Between Languages: Translation and Literatures from the South[1]

⊙ José Luís JOBIM, Bethania MARIANI
Federal Fluminense University

Abstract: This article proposes that the translation violence of the colonizing process—in terms of the confrontation between oral languages and ones with written grammars—coupled with the institutionalization of a given language as the national one, contains both a memory of the silencing of indigenous languages and cultures, and of transculturation. The latter, in turn, manifests itself, among other ways, through books that in different ways deal with the relationship between the West and descendants of the first-nation peoples of South America (especially in Circum-Roraima, the triple-border region between Brazil, Venezuela, and Guyana) and those of African descent (particularly in discussions about the use of the colonizer's language or the indigenous languages by writers from former colonies).

Keywords: languages and translations in confrontation, literatures of the South, national languages, verbal artifacts in literary systems

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Attempting to think about translation beyond Eurocentric paradigms is nothing new. Tiphaine Samoyault, in her book *Traduction et violence*, analyses the extent to which translation can cause violence in diverse contexts, including those created by colonization. She argues that *littérature mondiale* (world literature) should be understood as a collection of relationships that constitutes a system, but that can also be seen in a more flexible way, highlighting certain specific relationships, whose traces can be retrieved in other cases—according to variables that can be localized in time and space: "Above all, we can produce a way of thinking about translating that is as compatible as possible with the decentralization brought about by a globalized perspective, and that is neither Franco-centric nor exclusively European-centric (as comparative literature has long remained) " (10).

This article proposes that the translation violence inherent in the colonizing process—in terms of confrontation between oral languages and ones with a written grammar—coupled with the institutionalization of a given language as the national one, contains both a memory of the silencing of indigenous languages and cultures, and of transculturation (Ortiz). The latter, in turn,

manifests itself, among other ways, through books that in different ways deal with the relationship between the West and descendants of the first-nation peoples of South America (especially in Circum-Roraima, the triple-border region between Brazil, Venezuela, and Guyana) and those of African descent (particularly in discussions about the use of the colonizer's language or the indigenous languages by writers from former colonies).

Languages and Translations in Confrontation

It is in the context of the great "discoveries" that, in South America, translation imposed itself as a necessity when Europeans arrived and encountered unknown languages and cultures. The discourses of the "discoveries" both led to the silencing of the symbolic violence of linguistic confrontations and created, over the centuries, an imaginary about the peoples, cultures, belief systems and non-European languages, predominantly designating them as deficient or irrational. These languages have often been silenced, gagged, stigmatized and condemned to oblivion. Translation violence, however, did not occur outside a system of relationships between European and indigenous languages conventionally referred to as *grammatization* (Auroux).[2]

In other words, the aspiration to dominate and control the "new" territories, populations and languages has historically manifested itself as stemming from the command that Europeans already had of their own languages. In the discourse of the "discoveries," knowing, mastering, and translating the language of the Other was fundamental to the process of colonization in general and linguistic colonization in particular. Accordingly, as an imperative of domination and as a historical product, the production of knowledge about native languages involved the practical ability of the colonizer to understand, interpret and make himself understood in contexts of linguistic confrontations (Mariani 83). Gaining a command of indigenous languages was accomplished through mastering the enactment of language through an individual act of use (Benveniste 143), which would not be accomplished without mastering a written form and a grammar that would have to be developed for these unknown languages. We should remember that many of these Amerindian civilizations did not have a form of writing, as European colonizers (re)cognized it.[3]

When they explored Amerindian lands between the 13th and 17th centuries, Europeans already had two forms of metalinguistic knowledge: writing and grammar, the latter being conceived from the Greco-Latin tradition. The foundations that establish grammatical knowledge both aimed to systematize vernaculars and served as a basis for learning and codifying unknown languages. These two technologies, or as Auroux terms them, these two *technological instruments*, contributed, from the 16th century onwards, to the mass process of *grammatization*[4] of vernaculars and of unknown languages. On the one hand, the *grammatization* of "foreign" languages developed out of practical interests, among which we can highlight learning a language for the purposes of colonial domination; on the other, *grammatization* also resulted from the policy of/for a language as the language of established power, around which could be created a literary language and a policy of linguistic expansion in terms of the internal relations of a territory or of territorial expansion.

In this initial period of the discourses of the "discoveries," the question of translation is a form of introduction to the indigenous languages. According to Orlandi there are three main forms of translation: 1) the same indigenous expression with various possibilities in its translation into a

European language; 2) the expression that brings with it a "fixed" or literal interpretation; and 3) a "cultural" translation, in other words, in the act of translating, the interpretation points out flaws or lacks in the indigenous languages (87–89).

Analysis of the accounts of chroniclers, travelers, and missionaries reveals that, in addition to technological instruments of grammatization (dictionaries, grammars, primers, etc.) for mastering Amerindian languages, produced in Europe (based on the above-mentioned Eurocentric parameters), the so-called "*línguas*" (translators of indigenous languages into European ones) and the bilingual work of different religious orders, like the Capuchins and Jesuits, also played an important role. In the totalizing project of colonization, domination was imposed by force—causing, among other consequences, indigenous genocide—and via the arrival of a written and grammaticalized European language, imposed on indigenous people who, silenced in their own languages, were subjected to other memories and meanings, derived from other languages. The "línguas" were translators involved in the everyday teaching/learning of the indigenous languages as intermediaries between missionaries and administrators. The "línguas" could be either European or indigenous, though the indigenous ones were always distrusted by the colonizers. In general, the indigenous languages—seen as difficult, deficient and irrational—and the indigenous "línguas"—seen as untrustworthy—were the object of domestication and/or silencing.

In the case of Brazil, however, part of the local population of Portuguese descent, until the mid-18th century, used the so-called (Amerindian) "língua geral" (a lingua franca based on the Tupi language) in daily communication,[5] until the Portuguese crown, after countless attempts to establish a language policy, officially prohibited the use of any language other than "the language of the prince" (Portuguese), via the *Diretório dos índios* (Indian Directorate[6]).

Although, in 1822, with independence from Portugal some deputies in the constitutional assembly sought a *Brazilian* language, this discussion was silenced in the constitution approved by Pedro I in 1823. At that political juncture, the national language was Portuguese, though a series of questions remained to be debated throughout the 19th century (about the "correct use" of that language, about the creation of neologisms, about the literary models to be followed or rejected, etc.).

Meanings of Translation, of a "National Language" and of Verbal Artifacts in Literary Systems

As we know, in the 19th century a certain understanding of authorship developed that considered the author as the absolute source of his work, since the latter supposedly originated from his unique subjectivity, giving rise to an alleged "originality," derived from this individual origin. But, contrary to this concept, traces of previous historical moments still existed in the 19th century, according to which the writer should write like authors consecrated by tradition, imitating or emulating them. In this regard the opinion of the Portuguese romantic author Almeida Garret in opposition to literary translation is a very interesting one. In his view, the incorporation of western literary tradition should be achieved via imitation or emulation, and not via the introduction of works translated in Portugal:

But we are lame when it comes to translations: and with translations, Portuguese literature

> suffered the last blow; It was the death blow that the foreigners threw at us. Translating art and science books is necessary, indispensable; works of taste, of ingenuity, are rarely appropriate; It is almost impossible to do it well, it is want and not wealth for national literature. This type of work is studied, imitated, and not translated. Whoever does this, adapts them to the national character, gives them their own colour, and not only dresses a foreign body in national clothing (like the translator), but gives that body features, gestures, manner, and national character: this is what the Latins did, who always imitated the Greeks and never translated them; This is what our traditional poets did.[7] If Virgil had translated the Iliad, Camões the Aeneid, Tasso the Lusiads, Milton Jerusalem, Klopstock Paradise Lost; none of them would have been such a great poet, none of these languages would have been enriched with such precious monuments: and yet they imitated one another, and from this imitation they gained great benefit. (27)

Although we know that many authors, consciously or unconsciously, practised what Garrett proposed, we also know that this did not prevent these "imitations/emulations" of "foreign" texts from co-existing with literary translations, which became an integral part of national literary systems, though this integration is often not recognized. David Damrosch, in his book *Comparing the Literatures—Literary Studies in a Global Age*, argues that it is common in national literary systems for "national" and "foreign" works to co-exist, which should lead us to consider that translated works are not "external" to national literary systems—in fact, they represent an unavoidable part of these systems. The exclusion of what is "foreign" from the sphere of "national" literary systems, according to Damrosch, is an obvious contradiction of the facts:

> From the sixteenth century until Sterne's day, Spanish and French works would often have outnumbered homegrown productions in London booksellers' shops. Their plots, themes, and imagery made their way into English writing in much the same way as local material would do, adopted by writers who didn't cordon off translated works in some separate mental folder from English-language originals. Nor were major English works always published in England, or even in English. Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*—written in Latin and published in Holland in 1516—was never published in England during More's lifetime; it only became part of "English" literature (narrowly defined) in 1551, when it was finally published in London in an English translation. Scholars in semiperipheral cultures have long been well aware of the active presence of translated works as constitutive parts of national traditions, though these insights have rarely been developed by literary historians in more hegemonic cultures. (214–215)

In Damrosch's view, it is also necessary to reformulate the criteria for inclusion/exclusion of authors/works in the histories of national literatures, which normally leave out everything that was not written in the "national language." However, as we know, the very definition of a "national language" is problematic.

We could say that this issue becomes even more complex when we examine literary systems in which there is more than one language within the nation-state (for example: Catalan, Galician, and Basque in Spain; or the hundreds of indigenous languages in the countries of South America). In those countries, the linguistic question has also become a "national" one, or to put it another way, a question about what should be included in/excluded from the sphere of what is considered "national." In Brazil, no author has ever seriously proposed the substitution of the former colonial

language by an indigenous one. Lima Barreto, when he created the character of Policarpo Quaresma, who considered Tupi (an Amerindian language) to be the true language of Brazil, aimed to ridicule this idea, not adopt it. In South America, although there have been—and continue to be—many languages spoken by first-nation peoples, the states formed after independence chose as their "national languages" those of the former colonizers, and put forward many justifications for this choice, but this was not a universally adopted practice.

In this regard, both Brazilian and US writers who wrote/write in Portuguese or English were/are not questioned for writing in these languages, though they have been criticized for various other reasons (for example, for using the language of the former colonial power "incorrectly"). In Brazil and the USA, Portuguese and English have effectively become non-indigenous "national languages." In these nation-states indigenous languages have been diminished and, in many cases, have become extinct. In Brazil 98% of the population speaks Portuguese, including descendants of first-nation peoples, and there are programmes to preserve indigenous languages.

Of course, we know that the purposes of translation in literary systems include permitting the "national" circulation of translated "foreign" works and the "exporting" of translated "national" works abroad. Nevertheless, we do not always think about translation at an infra-national level, in multilingual contexts within a given country. In countries where different languages co-exist, translation can play an important role. When there is a dominant language, or when an entire population uses a "common" language, translation into the "common" language can facilitate the circulation in a "national" sphere of works translated from minority languages, or even facilitate the "exporting" of works originally written in those languages. In Brazil, for many years now educational programmes have been developed for the descendants of first-nation peoples, which include bilingual books in Portuguese and indigenous languages.

We also know that "western agents" have contributed to the production and circulation of fundamental texts about the cosmology of first-nation peoples in the Americas in translations into European languages. In Central America, *Popol Vuh* is a good example, and in the Circum-Roraima region, the text *Wätunnä* is a similar case. On the subject of these "agents," Isabel Maria Fonseca Gondinho illustrated, in her doctoral thesis, that the major compilations produced by researchers, generally anthropologists or linguists, are collected and translated oral narratives, where indigenous people play the role of "informants": "These [indigenous] texts, commonly termed *stories*, *myths* or *legends*, are present, for example, in the works of Capistrano de Abreu and of Theodor Koch-Grünberg" (30).

Gondinho worked on two versions of *Wätunnä*: one, created by Marc de Civrieux, translated/written in Spanish; the other, created by Marcos Rodrigues (a member of the Ye'kwana indigenous people) and collector of versions in the Ye'kwana language that were later consolidated and translated into Portuguese.

First of all, it is necessary to say that it is not possible to access the "original version" of *Wätunnä* (supposedly in Amerindian languages), for several reasons: 1) the ancestral transmission circuit of *Wätunnä* at the heart of the Ye'kwana ethnic group was exclusively oral and resulted in the co-existence of many variants of the "same" narrative; 2) we know that even in the course of the collecting and written recording of this verbal artifact the role of the person/those responsible was to "edit" a version that in fact does not fully correspond to any of the versions in circulation at the time of the collection process, but that is instead an "editor's version," with all the advantages and disadvantages that this implies. The idea of an original text, from which all the variants are

derived, and which should be "restored" via the exclusion of everything that was not originally present in the "first version" may perhaps be the dream of a western philologist, but it definitely did not exist among the ancient Amerindian cultures where the versions were created.

Marc Civrieux's *Wätunnä* established in Spanish a version of that Ye'kwana verbal artifact, involving not only a translation but also an edition, bearing the marks of its time and place. Marcos Rodrigues Ye'kwana's *Wätunnä* (created by an author who is a member of that Amerindian community), producing a new and different written version of the text in the Ye'kwana language, together with a Portuguese translation, is another edition, also bearing the marks of its time and place. Gondinho foregrounds the role of translation, arguing that, due to both the collection process and the fact that Ye'kwana was the first language of those who led this process of transforming an oral cultural product into a book (namely, Marcos Rodrigues Ye'kwana who collected the stories, as well as the *foväi* who narrated them), the texts were first recorded in the indigenous languages and then translated into Portuguese:

> […] the first act of translation was proposed by the teacher Marcos Rodrigues himself, who after completing it thought it wise to perfect it, to test it on the other teachers from the Mötaaku Indigenous State School as well as on the elders. This process of validation of the text by the school community and by the [wider] community seemed necessary so that the text could be duly legitimised within the community and the school. (143)

The transformation of Amerindian verbal artifacts into texts, whether in the original language or translated into another, does not mean establishing a "final version," so to speak, but recording a written version of the oral artifact, transposed into the written form, which will be juxtaposed with other previous or subsequent versions.

The anthropologist Manuela Carneiro da Cunha (18–19), in her inaugural lecture at the *Collège de France*, pointed out that there is an error in assuming that the question of transmission of the knowledge of first-nation peoples can be "resolved" by recording it in written form. She drew our attention to the fact that the traditional knowledge sets of Amerindian populations (like their narratives) are not precious closed sets that one can use but not add anything to.[8] Consequently, instead of imagining that there is only one "traditional narrative" that can be permanently preserved via a single written record, we can alternatively bear in mind that there is a traditional system of production and circulation of narratives, which results in the co-existence and unlimited proliferation of variants. Therefore, although a certain western philological tradition has the habit of presuming the need for a "definitive version" of the verbal artifacts that it processes (one that is purified of all errors and additions, via strict methodological procedures), it would seem unsuitable to attribute to first-nation peoples such a need for a "final version" of the verbal artifacts that they produce.

In Africa, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, the famous Kenyan writer, has defended the use of African languages by authors from that continent. Although he began his career writing books in English, when he published *Decolonizing the Mind*, Thiong'o declared that it would be his last book written in that language, and that he would from then on write in Gikuyu and Kiswahili. Nevertheless, in *Decolonizing the Mind*, he appears to address an English-speaking reader when he writes: "However, I hope that through the age-old medium of translation, I shall be able to continue dialogue with all" (xiv).

There is a series of questions that could be posed in relation to Thiong'o's aspiration, but I will restrict myself to just one: does not the belief that translation is a pre-requisite for "dialogue with all" imply a desire to go beyond what is possible if his texts only circulate in Gikuyu and Kiswahili?

In the case of the Americas, as previously stated (Jobim, *Literary and Cultural Circulation*), there are many variations regarding the way that the traditions of indigenous peoples situate themselves in relation to acclimatized European culture. The contrast between orality in Amerindian cultures—in which even the introduction of grammatization and a written form for their languages is already a consequence of contact with Europeans—and the European written tradition also implies different ways of evaluating literary and cultural circulation. Coco Manto (the indigenous pseudonym of the Bolivian writer Jorge Mansilla Torres) in 2008 shared with the members of the jury for the Casa de las Américas prize his view that the government of the then indigenous president of Bolivia Evo Morales—at the time the focus of intense critical opposition in the local print media (in Spanish)—did not pay much attention to what was published in that press. He was more concerned with the radio, especially the programmes broadcast in indigenous languages (Jobim, *Literatura Comparada* 18). The reason was simple: the print newspapers were predominantly read by the minority "white" elite who had never supported Morales, and the radio programmes were listened to by the majority indigenous population, which represented the then president's political and electoral base. Therefore, an analyst unfamiliar with the local reality could assume, based on the vast number of criticisms published in the newspapers, that Morales did not have the population's support to govern—instead of realizing that, for the majority of the electorate in Bolivia, that kind of written medium was irrelevant, as were the criticisms that it disseminated. In fact, we should pay attention not only to what circulates, but how it does so.

In 2016, at the Jornadas Andinas de Literatura Latinoamericana (Andean Conference on Latin American Literature), there was a session entitled "Poesíaindígena: Críadoras y críadores de poesíaquechua y aymara" ("Indigenous Poetry: Male and Female Creators of Quechua and Aymara Poetry"). The participants referred to themselves as "oralitores" ("oral-writers") and not just writers, to delineate their position regarding the oral circulation of their poetry—but this did not mean a rejection of the written form, since, at the event, the indigenous poet Clemente Mamani Laruta was selling a bilingual collection of his poems, printed in Spanish and in Aymara. Making clear the multilingualism that exists within nation-states, via publications in which the "same" content appears in two or more languages (in other words, it is translated), seems to be an interesting strategy, which is often being used by authors from first-nation populations.

Recently the book *The Falling Sky: Words of a Yanomami Shaman*, which was a best-seller in Brazil, represented another relevant case to be studied. The book is the result of hours of recordings made by the anthropologist Bruce Albert with the shaman Davi Kopenawa in the Yanomami language. It was never published in that language. The first edition came out in France in 2010[9]; then an English translation of the French version was published,[10] and only years later followed a Portuguese translation[11] (based on the French "original"), despite the fact that Kopenawa lives in Brazil and that his second language is Portuguese. In the case of Amerindian populations, especially in the kinds of texts termed *testimonio* (testimonial writing) in Latin America, translation is often part of a strategy to denounce violence against first-nation peoples for the benefit of dominant society (which speaks the predominant national language, into which the Amerindian verbal artifacts are translated). A publication only in an Amerindian language would

not serve this purpose, since the circulation of that book would be limited to the circuit of those who speak the indigenous language. Translation, in this case, implied the presence of a "western" cultural agent without whom the work would not exist.

As we know, neither the book nor the recorder used by the anthropologist Bruce Albert are objects that form part of Yanomami ancestral culture. Consequently, the very organization of the oral interview, originally recorded in Yanomami, the selection of the parts considered most relevant and their structuring into written chapters, in addition to their translation into French, would not have occurred without Albert's active participation. Without that anthropologist, the circulation of Kopenawa's *testimonio* beyond his ethnic group or the country where he lives would not have been possible.[12]

A similar case occurred with the well-known Master's dissertation *Os cantos tradicionais Ye'kwana* (*Traditional Ye'kwana Chants*) by Fernando Ye'kwana Gimenes, winner of the Dirce Cortes Riedel prize for best Master's dissertation in 2021, awarded by the Associação Brasileira de Literatura Comparada (Brazilian Comparative Literature Association—ABRALIC). As we know,[13] this study was motivated by the observation that the guardians and transmitters of traditional chants, referred to as "historians" and "singers," were dying without leaving others in their place, and by the change in the modes of transmission of ancestral knowledge, with the imposition of formal schooling as a replacement for previous transmission practices, which were embedded in the flow of activities of daily life. The Amerindian community where Gimenes lived was itself responsible for asking him to produce a record of the traditional chants, so that they could be passed on via non-traditional means—namely, via educational institutions that were not part of Amerindian ancestral culture. However, this project could not have been completed without the intervention of "western agents," since Gimenes used Portuguese as a second language and had difficulties mastering it. The final product was thus a text created by various pairs of hands, in the Portuguese language, in the Instituto Insikiran de Formação Superior Indígena (Insikiran Indigenous Higher Education Institute) and the Post-Graduate Programme in Languages and Literatures at the Federal University of Roraima. It involved the active participation of Professor Fábio Almeida de Carvalho as supervisor, without whom the dissertation would never have been produced in its definitive version in a language that was "foreign" to the Ye'kwana people. If we had to make a comparison, we could say that, just as without Bruce Albert Kopenawa's book would not have been published, without Almeida de Carvalho this award-winning dissertation would not have existed. Without the act of translation, neither of those two books would exist. Gimenes thus shared authorship not only with the members of his own indigenous community who passed on to him the "content," but also with the "westerners" who passed on to him their language and the book's "form," so to speak.[14] The act of translation was therefore also a key element in the production of that dissertation, both in the linguistic and cultural sense of the term.

Comparing with Africa

In Africa Thiong'o argues that there are two traditions in confrontation: an imperialist one, and one of resistance. In his view, African authors who wrote in European languages (English, French, Portuguese) were allied to the African neo-colonial dominant classes, who aped and parroted the

former colonial powers, on whom they remained dependent. The peasant and working classes of the national cultures, in contrast, expressed themselves in African languages, he states, conveying local African reality. To add a personal note here, when José Luís Jobim was a member of the jury for the Camões prize (the most important prize for Portuguese-speaking countries internationally), when the prize was awarded to the Cape Verdean writer Germano de Almeida, a Brazilian diplomat attended the event and told him that he had served in Cape Verde and met the author in question. According to him, it was possible to carry out daily duties as a diplomat in that country using the Portuguese language, but he had to learn the local language as well, because that was the language of everyday life.

In his book, Thiong'o, recalling the famous meeting of African writers at Makerere University College in Uganda (1962), entitled A Conference of African Writers of English Expression, states:

> English, like French and Portuguese, was assumed to be the natural Language of Literary and even political mediation between African people in the same nation and between nations in Africa and other continents. In some instances these European languages were seen as having a capacity to unite African peoples against divisive tendencies inherent in the multiplicity of African languages within the same geographic state. (Thiong'o 6–7)

If Thiong'o argues that, to be African, a literature must be produced in a language native to Africa, this would present a problem in Latin America, since most of what is considered literature has been produced in non-native languages. Another famous African writer, Chinua Achebe, who also attended the conference in 1962, takes a stance more compatible with the choice made by Latin Americans: that the effective local appropriation of the language of the former colonial power transformed that language into something else, in which it is possible to express oneself and create African meanings:

> I have indicated somewhat offhandedly that the national literature of Nigeria and of many other countries of Africa is, or will be, written in English. This may sound like a controversial statement, but it isn't. All I have done has been to look at the reality of present-day Africa. This "reality" may change as a result of deliberate, i.e., political, action. If it does, an entirely new situation will arise, and there will be plenty of time to examine it. At present it may be more profitable to look at the scene as it is. What is it that has conspired to place English in the position of national language in many parts of Africa? Quite simply, it is the fact that these nations were created in the first place by the intervention of the British, which (I hasten to add) is not saying that the peoples comprising these nations were invented by the British. The country that we know as Nigeria today began not so very long ago as the arbitrary creation of the British. […] Nigeria was created by the British—for their own ends. Let us give the devil his due: colonialism in Africa disrupted many things, but it did create big political units where there were small, scattered ones before. Nigeria had hundreds of autonomous communities, ranging in size from the vast Fulani Empire founded by Usman dan Fodio in the North to tiny village entities in the East. Today, it is one country. There are, of course, parts of Africa where colonialism divided a single ethnic group among two or even three powers. But on the whole, it did bring together many peoples that had previously gone their several ways, *and it gave them a language with which to talk to one another*. If it failed to give them a song, it at least gave them

> a tongue for sighing. *There are not many countries in Africa today where you could abolish the language of the erstwhile colonial powers and still retain the facility for mutual communication. Those African writers who have chosen to write in English or French are not unpatriotic smart alecs, with an eye on the main chance outside their countries. They are by-products of the same processes that made the new nation-states of Africa.* (Achebe 344; our emphasis)

In South America there are also geographical borders to nation-states that derive from how colonial powers carved up the territory in the past. These divisions, as we know, responded to the interests of the colonial powers and created borders where nothing previously existed. The consequences are still visible today. In the triple-border region between Brazil, Venezuela, and Guyana, for example, there are first-nation peoples who historically composed a single community, but who were split up into territories that belong to three different countries: as well as their native language, such populations have to use the language of the country where they are located—in other words, in addition to the native language, spoken on the three sides of the border, sections of the same ethnic groups have to speak Portuguese (if they live in Brazil), Spanish (if they live in Venezuela) and English (if they live in Guyana). In other words: translation is part of the daily life of this population.

If we were to follow Achebe's line of argument, we could perhaps also say that each one of these countries on the triple-border has brought together many peoples that previously followed different paths and has given them a language in which they can speak to each other, but there are other consequences: the division of land also caused the division of first-nation populations into different territories with different legal regulations and official languages. This has been very problematic, giving rise to the necessity for different second languages for ethnic groups that used to speak the same language, amongst other consequences.

The situation of African writers in former British colonies with regard to the English language is not the same as that of writers in places like Brazil or the USA, where European languages took root to such an extent that they became "native" languages for the majority of the local inhabitants. In Africa, we know that where more than one language is spoken, a "common language" becomes more important, since often it is the only one that can serve as a bridge between everyone. In the former Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique, the designation of Portuguese as the official language after independence, despite the fact that the different ethnic groups there continued to speak their native languages, was not by chance. In both countries the local languages competed (and continue to compete) with Portuguese, which, furthermore, allows the elites to gain access to an international community of Portuguese speakers. It would have been politically complicated for the governments installed after independence to opt for turning one of the local languages spoken by some of its population into the "national language," since there would always have been potential conflict, based on disputes of the following kind: "Why is yours (and not mine) going to be the national language?" Therefore, for better or for worse, one of the roles of Portuguese in the former African colonies was (and still is) that of "common language," even when it is not "common" to everyone (Jobim, *Literatura Comparada* 91–92).

In Brazil, the choice of most writers—male and female—who self-identify as indigenous has been to write in Portuguese, in circumstances where this language does not result from an act of translation. In fact, the majority of these authors are, so to speak, native speakers of Portuguese, although this no longer means unconditional adhesion to a particular use of that European

language, but rather the creation of a linguistic instrument suitable for expressing the experience of local life. It would appear that, in relation to the use of the Portuguese language these writers share the sentiment expressed by Achebe in relation to English: "I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings" (349).

Notes

1. Translated by Lisa Shaw, freelance translator of Portuguese and Professor of Brazilian Studies at the University of Liverpool, UK.
2. "While [the term *grammatisation* is] used occasionally in grammaticalisation research, the term is also used to refer to the process of creating grammar books and dictionaries for a speech community (Auroux 1992; 1994: 74–75; Balibar 1985: 178). The term is synonymous with grammar writing which means that it is, for instance, possible to compare the grammatisation dates of different languages (see, e.g. Bachmann 2005: 67–72). The term grammatisation in this sense is modelled after the term alphabetisation (Auroux 1994: 14) which analogically refers to the introduction of a script for a speech community. Consequently, it is likely that scholars familiar with the use of grammatisation in the sense mentioned above will not adopt grammatisation as an alternative to grammaticalisation" (Konvička 181).
3. According to Auroux, the disciplines focused on language studies owe their birth to the process that leads to the emergence of writing, since this is an important process of metalinguistic representation, a condition for the possibility of constructing metalinguistic knowledge and its transmission. The construction of metalinguistic knowledge, according to Auroux, springs from two facts: writing fixes language and objectifies otherness, as it allows, for example, the organization of lists of native and non-native words. The presence of writing corresponds to what Auroux calls the techno-linguistic revolution.
4. Between the 5th and 19th centuries, what Auroux called the mass *grammatization* of the world's languages took place based on a single initial linguistic tradition. He states that this process, which occurred over thirteen centuries, constitutes the second technical-linguistic revolution, which created "a homogeneous communication network initially centred on Europe. Each new language integrated into the network of linguistic knowledge, in the same way as each region represented by European cartographers, increased the effectiveness of this network and its imbalance to the benefit of a single region of the world" (Auroux, *revolução* 35).
5. The so-called *línguageral* based on the indigenous Tupi language was used above all in the northern region and on the large farms in the rural interior of the colony of Brazil.
6. A law passed in 1755.
7. Literally, "poets of the good age." Quotation taken from chapter VII, dedicated to the 18th century, of *Bosquejo* (Garrett, *Parnaso Lusitano, ou Poesias selectas de autores portugueses*). Chapter VII of *Bosquejo* is devoted to Portuguese writers from the 18th century and to the great vogue for translations of Greek and Latin writers and European literatures. According to Sérgio Nazar David, the "good age" probably refers to the 18th century.
8. Ce qui est traditionnel, cependant, et les organizations de peoples autochtones n´ont pas manqué de le rappeler, est le régime et le mode d´acquisition de ces conaissances, et non simplement la substance des informations reçues des aînés. Si les saviors traditionnels se résumaient à des informations, comme on a pu parfois le croire, in suffirait de les recueillir dans des bases de données pour assurer leur survie, quitte à se désintéresser du sort de ces qui les détiennent. Mais si, plus correctement, ces savoirs traditionnels sont non pas seulement des produits achevés, mais des forms de production innovante de données, d´informations et de conaissances, alors la sauvegarde du système devient aussi essentielle que la sauvegarde des informations.
9. Davi Kopenawa and Bruce Albert, *La chute du ciel. Paroles d´un chaman yanomani*, Terre Humaine, 2010.
10. Davi Kopenawa and Bruce Albert, *The Falling Sky: Words of an Yanomani Shaman*, translated by Nicholas Elliott and Alison Dundy, Harvard UP, 2013.
11. Davi Kopenawa and Bruce Albert, *A queda do céu: Palavras de um xamã Yanomami*, Das Letras, 2019.
12. This argument is further developed in Jobim, "Narrativas ameríndias: autoria, *ghostwriting* e língua de

fantasma."

13. Cf. Jobim and Almeida de Carvalho, "A noção de intimidade em narrativas ameríndias."

14. Fernando Ye'kwana Gimenes himself recognizes this, in an interview given to the newspaper *Folha de Boa Vista* (folhabv.com.br/noticia/CIDADES/Capital/Egresso-em-Letras-da-UFRR-ganha-premio-de-Melhor-Dissertacao/80646): "With my work and with the help of Professor Fábio, we have an award in our hands for our contribution to the community. There's my Master's training, there's what I've learned, there's the involvement of many members of the community who helped us when I was collecting and translating these chants. In other words, the contribution is enormous because we believe that when we record this on paper, it is a way of also preserving these traditional chants of our people."

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