Reforesting Imaginaries: Contra-Colonial Creative Ecologies

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Abstract: This essay examines how the concept of "reforesting" ("reflorestar" Núñez 2021, Krenak 2022) frames the textual/visual/mediatic works by Gustavo Caboco Wapichana,. By foregrounding a phytographic (Vieira 2017) approach to stories/storytelling, these Indigenous artists and authors reforest thought and imagination, creating a fertile terrain from which to rethink and challenge (neo) colonialism and its attendant modes of extractivist monocultures, from the appropriation of "erva mate" by white settlers to the extraction and resistance of Phyto and Indigenous knowledges by and against colonial archives.

Via phytographic germinations, Caboco Wapichana's creations present a multiplicity of expressivities, subjectivities, knowledges, and creative interventions that invite us to consider different chronologies, geographies, and modes of being and feeling rooted in and/or that converse with other than human existences, thereby effecting a contra-colonial gesture. By affecting this contra-colonial reforestation, these artistic endeavors also offer a way of thinking against the grain of anthropogenic environmental crisis. Instead, these works suggest exercises in planting/reforesting possible (creative) futurities in the midst/contra anthropogenic/colonial and extractive exhaustion, sowing "ideas to postpone the end of the world" (Krenak 2019).

Keywords: Indigenous art and literature, Gustavo Caboco Wapichana, Phytography, Plant Turn

This essay takes us through the imaginative botanical landscapes crafted by Wapichana multimedia artist Gustavo Caboco Wapichana. I attend to three

emplanted texts nourished by different flora: the *erva mate*, linguistic plants, and cotton. The path through these cultivations is guided by the concepts of "phytographia" (Vieira, "Literature") and "reforesting" ("reflorestar," Núñez; Krenak). With a masterful stroke, Caboco Wapichana employs a phytographic narrative that weaves a tapestry of multisensorial, multiscalar reforestation across the canvas of thought, visuality, textuality, and imagination. His visual, mediatic, and written artworks serve as fertile soil to contest (neo)colonialism and its voracious appetite for extractivist monocultures, examples of which include the appropriation of erva mate by white settlers to the extraction of Phyto and Indigenous knowledges by colonial powers. Caboco Wapichana's creative labor works against colonial and extractivist archives, as seen in the artist's work on the musealization of cotton. In this context, literature and art emerge as tools to generate other imaginative landscapes, to reconceptualize extractivist violence. They invite us to delve deeper, to engage with the intricate, tangled issues surrounding other than human and human modes of being and creative expression. Literature, visual art, and, as Vieira ("Animist") has shown, cinema are all media that approximate us to textual vegetation, to a narrative flora. In *Poetic Justice*, Martha Nussbaum explains why literature (and, as I argue in this essay, visual and mediatic narratives) is perceptually transformative. She notes, "Literature focuses on the possible, inviting its readers to wonder about themselves" (5). Nussbaum argues that literature's imaginative potential "imagining things that do not exist … is helping its readers to acknowledge their own world and choose more reflectively in it" (31).

Patrícia Vieira uses the term "phytography" to describe the marks left by plants in literary texts. Such phytographic traces are not only the representations we make of plants but the inscriptions that plants generate in texts produced by humans. For example, when we write on paper, we create a palimpsest over the traces, stories, and narratives plant beings leave on this medium. Phytography is, according to Vieira, also the textuality that flora imprints on the environment and our lives through forests, gardens, and food, to name a few botanical vestiges that surround us. Vieira observes, "In the realm of imagination, literature is a mediator in the aesthetic encounter with plants, despite the awareness that the medium always influences the message and that mediators can be evanescent" (216). We can also think of phytography as a form of botanical writing that occurs without the mediation of paper, writing in the world, on affectivity, and knowledge. I am

thinking here of the description that Ailton Krenak makes of his relationship with the tobacco plant (Petyngua), how he reads this plant, and, through this reading, he relates to the world (Krenak and Papá).

For Geni Núñez, colonialism, and its legacies have devalued and suppressed diversity by encouraging monoculture in various forms: in agriculture, in belief systems, in the ideas of gender and sexuality, and in the field of affections (for example, in the predominance of heterosexual monogamy within Western societies and their political and cultural systems) (2). Reforestation means countering colonial monoculture, creating space for other manners of distribution of the sensible (Rancière 2004) and a broad understanding of the relationships between different modes of existence and the potential for engagement with and of various lifeforms, including nonhuman ones, such as plants, rivers, and mountains, to create meaning and art (Krenak; Dias).

Via phytographic germinations, the works of artists and authors such as Caboco Wapichana present a multiplicity of expressivities, subjectivities, knowledges, and creative interventions that invite us to consider different chronologies, geographies, and structures of being and feeling rooted in and/or in conversations with other than human existences, thereby effecting a contracolonial gesture (Bispo dos Santos). Indigenous artists such as Caboco Wapichana craft a vibrant tapestry that challenges colonialism's monochrome, monocultural narrative, planting the seeds of a contracolonial renaissance/resistance. Their endeavors are not merely acts of creation but acts of reforestation—sowing fertile grounds for creative futurities to blossom amid the ruins of extraction and exploitation. By affecting this contracolonial reforestation, these Indigenous authors' and artists' works also offer a way of thinking against the grain of anthropogenic environmental crisis and despair. In other words, artists such as Caboco Wapichana beckon us to join in this grand reimagining, to cultivate "ideas to postpone the end of the world" (Krenak), transforming despair into a nursery of possibility. Here, in the heart of this fertile resistance, we find a map to navigate the challenges of our times, a compass pointing toward another possible futurity.

Phytography is a guiding methodology in the work of Gustavo Caboco Wapichana.[1] Besides his well-known visual production, Caboco Wapichana wrote

[1] Gustavo Caboco Wapichana was born and raised in Southeastern Brazil, in Curitiba (Paraná), to Lucilene Wapichana. Lucilene hails from the Canauanim community in Cantá, a municipality in Mideastern Roraima, near the Guyanese border. After being separated from her people because of

and illustrated several books. In 2019, he published *Baaraz Ka'aupan* (O campo após o Fogo [The Field after the Fire]), which received the 2020 prize SeLecT for Art and Education. In 2021, he published *Recado do Bendegó: Conversas com a pedra* (Message from Bendegó: Conversations with the Stone). Caboco Wapichana also published *Literatura do invisível* (Literature of the Invisible, 2021) and *Isso tudo não me diz nada* (All of This Does Not Mean Anything to Me, 2022). He is also the cofounder of the independent publisher Picada Livros. In 2023, he was among the guest authors of Brazil's most renowned literary festival, the Festa Literária de Paraty (FLIP). A text about his oeuvre for the 34th São Paulo Biennale describes the artist's creative modus operandi as a form of "return to the land" and a dialogue with the various interlocutors with whom the Wapichana interact, communicate, and engage. The artistic endeavor happens "justamente nesses caminhos de retorno à terra, no fortalecimento das raízes com a terra e seus parentes, ecoando as vozes do povo Wapichana e dos entes a quem eles sabem dedicar escuta, como as plantas, as pedras, as serras, os céus e os rios. É dessa forma que o artista costura o pessoal ao político e o cultivo da memória às possibilidades de futuro." [2] His poem "Ouve Wapichana" (Listen Wapichana) conveys the manifold modes of perception. Earth, soil (terra), as metaphor becomes fertilized, engendering multidimensional combinations rooted in the concepts of emplacement and embodiment, especially auditory and haptic (walking) corporality, and rootedness: "Pé no chão, / pé de ouvido. / Enterra, semente desperta. / Corpo é terra / Ouço a terra. Piso. / … Retorno à terra. Caminho" (Caboco Wapichana, "Ouço a terra").[3] As in other Caboco Wapichana works, the poem proposes to blur the boundaries between different modalities of

multiple adoptions, she settled in Curitiba. Twenty years after being forced to leave her community, Lucilene and Gustavo returned to Canauanim. Gustavo Caboco Wapichana inserts himself within these two territories, between Paraná (Curitiba) and Roraima. His art, including his literary output, hinges on a "retorno à terra" (return to the land). Returning means retracing not only his mother's but also, concomitantly, his own path back to Roraima. The act of returning signifies reconnecting to the "memória da relação ancestral com a terra" (memory of the ancestral relation to the land(Caboco Wapichana). The Wapichana people have their ancestral lands in what is now the Brazilian state of Roraima and in Guyana.

[2] precisely on these paths of return to the land, in strengthening the roots with the land and their relatives, echoing the voices of the Wapichana people and the beings to whom they know how to dedicate themselves to listening, such as plants, stones, mountains, skies, and rivers. In this way, the artist stitches the personal with the political and the cultivation of memory with the possibilities of the future. (This and all translations from Portuguese to English by the author).

[3] Feet on the ground, / feet listening, / Bury, awaken seed. / Body is earth / I hear the earth. I step. / … Return to the earth. I walk.

beingness and perception, in this case, between the physical body and soil ("corpo é terra"), between listening and touch. Creative enlivenment occurs in these intermedial modes of existence ("semente desperta"). The juxtaposition evokes the concept of multiperspectivism that inheres many Indigenous cosmologies, the notion of different types of actants beyond humans, such as plants, rocks, and mountains (Viveiros de Castro).

First Blossoming: The Paths of the Erva Mate

In his visual, textual, and mediatic production, Gustavo Caboco Wapichana has centralized plants such as cotton and erva mate (*Ilex paraguariensis*, *ka'a* in Guarani). The artist maintains relations of memory and affection toward both types of crops. For instance, Wapichana women use cotton to weave hammocks. In Caboco Wapichana's work, cotton threads, therefore, represent the linkages between memory, territory, and knowledge; they signify the intertwined learning processes, the "aprendizado com os fios" ("learning with threads" Caboco Wapichana) that mend and patch the stories that link memory and territory. Learning with threads also signifies the multiple strands of connectivity, of kinship, that connect humans and other-than-human existences, stories/storytelling, and creative output. For example, the erva mate is connected to the Indigenous presence in Southern Brazil. The plant is sacred for the Guarani Indigenous communities in Brazil's southern region and those of neighboring countries, such as Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay, and is part of these communities' everyday sociability. Used in religious and healing rituals and in community gatherings, the herb's origin stories relate it to the divine and to practices of hospitality.[4] Anthropologist José Catafesto de Souza notes that erva mate was also used by Indigenous spiritual leaders who opposed European colonial interventions in Southern Brazil (*Legado indígena* 8:17–8:46). As a result, the

[4] There are two main origin stories for erva mate. In one version, Yari, the Moon, descends to Earth and is almost attacked by a jaguar. She is saved by a Guarani man and, in gratitude, gives him the plant, explaining how to brew it. Another legend describes how a stranger, an emissary of the god Tupã, came upon an elderly Guarani man and his daughter who had stayed behind as their nomadic community traveled on. The father and daughter welcome the stranger into their home, and as in thanks, he gifts them the herb and teaches them how to prepare it. A third version explains how two brothers formed two different tribes: the Tupi, who were fierce and nomadic warriors, and the Guarani, who were skilled farmers and known for their hospitality. The deity Pa' I Shume gifted the Guaranis with the knowledge of cultivating and using erva mate.

Jesuits, who established the missions (*missões* or *misiones*), Indigenous settlements on the border between Argentina, Paraguay, and Brazil, initially opposed the use of the herb, until they became aware of its potential to increase labor productivity. They domesticated and inserted the plant into a system of labor and consumption. Jesuit missionaries established plantations on mission lands, which competed with the wild stands of ka'a, which, in turn, were harvested by forced Indigenous labor.

Gustavo Caboco Wapichana's work on erva mate was part of the series *Exigências da mata* (Claims of the Forest), which appeared in the exposition *Eu memória. Eu floresta: História oculta* (I Memory. I Forest: Hidden History) in the Museu Paranaense (Curitiba, Paraná). Curated by Richard Romanini, the exposition, which opened to the public in 2021, explores the complex history of erva mate and its multiple human partnerships. Caboco Wapichana's work for the exposition reclaims the herb as part of Indigenous history and culture, recovering its meanings from colonial and postcolonial exploitative processes. Santiago Franco, from the Mbya Guarani people, observes that the plant was appropriated from its Indigenous roots by the *gaúchos* in Southern Brazil (*Legado indígena* 1:44–1:46).

Exigências da mata is a captivating and thought-provoking art series that delves into the rich tapestry of erva mate's cultural, historical, and ecological narratives. Through a blend of mediums—photographs, prints, performances, and video—each component asserts its individuality while seamlessly weaving into a collective exploration of the herb's profound symbolic significance. At the beginning of this journey lies the Palacete dos Leões in Curitiba. Once the residence of the Matte Leão company's founders, this neoclassical architectural gem serves as the cornerstone of the narrative, connecting the past with the present. Matte Leão, under the leadership of Agostino Ermelino de Leão Júnior from 1901 and now a part of the Coca-Cola company, revolutionized the global consumption and cultural significance of erva mate.[5] Embarking from this historical nexus, Caboco Wapichana traces a path from the Serra do Mar mountains to the Atlantic,

[5] Agostino Ermelino de Leão Júnior founded Matte Leão in 1901 and started exporting the herb to Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. The company pioneered marketing strategies and used promotional videos in the 1930s. Although the company became more diversified, its portfolio still emphasized extraction, with investments in livestock, mining, waterway development, and timber exploration. The Palacete dos Leões, completed in 1902, is neoclassical with additional baroque details. Today, the building, considered a historical patrimony, serves as a cultural center.

enveloped by the lush yet imperiled biome of the Mata Atlântica. Amid this enthralling backdrop, at a wooden desk with a potted erva mate plant by his side—a silent yet compelling collaborator—Caboco Wapichana engages in a ritual of stamping a ledger with the plant's imprint. His attire, a blend of the traditional and the anachronistic, speaks volumes: a dark red suit with nineteenth-century tailoring, a red feathered headdress, and bare feet. This sartorial storytelling, intertwined with the rhythmic shake of a maraca—an instrument of divination in Guarani culture—invokes a powerful dialogue between Indigenous and Western histories of the herb, between phytographic narration and sacred ritual.[6] The artistic reimagining of the erva mate plant, drawing from nineteenth-century botanical illustrations yet defying their classificatory gaze, underscores a bold resistance to the exoticization and commodification of non-European flora. In Caboco Wapichana's hands, these renderings are transformed. A human foot merges with the plant, symbolizing an inseparable bond between humanity and nature, a shared story of survival and resilience. This fusion challenges the historical erasure of the plant's relationality, hinting at a deeper connection preserved in the "phytological archive" of old botanical books. *Exigências da mata* is not just an artistic endeavor; it is a profound reclamation of different narrative modalities, a celebration of the interconnectedness of life, and a poignant critique of historical oversights. It serves as a powerful reminder of the enduring power of art to bridge worlds, recover lost stories, and imagine new ways of being as a mode of coexistence and collaborating with the world around us.

Caboco Wapichana's composite plant also signifies the geographic, visual, and symbolic paths the herb traveled, from its cultivation on Indigenous territories to its planting by forced Indigenous labor in the colonial period and its journeys as an export commodity beginning in the eighteenth century. Set in ledger books, the herb's prints—the artist created seven books, with five hundred prints each—replicate the serialization of the plant as an exportable consumer product. Nonetheless, Caboco Wapichana's encoding of the herb uproots its commodification, inscribing the logbook instead with a visual narrative that displaces (displants) the imagery of tallies, of accounts, of profit, of instrumentalization. The movement that Caboco Wapichana's drawing traces runs counter to the statical/statistical characterization of the plant in the accounting

[6] In Guarani culture, the mbaracás are used in divination ceremonies.

records, its fixed meaning as a commodity that obscures erva mate's narrative, cosmological, and social traceries. Set in motion (via the literal movement of the pages, as in early animation), the drawings become dynamic. Each step of moving emplanted foot, or the foot-plant reconstitutes the plant's historical and symbolic passages through different natural and signifying landscapes. The paper's movement mimics Caboco Wapichana's own journey retracing the plant's trajectory. In addition, the movement of running, of dislocation, as if the foot-plant is literally walking, transversing the paper, roaming, creates new phytographic prints that elude the rigid botanical and economic classifications to which it has been subjected, inviting to see beyond these categorizations, beyond the instrumentalization of different landscapes and their multiple residents.

The photographic and video registry of the (un)making of the ledger serves as a testament to the phytographic reclamation. Among the series, one photograph stands out, capturing Caboco Wapichana, maraca in hand, before a tree stump, mist swirling in the background. This image, with its embroidered "Fronteira Wapichana" (Wapichana Boundary), muddles the lines between physical and imagined boundaries, revealing such delimitations as arbitrarily established and overlaid on top of other stories and presences. As such, the photograph invites us to consider territories not just as land but as realms of memory, affect, and experience. The picture therefore questions the notion of frontiers while also expanding the concept of territorial borders to include an affective and experiential dimension. Caboco Wapichana has posited himself as working within the Roraima-Paraná network, connecting these and other Indigenous territorialities through memory and storytelling.

Another poignant image captures the artist in an embrace with a massive rock draped over its form on a patch of grass. This interaction is witnessed by the surrounding flora. In the foreground, a few leaves of ka'a peek into the image as if observing the intimate interaction between stone and human. The composition brings to mind Caboco Wapichana's book *Recado do Bendegó: Conversas com a pedra*, in which the artist retraces the story of the Bendegó meteorite that fell in the interior of Bahia. Considered the largest iron meteorite ever found in Brazil, the stone survived the tragic fire at the National Museum in 2018. Caboco Wapichana's text enlivens the rock, bringing to its surface multiple memories that inhere the mineral formation but that also come from beyond it: the stories of the Wapichana people and of other Indigenous groups and their relation to the

territories they are related to. Similarly to *Recado*, in the photograph from *Exigências da mata*, human and rock become one embodiment, telling and listening to each other's stories. Both existences are changed by the encounter, each leaving traces on the other.

Returning to *Exigências da Mata*, two videos show how the artist imprints the ledger's pages. As important as the visual element, which captures the verdant landscape of the Mata Atlântica, is the soundscape that transforms the phytographic exercise into a synesthetic experience. In one of the videos, we hear the *mbaracá*. Considering that the instrument was traditionally made of gourds and contained seeds or, sometimes, stones, the *mbaracá*'s rhythm becomes another phytographic trace in the artwork. In both videos, we also hear various sounds coming from the surrounding landscape: the rustle of vegetation, birdsong, and the gurgle of unseen water. More than background noises, these sounds are an agentic part of Caboco Wapichana's eco–visual poetry. The soundscape produces its own ecopoetics/econarrative, which complements but is also autonomous from the story that Caboco Wapichana tells. Caboco Wapichana's work, thus, is not just an artistic endeavor but a reclamation, a conversation, and a journey that challenges us to see beyond the ledger, to hear beyond the silence, and to feel beyond the touch. It invites us to wander, to wonder, and to witness the stories that lie beneath the surface, waiting to be told.

In the closing scene of *Exigências da mata*, we see a ledger with plant imprints on a table at the edge of the Atlantic Ocean. This scene invites us to experience the plant's journey in a sensory way. The pages of the book flutter in the wind, creating a melody or a story made up of different natural elements: the distant waves, the sound of the wind, and the rustling of the paper, as well as the plant traces made of soil, water, and salt on the pages. We are beckoned into another multi-sensory encounter with the plant and its diverse storylines. As the book's pages and, by extension, the imprint of ka'a (and other plants) dance in the ocean's breath, they compose a melody, a narrative woven from the whispers of distant waves, the wind's caress, and the gentle rustle of paper. These pages are canvases of memories bearing the marks of plants, of earth, of water. The wind seems to disrupt the order of the book's pages, inscribing a new narrative in the ledger. This exercise challenges the linear and contained narrative of profit and account, shaping it into a new form. The pages of the ledger, rearranged by the Atlantic breeze, resemble a blooming flower, an image that evokes erva mate's white buds. *Exigências da*

mata recovers/retells the interconnected stories of plants, humans and other-than-human collaborations, generating an ecopoetics from these multimodal imprints.

Second Blossoming: Emplanted Language, Language as a Plant

As discussed in the previous section, Caboco Wapichana incorporates the voices of plants into his narrative, engaging with their history and significance especially within Indigenous contexts. By including plant voices, he challenges anthropocentric and Eurocentric colonial hierarchies and enriches imaginations and environments. His visual, textual, and mediatic productions offer diverse images, metaphors, soundscapes, and colors that emphasize trans and multispecies collaborations, pollination, and flourishing, serving as a seed bank and garden of creativity. Like his visual production, Caboco Wapichana's literature challenges us to embrace a countercolonial perspective, urging us to decentralize the human presence in our imagination. Through his illustrated poem-story, *A semente de Caboco* (The Seed of Caboco, 2022), he paints a vivid phytographic exploration of personal narrative and collective Wapichana history and the stories of other Indigenous groups, illuminating their deep connection to the plants that shape their cosmologies. This approach offers a compelling and captivating glimpse into Indigenous groups' emplanted stories, such as the symbolism of guaraná (*waraná*) for the Sateré-Maué people of the Tapajós and Madeira Rivers.

> Eu sou da terra, diz a semente.
> No broto da rocha do pé d'água e da raiz do mar escutei uma voz
> Pataxó.
> Do olho do guaraná ouvi histórias dos Sateré-Maué.
> Uma folha protegeu o céu do chão. Conheci Yanomami.
> Identifiquei uma árvore: a casa de farinha Wapichana e Macuxi.
> O chocalho acordou a flauta e o tambor.
> Cantei para as sementes do meu bisavô. (17)[7]

[7] I belong to the earth, says the seed.
In the crack of the rock, in the spring water and in the sea root I heard a Pataxó voice.
From the eye of the guaraná I heard stories of the Sateré-Maué.
A leaf protected the sky from the ground. I met the Yanomami.
I identified a tree: the Wapichana and Macuxi flour house.
The rattle woke the flute and the drum.

Recovering these Indigenous/emplanted stories prepares the soil for a reforesting of the imagination, a countercolonial turn that questions the hierarchical separation between different forms of existence.

A semente de Caboco encapsulates and emphasizes the profound connection between language, memory, and nature that can lead to other recollections triggered by the story we read, becoming a source of reflection in various topics, such as how we relate to other-than-human actants. In a way, the seeds coauthor Caboco Wapichana's text. As Julian Yates suggests, language is a tool to emplant memories in individuals and collectives. In this case, it is nourished by the memories of different existants. *A semente de Caboco* encourages us to listen to the stories of various seeds ("ouvir a semente") and adopt a less anthropocentric understanding of the world but also of language and creativity. Written in verse format and illustrated by Caboco Wapichana, the opening stanza suggests a rooted relation between being and soil, seed and body/embodiment. The foot-root (or rooted foot), a recurring visual and textual trope in Caboco Wapichana's work, reappears in the poem: "Pé no chão, / pé de ouvido. / Enterra, semente desperta. / Corpo é terra." Here, the poetic voice highlights the connection between emplacement and embodiment, between being and soil, and between different modes of cultivation. Such a mode of thinking underlies the notion of territory, earth, and other modes of existence as actants and as "relatives" (*parentes*) (Krenak). In Caboco Wapichana's verses, this perceptual mode establishes the groundwork for multiple reforestations: "Não é que a terra é uma semente gigante? / O que acontece se eu plantar o planeta? / Plantei. Cultivei. / Com o tempo certo, um broto. / Outro. / … / Foi crescendo e tomou forma de homem. / Forma de Caboco. / Ele também uma semente" (18).[8] The seed tenses the boundaries of metonymy, standing in for the human but also hinting at modes of beingness that are not human. Word repetition, with the same or different meanings, in the verses, suggests a circularity of being (seed – earth – human – seed) that also communicates other, nonlinear, nonprogressive chronologies and the associated idea of progress as a forward movement that erases previous stories and modes of

I sang to the seeds of my great-grandfather.

[8] Isn't the earth a giant seed? / What happens if I plant the planet? / I planted. I cared for it. / In due time, a sprout. / Another one. / … / It grew and took the form of a man. / The form of a Caboco. / He, too, is a seed.

being. The seed also facilitates relationality as a mode of seeing and being. The earth as a seed and the human as a seed become imbricated, partaking in the same source. Significantly, the verses contain both the verbs *plantar* (to plant) and *cultivar* (to cultivate). "Cultivation" derives from the Latin *cultus* (care or labor); unlike extraction, cultivation hinges on management, on a cycle of harvest and replenishment that recognizes the landscape's idiosyncrasies, its needs, and, therefore, its multiple modes of awareness that encompass and transcend humans. Such a relational, nurturing discernment of plants/earth and humans comes across in the drawings accompanying these verses. Sprouting from an emplanted foot/foot-plant, a wine connects the terrestrial globe and human existence. We see a human hand holding an earth/seed and a human figure hugging a terrestrial globe. In essence, *A semente de Caboco* invites us to embrace a holistic and empathetic perspective that recognizes the profound interconnectedness of all living beings and the significance of nurturing and cultivating our relationship with the earth.

While the well-known dictum "pé no chão" (literally: foot on the ground) implies a grounding, a connection between body and soil, between embodied self and the territory, the next verse transforms the maxim. The "foot" seemingly becomes a stem, an auditory plant that grounds existence in other modes of perception.[9] Aurality and embodied discernment come together synesthetically. Julian Yates invites us to think of texts as multimodal, multisensorial archives that contain the traces of various forms of existence, knowing and creating. He asks:

> What happens if we assume that our texts play host to or are crowded with other forms of writing or marking (human and not), traces that our own acts erase, obliterate, but also render sensible, knowable, precisely by taking so many others as a substrate? Let's imagine that our archives are full of other forms of expression not reducible to the physiology of a human sensorium, modes of inscription that do not allow themselves to be linearized or readily processed but that necessarily we receive by and as they press or impress themselves upon us.… Fragments of "bacteria, fungi, protists and such" dally in our archives as in our genome, rendering them a multispecies impression. (11–12)

Like the opening line, the following two verses of *A semente de Caboco* proffer a symbiosis between embodiment and soil: "Tinha semente na pá, no passo e no pássaro. / No canto da gralha. / Na erva doce, na minhoca e até nos meus desenhos"

[9] "Pé de" is used to reference a plant stalk. For example, a beanstalk is a "pé de feijão."

(16).[10] Embodiment here is not solely human but transcends species and expressive boundaries. The body is at the same time human, other-than-human, and botanical (*semente*). Such a perceptual shift, a transspecies ontology that includes not only the animal but also plant existences and entities that comprise many forms of being (soil), probes the construct of Western primacy of the human over other modes of existence.

Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro remarks that what he calls the "Great Divide," the hierarchical distinction between other-than-human and human beings, is analogous to "the same gesture of exclusion that made the human species the biological analog of the anthropological West, confusing all the other species and peoples in a common, privative alterity. Indeed, asking what distinguishes us from others—and it makes little difference who 'they' are since what really matters is only 'us'" (*Cannibal* 44). Viveiros de Castro contrasts the "Great Divide" with Amerindian perspectivism, which understands humanity as a common condition shared by various species. Caboco Wapichana's visual textuality suggests mending this divide, a playful take on the Aristotelian classification of plants as borderline beings between animate and inanimate matter.[11] The verses and illustrations that accompany the text suggest the breaking of boundaries. Pleasure, and joy become gestures that subvert norms and challenge hierarchies. In this and other illustrations in the text, the expansive lines, which seem to want to go beyond the limits imposed by the page, insinuate a visual, experiential amplitude and, considering the hybridity of several of the images, also of the existences contained in each figure. In other words, *A semente de Caboco* suggests that the transspecies/transperceptual flexible boundary is a condition common to all beings. Crossing this boundary constitutes an act of creativity and resistance at the same time: "Learning from plants entails thinking outside the totalizing categories of Western metaphysics and, therefore, paves the way for a more open-ended, less instrumental, approach not only to social relations but also to the environment" (Gagliano, Ryan, and Vieira xv).

[10] The seed existed in the shovel, in the step, and in the bird. / In the crow's song. / In the sweet grass, in the worm, and even in my drawings.

[11] Aristotle claims that a plant, "while … devoid of life as compared to an animal, is endowed with life as compared with other corporeal entities. Indeed, as we just remarked, there is observed in plants a continuous scale of ascent toward the animal" (6).

In *A semente de Caboco*, language acquires its own agency, extrapolating and simultaneously fertilizing the human imagination. But language is not confined to the human. Words are seeds, just as plant seeds can turn into words. Language becomes "an ecology produced by organisms in an interdependent and multispecies relation" (Gagliano, Ryan, and Vieira xviii). Such a perception of language as a generative, multispecies potency is grounded in Wapichana cosmology. For the Wapichana, in the original conception of the world, speech was a creative force that had the ability to shape things. All beings had such a power, which eventually was lost. Speech no longer has its generative capacities unless it is in the context of ritualistic expression. *A semente de Caboco* retrieves language's power to animate, infuse life, and create new things: "Misturou muito, até as sementes das palavras. / Makuxi e Wapichana: *Makuchana*. / Tapera com Maloca, virou *tapioca*. / … / Urtiga, cura e pé: olha o *igarapé*" (5).[12] Language, much like a potent seed buried within the earth, holds the promise of blossoming into multiple creative expressions. It germinates with playful vigor, sprouting new realms of existence, allowing us to perceive the world not as a collection of rigid etymological pathways or as a divided species but as a rich, interconnected landscape. This linguistic alchemy, blending beings and elements in unexpected combinations, challenges the rigid narratives that seek to pigeonhole existence into neat, often hierarchical compartments. In this sense, Caboco Wapichana's text beckons the reader to a new perception and, therefore, an attitudinal shift resulting from "the conjunction of three processes: first, the production of a sensory form of 'strangeness'; second, the development of an awareness of the reason for that strangeness; and third, a mobilization of individuals as a result of that awareness" (Rancière). Cross-fertilization between words, beings, and things provides a rich example of phytography and of reforesting the imagination/meaning.

In the vibrant illustrations accompanying Caboco Wapichana's narrative, whimsical hybrid creatures dance and revel, conveying the idea of celebration and play. These images serve not just as companions to the text but as visual echoes of the rich, seed memories Caboco Wapichana plants within his words. Such seeds, once sown by the text and accompanying illustrations, sprout into a plethora of possible reflections and memories in the reader's mind, offering fertile ground for contemplation. In *A semente de Caboco*, while the botanical essence flourishes

[12] "He mixed many things, even the seeds of words. / Makuxi and Wapichana: Makuchana. / Tapera with Maloca, became tapioca. / … / Nettle, cure and foot: look at the creek (igarapé)."

most prominently, the concept of a "seed" nonetheless blossoms with multiple significations. Here, the seed becomes a powerful symbol, bridging metaphor and reality, challenging the boundaries between the two, and cultivating a potentially new realm of understanding.

Third Blossoming: Weaving Stories from Cotton Threads

Historian Roseane Cadete Wapichana beautifully compares the threads of Wapichana culture to the cotton hammocks woven and used by her people. She describes how these threads intertwine emplaced speech, embodied memory, and cultural resistance, emphasizing the significance of the territory as the foundation for these threads. This powerful metaphor resonates as it highlights the interconnectedness of speech, memory, and resistance within the Wapichana culture. Cadete Wapichana notes that "the territory is the place of speech, it is the base where the threads are strengthened—threads of speech, threads of the body, threads of memory, threads of the threads, threads of history, threads of resistance."

Roseane Cadete Wapichana and Gustavo Caboco Wapichana delved into the remnants of cotton threads and other Indigenous and plant traces in the esteemed collections of the British Museum. This exploration was part of an impactful artistic residency at the British Museum Ateliê-Lavrado (Tilled Workshop, 2023). Wapichana artifacts, meticulously compiled by Robert Herman Schomburgk and plantation owner Lionel Hector Tracey Asburner, serve as poignant testaments to the enduring legacy of colonial violence inflicted upon the Wapichana people. In the 1830s, Schomburgk played a pivotal role in a mapping expedition of colonial British Guyana, an endeavor that resulted in the displacement and fragmentation of numerous Wapichana communities (Atehortúa et al.). As Caboco Wapichana, Cadete Wapichana, and Jamille Pinheiro Dias explain, the collection "comprises spinning and weaving tools such as spindles, bobbins and needles, beaded aprons, basketry made from local vegetal fibres, alongside rattles, arrows and other organic materials like seeds, cotton threads, and animal teeth" (Atehortúa et al.). The archive reveals the connections that tie the Wapichana people to their surroundings, showing the different relationships between humans and other living beings. The compilation shares stories about everyday life, such as baskets and arrows, as well as family bonds and rituals that involve plant and animal life. Such

stories, like those of the Wapichana people, were disrupted by colonial violence. Robin Wall Kimmerer explains how this violence affects both human and plant life, impacting the habitats of the latter: "a loss of cultural knowledge and little memory of original uses and significance of plants" (1). The stories of the Wapichana people held in the British Museum collection are a powerful reminder of the impact of colonialism on their communities, providing insight into their disrupted history.

Taking up the cotton thread as metaphor, Gustavo Caboco Wapichana and Tipuici Manoki (of the Manoki peoples of Mato Grosso) suggest the recuperation, reconstitution, and creation of an Indigenous archive that unspools from a cotton thread. The two editors explain:

> Nossa relação com a terra é de fato uma base para pensarmos o arquivo-indígena. Fazer um fio de algodão, por exemplo, exige uma série de saberes complexos que alguns pesquisadores chamam de "etnomatemática"—mostrando que há outras formas de se pensar para se fazer ciência. Uma rede de dormir ou uma rede de pesca é um banco de dados para um povo que vai muito além dos saberes técnicos ou práticos (19).[13]

The botanical, countercolonial archive is driven by a series of questions that lead to various ways of understanding how we document histories and the objects that represent this history, such as artworks and the timeline that guides this documentation (and the process of documentation as an expression of the distribution of the sensible, of making visible, or of concealment, erasure). Emerging from the cotton threads, or rather, from the flower that will later become a cotton thread, a thread that is as alive as the flower that produced it, this new archival effort asks: "E se um de nossos arquivos-indígenas se iniciar numa flor de algodão?," "E se a flor este fio-arquivo-vivo está num tempo histórico não-linear?," "E se nosso fio-arquivo se organiza no tempo das relações semente-

[13] Our relationship with the land is the basis for thinking about the Indigenous archive. Making cotton thread, for example, requires a series of complex knowledge that some researchers call "ethnomathematics"—showing that there are other ways of thinking about creating science. A hammock or a fishing net is a database for a people that goes far beyond technical or practical knowledge.

floresta?" (26–31).[14] Accompanying these interrogations, or rather challenges, are drawings by Caboco Wapichana that highlight the webs of connectivity, or as Antonio Bispo dos Santos, the Nego Bispo, proposes, skeins of collaboration, of conviviality, of sharing (23). In the first drawing, the Portuguese translation of "plant" as "pé" is illustrated verbatim. Out of (human) foot, a flowering plant emerges. The sketch does not suggest an anthropomorphizing of the shrub. Rather, the conjunction of humanoid foot and plant life, the cotton flower, seeds the notion of another type of reading and remembrance, a chronicle that flowers (pun intended) from both human stories, from the imprints left on landscapes, pages, narratives by human presences and by other than human existence. This is a chronicle not just of coexistence but of cocreation, fertilized by the footsteps of both human and other-than-human lives. Randy Laist notes that plants are inherently semantic since "they have evolved with the explicit purpose of sending messages to mammals, birds, insects, and other animals that pollinate them and disperse their seeds" (14). Plants tell us emplaced stories. In their flowering and wilting, they communicate about time and weather conditions. But plants also communicate other narratives not rooted in specific spatialities or chronologies. They speak of their interactions with other existants, such as animals and other botanical beings, with their rooted neighbors and the very soil that cradles them, teeming with unseen life. Plants recount tales of nurturing tenderness and, in the same breath, of neglect and disregard. In the vibrant strokes of Caboco Wapichana's art, a blooming "foot-plant" (pé de planta) emerges, a tapestry woven with the phytographic imprints of Indigenous lore. These stories, embedded in the journey from seed to bloom and then to the threads of cotton, speak of cultivation in its most profound forms: literal, symbolic, and heartfelt. Yet, as Caboco Wapichana and Tipuici Manoki remind us, these narratives of the earth and its caretakers often linger in the shadows, overlooked by the makers and the keepers of artistic and historical memory. Caboco Wapichana's work recentralizes the multi and transspecies stories that populate the counter-colonial archive. In this sense, Caboco Wapichana's multimodal artworks beckon the reader to a new perception and, therefore, an attitudinal shift that holds a promise of de-anthropocentric futurity.

[14] What if one of our Indigenous archives begins with a cotton flower?, What if the flower, this living archive-thread, exists in a nonlinear historical time?, What if our archive-thread is organized in the time of seed-forest relations?

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