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Oral history from an anti-colonial perspective: temporal and anthropocentric traps¹

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Abstract: This article explores the conceptual pitfalls of temporality and anthropocentrism from an anti-colonial perspective. Based on the narratives of Merina, a Kaiowa indigenous woman, the text discusses how ethnic memory, based on non-anthropocentric elements, challenges temporal linearity and colonial/modern and Eurocentric power structures. The analysis proposes an anti-colonial oral history that considers more-than-human relations and questions the imposition of a homogeneous and progressive temporal perspective, while also highlighting the issues surrounding multiple temporalities in the struggle against coloniality. The work articulates the critique of Eurocentrism and the defense of an alternative understanding of indigenous memory as a referent.

Keywords: Oral history; indigenous memories; temporalities; coloniality; Eurocentrism. Merin

História oral em perspectiva anticolonial: armadilhas temporais e antropocêntricas

Resumo: Este artigo explora as armadilhas conceituais da temporalidade e do antropocentrismo no âmbito de uma perspectiva anticolonial. Partindo das narrativas de Merina, indígena Kaiowa, o texto discute como a memória étnica, baseada em elementos não antropocêntricos, desafia a linearidade temporal e as estruturas de poder colonial/modernas e eurocentradas. A análise propõe uma história oral anticolonial que considera as relações mais-do-que-humanas e questiona a imposição de uma perspectiva temporal homogênea e progressista, ressaltando também os problemas das múltiplas temporalidades na luta contra a colonialidade. O trabalho articula a crítica ao eurocentrismo e a defesa de uma outra compreensão da memória indígena posta como referente.

Palavras-chave: História oral; memórias indígenas; temporalidades; colonialidade; eurocentrismo.

1 This article is the result of my participation in Round Table 2, “Oral History, resistance and anti-colonial perspectives”, at the 17th National Oral History Meeting of the Brazilian Oral History Association - ABHO, on September 4, 2024, at Univille, in Joinville, Santa Catarina. For this reason, elements characteristic of the spoken word have been preserved.

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Introduction

We remember because the memories are brought by Pa'i Kuara, who is the Sun. The Sun will burn the memories with its brightness; they appear, but they are the same as before: it works like this, we remember the ancestors, the shamans, the stories, but then it seems that a new memory is formed in an older one. It's as if from within the memory we could draw another one, more illuminated by the sun; one memory in another [...] It's true that we defend ourselves by telling stories about our people, but I exist because I can remember and tell stories of my own (Merina Adelina Ramona, 2018).

I begin with the words of Ñandesý² Merina Adelina Ramona, Merina, an indigenous woman of the Kaiowa ethnic group, from the Itay Ka'aguyrusu camp, Indigenous Land in Panambi - Lagoa Rica, municipality of Douradina in Mato Grosso do Sul. The interview was conducted in Guarani-Kaiowa on a sunny weekend in 2018, after a performance by the musical group Okaraguyje Taperendý³. At the time, Merina was 71 years old. The interview is part of a list of dozens of other oral histories heard during the course of the institutional research project: "Indigenous voices in the spaces of life", which has now ended.



Figure 1 - Ñandesý Merina Adelina Ramona. Source: Leandro Seawright.

2 Ñandesý is a traditional prayer.

3 As Merina is Guarani-speaking and does not speak Portuguese, I relied on the valuable contribution of teacher Graciela Chamorro to carry out the interview.

Throughout the interview, oral memory presented itself as an anti-colonial manifestation and thus challenged understandings. Memories were brought back by Pa'i Kuara, the Sun; Jasy, the Moon, and with the narrated presence of Ara Noé, the Storm, as well as references to the destructive beings as allies of the plunderers of sacred territory. The stories linked to non-anthropocentric or more-than-human elements, such as the Sun, the Moon and the Wind, demonstrated the possibility of insistent existence in the world: "I exist because I can remember and I tell stories [...]", said the narrator.

Starting from the story of Merina at the crossroads of the narrative genres of *oral tradition* and *testimonial* oral history, I consider the primacy of ethnic memory, which highlights the conditions of possibility for an anti-colonial, public oral history, applied in the face of some of the various conceptual traps that may (or may not) be undone as we reach the third decade of the 21st century.

Memory and coloniality

Let's move on to the exam.

Tripartite (Ancient History, Medieval History, Modern History); then quadripartite (Contemporary History), the Western caesura between memory and history originates in the scientific status of History as the constructor of a glorious past for nations between the mid-18th century and the 19th century. In this sense, I consider the coloniality of knowledge (Lander In Lander, 2005, p. 8; Mignolo, 2008, p. 242):

The intellectual elaboration of the process of modernity has produced a perspective of knowledge and a way of producing knowledge that demonstrate the character of the global pattern of power: colonial/modern, capitalist and Eurocentric. This perspective and concrete way of producing knowledge is recognized as Eurocentrism. Eurocentrism is, here, the name of a perspective of knowledge whose systematic elaboration began in Western Europe before the middle of the 17th century, although some of its roots are undoubtedly older, or even ancient, and which, in the following centuries, became hegemonic worldwide, following the same path as the dominance of bourgeois Europe. Its constitution was associated with the specific bourgeois secularization of European thought and with the experience and needs of the capitalist, colonial/modern, Eurocentric world pattern of power established from America (Quijano, 2005, p. 9).

When the dictionary defines the entry "History", Voltaire already expressed, in his own way, in the "Encyclopédie, or Reasoned Dictionary of the Sciences, Arts

and Crafts”, that Western Europe was triumphant in terms of historical reason (In Diderot; D’Alembert, 2015, p. 345). At the same time as nations were glorified and the national ideal consolidated in the 19th century, “methodological nationalism” was created, according to which the narratives of *true citizens* were subjected to the forms of the national past under the criteria of writers legitimized to spread knowledge. It was Jaucourt, in fact, who said of the “man dedicated to the sciences and the man of letters”, of the “superiority of his lights, the nobility of his outlook and his way of life, honest, tranquil and withdrawn” (In Diderot and D’Alembert, 2015, p. 371). A kind of universal man with virtues capable of dominating through enlightenment.

On the other hand, and a long (long) way from coloniality coming to an end at the end of what is known as the colonial period, indigenous peoples, including in the Midwest of Brazil - also in the republican chronotope - had their territories invaded on the grounds that they were “wastelands” that were always subject to political and economic projects, or, in this case, the incursion of colonizing agents.

Merina remembered *colonial violence* - a kind of enhanced continuation of elements of *colonial just war* associated with *ruralist ideology*:

I went with my father and mother from one place to another a few times [...] They would arrive when we were quieting down, calming down! They pushed us again and again and again. It was a great struggle for sacred territory. And all in terror, because the whites didn’t ask permission, they weren’t gentle: they shot at the indigenous people, beat them, mistreated them. They assaulted! And it was from one place to another, over and over again [...] It was always with the butt of the gun, punches and kicks. Truculence with us (Merina Adelina Ramona, 2018).

European authors such as Georges Balandier have called this set of conditions, shocks and contacts the “colonial situation”. In other words, the “domination imposed by a foreign minority”, ethnically and culturally different, in the name of the idea of cultural superiority, which is dogmatically affirmed, as well as being racist; the colonizing minority therefore imposes itself on the “autochthonous majority” which, according to the author, is “materially inferior” [...] (Balandier, 1951, p. 50). For this reason, there is the “fundamentally antagonistic character of the relations between these two societies [the colonial society and the colonized society]”, which can be explained by the role of instrument to which the “colonized society is condemned; the need, in order to maintain domination, to resort not only to ‘force’, but also to a system of pseudo-justifications and stereotyped behaviors” (Balandier, 1951, p. 50).

It is clear, however, that colonization was put into effect under the continued belief that the indigenous peoples would be decimated, that they would be integrated into the national community or that they would simply disappear; they would be extirpated. That was a mistake. On August 7, 2023, in Belém, Pará, during the event *O Brasil Indígena: Uma Nova Foto da População Indígena (Indigenous Brazil: A New Picture*

of the Indigenous Population), organized by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), the “first results of the 2022 Democratic Census on the indigenous population” were presented, with the “striking figure of 1.693,535 people declared to be indigenous, which represents an increase of 88% in relation to the previous census in 2010” (Simoni; Guimarães; Santos, 2024, p. 1).⁴

Perceiving in an empirical way the permanence/survival of indigenous peoples, Ms. Merina reflected:

Before - with the Indian Protection Service, SPI - they thought they could control us. With the National Indian Foundation, FUNAI, even more so now, this is no different. Although the law is not the indigenous people's thing, because the indigenous people live by their memories and their way of being, I've heard of laws in Brazil that say that the Kaiowa and other indigenous people can be the way they have been for hundreds of years. So, if they don't respect people who are different from them, why don't they respect the law they themselves created? Let the indigenous be indigenous, in their own little place, and with the help of the sun, nature will certainly be well protected from destructive beings (Merina Adelina Ramona, 2018).

Colonial violence, which is also the disorganizing violence of the ethnic memory of the colonized, can be better understood through the concept of “internal colonialism” in the manner of Pablo González Casanova (2007, p. 431). Therein lies the intricate relationship between the native peoples and the colonizing state, which, over time, moves towards a dynamic between the native populations and the state erected on the colonized soil, the result of a process of formal emancipation that separates the colony from its metropolis (Casanova, 2007, pp. 431 - 438).

Two exponents explained, each in their own way and in other terms, that it would be unreasonable to understand indigenous people as prostrate, defeated, exotic or stereotyped in the manner of the “paper indigenous” or trapped in the immobility of a certain perception enclosed in the permanent category of victim. In the field of so-called *New Indigenous History*, it is clear that the classic “Os negros da terra” (1994), written by John Manuel Monteiro, established a *leading role* for native peoples in colonial relations. In the field of oral history, it was José Carlos Sebe Bom Meihy who, distancing himself from the memory of the elites, published the work “O Canto de Morte Kaiowá” (1991) in the face of the persistent problem of indigenous suicide in Mato Grosso do Sul.

Far from consecrating the narrative of prostration, the stagnation and embalming of the victim or even of memory (Gagnebin, 2020, p. 204); even though she narrates painful memories and *bruised lives*, Merina, for her part, repositioned the *Word* with songs, rites and dances, since she received the legacy of prayer from her father, Pa'i

4 In the 2010 Census, 890,000 people declared themselves to be indigenous.

Chiquito. Throughout the interview, Merina sang several times.

The *Word* has in shamanism the foundation of what non-indigenous people consider to be “aesthetics” or, in a different sense, “ethics”. For Ms. Merina, neither aesthetics nor ethics in the conventional sense: it is - in the *strong sense* - the very foundation of *ethnic memory*:

When I was a child, there were many prayers. Some prayers, also called shamans, didn't just hear the Word, which is *Ñe'ẽ* in our language, but they saw *Ñe'ẽ*. In other words, they saw the Word. With their eyes it was possible to see the Word that touched us, our soul: because the Word is the memory and the memory shows itself in our speech [...] I had a father who was very well known, very respected in the Panambizinho region, near here [...] His name was Pa'i Chiquito. He was a *hechakáry*: I'll explain: he's a shaman who sees the word. *Hechakáry* is nothing more than someone who looks at the Word, who sees it, and who has the sacred direction in it. My father's memory is the memory of a sage, an old indigenous sage (Merina Adelina Ramona, 2018).

We can see, then, that the indigenous narrative is not that of the “enlightenment” that founded a certain way of being and thinking in the West - dichotomous, split between beliefs and the ideal of enlightenment. It is far removed from idealism, from solipsism; far enough, and very far, of course, from Cartesianism, which partitions knowledge; from icy rationalism, from reified memory. In this sense, too, it is true that indigenous peoples do not fit into the narrow Eurocentric categories of memory. Indigenous memory is a lump between that which *is*, *which says it is because it is*; which in fact *is* (an exoreference): in other words, indigenous memory is not the simple reference, but the referent. It's not possible to say: mine is reason, yours is myth.

In other words, the Sun or the light of the Sun not only represent the Sun shaman, because for Merina, he is (the Sun shaman); likewise the Moon, the wind and the destructive beings that a pray-er can fight against with chants. Perhaps we could say *presentification*, but how can *we present* what has never been absent for this ethnic group? Indigenous memory is its own condition.

It was João Pacheco de Oliveira who, in the field of indigenous studies, said: “memory is not made up of mechanical fragments that can be freely and incessantly assembled, disassembled and reassembled in a *bricolage* activity” (2016, p. 26). He also said that memory is not made up of adding “new and unknown meanings to the preceding object according to the circumstantial interests of a sovereign intellect” (2016, p. 16). According to Oliveira, each “fragment does not exist in itself, but is integrated into an architecture of memory, into a totality that integrates all its parts, establishing a shared meaning” (2016, p. 26).

Oliveira is right and it would nevertheless be strange if the expressions listed were suitable for understanding indigenous memory, which doesn't even operate

with notions derived from the partitioned perception of Western epistemology: “fragments”, “mechanical”, “assembled”, “disassembled”, “reassembled”, “*bricolage*”; or even “sovereign intellect”. The relationship between possible parts of memory and a whole, for example, is entirely foreign to Kaiowa indigenous conceptions, as is the idea of “memory architecture”. Of course, saying what indigenous memory is not does not elucidate what it is and what Merina, among other indigenous people, said it is: the very condition of indigenous life, of ethnic life.

According to Mario Rufer, “history has the right to mechanical representation: the order of time organizes the account”, but for the narratives of memory - the “discourses”, says the author - “time doesn’t even pre-exist as a structure” because “memory parasitizes time, transforming it into a question and an occasion for practice, it takes it out of mechanical strategy and puts it into tactics” (Rufer, 2010, p. 13). In any case, if “in history time is language, for memory it is speech” and that is why one can speak one’s own mnemonic condition from within - with one’s own sensitivity, responsibility or referentiality (Rufer, 2010, p. 13).

The politics of time and the “new historical subjects”

I’ll return to Merina’s words and then proceed with the proposed examination:

Another good thing is that time to wait... Waiting... Because indigenous time is different from white time: our memory is the memory of plants that take time to grow. Plants have a certain time to be born and grow. Now, the white man is worried about money, although not everyone: so, he poisons the plants and kills others because he wants to earn more and more money. After planting, the little plant grows and that expectation happens! Time passes until the fruit arrives... Until the plants produce ripe fruit! Everything has time to ripen!” (Merina Adelina Ramona, 2018).

I consider the tense distinctions between the temporality of indigenous life and that (of the functioning) of capital, bequeathed by the modern economy. No less important would be an analysis of the different gears in consumer society and, consequently, their impact on indigenous life. Or even the exploitative nature of agribusiness, which, in short, jeopardizes the basic forms of indigenous life and the *Tekohá* (sacred territory) where one is indigenous Guarani or Kaiowa. However, I take the following portion as the reason for the problematization: “because the time of us, who are indigenous, is different from the time of the whites [...]” (Merina Adelina Ramona, 2018).

I will consider it from a point of view that can, however, help to tackle some of

the pitfalls that exist in the field of epistemology: 1) the well-known pitfall of the ideas of linear, empty and homogeneous time, as well as multitemporality, initially perceived as gaining or recognizing the time of the *other*, the life of the *other*, the identity of the other; and 2) the pitfall of the proposal to include the excluded, which in the past created the no less well-known designation of “new subjects of history”.

The question, however, remains: are there risks in including the *other* as if they were the *same*: the *other* in the grammar of the *same*? Do we consider their historical experience over time as if it were unique, hegemonic? The other question that arises is: how can the proposal of an anti-colonial oral history help to undo the treatment of the *other* (the multiple) as if it were the *same*?⁵

Over time, oral history projects have been carried out with those considered to be, in some way, the “new subjects” of history or those who suffered from some form of elision in the face of the work of historians; everything was enchanting and promising, although it was also criticized by those who could not stand the idea of working with “alternative sources”. Soon, we went from the initiatory condition of *giving a voice to* the sophisticated suggestion of *listening to* the most varied people who were included in history through the stories of their own memory. This proposal was something unthinkable when one recovers, in reverse, the Western or Germanic onslaught of conceptual synthesis in the singular collective *Geschichte* (Koselleck, 2006, p. 21; 47 - 60). The manifestations of oral history, from another angle, made themselves felt to the sound of many voices and diverse listenings - with polyphony, heteroglossia, multivocality and through a virtuoso methodological constraint.

In addition to those who have done oral history without being historians, the historian community - although by no means unscathed -, learned that it could lead projects that were pluralistic and more *inclusive*. Everything would have been a success and an eloquent overcoming. At the same time as the possibility of including “new subjects” in academic and non-academic writing was realized, the notion of multiple temporalities gained momentum in the West. Once again, the gains have multiplied in historian understanding. Could it be better?

I note the advances made by the monumental and inspiring work of Reinhart Koselleck (2002; 2006; 2018), widely discussed by attentive readers such as Helge Jordheim, Stefan Helgesson, Achim Landwehr, Zoltán Boldizsár Simon, Marek Tamm, Elías Paltí and María Inés Mudrovcic, among others. Also noteworthy are the earlier contributions of Gaston Bachelard, as well as other thinkers from the humanities and social sciences examined by Marlon Salomon. In the work “Heterochronies”, one of the expectations was to demonstrate in the history of history, in the humanities and social sciences, how it became possible to call into question the unique temporality of the Eurocentric matrix. In other words, the temporality of chronological, empty and

5 I highly recommend reading the article “Espectros da colonialidade-racialidade e os tempos plurais do mesmo”, by Maria da Glória de Oliveira (2024).

homogeneous time. I believe, however, that this temporality is a kind of *chronological colonialism*, or a form of *colonialist chronology* (based on Newtonian, mathematical, external, conquering time, centered on teleologies). The temporal matrix radiating from the North, with its progress, its fury, its violence, its sharpness, is part of what can be attacked when the aim is to combat coloniality.

With the shrinking of the linguistic turn or neo-historicism, however, the so-called “new metaphysics of historical time” emerged, presenting the paradigm of presence with Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, multitemporality with Koselleck and his readers, as well as the new analytical philosophy of history with Paul Rorth and Jhonatan Gorman (Cardoso Jr; Mudrovcic; Landwehr, 2024, pp. 5 - 9). For more than a decade, so-called postmodernity has lost its strength, literary narrativism has fallen into decay and representations are no longer sufficient to represent the represented. There has been a “return to things” as proposed by Ewa Domanska (2006, p. 338).

Not infrequently, the apparent optimism, with the possibility of opening up to the multiple, the inclusive and a new temporal vectorization, can also be understood as the acclaimed decline of the singular that brings as a corollary the “plurality of histories and temporalities” that could no longer be homogenized in the old concepts of universal histories or civilization (Salomon, 2018, p. 9). But why do we still consider the notion of “chronology” (Pimenta, 2021, pp. 214 - 219; 227 - 232) - a Judeo-Christian conception of solid permanence - to make the important gesture of periodizing the stories told from memory? Are we critical of the succeeding time, but still employ it in strange patterns for some communities in order to fit the memories of others?

In fact, Stefan Tanaka presented precisely this problem in one of his books: “History Without Chronology” (2019). In this way, it is possible to understand that chronology as a measure of time also serves to lengthen or stretch an imaginary line, the so-called “timeline”, which started in Western Europe around a successful, colonial, violent time, centered on progress. And who needs progress if not to sustain the ideal of civilization? After all, how can we dominate without the progression of the conqueror’s temporal vortex, which carves out the dominant perception of race, gender and class supremacies?

While on an intellectual level no one else seems to credibly adhere to this type of “temporal order”, on the other hand it is possible to agree with Dipesh Chakrabarty, for whom Western Europe has placed itself at the forefront of progress and condemned all other peoples to the “imaginary waiting room of history” (2000, p. 8): they would also be “backward” peoples. The multiple, overlapping times explained by Koselleck’s geological metaphor are those that enshrined the temporal partition between the well-known “space of experience” and “horizon of expectations”; through “acceleration”, the historian of concepts says, Christian eschatology was turned into the ideology of progress in the 19th century (2006, p. 305). The distance between the past and the

future demarcates the present - this gap - which promoted in progress the belief in tomorrow.

But which tomorrow? In progress, in development, in developmentalism or in the tomorrow of those who have a tomorrow? Or even in the gesture of sacrificing one “generation” so that the next can be better, “happier” or improved? During the 1980s, when studies on memory in the West were revived, a curious tendency emerged to approach memory as a counter-concept - something explosive, surplus, worthy of “commemoration”. In the case of Western heritage, memory has come to be seen as a celebratory gesture, within what has been called, with a certain solemnity, the “age of commemoration”, mainly in the 1980s in France. At the end of the 20th century, the present showed its voracious appetite for the past, as if it had savored and digested it to its liking - a phenomenon that, not by chance, was reflected in the paradigm of presence.

In the “now”, governed by tensions that were more than arbitrary, and crossed by correlations of forces, it was decided who belonged to the present and who belonged to the past. This is known as *allochrony*. Who would therefore be current and who would be backward in a kind of “negation of coetaneity” (Rufer, 2010, p. 17)? Mudrovic calls this impetuous ensemble “the politics of time” (2024, p. 48). As a side-effect, and with the expansion of memory, the gesture of including the time of the other, then pushed into memorial time, anachronistic, repeatedly delayed.

One of the main examples of the “politics of time” is the “temporal framework” that has been tried, and is still being tried, on indigenous lands: do the constitutional rights of indigenous peoples cover their present conditions or is it necessary to establish a framework in the colonialist imaginary of time with legal validity to judge who can have the usufruct of traditional territory and who has lost their rights (Mudrovic, 2023, p. 365)? Once again, the inclusion of rights in a not-so-subtle exclusion on the margins of linear, empty and hegemonic temporality. All this while defending multitemporality as an achievement.

It is clear that dignified gestures of inclusion and giving a voice are not enough. Listening is dignified and is a demonstration of empathy. Empathy is the raw material of oral history, without which it would be difficult to establish the indispensable relationship between narrator and oral historian or oralist. However, empathy isn't everything when what you want is a certain anti-colonial movement. *Good feelings* as a whole are noteworthy, but they are not enough. Because it doesn't necessarily have the power to establish a series of applications, reflections, disciplined cadences in a well-constructed methodology aimed at attacking the epicenter of colonialism: progress is chronosophical; a resistant, hard-won belief that is often only broken at the level of argumentative protocol. Decolonizing in a vacuum is also a trap.

Anti-colonial oral history can, in turn, add the contribution of self-reflexivity and provocation to the tripartite nature of historical time, accentuated by faith in the

inclusion of the other in their space, speech and voice (Oliveira, 2024). The other is not the same, their demands are not the same; their expectations are not the same. It's not enough to cut corners in the name of good intentions when what you're looking for is the insertion of the other from the same place. The multiple times from the same, when this is the case; the non-linear, linearized. Memory extracted from its natural state to be fitted into chronological panoramas.

In this sense, a painful reflection is in order:

Even when history becomes inclusive, through the multiplication of subjects, the political place they acquire through discourse is necessarily degraded. And if the demands for recognition are functional in this historiography, it is because the subjects themselves identify themselves, in the discourse that constitutes them, as excluded and subordinate. This means that, by constituting themselves as subjects of historiographies, they acquire, ipso facto, a subordinate political representation within the discourse itself, in other words, they are 'second class' subjects. In this work, I start from the conviction that this situation is produced by the intimate relationship between historical time and hierarchy, that is, the temporal presupposition underlying history is what allows it to operate politically, excluding the alterities that the history discourse itself makes visible (Mudrovic, 2023, p. 361).

As well as the paradox of degradation presented by Mudrovic, it's worth mentioning another passage - albeit a little long - that sums up the author's thinking:

[...] if I have a banana, for example, I can say that apples, pears and grapes are "other" fruits and that there is a "multiplicity" of fruits. Why? Because I have the general concept of "fruit" which allows me to encompass and group them all together as different instances of the term. Following this example, I can't say that the Nuer, the Amondawa people, the Wichis, the Mapuche, the European inhabitants of the Middle Ages, for example, have "other" times, "other" temporalities, or that there are "multiple" times, because there simply isn't a universal concept of time, a Time itself, that can encompass all of them and of which these peoples are more or less different instantiations. Relationship-time cannot be confused with substantive-time. The concept of abstract, empty and linear time is a conquest and colonization of Western culture, which has become hegemonic. In short, this "time itself" is not a universal, but the result of a historical construction based on social practices and semiotically mediated by cultural and cognitive systems. Hence the trap of "temporal multiplicities", the most popular but no less regrettable version of which is the coining of the category "regimes of historicity", which was born flawed by the optimism of the Western European subject. Under the naivety of thinking that it is just a matter of ordering the past, present and future differently, the failed belief in a universal time organized in three temporal dimensions that can simply be

“applied” to “others” that are not like “one” is concealed and disguised (Mudrovic, 2023, pp. 364 - 365).

From another angle, it can be seen that Merina dialogued with ethnic conceptions of time, making distinctions between the time of the environment, of plants and animals, and the time of the interests of groups that use “colonialist predation” to practice the relentless territorial dispossession of traditional lands. As opposed to an anti-human proposal, it is essential to think about the temporalization of the narrator’s time, provoked by herself or by her community of belonging: after all, whose story is being heard? It doesn’t seem to be the history of the same, or the utilitarian extraction of material for the production of exotic or culturalist ideas placed online, as much as in the mirage of the multiple derived from the center.

Post-anthropocentric oral history

The forms of anthropocentrism, however, do not dispense with what I consider to be the forms of anthropochronism, that is, that temporal organization which abandons the more-than-human components in order to concentrate on time, as well as on strictly human relations or relations between humans (Mudrovic, 2024, p. 48). If this is the case for the majority of minds that are tributaries of Western illustrated culture, indigenous peoples even in their dreams bring images, smells, fears and a set of emotions alongside the environment or even other forms of existence that are not human (Rodrigues, 2020; 2023).

The interview with Merina shows elements of memory based on human experience, but in no way anthropocentric:

What does the Word make you feel? The spirits, the forest that we remember but no longer have because the whites, who we call Karaí, destroyed almost everything. Wisdom, healing and the possibility of surviving even in this way... With our land taken by the whites. After all, do we have the right, as you say, to nature? Of course. We have to defend what’s left of the forests [...] Because the Tekoha is not just the place where we live and which has been reconquered in parts by our leaders. We remember the Tekoha and of course the Tekoha is a space, a place where we plant, where we hunt and where we live. But I can tell you today, in this speech of mine, the following: there is a Tekoha in the memories of the indigenous: it has color, it has taste, it has smell, it has life and it even has the blood of our ancestors and our placentas are buried in its ground (Merina Adelina Ramona, 2018).

Anthropocentrism with an anthropochronic temporal basis places the human species at the “center of the world, enjoying hegemony over other beings and

functioning as masters of a nature that exists to serve their needs” (Domanska, 2013, p. 10). This stance therefore leads to *speciesism* because it derives from an anthropocentric essentialism capable of reducing all perception of the passage of time to the priorities assigned to humans.

The basic element is that oral history is only possible because, of course, someone is telling a story. However, I would also like to insist in this text that oral history is not reduced to conducting interviews or forging the strange craft of *oral archivist*. Nor is it synonymous with the mere production of unpublished sources, hierarchically established or merely filling documentary gaps; creating archives for elite memories. Therefore, I ask for space for the obvious: there is no oral history without interviews and there are no interviews that are not given by humans. If this is the consideration, we can't rule out the repeated problem: how can we think in an anti-colonial way about references to non-human beings that don't dispense with the becoming of a memory beyond the human traumatic core?

Chakrabarty said that “globalized consciousness” marked a certain period in which, although the “environmental concerns of the last four decades have drawn attention to the relationship between man and his environment, including other species, this epochal consciousness has remained profoundly homocentric” (2015, 141 - 152; 154). In the case of oral history, on the other hand, homocentrism didn't even need to be *naturalized* and it wasn't necessary to make statements like Marc Bloch's classic one about the discipline of History: “science des hommes dans le temps” (Bloch, 1952, 29). Bloch's timely and repeated definition, however, begs the question: what can we learn from deep history, big history, global history, digital history, the history of the time of the Earth System, of the emergence of diseases through new or modified strains; of animals, plants, various forms of existence; of algorithms and things?⁶

“Human beings are a minority life form” - endangered or not - when it is possible to consider that “microbes constitute the largest of life forms” (Chakrabarty, 2023, p. 680). But what should we do? Admit arguments for the separation of human beings as dominators of all other existences by divine order (theological argument), the ontological superiority of humans to the detriment of the various forms of life (speciesism, Cartesianism, rationalism, etc.) or simply the resizing of the colonial gesture of animal domination through disintegrating voracity?

Based on Ailton Krenak's assumption that “we should admit nature as an immense multitude of forms, including every bit of us, who are part of everything” (2021, p. 33) there would no longer be *solipsism* or *speciesism*, *determinism* of relationships or *Cartesian divisionism*. There is concern about what we do with anthropogenic factors typical of what several authors have called the Anthropocene (Turin, 2023; Turin; Lowande In Turin; Lowande, p. 7 - 17); carbon dioxide emissions and global warming. Krenak

6 I also recommend reading the recently published book: “Antropoceno: perspectivas historiográficas”, organized by Rodrigo Turin and Walter Francisco Figueiredo (2024).

stated, however, that the ontological pillars that have sustained modern thinking are based on the separability, determinability and sequentiality characteristic of modern times, especially when considering that another world is possible in terms of the relationship with the environment. Krenak pondered the possibility of an awakening:

What I have learned over these decades is that everyone needs to wake up, because if for a while it was us, the indigenous peoples, who were threatened with the rupture or extinction of the meanings of our lives, today we are all facing the imminence of the Earth not being able to support our demand (Krenak, 2019, p. 45).

I'll end by returning to the concept of temporality, now dimensioned in what I consider to be the communities of destination in oral history, as well as their networks of narrators. The community of destination is typical of a community of memory. After the crisis of narrative, neo-historicism and narrativism based on the retraction of the *linguistic turn*, there is also the crisis of representationalism, idealism and, above all, the conscience of the good, "enlightened" modern citizen. The community of destiny is made up of components that can't do without traumas and injuries related to the past, but beyond the elemental dimension of the human psyche, what about deforestation, violent aggression towards the environment and animals? Climate emergencies are equally traumatic and cause social trauma (Seawright; Maceno, 2023).

For Ecléa Bosi, a community of destiny "means suffering irreversibly, without the possibility of returning to the old condition, the fate of the subjects observed" - in this case, the people being listened to (1979, p. 2). I worked out this perception myself and wrote it down:

Communities are made of the stuff of people, and people are made of the warmth of memory. People, of course, are not only made of memory, but it is possible to argue in favor of humans being mnemonic animals par excellence. Belonging and social ties only exist because the animal made of memories is capable of remembering, imagining, wandering and establishing horizons for insistent permanence in the world (Seawright, 2023, p. 17).

A community of destiny is a part that remains in the link - even if it is broken - through the joint elaboration of affections, of those affected, of those shattered (Seawright, 2023, p 17). In the community and in the resurgence of the referent outside the "prison of language", as the first narrativists argued - which was later reaffirmed in the context of literary narrativism - there is the referent and it seems that the referent of speech and memory can be submitted to the human and more-than-human world in a non-exclusive way. There are more survivors than those who are capable of suffering historical trauma to the extent of human historicity. What

we do know is that, wherever there is a survivor, there will always be oral history as a possibility: there are those who speak and those who are spoken of with justice and generosity: a second-dimensional listening that soon makes sense in the gestures of provincializing, or decolonizing; decolonizing oral history together, respecting the most varied methodological tendencies.

What hides the ambiguity of national time between “rupture and archaism is not only the discontinuity between a universal history (the national people) and smaller histories (the time of communities)”, but also the “continuity of the violent condition of production and reproduction of identities in this history itself” (Rufer, 2010, p. 21). Although the expansion of the community of destination is elementary and marks a position in the face of the colonial spectrum from the point of view of interacting temporality, the violence that indicates colonial matrices requires a similar re-examination of writing after listening in oral history. The point is not to abandon the analysis of temporal violence or the violent physiognomies of anthropocentrism, which is inattentive to the risks posed to the multiple forms of life on the *planet of memory*.

I, therefore, propose broadening the notion of relational time, which is no longer multidirectional and radiates from the center, as well as broadening the notion of a community of destiny that is more than human, filtered through the speech of those who speak, as well as the broader perception of those who don't speak but can still be “heard”. As Merina said in one of the chants against the aggression of non-indigenous people on traditional lands: “I'll fight you, I'll fight you” (Merina Adelina Ramona, 2018). All of this can also be a committed, disciplined and anti-colonial oral history. Applied.

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