



## The Brazilian Indigenous as an Uneven Identity Reading an Indigenous Woman's Voice in Márcia Wayna Kambeba's Poems.<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

*Orality has always been the main channel through which culture and knowledge has passed onto generations of Indigenous peoples in Brazil. Yet, today, the need to resist cultural assimilation or, even worse, annihilation, has led to the creation of new, written materials where Indigenous people can speak for themselves by relating their history, defending their identity, and their cultural territory. Among these, Brazilian geographer, poet, and activist Márcia Wayna Kambeba of the Omágua/Kambeba people uses literature as a space where decolonial thought and traditional knowledge meet to build a philosophical, political, and poetic view on indigenous identity in general and on the experience of Indigenous women in particular. Drawing from previous studies on Brazilian Indigenous literature, decolonial theory, and decolonial feminism, this paper discusses Kambeba's works and underpins the relevance and need to examine the specificity of the experience of Brazilian Indigenous women writers as fundamental participants in the periphery of the world-literature to discuss the postcolonial configurations of identities in present-day Brazilian society.*

**Keywords:** Brazilian Contemporary Literature, Indigenous Literature, Decolonial Practice, Indigenous Women Authors, Márcia Wayna Kambeba

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Writing about Indigenous literature is quite a recent practice, inside and outside Brazil. By Indigenous literature I mean the literary production of an Indigenous/native authorship that has been paving its way in Brazil as a proper cultural practice and a literary movement since the 1990s (Thiel 2013). Until 2008, with the Law 11.645/2008, the teaching of Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous history and culture(s) was completely absent within the curricula of Brazilian schools and universities; hence, there is a gap that still needs to be filled. However, when approaching the study of this practice, we need to bear in mind that Indigenous literature, in the form of Orature, is an aesthetic and political movement much older than the Western alphabet-based records. It is ancestral and has always been in native peoples' memory and practices; for this reason, contemporary Brazilian Indigenous literature has emerged in the 1990s as a literary movement for the dominant, Westernized society. Until then, Indigenous lifeways and artistic traditions had always been vehiculated in the form of texts by non-indigenous voices and gazes (Thiel 2023).

The appearance of Indigenous literature within the Brazilian editorial market is strongly connected to the goals achieved by the Indigenous Movement.<sup>2</sup> In fact, until 1988, with the enactment of the Federal Constitution, legislation concerning native people in Brazil was marked by a conservative vision that defended the interests of the (former) colonizers—later, of the elites—and at no time did any law respect the territorial and ancestral rights of native groups. Accusing them of primitiveness and savagery, the State enforced native identity extinction through colonial measures: to exist in the country, one had to master the customs and tools of the white man (Dorrigo 2021). This reality began to change in the 1980s, when the Indigenous struggle shifted from being a pan-Indigenist movement to the fragmentation into associations and human rights organizations, which multiplied the number of institutions involved in the struggle and helped to build strategic alliances (Dorrigo 2021). Within this context, Indigenous leaders were able to participate in the drafting of Chapter VIII “On the Indians” of the 1988 Federal Constitution (Potiguara 2022). The 1988 Federal Constitution granted native populations the right to tuition in their mother tongue, as well as the right to use their own learning processes, based on their cultural background: they conquered the legal right to their original and collective identity, and by doing this they challenged the Western single-identity tradition (Dorrigo 2021).

The emergence of written works by a collective and individual authorship of native descent came as a response to the new educational need promoted by the Constitution, and the publishing of native literature would confirm the urgency of a shift in term of Indigenous identity protagonism. Coming into the Brazilian publishing market, pioneer authors such as Daniel

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<sup>2</sup> The Brazilian Indigenous Movement rises in the end of the 1970s, with the clear intention of politicizing and promoting the Indigenous struggle in the country, and as a response to the plans of social and economic expansion fostered by the military governments, especially in the northern and central-western regions. Intellectuals, politicians, Indigenous activists as a political movement successfully signed indigenous rights in Federal Constitution Articles 231 and 232. Indigenous movement and Indigenous literature share a common ground when it comes to militancy, activism, and public, political, and cultural commitment. If the first has always been focusing on promoting the Indigenous as a political subject in the public sphere, the latter's purpose is to promote individual ethnic peculiarities as well as the overall experience of violence and exclusion inflicted on them during the colonial and neocolonial process.

Munduruku, Kaká Werá and Olívio Jekupé, as well as Eliane Potiguara, Yaguarê Yamã, Graça Graúna, among many others during the following decade, have been producing “autobiographical, testimonial and mnemonic works on the process of colonization that has shaped and is shaping the building of contemporary Brazil” (Dorrigo et al. 2018: 11), offering important accounts on their experience of exclusion, marginalization, and violence. As an aesthetic and literary expression of a minority, in these texts “everything is political” (Deleuze and Guattari 1975) and the practice of self-affirmation and self-expression appears as a critique of present times, in the name of a community; agreeing with Dorrigo (2018: 12) and their colleagues who state that “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.”<sup>3</sup> Moreover, Indigenous literature questions literariness as it is perceived and decided in Western cultures, with the specific goal of decolonizing its colonial matrix.

Drawing from previous studies on Brazilian Indigenous literature, decolonial theory, and decolonial feminism, this paper discusses Kambeba’s (2013) works and underpins the relevance and need to examine the specificity of the experience of Brazilian Indigenous women writers as fundamental participants in the periphery of the world-literature, to discuss the postcolonial configurations of identities in present-day Brazilian society. In order to do this, I will examine some works by Brazilian geographer, poet, and activist Márcia Wayna Kambeba of the Omágua/Kambeba people. The objective is to discuss the use of literature as a space where decolonial thought and traditional knowledge meet to build a philosophical, political, and poetic view on indigenous identity in general, and on the experience of Indigenous women in particular.

### **Brazilian Indigenous Literatures and World-literature**

Considerations on world-systems by the Warwick Research Collective [WReC] (2015) are quite useful to understand the extent to which literary studies have been undergoing a crisis and how this crisis led to the questioning of the emergence of the idea of world-literature based on the theory of combined and uneven development. According to the WReC (2015):

In this context of disciplinary rethinking and reorientation, the notions of “world literature” and “global literature” have emerged as important nodes of discussion and research. A relatively minor difference in the sub-disciplinary provenance of these two linked initiatives might be registered quickly. It is clear that the thought-figure of “globalization” is fundamental to them both. But where “global literature” might be understood as in the first instance an extension of postcolonial studies—*as postcolonial studies under the sign of “globalisation theory,”* in fact—“world literature” is in the first instance an extension of *comparative literature, and might be understood as the remaking of comparative literature after the multicultural debates and the disciplinary critique of Eurocentrism.* (P. 4, italics in original)

<sup>3</sup> All translations are mine unless otherwise stated. Original text: “...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.”

Stemming at once from postcolonial and comparative studies, world-literature can be considered as “what happens to comparative literature when—having, however belatedly, engaged the task of ‘unthinking’ Eurocentrism—it ‘goes global’” (WReC 2015: 5). Yet, one must not fall into the mistake of perceiving world-literature as a (new) canon made of masterpieces or a way of reading contemporary texts; world-literature is, in fact, a system, that finds its basis not on difference but on inequality (WReC 2015). With Vilashini Cooppan’s (2004) words:

[w]orld literature...is not...not a pre-packaged canon that differs from the traditional one only in its inclusion of a handful of unfamiliar names. Rather, world literature is a way you learn to think, a mode in which you learn to read, and a collective agreement you make to lose something in translation in order to gain something in transformation. (P. 30)

This renewed idea of world-literature entails the necessary building of new categories, the definition of new frames, new theories, since it raises unresolved issues and new questions. In other words, “world literature is not an object, it’s a problem, and a problem that asks for a new critical method” (Moretti 2004: 149); it shows that enlarging the corpus of works isn’t the answer to this renewed scenario: what is actually needed, is to review and change the ordinary way of looking at the literary phenomena (Casanova 2004).

Bearing this in mind, world-literature can be considered as the literature of the capitalist world-system, with its combined and uneven development and its simultaneous, coexisting modernities (Jameson 1995). Capitalist development is intended here as being characterized by the production of systematic unevenness, this being central to the definition of modernity:

Modernity is neither a chronological nor a geographical category. It is not something that happens—or even that happens first—in “the west” and to which others can subsequently gain access; or that happens in cities rather than in the countryside; or that, on the basis of a deep-set sexual division of labour, men tend to exemplify in their social practice rather than women. (WReC 2015: 13)

Responding to modernity and capitalism means inevitably to respond to the declination of asymmetries; in literary terms, this translates into the creation of “dialectical images of combined unevenness” (WReC 2015: 17). This seems particularly pertinent when observing Brazilian Indigenous literatures, especially those written by women: by exposing the violence suffered during colonial and neocolonial times as well as the persistence of a system of inequities and injustices, contemporary Indigenous writers question modernity as it is perceived in Western cultures; they also offer new paradigms, entrenched in the ancestral knowledge of their people, and renewed frames where new propositions can find their place, exposing the limits and the uneven matter of Brazilian identity.

### **Indigenous Women and Literary Production in Portuguese:**

The role played by women has become increasingly prominent: as I mentioned above, first during colonialism, and today as postcolonial subjects, women experience the most varied forms of

violence, ranging from a physical dimension to a more symbolic one; enduring, among these, what Spivak (1988) refers to as “epistemic violence.” Hence, their accounts become necessary elements in the process of deconstruction and renovation of the paradigms that have defined the Western world and its production of knowledge, precisely because they expose the downfall of a fragile apparatus; moreover, and agreeing with Aline Rochedo Pachama (2019: 135), I believe that “native women are the main characters of the history of our country [Brazil], as wisdom-keepers, artisans and guardians of the language, mothers, daughters, warriors. To Brazilian native peoples, women have the primordial function of preserving their culture.”<sup>4</sup> The strength of these women comes from a community of ancestors who were the first to resist against the colonial project allowing them to build “healing accounts” (Justice 2018), a true movement of regeneration that challenges, through written texts, colonial powers; offering tangible examples of what decolonial praxis is today. Based on these premises, the present contribution discusses Márcia Kambeba’s (2013) works and underpins the relevance and need to examine the specificity of the experience of Brazilian Indigenous women writers as fundamental participants in the periphery of the world-literature to discuss the postcolonial configurations of identities in present-day Brazilian society.

In Brazil, Indigenous authors continue to maintain a special connection with oral expressions in their native languages, despite producing them in Portuguese. One of the main features of their literary production is the dialogue between visual and written texts, since illustration has always been equally relevant in terms of cultural value and significance. They also work as “multimodal narratives” (Sousa 2003), where the connection between orality and the written word is central:

Writing can be perceived not only as an alphabetical form to represent ideas, values or events. Interpreted like this, writing has always been present within indigenous cultures in Brazil under the form of graphics on ceramics, fabrics, wooden tools, basketry and tattoos. On the other hand, alphabetic writing *strictu sensu*, where words and sounds are registered on paper, was introduced in Brazil by European colonization and has been present in different forms within the indigenous communities since the 16th century (Sousa 2006).<sup>5</sup>

The choice to write both in their native language and in a non-native one, or more precisely, in the oppressor’s language (Portuguese), can be seen as ambiguous; yet, it is to be intended as an act of reaffirmation: the “white man’s language” (*a língua do branco*), the same language that in the past functioned as an instrument of domination and manipulation of knowledge, today becomes part of the Indigenous domain, and what formerly was a weapon against them today becomes beneficial to the Indigenous people, who use it to disseminate and value their cultures and traditions, but

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<sup>4</sup> Original text: “a mulher originária é a protagonista da história de nosso país, como mantenedora de sabedoria, artesã e guardiã do idioma, mães, filhas, guerreiras. Para o povo originário, a mulher tem a função primordial de preservar sua cultura.”

<sup>5</sup> Original text: “a escrita pode ser concebida como uma forma não apenas alfabética para representar ideias, valores ou eventos. Entendido assim, a escrita sempre esteve presente nas culturas indígenas no Brasil na forma de grafismos fetios em cerâmicas, tecidos, utensílios de madeira, cestaria e tatuagens. Por outro lado, a escrita propriamente alfabética, registrando no papel a fala e o som, foi introduzida no Brasil pela colonização europeia, e desde o século XVI está presente de formas variadas nas comunidades indígenas.”

above all their rights (Guesse 2011). To Indigenous people, writing (in Portuguese) can become a form of liberation, a necessary step in order to survive and to preserve their ancestral memory. As Daniel Mundurku (2008) explains:

It is necessary to write...the history that was denied so many times. Writing is a craft. It is necessary to be able to master this craft to perfection in order to use it in favor of indigenous people. [Learning] a craft doesn't mean to deny what we are. Quite the opposite, it means to affirm our skills.... There's a thin thread running between orality and writing, there is no doubt about that. Some people want to transform it into a fracture. I prefer to think of them as complementing each other.... Memory is trying to master new technologies in order to stay alive. To think about indigenous literature corresponds to thinking about the movement made by memory to understand the possibilities it has to move within a time that denies it and denies the people that affirm it.... Indigenous writings is the affirmation of orality.<sup>6</sup>

As a cultural and political phenomenon, Indigenous literature in Brazil is nothing but another attempt to resist discrimination and segregation and affirm identities. Moreover, texts by Indigenous authors are stewards of true cultural evidence, where ancestral knowledge is transferred in order for it to be preserved and disseminated. More specifically looking at works by Indigenous women, as Trinh T. Minha (1989: 121) explains, “the world’s earliest archives or libraries were the memories of women,” who have been keeping and transmitting the knowledge, traditions and beliefs of their community “from mouth to ear, hand to hand, body to body” given that “every woman partakes in the chain of guardianship and transmission” (Minha 1989: 121). In this sense, women’s testimonies are crucial to the understanding and embracing of Indigenous epistemologies, of their origins, traditions, hopes, and desires as human beings (a very much needed practice given the dehumanization process Indigenous people have been going through for decades); they are also crucial to the transmission of their history, since it is everybody’s history, seen and narrated from a different, very much necessary, perspective. When it comes to women’s storytelling, this can be seen as “an oracle and a bringer of joy, the storyteller is the living memory of her time, her people. She composes on life but does not lie, for composing is not imagining, fancying or inventing” (Minha 1989: 125); the evolution of this oral tradition into written texts becomes a necessary step to take in the process of transmission of memories and practices, especially for Indigenous populations in Brazil.

Acknowledging Indigenous populations and their literary contributions, then, means to acknowledge Brazil’s cultural background and its precolonial history; it also means fighting against the stereotypes built around marginalized groups who have been silenced throughout

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<sup>6</sup> Original: “é preciso escrever...a história que foi tantas vezes negada. A escrita é uma técnica. É preciso dominar a técnica com perfeição para poder utilizá-la a favor da gente indígena. Técnica não é negação do que se é. Ao contrário, é afirmação de competência.... Há um fio tênue entre oralidade e escrita, disso não se duvida. Alguns querem transformar esse fio em ruptura. Prefiro pensar numa complementação.... A memória está buscando dominar novas tecnologias para se manter viva.... Pensar na literatura indígena é pensar no movimento que a memória faz para aprender as possibilidades de mover-se num tempo que a nega e nega os povos que a afirmam. A escrita indígena é a afirmação da oralidade.”

history up to present times. As Stuart Hall (2006) reminds us, nations settle on long processes of identity-building and on violent mechanisms of conquest that aim at suppressing cultural differences, gathering classes, ethnicities, and genders over social divisions; this ends up suggesting a strongly gender-focused image of the nation—which is presented as being primarily masculine. In addition to this, nations are symbolic, or imagined, communities (Anderson 1983). In other words, instead of considering national identities as uniform (as intended during modernity),

we should think about them as if they formed a *discursive device* that pictures difference as a whole or as a body. They undergo deep divisions and internal differences, yet being “unified” solely through the exercise of different forms of cultural power. (Hall 2006: 62)

As Homi Bhabha (1990) pinpoints, the attempts of the nationalist discourse constantly focus on producing a narrative of national progress and development. Hence, narratives of national progress generate a strong ambivalence within the very concept of nation, in the discourse of those who write about it or even in the lives of those who experience it. Bhabha (1990: 2) finally argues that “nationalism is, by nature, ambivalent.” So, given their close connection to the language used to convey them, nations are the results of a power discourse, of an ambiguous rhetoric because ambiguous is the language that produces them.

National identities are not permanent, steady, and predetermined, but they are reiterated practices, experiences, ideologies, and imaginaries; in other words, narratives that depend from and respond to a specific historical, cultural, political, and social context. They often face the need to be renewed and tend to adjust to the need of time and space. However, the hegemonic discourse tends to preserve its power, recreating its narratives through new strategies and promoting a distorted idea of the nation in order to maintain control. Bhabha (1994), again, explains that:

The representation of difference must not be read hastily as the reflection of *pre-given* ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition. The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transition. The “right?” to signify from the periphery of authorized power and privilege does not depend on the persistence of tradition; it is resourced by the power of tradition to be reinscribed through the contingency and contradictoriness that attend upon the lives of those who “are in the minority.” (P. 2)

Modern nations do not consist of a single folk, a single culture, or a single ethnicity. Despite the efforts in implementing homogenizing and unifying discourses, all modern nations are cultural hybrids: any representation that silences differences and a nation’s heterogeneity will never correspond to its nature and its reality. Especially in post-colonial countries such as Brazil, literature contributes to the reaffirmation of these alternative narratives, their cultures, identities, as well as their memories: it works as a significant strategy against violence and annihilation, processes that all minorities have been experiencing in Brazil since colonial times. Moreover, opening our perspective to Indigenous women’s contributions allows us to understand literature

far from its traditional, canonical conceptions and to widen its boundaries towards singular texts and the knowledge they convey.

### **Indigenous Women and Postcolonial Societies: Literature as Decolonial Praxis**

Post-colonial societies are still struggling with accepting and legitimizing women's voices and Indigenous contributions. According to Aníbal Quijano (2000), the idea of race, in its modern sense, had no reason to exist prior the colonization of the Americas. It made its appearance allegedly to define the differences in terms of biological structures between conquerors and conquered people. Therefore,

the establishment of social relations based on such idea produced in America social identities that were historically new: Indians, Black and mestizos, and it redefined other [relations]. And while the social relations that were being configured where relations of domination, those identities were being associated to the corresponding hierarchies, spaces and social roles, as if these were constituting them, and, consequentially, [they were being associated] to the paradigm of colonial domination that was being imposed. In other words, race and racial identity were being established as basic tools for the social classification of the population (Quijano 2000: 202).<sup>7</sup>

After paving its way in the social grammar within the Americas, the idea of race continued to define the relationship between Europeans and non-Europeans when Europe expanded its domination to the rest of the world. This led to the spreading of the Eurocentric view on knowledge and to the normalization of the relations of dominance based on racial difference, as well as those of superiority/inferiority between the dominated and the dominating.

Hence, the idea of race has been the most effective and enduring instrument for social domination not only in the Americas, but at a global level. In addition to this, it has also been used as the foundation for the redefinition of another well-known device when it comes to domination: that of inter-sexual or gender relations. In fact, according to the Eurocentric approach in the production of knowledge, race, and gender are closely related. According to Quijano (2000), the spreading of the Eurocentric mindset led to the consolidation of a specific form of dualism, that is, the strict separation between the physical dimension of the human experience, and the non-physical one, or in other world the distinction, within human beings and human cultures, between a natural dimension and a rational one. This approach deeply affected racial relations of domination, since it validated the idea that some people—Black or African people, Indigenous, or even Asian people—were to be considered closer to nature than white people, legitimizing the fact

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<sup>7</sup> Original text: “La formación de relaciones sociales fundadas en dicha idea, produjo en América identidades sociales históricamente nuevas: indios, negros y mestizos y redefinió otras. Y en la medida en que las relaciones sociales que estaban configurándose eran relaciones de dominación, tales identidades fueron asociadas a las jerarquías, lugares y roles sociales correspondientes, como constitutivas de ellas y, en consecuencia, al patrón de dominación colonial que se imponía. En otros términos, raza e identidad racial fueron establecidas como instrumentos de clasificación social básica de la población.”



that Europeans could treat them as objects of study, domination, and exploitation. It also affects the Western idea of literature as “belles-lettres,” since this definition clearly privileges products and cultures that have embraced written communication earlier, while it disadvantages oral cultures by considering them less valuable and less reliable (Vieira 2021). More importantly, this dualism undermined the relationship of sexual domination:

This new and radical dualism didn't affect only the social relationship of dominance, but also the more ancient one, that is, the relationship of sexual domination. From then on, women's space, and that of women from inferior races in particular, became stereotyped, alongside the rest of their bodies, and the more inferior their race was, the closer to nature or even directly part of nature, as shown by the case of Black slaves, [they were considered to be]. Although the topic still needs to be explored, it is plausible that the idea of gender has been developed after [the appearance] of the new, radical dualism and as part of the Eurocentric cognitive perspective (Quijano 2000: 225).<sup>8</sup>

The subordination experienced by Indigenous women comes as a consequence of the coloniality of power, or in other words, it is a clear example of the social discrimination that continues to affect modern postcolonial societies (such as the Brazilian one) as a legacy of the patriarchal colonial past. The concept of coloniality of power is very useful to understand the extent to which modernity, coloniality, and capitalism are related. In fact, the capitalist system reproduces patterns of domination and subordination, mechanisms of social classification and social hierarchies that are deeply rooted in the colonial perspective on race, gender, and its well-known dichotomy center/periphery.

In this sense, the influence of the decolonial movement on the legitimation of women's contributions as cultural producers has been significant in the past years, since it has stirred the debate on the dynamics of subordination dictated by colonialism and on the practice of domination of women's bodies and territories. In particular, Maria Lugones (2014) develops the idea of decolonial feminism stemming precisely from Quijano's theories on the coloniality of power. In her work *Toward a Decolonial Feminism*, Lugones (2010: 745) offers a detailed analysis of what she calls the “coloniality of gender” and on the fact that “the semantic consequence of the coloniality of gender is that ‘colonized woman’ is an empty category: no woman are colonized; no colonized females are women.” In this scenario, 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: 746). As resistant subjectivities, they express themselves infra-politically, or in other words, in a “politics of resistance, toward liberation” (Lugones 2010: 746). Continuing her analysis, Lugones (2010) argues that:

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<sup>8</sup> Original text: “Ese nuevo y radical dualismo no afectó solamente a las relaciones raciales de dominación, sino también a las más antiguas, las relaciones sexuales de dominación. En adelante, el lugar de las mujeres, muy en especial el de las mujeres de las razas inferiores, quedó estereotipado junto con el resto de los cuerpos, y tanto más inferiores fueran sus razas, tanto más cerca de la naturaleza o directamente, como en el caso de las esclavas negras, dentro de la naturaleza. Es probable, aunque la cuestión queda por indagar, que la idea de género se haya elaborado después del nuevo y radical dualismo como parte de la perspectiva cognitiva eurocentrista.”

[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. (P. 746)

The idea of coloniality of gender becomes very useful to understand the oppressive impositions experienced by women in post-colonial societies as a complex interaction between economic, racializing, and gendering systems. Decolonizing gender, hence, is necessarily a practical matter, a praxis that has the clear intention of building a solid critique of “the capitalist heterosexualist gender oppression as a lived transformation of the social” (Lugones 2010: 747). In this perspective, Indigenous women writers fit Lugones’ description of the “resistant,” and their inclusion in the decolonial feminist movement can encourage the process of self-recognition and self-affirmation through the practice of self-expression. In addition to this, it promotes a sense of unity and community that can a very 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: 754)

United by the same purposes, Indigenous women writers reject the old, long-lasting colonial categories and the historical condition of subordination by producing texts that are imbued in their ancestry, that address the coloniality of power and celebrate the beauty of Indigenous women as a form of resistance, and as a connection to their territory for the future generations. As Márcia Kambeba (2020: 92) explains, “in the non-Indigenous society, writing emerges as a form of control of the surrounding environment. To Indigenous people, writing is important as a form of resistance, a record of thoughts and a continuity strategy for the future generations.”<sup>9</sup> Indigenous authors such as Graça Graúna, Eliane Potiguara, Aline Rochedo Pachamama, Fernanda Vieira, and Márcia Kambeba herself, among many others from the new generation, are leading the protest against the risk of falling into oblivion and against a national dominant discourse that tends to place the indigenous people in a “non-space,” with no identity and no territory. By merging oral practices with written texts, they manage to preserve and transmit traditions and knowledge, while also sharing information on their culture, history, and the most different practices. In this scenario, works by Brazilian geographer, poet, and activist Márcia Wayna Kambeba offers good examples of how literature becomes a space of resistance, of connection; where a true, decolonial practice takes place and where boundaries can be exceeded. Moreover, Kambeba’s poems also allow us to discuss the role of Indigenous women in contemporary Brazilian society, as citizens, cultural agents, political activists, and as potent voices in the (renewed) narration of the country’s history.

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<sup>9</sup> Original text: “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.”

As most minorities, women in Brazil have been enduring the most diverse forms of violence and exploitation, and probably are those who have been more deeply affected by the dynamics and consequences of the colonial process. They have undergone abuses, violence, and varied forms of subordination at many levels. This becomes particularly painful when thinking about native populations. The fact that Indigenous women are increasingly taking action and owning their voice as writers, finding a place in the publishing market, in schools, and as researchers, allows them to slowly overcome a long-lasting condition of subalternity, or even worse, of invisibility. As Kauss and Peruzzo (2012: 37) pinpoint, when evoking the image of Brazilian women, the tendency is to immediately think of white women, or Black and *mulatas*: “Even with some effort, quite unlikely one will think of an indigenous woman, and this presumably happens because of the invisibility suffered by Brazilian indigenous people.”<sup>10</sup> Therefore, the urge to take part to the country’s social panorama as writers comes as a response to this uneven and unfair cultural scenario, consequence of the combined and uneven modernity mentioned at the beginning of this contribution; it can also be seen as a way for these women to redeem their image and reputation, while defending their experiences, preserving their memories, traditions, and the struggles they’ve been going through since ancient times: literature in the hand of Indigenous women becomes a tool of resistance, self-affirmation and self-narration, or in other words, a place where *autobiogeographies* are build (Vieira 2021).<sup>11</sup>

Despite the fact that works by women writers have been slowly paving their way within Brazil’s national literary scene, the space dedicated to indigenous women authors is still very small, many books are self-published, other are unavailable, and overall Indigenous literature is very hard to find in bookstores or archives. However, this uneven scenario does not correspond to what is actually happening “on the field”: women authors such as Eliane Potiguara, Graça Graúna, Márcia Kambeba, among many others, are leading the protest against the risk of falling into oblivion and against a national dominant discourse that tends to place the indigenous people in a “non-space,” with no identity and no territory. This is quite evident in the poem “Entre-lugar” (In-

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<sup>10</sup> Original: “Mesmo com esforço, muito improvavelmente, virá a memória a mulher indígena, isso, possivelmente, se deve à invisibilidade que foi atribuída aos povos indígenas do Brasil.”

<sup>11</sup> *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. 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 flourish. *Autobiogeographies* enable those who feel “out of place” (Mignolo 2010) to engender spaces where they can find themselves, away from Eurocentric epistemologies.

between place) by Graça Graúna (2007), published within the collection “O Tear da Palavra.”<sup>12</sup> The poem is quite brief, presenting two stanzas of respectively five and three verses. It proceeds at a quick pace, with the lyrical subject building a contraposition between “the words of the other” (*a palavra do outro*) and “silence” (*o silêncio*). Here, with “the words of the other,” the reference is to the ideologies and values of the Western, capitalist order; while “silence” refers to the well-known Indigenous reality. The idea of otherness is then subverted and reconfigured: from an Indigenous perspective, the colonizer is the “other,” he represents alterity, he speaks another language and carries different values and beliefs. The more the writer moves forward in the “in-between space,” the more he comes in contact with an “abysm” (*o abismo*)—the void that stands between him and the other—the more distant he feels from himself too. Writing and displacement are inseparable elements within Indigenous literary production, either because of the deep connection with their origins experienced while attempting to restore and fill the gaps in terms of memory, or in the continuous contact with different cultures, all shaping the hybrid nature of their identity. Writing is perceived as a space where identity is rebuilt through sensitivity and resilience, whereas the writer stands precisely in the “in-between space” (Olivieri-Godet 2017). To Graça Graúna (2007), this space is both the place where the dreams, the hopes, and the creations of the Indigenous people take place, and the place where they come closer to, or move away from, Western, capitalist culture in a potentially harmful play. It is the tension between these forces that is being addressed and defined as a key element of the experience of Indigenous people today.

### A Closer Look to Márcia Wayna Kambeba’s Works

Particularly relevant to my argument, works by Brazilian geographer, poet, and activist Márcia Wayna Kambeba (2013, 2020), can be good examples of how literature, especially in the hands of a woman, becomes a space of resistance. Her writing is a space where the fight for territory—being this a symbolic or a physical one—becomes central and where identities are negotiated. In this sense, Kambeba’s (2013) poems such as “Minha pena vermelha” (My Red Feather) or “Natureza em chamas” (Nature on Fire), or “Resistência Indígena” (Indigenous Resistance), “Identidade” (Identity), among many others, allow us to discuss the role of Indigenous women in contemporary Brazilian society, as citizens, cultural agents, political activists, and as the main character of their own story.

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<sup>12</sup> Graça Graúna, Indigenous name for Maria das Graças Ferreira, is a contemporary Brazilian writer of Potiguara descent. She was born in São José do Rio Campestre, RN (Brazil); she is also a poet, a literary critic, and a professor at the University of Pernambuco. Her works cover a wide range of genres, from poetry, to chronicles, to essays, to youth literature and haiku. Among these: *Canto Mestizo* (1999), *Tessituras da terra* (2000), *Tear da palavra* (2001), *Criaturas de Nãnderu* (2010), *Contrapontos da Literatura Indígena Contemporânea no Brasil* (2013) and *Flor da mata* (2014). Her lyrical works frequently rely on non-indigenous references and forms of expression, creating a unique literary field that is contemporary and ancestral at once, while also being a space for revindication of creative freedom. Her works are particularly relevant for her appropriation of non-indigenous references and forms to transform them into her own space of expression and cosmovision, in some sort of “re-antropofagic” process (Lima 2022) that returns them loaded with Indigenous content.

Márcia Vieira da Silva is of the Omágua/Kambeba people, who are located in the Alto Solimões in the Amazon. She was born in the Belém do Solimões, from the Tikuna people, and she currently lives in Belém, in the state of Pará. By choosing the name Márcia Wayna Kambeba, the author aimed at manifesting two distinct spheres of her identity: her first name, Márcia, corresponds the socio-cultural face of the non-Indigenous elements of her identity as this is a typical Portuguese name, while her family-names, Wayna Kambeba, showcase her ethnicity, referring respectively to her Indigenous name and to the name of her people. Márcia, then, manages to perfectly merge and manifest the double condition of being Indigenous and Brazilian in a country where the encounter between these two identities is still being negotiated. In fact, often Indigenous people struggle for being identified as Brazilian and are constantly fighting for their rights as normal citizens. These conflicts and biases intensify when native people move from their original territories to the urban areas of the country, since this is being used by the dominant discourse as an excuse to de-legitimize their ethnical identity, as well as their cultural background. It gets even more intense in case Indigenous people have access to education and manage to achieve any academic degree, as is the case of Márcia Wayna Kambeba.

Kambeba holds a degree in Geography from the Federal University of Amazon (UFAM), and her work is often built around matters such as territory, reterritorialization, the identity of the Omágua/Kambeba people and the revindication of the right to their land in order to preserve their practices and traditions. Besides working as an academic, according to her presentation on the book of poems *Ay kakyri Tama (eu moro na cidade) (I live in the city)* (Kambeba 2013), she is also a writer and a poet, a composer and a photographer. This specific work was reissued in 2018; in this same year, the author released her second work, *O lugar do saber (The place of knowledge)* (Kambeba 2018).

Most of Kambeba's poems feature a voice in first person singular, touching themes such as identity, territories, urban space, the connection between nature and women, resistance, silence, and the act of writing. In most cases, the approach to these issues is filtered through autobiographical lenses: the author builds her identity and her narrative from a very personal perspective, which is also a collective one (that of her people and their ancestral knowledge). Yet, in order to understand the specificities of Kambeba's work, one must bear in mind that Indigenous population have endured a devastating colonizing process—and its contemporary declinations—and that the numerous invasions of Indigenous territories have forced many populations into (unwanted) migrations. In fact, most Indigenous subjects don't chose to move from their territories spontaneously, but end up migration to the big urban centers in order to survive the occupation of their land; Márcia Wayna Kambeba (2012) herself explains that the migrations of the Omágua/Kambeba people that occurred in the twenty-first century have to be understood as a response of the intense changes that have affected Brazil at a social and economic level during the past decades, and as a consequence of globalization: (Indigenous) people move to look for education, health care, food, and employment. In her works, Kambeba articulates precisely the clash experience during this intercultural encounter (that between Indigenous cultures and the urban environment), reinforcing and validating her dual identity: that of an Indigenous woman living in the city.

Another urgent theme to Márcia Wayna Kambeba's work is the struggle for the demarcation of Indigenous territories. In fact, as far as territorial claim is concerned, in Brazil, Indigenous people have often been positioned in a "non-place," this having its origins precisely in the colonial era. The clear distinction and consequent separation between the natives' world and white people's world started back then, soon exceeding the physical sphere and reaching the sociocultural one, causing important conflicts in terms of visibility and recognition of the native populations. The intention to occupy Indigenous land is still very present in today's political narratives, showing the extent to which the colonial mentality still persists and determines the country's social relations. Most efforts in resisting against these ideologies and narratives today come from the literary field, since literature is being used more and more by Indigenous voices to vehiculate their message and to claim their space in the literary world-system. In this sense, Indigenous literatures seem to belong to a space that Homi Bhabha (1998) describes as "in-between," a space where societies are challenged and redefined by new, border identities. Homi K. Bhabha (1998) explains that in-between spaces enable the emergence of new identities, subjects who identify in the frontiers of cultural spaces; they question, challenge, and redefine the traditional idea of society. Stuart Hall (2011) conceives the identity of migrant subjects as being part of both their native culture and the culture or lifeways they move to, hence build upon a boarder where they have to speak both languages, and have to constantly negotiate between two different worlds, nevertheless entangled in one uneven modernity; a relation which the publishing industry in Brazil in some ways illuminates and in others smooths by giving one group access to the stories of another. Indigenous people are increasingly building their opposition against ideologies such as capitalism, eurocentrism, and coloniality, especially through literature: they are redesigning epistemologies and claiming recognition for their ancestral knowledge, while also representing intercultural, postcolonial identities that identify both locally and globally.

Among Márcia Wayna Kambeba's concerns, one of the most significant ones is fighting for the recognition of the existence and the identity of the "urban natives," that is, indigenous people who have moved to the cities. Kambeba defends the right for these people to have their ethnicity acknowledged and recognized, while also addressing the difficulties they experience in order for this to happen (as an example of this, the Omágua/Kambeba people have two names, as the author's shows). Kambeba (2012) herself explains that the migration of Indigenous people to the urban areas comes as a consequence of different factors, such as education, health, internal conflicts, shortage of food, and job searching, as well as a general response to globalization. Kambeba's works often touch themes such as the clash resulting from the intercultural encounter between Brazilians and Indigenous people, as well as the issues related with the definition and demarcation of Indigenous land. In addition to this, she questions the interpretation of Indigenous works by non-Indigenous critics, yet always defending her peculiar point of view: that of an Indigenous woman who lives in the city.

This is particularly clear in her first book, *Ay kakyri tama (eu moro na cidade)* (I live in the city). In the 32 poems that compose the book, Kambeba (2013) touches on matters such as Indigenous identity, territory, displacement, the urban environment, as well as the relationship

between women and nature. The book also shows some of Kambeba's works as a photographer, where she chooses to depict some daily life scenes of her people, shooting in black and white film; in this way, she reinforces the idea that her work is anchored on ancestral elements, showcasing them in dramatic tones, creating a sort of suspended image that lives beyond time.

A closer look to her poems shows Kambeba's use of written word to translate her Indigenous character; the author is able to adapt the western literary tradition to the need to inform, disclose and reaffirm her identity as a native subject. Most messages are conveyed in the first person, reinforcing the idea that her art is autobiographical, that her writing is her territory. Here, the Indigenous voice and text are used to deconstruct the image of native people that historically has been defined through a non-Indigenous gaze, mostly with literature. In its structure the book reproduces Western models, yet the intention is to inform, present and reaffirm the Indigenous identity with its struggles, in order to expose and overcome the historical process of obliteration and violence that it endured. The call for self-affirmation and for the reinforcement of the native character echoes in Kambemba's verses in the poem *Ser indígena/ser Omágua* (To be indigenous/to be Omágua):

Sou filha da selva, minha fala é Tupi.  
Trago em meu peito,  
as dores e as alegrias do povo Kambeba  
e na alma, a força de reafirmar a  
nossa identidade,  
que há tempo ficou esquecida,  
diluída na história.  
Mas hoje, revivo e resgato a chama  
ancestral de nossa memória.

Sou Kambeba e existo sim:  
No toque de todos os tambores,  
na força de todos os arcos,  
no sangue derramado que ainda colore  
essa terra que é nossa.  
Nossa dança guerreira tem começo,  
mas não tem fim!  
Foi a partir de uma gota d'água  
que o sopro da vida gerou o povo Omágua.  
É na dança dos tempos  
pajés e curacas  
mantêm a palavra  
dos espíritos da mata,  
refúgio e morada  
do povo cabeça-chata.

Que o nosso canto ecoe pelos ares  
como um grito de clamor a Tupã,  
em ritos sagrados,  
em templos erguidos,  
em todas as manhãs!

(Kambeba 2018: 26).<sup>13</sup>

The lyrical subject appears in first-person singular—and presents herself as being a “daughter of the jungle,” in order to emphasize the connection with nature as part of her Indigenous descent and her ancestral background. The first-person singular shows the empowered voice of the female subject: her speech is charged with the memory, the history, and the collectivity of her people, and it is through her verses that she redeems their ancestry. In the poem, Kambeba builds a strong connection between the lyrical subject and her people, the Kambeba/Omágua people, through a constant identification of traditional elements such as the drum, the bow and the dance. Yet, it also exposes the historical wound that still affects native people (“I carry in my chest / the pain and the joy of the Kambeba people”) while “the blood that was shed that still colors/ This land that is ours.” The reference here is clear, as well as the claim. The poem then continues to refer to traditional elements, charging them with hope and revindication (of a voice, a land, a space). The message is a positive one: “Our warrior dance has a beginning / But doesn’t have an end!”. Through the writing of these empowering verses, the author aims at promoting the Indigenous

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<sup>13</sup> Translation:

“I am a daughter of the jungle, my language is Tupi!  
I carry in my chest  
the pains and the joys of the Kambeba people,  
and in my soul, the strength to reaffirm  
our identity,  
that has been forgotten since a long a time,  
diluted in history.  
But today I live and I redeem the ancestral  
Fire of our memory.

I am Kambeba and I exist, I do:  
In the touch of every drum,  
In the strength of every bow,  
In the blood that was shed that still colors  
This land that is ours.  
Our warrior dance has a beginning,  
But doesn’t have an end!  
It was from a drop of water  
That the breath of life created the Omágua people.  
And in the dance of times  
The shamans and the healers  
Keep the word  
Of the spirits of the forest,  
Shelter and home  
Of the flat-head people.

May our song echo in the air  
As a scream of clamor to Tupã  
In sacred rituals,  
In rising temples,  
In every morning!”



cause, while also making it know to non-Indigenous readers. In fact, according to her own view of Indigenous literature(s):

To Indigenous people, writing is important as a form of resistance, as a registry of thoughts and as a continuity strategy for the future generations. Someone has always spoken for these people, it's time for each nation to express themselves with regards to their reality and cultures. Therefore thoughts have started being organized and designed, it has taken the shape of letters, engravings, images and stepped into the village and the city. This explains the fact that it is important to learn to read and write in Portuguese, the Brazilian language, without losing the native language. The Indigenous writer knows the responsibility that his writing carries, since it doesn't only represent his/her memory, but it also transforms into the collectivity's when it leaves his/her hands and it reaches a larger audience of readers inside and outside the village. Writing is an act of tuning with ancestry, it entails being guided by the spirituality that inhabits our body-territory.  
(Kambeba 2020, 92–93)<sup>14</sup>

A similar message can be found in the poem that give the name to the collection *Ay kakyri tama* (*Eu moro na cidade*) (I live in the city):

Ay kakyri tama  
Ynua tamaverano y tana rytama  
Ruaia manuta tana cultura ymimiua  
Sany may-tini, iapã iapuraxi tanu ritual

Tradução:  
Eu moro na cidade  
Esta cidade também é nossa aldeia,  
Não apagamos nossa cultura ancestral,  
Vem homem branco, vamos dançar nosso ritual.

Nasci na Uka sagrada,  
Na mata por tempos vivi,  
Na terra dos povos indígenas,  
Sou Wayna, filha da mãe Aracy.

Minha casa era feita de palha,  
Simples, na aldeia cresci  
Na lembrança que trago agora,  
De um lugar que eu nunca esqueci.

Meu canto era bem diferente,  
Cantava na língua Tupi,

<sup>14</sup> Original: Para os povos indígenas, a escrita tem sua importância na forma de resistência, registro do pensamento e estratégia de continuidade para as futuras gerações. Sempre alguém falou pelos povos, é chegada a hora de cada nação se manifestar sobre sua realidade e cultura. Então o pensamento começou a ser organizado e desenhado, ganhou forma de letras, gravuras, imagens e adentrou aldeia e cidade. Isso explica o fato de ser importante aprender a ler e escrever em Português, idioma brasileiro, sem perder a língua materna. O escritor indígena sabe da responsabilidade que carrega sua escrita, uma vez que ela não representa apenas sua memória, senão que se transforma em coletivo quando sai de suas mãos e ganha um público leitor maior dentro da aldeia e fora dela. Escrever é um ato de sintonia com a ancestralidade, é ser guiado pela espiritualidade que em nosso corpo-território que habita (Kambeba, 2020, p. 92–93).

Hoje, meu canto guerreiro,  
Se une aos Kambeba, aos Temb , aos Guarani.

Hoje, no mundo em que vivo,  
Minha selva, em pedra se tornou,  
N o tenho a calma de outrora,  
Minha rotina tamb m j  mudou.

Em conv vio com a sociedade,  
Minha cara de “ ndia” n o se transformou,  
Posso ser quem tu  s,  
Sem perder a ess ncia que sou.

Mantenho meu ser ind gena,  
Na minha Identidade,  
Falando da import ncia do meu povo,  
Mesmo vivendo na cidade.<sup>15</sup>  
(Kambeba 2018: 24)

The poem is one of the most significant works by M rcia Wayna Kambeba, where her identity as an urban Indigenous woman is fully represented. Among the eight stanzas, the first and opening

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<sup>15</sup> “Translation:

I live in the city  
This city is also our village  
We didn’t erase our ancestral culture  
Come, white man, let’s dance our ritual

I was born in the sacred Uka,  
For years I lived in the forest  
In the land of Indigenous people  
I am Waya, daughter of mother Aracy.

My house was made of straw  
Simple, I grew up in the village  
In the memory that I carry now  
Of I place I never forgot.

My chant was very different  
I sang in Tupi language.  
Today, my warrior chant  
Joins the Kambeba, the Temb , the Guarani [people]

Today, in the world I live in  
My jungle became of concrete  
I can be who you are,  
Without losing my essence.

I continue being Indigenous  
In my identity,  
By speaking of the relevance of my people,  
Even if I live in the city.”

one is in Tupi, the author's native language: on the one side showcasing the intercultural dimension of her works, on the other Kambeba seems to want to force the contact between the reader and Tupi, a language that is often considered less valuable and definitely less known than Portuguese; Kambeba somehow forces the reader to come in contact with this "other" language and to open his horizon to alterity. By using both Portuguese and her native language, however, the author seems to claim that Lusophone writing would not exist without the historical subjugation of Indigenous culture; hence, by her time of writing, they are enmeshed, not through assimilation but through a combined and uneven modernity. Yet, the will is to build a space of encounter, overcoming cultural segregation. The poem is also built using strong rhymes; by this, it reproduces (in Portuguese) the strong musicality of Indigenous orality, making it one of its more evident elements. By stating that "Ay kakyri tama," "I live in the city," Kambeba wants to tell the story of many diasporic families who have left their native land and have moved to the city; the intention is made clear in the either stanza, the closing one: Kambeba wants to prove that, despite being eradicated from their territories, Indigenous people treasure their roots and their cultures: regardless the adversities experienced in the urban environment and in displacement, the memory, knowledge and traditions of her ancestors still define their identity ("I continue being Indigenous / In my identity / By speaking of the relevance of my people / Even if I live in the city").

In the second stanza, the lyric subjects inform the reader that he/she lives in the city; however, despite this being the new home, it hasn't wiped out the ancestral culture and traditions ("This city is also our village/ We didn't erase our ancestral culture"). According to Paola Effelli Rocha de Sousa Lima (2020: 124),

There's a big prejudice with Indigenous people who live in cities since Western people think that if an Indigenous person lives in the city he/she is no longer Indigenous. This thought is somehow supported by some Indigenous, more traditional, elders who do not believe that an Indigenous person can learn a western language, since this means to disown their culture.<sup>16</sup>

However, Marcia Kambeba shows us that this does not happen: being Indigenous does not depend merely on where you live, it is much more than that; it is a mixture of places, traditions, language and memories that are carried within one's identity; also, in stating that "the city is also our village" she seems to refer to pre-Colombian times, when the whole Pindorama (Brazil) was inhabited by native populations. She then invites the white man to join her ritual, subverting the narrative that has always depicted Indigenous practices as less valuable and less important: here, Kambeba treasures it, inviting the Western eye (in the body of the white man) to have a look at it and learn from it.

As a diasporic subject, the lyrical voice often transmits a sense of nostalgia when recalling her native roots and her native land, this probably because—despite embracing the new location

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<sup>16</sup> Original text: "Existe um grande preconceito com os indígenas que moram na cidade, pois o homem ocidental acredita que se o indígena mora na cidade ele deixa de ser indígena. Esse pensamento também é sustentado por alguns indígenas mais antigos e tradicionais, que não acreditam que o indígena possa aprender uma língua ocidental, pois isso significa renegar sua cultura."

(the city)—she still somehow desires to go back to that ancestral dimension, to that connection with nature that is intrinsic to Indigenous identities and still very alive in their memory. This becomes clear in the fourth and fifth stanzas, where Kambeba states that “my house was made of straw / Simple, I grew up in the village / In the memory that I carry now / Of I place I never forgot” and that “My chant was very different / I sang in Tupi language.” Yet, she also reinforces the idea that now, her singing has become that of a warrior and it has joined the singing of other Indigenous people (“Today, my warrior chant / Joins the Kambeba, the Temblé, the Guaraní [people]”) proving that the condition of displacement and the urban environment haven’t erased her roots; quite the opposite: they have reinvigorated the call to fight for the rights of her people and for the recognition of her identity as an urban Indigenous woman. Márcia Wayna Kambeba is depicting here what having a voice as an Indigenous person means today, in contemporary Brazil; it means using this voice to claim for reaffirmation and recognition, for union and for integration, to overcome the uneven perception of their (dis)placement in society. In fact, according to Lima (2020: 126),

thanks to this process of displacement, Indigenous people are strengthening their union, since they see each other as big family, fighting for the same ideals. They had to organize themselves with more power and in a political and social way, such as learning new languages;”<sup>17</sup>

this process of transculturation has led to what Gersem dos Santos Luciano (2006) has referred to as “ethnogenesis,” that is, the process of revitalization, retrieval, and reinvigoration of native cultures carried out by Indigenous people throughout Brazil in modern times. This seems to be a necessary step towards acknowledgment and exposure of the repression, oppression, and cultural segregation lived during colonial times, and its perpetration in the unevenness of the modern capitalist world.

The idea sponsored by Kambeba’s poem is that Brazil is a multicultural, multilingual and heterogeneous country, made by different identities who need to be recognized and respected. On a bigger scale, the claim seems to be that Indigenous voices have always been part of the literary world-system, and this has always been profoundly unequal. The poem closes with the reaffirmation of her Indigenous identity as an urban woman, closing the imaginary circle that started with the title in Tupi.

### Final Considerations

In Márcia Kambeba’s (2013) works such as “Ay kakyri tama” or “Ser indígena/Ser Omágua,” the Indigenous identity is claimed both as an individual and a collective practice, built from the most ancient times and carried out in contemporary Brazil. She relies on literature for her self-

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<sup>17</sup> Original: “E com esse processo de deslocamento, os povos indígenas estão ficando mais unidos, pois se veem como uma grande família, lutando pelos mesmos ideais. Eles tiveram que se organizar com mais força e de forma política e social, como também aprender novas línguas.”

representation and to show the beauty of Indigenous culture; she aims at being encouraging for her people, and for non-Indigenous people too, for them to understand and embrace the power of their resistance against historical invisibility, in favor of new narratives, written with their own hands. By doing this, by offering new epistemologies, she is showing the extent to which decolonial praxis can take place through literature. As Danner, Danner, and Dorrico (2020: 68) explain:

Quintessentially, the decolonial movement is and is defined by this path and this posture taken by minorities who break the silencing, the invisibility and the private appropriation towards which they were pushed during colonization, and they take a public, political and cultural stand made of militancy, activism and commitment with their condition and their cause as minorities.<sup>18</sup>

Claiming a voice and breaking the imposed silence is part of a practice that seeks to question the colonial legacy and to formulate new postulates that are committed to decolonizing theories, views and the production of knowledge as a whole. Indigenous women such as Márcia Kambeba, and many, many more, aim at deconstructing the colonial, oppressive, patriarchal logic of contemporary post-colonial societies by producing decolonizing literature where they refuse these forms of domination and defend the freedom to be who they are in the name as a conscious act of resistance.

With works such as “Ay kakyri tama” and “Ser Indígena/Ser Omágua” Márcia Wayna Kambeba (2013) responds to the urgent need to reconfigure the country’s foundational narratives in order to provide more inclusive perspectives. She also responds to the need to broaden the frames of representation of women’s subjectivities and break the practice of silencing their narratives. In this sense, the decolonization of knowledge, gender, and culture as a whole, seems to be a necessary step to take to guarantee the right for minorities to speak their own truth and claim their own story. By refusing the old categories, these authors prove that decolonial praxis takes place through cultural resistance with the clear intention of claiming that Indigenous voices were always part of the literary world-system, and this is always and always has been profoundly unequal. Márcia Kambeba showcases her very peculiar way of perceiving, belonging, and relating to the world, or in other words, their very personal worldview. Their multifaceted identity of native women comes through, and in this sense, I believe that they respond to a very contemporary urge: that of giving voice to the experience of Indigenous women as fundamental agents in the building of a true, decolonial praxis and in the process of reconfiguration of Brazil’s postcolonial identity.

To sum up, Kambeba’s works manage to shed light on a series of conflicts that arise from the encounter between cultures, emphasizing the need to define those necessary sacred spaces, while also affirming her Indigenous identity and questioning migrations and displacement. In her verses, one can find her very peculiar way of perceiving, belonging, and relating to the world, or in other words, her very personal worldview. Her multifaceted identity of a native woman living in the city

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<sup>18</sup> Original text: “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.”

comes clearly through, and in this sense she manages to respond to a very contemporary urge: that of giving voice to the experience of Indigenous women as fundamental participants to the periphery of the world-literature, while contributing to the reconfiguration of Brazil's postcolonial identity. Moreover, Kambeba's work invite the reader to come in contact with native cultures as they are (that is, without being filtered or diluted by the colonizers' eye) and to approach them based on the new epistemologies they offer. With Daniel Munduruku's (2005) words:

Understanding Indigenous Literature means to understand that it manifests through different ways of transmitting knowledge: that it is the reverberation of what lives within our body. Literature, understood this way – completes us as people, because it reminds us where we come from, where we are going and what is the meaning of our presence on this planet. Therefore, it is a very peculiar way of reading the world we live in and of giving a creative response to the questions that life is raising to us. This is how we understand this peculiar way of reading the worlds that the West decided to call literature. And this is how we redrew it and how we understood that it is also a way for us to refresh the memory responsible for the maintenance<sup>19</sup> of our history. (P. 9–10)

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<sup>19</sup> Original text: Compreender a Literatura Indígena é entender que ela se manifesta nas diversas formas de transmissão do saber: que ela é a reverberação do que mora dentro do corpo de nossa gente. A literatura entendida nesses moldes – nos completa enquanto pessoas, porque nos lembra sempre de onde viemos, para onde vamos e qual o sentido de nossa pertença a esse planeta. É, portanto, um modo todo peculiar de ler o mundo em que vivemos e dar uma criativa resposta às questões que a vida está sempre nos levantando. É assim que entendemos essa forma peculiar de ler o mundo que o ocidente decidiu batizar de literatura. É assim que a temos reelaborado e compreendido que é, também uma forma de atualizarmos a memória responsável pela manutenção da nossa história (Munduruku 2005: 9–10).

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