniality in the Brazilian collective memory narrative.

Keywords

Autobiogeographies; Decolonial Praxis; Fernanda Vieira; Brazilian Indigenous Women Writers; Brazilian Indigenous Literature.

RESUMO

As *autobiografias* expressam as noções de escrita e inscrição de si próprio em espaços físicos, sociais e emocionais de acordo com novos entendimentos e posicionamentos (VIEIRA, 2021). Elas reapropriam a memória histórica coletiva para que as escritoras brasileiras indígenas (re)conquistem os seus corpos-território. A partir das considerações de Vieira, bem como de teorias decoloniais e feministas, o presente artigo discute a escrita de Fernanda Vieira, Eliane Potiguara e Graça Graúna, argumentando que estas escritoras indígenas utilizam as suas *autobiografias* como prática decolonial que desconstrói a persistente colonialidade nas narrativas de memória coletiva brasileira.

Palavras-chave

Autobiografia; Práxis Decolonial; Fernanda Vieira; Autoras Indígenas Brasileiras; Literatura Indígena Brasileira.

1. DECOLONIAL FEMINISM AND BRAZILIAN INDIGENOUS AUTOBIOGEOGRAPHIES

Contemporary Brazilian Indigenous literature emerged in the 1990s and represents an aesthetic-political movement led by the Indigenous identities (GRAÚNA, 2013; JUSTICE, 2013; MUNDURUKU, 2017; DORRICO, 2018). The publication of collective and individual authors of indigenous descent came as a response to the educational need legislated in the 1988 Federal Constitution. Until that decade, Indigenous people were completely silenced and neglected in the Brazilian literary scene, and along with them, their history and memory narratives.³ Pioneering Indigenous authors, such as Daniel Munduruku, Olívio Jekupé, Eliane Potiguara, Roni Wasiry Guará, and Graça Graúna, offer valuable insights into the experience of exclusion, marginalization, and violence in “autobiographical, testimonial and mnemonic works on the process of colonization that has shaped and continues to shape the construction of contemporary Brazil” (DORRICO et al., 2018, p. 11)⁴. As aesthetic and literary expressions of minorities, “everything is political” (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 1975, p. 39) in these texts. Self-affirmation and self-expression are the critique of Indigenous community to present-day times as “a literatura indígena não é um fim em si mesmo, senão um meio para uma *práxis* político-pedagógica de resistência, de luta e de formação em que as diferenças assumem protagonismo central e escrever outras histórias do Brasil” [(...) Indigenous literature is not an end in itself, but a means for a political-pedagogical praxis of resistance, struggle and education where differences gain central prominence and write other histories of Brazil] (DORRICO et al., 2018, p. 12).

Indigenous Orature is an aesthetic and political manifestation that predates the Western alphabet-based records. Orature has always encapsulated the memories and traditions of Indigenous peoples. For this reason, as written literature, it challenges literariness as perceived and regulated in Western cultures and exposes the persistence of the patriarchal, and structurally violent matrix of coloniality:

3. The Brazilian Indigenous Movement emerged at the end of the 1970s as a response to the plans of social and economic expansion fostered by the military governments, especially in the northern and central-western parts of the country, with the explicit intention of politicizing and promoting the Indigenous struggle. Intellectuals, politicians, and Indigenous activists, fought together to successfully reach the recognition of Indigenous rights in the Federal Constitution's Articles 231 and 232. The Indigenous movement and indigenous literature share common grounds when it comes to militancy, activism and political and cultural commitment. If the former has always focused on promoting the Indigenous people as political subjects in the public sphere, the latter is determined to promote individual ethnical specificity and convey the experience of colonial and neocolonial violence and exclusion.

4. All translations are mine unless otherwise mentioned.

as literaturas são anteriores à invenção do conceito (sem consenso) de Literatura pelo Ocidente. Considerando o dissenso no pensamento ocidental em uma definição de Literatura, seu pensamento abissal, contudo, chega ao consenso de classificar as literaturas Indígenas como “não-literatura”. Ou seja, sejam quais forem os critérios utilizados para caracterizar Literatura, as literaturas Indígenas foram, por muito tempo, rejeitadas em todos eles (VIEIRA, 2021, p. 140).

In this article I argue that indigenous women find their voices when they write and, thus, disentangle coloniality. They use their *autobiogeographies* as decolonial praxis that deconstructs the colonial narrative in Brazil and, thus, envisage new worlds where it is possible to (re)root their (Indigenous) identities. More importantly, they convey the urge to establish new methodologies that aim at decolonizing Western representations of minds, bodies, and territories. By exposing the violence and exploitation experienced during the colonial and neo-colonial processes, Brazilian indigenous women authors offer tangible examples of the extent to which their *autobiogeographies* can be used in literature as decolonial praxis.

The notion of *autobiogeografia* became central in my conversation with Fernanda Vieira, although it also pervades Vieira’s research work and writing.⁵ Vieira uses it to describe the extent to which Indigenous voices, and more specifically those of Indigenous women authors, expose cartographies of identities to re-map the self (VIEIRA, 2021). According to Manoela Rodrigues (2017), the notion of *autobiogeography* was first used in an academic paper by Matthew Wolf-Meyer and Davin Heckman (2002); there are several studies on the close relationship between space (geography) and self-writing (autobiography), but they mostly lack the connection with decolonial thinking. Rodrigues is among the earliest authors to define the application of *autobiogeography* within a decolonial framework. According to her analysis, *autobiogeography* is a critical and creative methodology used to express decolonial practices, where the “immigrant consciousness” (MIGNOLO, 2010) can emerge.⁶ In other words, *autobiogeographies*

5. This conversation constitutes an episode of the Podcast *Todas as Vozes*, available on <https://open.spotify.com/show/1Fm6Y3AuEtx2PP2xAuWPVr>.

6. In Mignolo’s words: “Immigrant consciousness (...) is an assumed condition of existence, an existence out of place. This was the consciousness of people of European descent, who inhabited a place whose history was not the history of their ancestors; of the Indigenous peoples or ab-origins, who found themselves out of place when their form of life, institutions, educational systems, and economies were displaced, destroyed, and replaced with ways of life and institutions of migrants from European countries. Africans, coming from several parts of the continent, with their own different languages and beliefs, forms of life and institutions found them-selves in a land whose histories did not belong to their ancestors and, in contrast to the Europeans, in a land whose social structures placed them at the very bottom of the social scale.

should be used “como metodologia de criação de lugares de enunciação por meio de práticas individuais e/ou coletivas que abram caminhos para o “vir a ser” decolonial, ou seja, que despertem nas sujeitas e sujeitos desejos de re-aprender a ser” [as a methodology to create *loci* of enunciation through individual and/or collective practices that fosters the decolonial “becoming”, in other words, to awaken in the subjects the desire of re-learning how to be so] (RODRIGUES, 2017, p. 3155). *Autobiogeographies* enable those who feel “out of place” (MIGNOLO, 2010) to engender spaces where they can find themselves, away from Eurocentric epistemologies.

In *Toward a decolonial feminism* (2010), Maria Lugones offers a detailed analysis of what she calls the “coloniality of gender” and of fact that “the semantic consequence of the coloniality of gender is that the ‘colonized woman’ is an empty category: no women are colonized; no colonized females are women” (LUGONES, 2010, p. 745). Women become “beings who resist the coloniality of gender from the ‘colonial difference’”, who are “only partially understood as oppressed, as constructed through the coloniality of gender” (LUGONES, 2010, p. 746). As resistant subjectivities, they express themselves infra-politically; in other words, in a “politics of resistance, toward liberation”:

[Infra-politics] shows the power of the communities of the oppressed in constituting resistant meaning and each other against the constitution of meaning and social organization by power. In our colonized, racially gendered, oppressed existences we are also other than what the hegemon makes us. That is an infra-political achievement (LUGONES, 2010, p. 746).

The notion of coloniality of gender is helpful to understand the oppressive impositions experienced by Indigenous women in colonial and postcolonial societies, and the intersections between economic, racializing, and gendering forms of oppression. Hence, decolonizing gender is a praxis in the pursuit of building a solid critique of “the capitalist heterosexualist gender oppression as a lived transformation of the social” (LUGONES, 2010, p. 747).

Indigenous women writers are thus “resisters”, to use Lugone’s term. Decolonial feminism encourages self-recognition and self-affirmation through self-expression. In addition to this, it promotes a sense of unity and community that can be seen as an

‘Immigrant consciousness’ – double consciousness, mestiza consciousness, mulatto consciousness, intercultural consciousness (as Indigenous people in Ecuador maintain to this day), maroon consciousness (as it has been established among Afro-Andeans in Ecuador) - contains diverse expressions and experiences of the same condition of existence: the awareness of coloniality of being; the awareness of being out of place with regard to the regulations (i.e., the cosmology) of modernity; the awareness, in short, of the colonial wound.” (MIGNOLO, 2010, p. xvi-xvii)

effective act of resistance: “One does not resist the coloniality of gender alone. One resists it from within a way of understanding the world and living it that is shared and that can understand one’s actions, thus providing recognition. Communities rather than individuals enable the doing” (LUGONES, 2010, p. 754).

Bonded in their refusal of Western categories, Indigenous women writers reject any enduring colonial condition of subordination when they write texts about their ancestry and celebrate Indigenous women. These are forms of resistance that make the connection to territory pivotal, a valuable message for future generations. As Márcia Kambéba argues, “para a sociedade não indígena, a escrita surge numa forma de controle do ambiente que o circunda. Para os povos indígenas, a escrita tem sua importância na forma de resistência, registro do pensamento e estratégia de continuidade para as futuras gerações” [for non-Indigenous societies, writing is a form of control of the surrounding environment. For Indigenous people, writing is important as a form of resistance, a record of thoughts and a strategy of continuity for the future generations] (KAMBEBA, 2020, p.92). In their writing, Graça Graúna, Eliane Potiguara, Aline Rochedo Pachamama and Márcia Kambéba, among many other Brazilian Indigenous writers, react against the national dominant discourse that places Indigenous people in a “non-space”, with no identity or territory. By conflating the use of the spoken word and writing, they preserve and pass on tradition, knowledge, and history.

2. LITERATURE AS SELF-EXPRESSION AND TERRITORY: FERNANDA VIEIRA’S AUTOBIOGEOGRAFIA

This section explores the notion of *autobiogeography* in the works of Fernanda Vieira. Her short introduction, available online, shows the complexity of the identity of this woman author and researcher:

Corpo (sub)urbano indigenodescendente, de origem Xokó e com raízes paternas em Aracaju (SE), fala através da sua pluralidade de vozes historicamente silenciadas. Escritora, poeta, ativista, professora, tradutora, pesquisadora em Estudos de Literatura (UERJ), Visiting Scholar na Boston University, fundadora do site *ikamiaba.com.br* e membro do GRUMIN (Rede de Comunicação Indígena) (SLAM DAS MINAS).⁷

Her concerns are clear: the urban space, her Indigenous ancestry, the struggle against historical silencing and monocultural models. Both as a writer and a researcher

7. Available on <https://ims.com.br/convida/slam-das-minas-rj/fernanda-vieira/>

(although there is no clear distinction between these two “constituents” of her production), Vieira is driven by her need to understand and disclose her identity as “mulher hifenizada e subjetividade fragmentado” [hyphenated woman and fragmented subjectivity] (2021, 12), and urge to promote and empower the Indigenous episteme. In 2017, Vieira published *Crônicas ordinárias* [Ordinary chronicles]; her poems, translations, essays, and academic work are available on various online platforms.

With her poetic touch and straightforward style, Vieira’s chronicles depict everyday scenes of the lives of common people. As she told me during our conversation, her first book is a collection of short stories about everyday life in an urban environment: “Eu gosto muito de observar as pessoas [...] e ficar imaginando sobre a vida delas. E queria ler sobre isso. Queria ler sobre quem normalmente não está na literatura [...]; eu queria ler sobre o cotidiano, sobre as coisas que são comuns e mesmo assim são absolutamente extraordinárias” [I really enjoy observing people (...) and imagining their lives. I wanted to read about them. I wanted to read about people who normally aren’t depicted in literature (...); I wanted to read about everyday life, about common, yet extraordinary, things] (VIEIRA, 2023, 22’15”). The author and subjects of her chronicles share the condition of being “só mais uma entre tantas com absolutamente nada especial, a não ser eu mesma e ser muitas e ser outras” [just one among many other with absolutely nothing special, unless being myself and many others and others] (VIEIRA, 2017, p. 7). Fiction becomes the space where identities are examined and experienced, alternative worlds become tangible options, and possible futures are engendered: “A ficção é um lugar em que novos mundos são possíveis e o nosso mundo fica ainda mais visível. Este livro é um composto de retalhos deste mesmo mundo, com cores do que ele poderia ser e — quem sabe? — um dia será” [Fiction is a place where new worlds become possible and our world becomes more visible. This book is a patchwork of this world, with the colors of what it could be and – who knows? – one day will be] (VIEIRA, 2017, p. 8).

There are common threads in her memoirs: elements of social criticism can be found in stories such as “Gente de bem” [Good people], “Sem nome” [Nameless] and “Você fez por merecer?” [Did you do it your way?], where the subject exposes the harshness of the urban space, its reiterated privileges, inequities and the hypocritical middle-class mindset; Vieira’s poetics in stories such as “Salomé” and “Lapa”, conveys metapoetic references showcasing the author’s skillful switch between different genres and frameworks; and a subtle critique of the capitalist system, with its categories, order, and downfalls. When Vieira tells stories of “ordinary” people, she gives voice to those identities silenced by a system that ignores them and merely exploits them. Literature, as a space where alternative worlds are actually possible, becomes the territory where

these voices and their stories are represented. *Crônicas Ordinárias* does not depict specific Indigenous lives or matters; yet, it still unfolds around themes and concerns that are directly connected to them, addressing issues, such as silenced subjectivities and the struggle to find a place in the contemporary capitalist system.

The critique of capitalism and the exposition of its failures are among Vieira's strongest concerns: "Eu acho muito curioso que a literatura não indígena consiga enxergar o fim do mundo, mas não consiga enxergar o fim do capitalismo" [I find it very curious that non-Indigenous literature is able to imagine the end of the world, but isn't capable to see the end of capitalism] (VIEIRA, 2023, 31'11"), was one of Vieira's statements that most impressed me. Present-day capitalism represents the widely appraised way of living – it is not just a system –, where Western rules and order are imposed as the only options available. Vieira believes that literature, and more specifically Indigenous literature, is the space where alternative systems become possible:

Para mim a Apocalipse começou em 1492. Eu entendo a apocalipse como um processo. Gostaria que a gente conseguisse chegar nesse mundo pós-apocalíptico. A gente vem vivendo um apocalipse por séculos, vem enfrentando um fim: o silenciamento, emergências climáticas... A gente sabe" (VIEIRA, 2023, 33'55").

Re-writing their history and re-rooting their subjectivities are active responses to the need of creating this post-apocalyptic world. Vieira's contributions to this struggle can also be found in her PhD dissertation, *Ruptura histórica e abordagem criativa: uma cartografia de identidades nativas* (2021). Here, she shares the findings of her research on two Indigenous authors of Turtle Island – the northern region of Abya Yala (pre-Columbian name of the Americas). Its hybrid structure and innovative methodological approach conflates academic research and literary creation to engender her own territory:

Este trabalho é uma volta no caleidoscópio das múltiplas identidades deslocadas de Abya Yala, de Turtle Island, de Pindorama. Este trabalho é uma expedição a mim mesma [...], onde me exploro desprezando a sanha do Ocidente. Este trabalho é uma cartografia, dentre das muitas possíveis, que me reposiciona no mundo. Ouso abrir este caminho falando de mim. Não haveria autoetnografia ou autohistória sem o impulso do eu que se busca, do que que se encontra, do que que se perde. Na resistência de anos de colonialidade, minha identidade me atravessa de passados, presentes e futuros. [...] Eu sou o continente que sangra. Eu sou oceanos que se abraçam. Eu sou o sonho feito gente das minhas ancestrais. E me re(des)construo nas linhas da literatura que leio, reescrevo e escrevo (VIEIRA, 2021, p. 12).

The poem *Autobiogeografia* is part of her dissertation; it can also be easily found under the section “Fernanda Vieira” on *Ikamiaba* website.⁸ The first-person lyrical subject claims the indigenous roots and the polyphonic, ancestral nature of indigenous voices: “Eu não falo só / Minha voz é composta pelas vozes / Das minhas ancestrais / Dos meus ancestrais ” [I don’t speak alone / My voice consists of the voices / of my women ancestors / of my ancestors]. A strong “Eu [I]” opens the first verse, setting the tone for the following ones: as a true act of epistemic disobedience, the first-person singular lyrical subject retrieves her voice, re-appropriates the representation of her history as a Brazilian Indigenous woman, and claims her place in the world. The poem is about connections between having a voice and transforming it into the written word as self-writing and self-positioning: “cada palavra que deixa minha boca, / cada linha que encosta no papel / e conta minha história / é topografia da minha alma / que me reposiciona no mundo” [every word that leaves my mouth, / every line that leans on the piece of paper / And tells my history / Is a topography of my soul / that relocates me in the world]. More importantly, it stresses the idea that the indigenous writer lives and creates in connection with his/her ancestry, yet firmly rooted in present times: “Eu sou o hoje da minha ancestralidade” [I am the today of my ancestry], as a way to fight oblivion and obliteration, embodying connections between the past and the present with their view on the future.

Claiming a voice and breaking the imposed silence is part of a practice that seeks to challenge the colonial legacy and formulate new postulates engaged in decolonizing theories, and the production of knowledge. As Eliane Potiguara argues, “a libertação do povo indígena passa radicalmente pela cultura, pela espiritualidade e pela cosmovisão das mulheres. O papel da mulher na luta pela identidade é natural, espontâneo e indispensável” [the emancipation of Indigenous people happens through women’s culture, through their spirituality and their cosmovision. The role played by women in the struggle for identity is natural, spontaneous, and essential] (POTIGUARA, 2004, p. 46); the strength of these women comes from a community of ancestors who were the first to resist against the colonial project. Women build “healing accounts” (JUSTICE, 2018), highlighting the centrality of Pindorama’s ancestral memory (pre-Columbian Brazil) and epistemologies to re-appropriate the identity and history of communities, through their own unique voices, historically expropriated: “Compomos o cosmos e o topos / Em uma cosmografia / Autobiográfica / E coletiva / Uma autobiogeografia”.

8. Available on <https://ikamiaba.com.br/fernanda-vieira>

Indigenous people still struggle to return to a land they never left. The complexity of the term *autobiogeography* expresses the intricacy of the Brazilian Indigenous experience of re-appropriation and reterritorialization, “desenraizados” [uprooted] not only from their territories but also from their identities: “Indígenas são pessoas cuja diáspora escapa à geografia física e se dá/deu pela estrangeirização dentro de seus próprios territórios” (VIEIRA, 2023). As Vieira further explains: “Autobiogeografia exprime a noção de escrever e inscrever a si próprio nos espaços físicos, sociais, emocionais, espirituais, em novos entendimentos e reposicionamentos de si.” (VIEIRA, 2021, p. 53). Writing becomes a tool that enables Indigenous subjects, and women in particular, to question and eventually (re)create their location in the world, and by doing this, they re-write their territory and that of their community.

Vieira’s *Autobiogeografia* can be read as a poem and a manifesto:

A autobiogeografia é processo e resultado, uma abordagem não apenas à pesquisa e à escrita, mas também ao posicionamento espacial (geo) e à análise sistêmica (grafia) da identidade pessoal (bio); assim como à impressão/reprodução de si, descrição e inscrição da vida e/no espaço, nos territórios de pertença. Indo além da compreensão de si para incluir um fazer de si. Autobiogeografia é o caleidoscópio feito com os pedaços do espelho colonial partido, e na juntura e recombinação de seus elementos produzimos novos entendimentos possíveis (VIEIRA, 2021, p. 139).

It is about producing new knowledge, by reformulating what is already known; it is about exposing the extent to which Indigenous identities have always been relegated to a non-space within the patriarchal/capitalist/colonial/modern world-system that needs to be dismantled; eradicating the colonial frontiers and redefining Indigenous territories; to sum up, it is about agency and decolonial delinking. In research, it is about looking into Indigenous texts in order to abandon Western categories and embrace new ones:

O reducionismo do ocidente hegemônico sobre as literaturas indígenas não se restringe à “autenticidade” das suas subjetividades, mas se estende ao que considera como “motivos” para a existência de tal literatura: produto de opressão social, explicação de modos de ser para não-Indígenas, registro de “lendas”, línguas, culturas e identidades em “risco de extinção,” por exemplo (VIEIRA, 2021, p. 140).

3. AUTOBIOGEOGRAPHIES IN THE WRITING OF ELIANE POTIGUARA AND GRAÇA GRAÚNA

This section explores three poems by Eliane Potiguara and Graça Graúna. I argue that their poems as *autobiogeographies* convey the decolonial praxis. The act of writing

“uma autoetnografia que não espera o olhar do outro para se (auto)construir” [a self-ethnology that does not wait for the gaze of the other to build itself] (VIEIRA, 2021, p. 56) seems central in the works of both authors who convey their determination to look into themselves and offer de-Westernized accounts.

The struggle and resistance endured by indigenous women are central themes in the poem “Terra Cunhã” (“Indigenous Land” – the word “cunhã” in Tupi means “indigenous girl/young woman”). The poem was published in Potiguara’s *Metade cara, metade máscara* (2004). Here, a female, lyrical subject expresses herself in six stanzas, in free style and no rhyme or fixed number of verses. In this sense, the choice to rely on a non-conventional and non-canonical poetical structure is illustrative of Potiguara’s writing it also shows the extent to which Potiguara’s works re-appropriate traditional, Western poetry with the intent of conveying words as alternative space for militant action in defense of the Indigenous cause. Moreover, the model of woman promoted by patriarchal powers, silenced, submissive, confined within the household, and moved by unconditional motherhood, is completely absent in Potiguara’s poems. These poems foster a radically different image: in them, women are “sábia, paciente, profunda” [wise, patient, profound], powerful guardians of knowledge, key elements in the process of survival of their people.

This poem starts with the vocative “Mulher indígena!” [Indigenous woman!], a strong call directed to all her peers, an invitation to rely on their own voice to expose and condemn the suffering and pain endured throughout history. It carries on stating that this struggle has not battered (Indigenous) women’s integrity and strength, since “com a dor ela aprendeu pelos séculos / A ser sábia, paciente, profunda” [with the pain she learned through the centuries / to be wise, patient and profound], all necessary qualities to endure present times. The call continues in the second stanza; the lyrical subject encourages these women to join her cause in order to dismantle the unbearable lie, that is, the misleading representations created by the white colonizer that can only lead to “incompreensão e maldade” [incomprehension and evil]. The use of direct speech in the verse “Não aguento mais a mentira!” [I can’t stand the lie any longer!] intensifies the depiction of the anger, and frustration experienced, and evinces the extent to which these distorted narratives particularly affect Indigenous women. Colonizers are indirectly depicted as thieves who steal their (hi)stories and their land, while women “slowly starve to death” (“aos poucos morres à míngua”). The word “MEDO” [FEAR] is in the middle of the stanza, in bold, capital letters. It is only apparently disconnected because its link lies in the previous verse (“choras o medo”). The need to highlight this feeling is as a response to the enduring practices of silencing the Indigenous female

voice: by emphasizing her perception, Potiguara legitimizes it, and represents the indigenous woman in her completeness, that is, not only as a powerful warrior, but also as an individual. By doing this, she condemns violence at all levels; by dwelling on these feelings, the subject provides a powerful point of view on human rights and their violation.

While the third and fourth stanzas describe abuse and affliction, or broadly speaking, “a miséria e angústia dos trópicos...” [the misery and agony of the tropics...], a sense of hope paves its way in the fifth and penultimate stanzas. The lyrical subject becomes compassionate, sweet; despite the “rio de lágrimas que te aperta o peito aflito” [a river of tears that tightens the afflicted chest], the possibility of a new life (“na bolsa d’água o filho esperas”) generates a feeling of strength, stirring the gaze towards the bright future. The role played by women is pivotal since they generate life; in this sense, Indigenous women are exactly the opposite of white men, who invaded their land and imposed death as the end of everything. In fact, by generating life, Indigenous women ensure “futuro, luz, nova era” [future, light, new era], in charge of the fundamental process of survival, renewal and reinforcement of their community, the resurgence of its power and light, and the transition into a new era. The poem closes with an encouragement to fight in the name of the land, with the power of the land (“Mas luta, raiz forte da terra!” [“fight, strong root of the land!]) – as a powerful element. Yet, this is followed by a reminder: women (and indigenous people in general) are “still trapped in the clutches of POWER and history” (“porque estás presa ainda / nas garras do PODER e da história”), meaning that hegemonic memory narratives in contemporary postcolonial Brazilian society continue oppressing indigenous women. Potiguara offers feisty, complex, and visionary writing that showcase her cosmovision. “Terra Cunha” is illustrative of the extent to which Potiguara elaborates on the multifaceted identity of the Indigenous woman, exuding the violent conflicts of a brutal reality and stressing the need to urgently dismantle the memory narratives on colonialism and coloniality. Her aim is that of engender territory (metaphorical and physical) for Indigenous epistemologies, and for the wisdom and the struggle of all Indigenous people and women, through *autobiogeographical* representations.

Another significant poem to enhance the argument of this article is “Entre-lugar” (In-between place) by Graça Graúna, published in chapter “Tessituras da terra” of *O Tear da Palavra* (2007). The poem is quite short, with two stanzas, one with five verses and another with three. The lyrical subject creates a contraposition between “a palavra do outro” [the words of the other] and “o silêncio” [silence]; in other words, between the ideologies and values of the Western, capitalist order (“a palavra do outro”), and the

silenced Indigenous reality. The idea of Otherness is hence subverted and reconfigured: from an Indigenous perspective, the colonizer is the “other”, he – always a masculine *he* – represents Otherness; he who speaks another language and carries different values and beliefs. The more the subject explores the “in-between space”, the more she contacts with “o abismo” [the abyss], the void that stands between her and the other. According to Olivieri-Godet (2007), writing and displacement are inseparable elements in Graúna’s writing: the act of writing and filling the voids of memory trigger both deep, symbolic and ontological connections with her origins, and force her to constantly interact with the numerous, different cultures that shape her hybrid nature, generating an overall feeling of displacement. Writing is perceived as a space where identity is re-engendered through sensitivity and resilience, whereas the writer stands precisely in the “in-between space” “que corresponde a uma forma de “corte-vínculo”, ajuda-nos a compreender a experiência complexa, contraditória e dolorosa da expropriação e a necessidade de reocupação expressa na poesia de Graça Graúna” (OLIVIERI-GODET, 2007, p. 105). To Graúna, this space is both the place where dreams and hopes of the indigenous people are generated, and where they move away from the Western and capitalist culture: “De um lado / a palavra / do outro / o silêncio / estreando realidades conhecidas./ A pá lavra o abismo / que vai de mim / ao outro” (GRAÚNA, 2007, p. 11); and in this tension between the forces of territorialization and deterritorialization, *autobiogeographies* are created.

The poem “Era uma vez” (“Once upon a time”) also contributes to strengthen my argument. According to Olivieri-Godet, Graúna’s poem “explora a memória do território brasileiro, desde o contexto da aculturação colonizadora até o presente [...] O texto evoca o caráter conflituoso da tomada das terras indígenas pelo projeto colonizador que levou à formação do território nacional brasileiro” (OLIVIERI-GODET, 2017, p.108). Here, the lyrical subject unfolds – as if it were a tale – the process of formation and division of Pindorama (referred to as “um pernil de carneiro” [a lamb shank]) that started with the invasion of Indigenous lands and their enslavement at the hands of the Europeans (“[...] more and more foreigners / were coming”). The lyrical voice depicts colonizers as “grávidos de malícia” [pregnant with viciousness] (grávidos de malícia) and “sedentos de Guerra” [thirsty for war]; they are seducers who “dançam a falsidade” [dance in falsity] and “esterilizam a festa” [sterilize the party] eager of gold. As a consequence, “it became dark / but in the morning, very early” (e foi escurecendo / mas de manhã, bem cedinho) referring here to the dark, sad times that came after the arrival of the Portuguese in Pindorama. The lyrical voice then switches to the first-person singular: “vi um curumim sonhando / com “IVY-MARÃEY” formosa” [I see an indigenous boy dreaming / about a

beautiful, free of evil land]. The relevance of a land “with no evil” is shown in the use of capital letters, an aesthetical and ideological choice: this land is the core idea of this poem, the dream of all Indigenous people. This poetic tale is an imaginary journey from the non-indigenous world (the invaders) to that indigenous. These two worlds coexist but collide. The last verse conveys a collective call to believe in the future and that violence will be overcome. With its emblematic title, this poem is only apparently a fabula, a Western literary text used to pass on moral values: by appropriating it, Graúna conveys the power of Indigenous people to resist being subjected to Western power and their ability to tell their own story, in their own words. Graúna chooses to tell the origin of Brazil, with its mythical nuances, a dear theme within hegemonic collective memory narratives; yet she does not offer the well-known Western perspective, but one indigenous. Graúna writes in Portuguese (the language of the colonizer) to take this story back to Pindorama.

As Vieira argues, “retomar a palavra retomar Abya Yala, é descolonizar a língua e o pensamento. Reinventar a língua dos inimigos é também descolonizar o pensamento. E fazer circular a magia capaz de construir novos mundos possíveis, desmantelando os sistemas de opressão erguidos desde 1492” [take over the word is to take over Abya Yala, i tis to decolonize language and thought. Reinventing the language of the enemies is also to decolonize thought. And it is to circulate the magic that engenders new possible worlds, dismantling the oppressive systems built since 1492] (VIEIRA, 2021, 112). In their poems, Potiguara and Graúna showcase self-writing and self-inscription in physical, emotional and spiritual spaces, based on renewed self-understanding and positioning. Again, in Vieira’s words:

A escrita de si é um espaço de leitura e reescrita de subjetividades atravessadas pela colonialidade, um espaço para a análise das fissuras na identidade e das rupturas na história. Escrevemos para nós mesmas, escrevemos para nos reinscrever nos espaços, escrevemos para ser lidas, mas não para saciar uma necessidade voyeurística pela dor e pelo trauma coloniais, que além de buscar uma redenção para a violência colonial, espera uma experiência homogênea das subjetividades afetadas para a colonialidade (VIEIRA, 2021, p. 139).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Fernanda Vieira, Eliane Potiguara, and Graça Graúna subvert the Brazilian collective memory narratives to claim Indigenous space and their Indigenous voices. Literature is a territory and a space they belong to. They belong to the words they write just as they belong to the land their people inhabit and to their bodies.

This is how the narrative of the self becomes possible, memory is evoked, and traditions are passed on. Decolonial demands and poetic texts work as a whole, and Indigenous voices express themselves and call for collective action to defend their identities. They use literature to represent themselves and show the heterogeneity and complexity of Indigenous cultures; they convey it is possible to understand and empower resistance against historical invisibility and re-write narratives to depict their own subjectivities. Literature can contribute to a decolonial praxis:

O movimento descolonizador por excelência é e se define por esse caminho e por essa postura das minorias que rompem com o silenciamento, a invisibilização e o privatismo, aos quais foram empurradas ao longo da colonização, e assumem uma atitude pública, política e cultural de militância, de ativismo e de engajamento em torno à sua condição e à sua causa como minorias (DANNER, DANNER e DORRICO, 2020, p. 68).

The decolonization of knowledge, bodies, territories, and methodologies is a necessary step to ensure the right of Indigenous voices to exist as legitimate, cultural producers. By rejecting categories that do not represent them, these Brazilian Indigenous women writers reclaim and recreate their territory where their (indigenous) identities are engendered. By writing their *autobiogeographies*, they are increasingly finding their voices to able to repair the erasures of collective memory narratives.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- DORRICO, Julie; DANNER, Leno Francisco; CORREIA, Heloisa Helena Siqueira; DANNER, Fernando (Eds.). *Literatura Indígena Brasileira contemporânea. Criação, crítica, recepção*. Porto Alegre, RS: Editora Fi, 2018.
- DORRICO, Julie (2021). *Contemporary Indigenous Literature in Brazil: individual authorship of a collective identity*. Available on: <https://flip.org.br/2021/en/contemporary-indigenous-literature-in-brazil-individual-authorship-of-a-collective-identity/>.
- GRAÚNA, Graça. *O tear da palavra*. Belo Horizonte: S.N., 2007.
- GROSFUGUEL, Ramón (2007). The epistemic decolonial turn. *Cultural Studies*, 21:2-3, p. 211-223.
- LUGONES, María. (2010). Toward a decolonial feminism. *Hypatia*, Vol. 25, Issue 4. Fall 2010, p. 742-759.
- MIGNOLO, Walter. Introduction: Immigrant consciousness. in KAUSH, Rodolfo. *Indigenous and popular thinking in America*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010, p. xiii-liv.
- MUNDURUKU, Daniel (2008). *Literatura Indígena e o tênue fio entre escrita e oralidade*. Available on: <http://www.overmundo.com.br/overblog/literatura-indigena>.

- OLIVIERI-GODET, Rita. Graça Graúna: A poesia como estratégia de sobrevivência. *Interfaces Brasil/Canadá*. Florianópolis/Pelotas/São Paulo. v. 17, n. 3, 2017, 101-117.
- PACHAMAMA, A. R. (2019). “Mbaima Metlon: narrativas de mulheres indígenas em situação urbana.” *Ekstasis: revista de hermenêutica e fenomenologia*, 8(2), 134-150.
- POTIGUARA, Eliane. *Metade cara, metade mascara*. Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Grumin, 2004.
- POTIGUARA, Miriam (2022). *Indigenous Peoples, public policies and elections in Brazil*. Available on: <https://www.iwgia.org/en/brazil/4990-indigenous-peoples,-public-policies-and-elections-in-brazil.html>.
- RODRIGUES, Manoela dos Anjos Afonso. Autobiogeografia como metodologia decolonial. *Encontro da Associação Nacional de Pesquisadores em Artes Plásticas, 26º, Campinas. Anais do 26o Encontro da ANPAP*. Campinas: Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Campinas, 2017, p. 3148-3163.
- SLAM DAS MINAS RJ. Available on: <https://ims.com.br/convida/slam-das-minas-rj/fernanda-vieira/>.
- VIEIRA, Fernanda. *Ruptura histórica e abordagem criativa: uma cartografia de identidades nativas*. PhD Dissertation, UERJ, 2021.
- VIEIRA, Fernanda. <https://ikamiaba.com.br/>.
- VIEIRA, Fernanda. Podcast *Todas as vozes*. 2023 Available on: <https://open.spotify.com/show/1Fm6Y3AuEtx2PP2xAuWPVr>.