


## SINGULARITIES OF THE SELF, AS A YANOMAMI SHAMAN

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**Fernando Arantes Ferrão<sup>1</sup> and Patricia Cecilia Burrowes<sup>2</sup>**

### ABSTRACT

From the need to gather subsidies that would allow us to carry out a careful reading of the work *The Fall of the Sky – Words of a Yanomami Shaman*, by Davi Kopenawa and Bruce Albert, in our current research project, we tried to find answers to the misunderstandings in the historical, cultural and legal-institutional relations maintained between civilized and indigenous people who share the Brazilian territory, or, according to Viveiros de Castro (2015) to elucidate a "poor, sporadic and highly unequal dialogue". However, when approaching the problem of the enunciation of person, which we proposed to face, the impropriety of the theoretical inflections chosen by us at the beginning of this investigation was revealed. Faced with this impasse, we decided to resume the studies already carried out, seeking, in the present text, to unfold them as a kind of report of errors – and possible course correction. Thus, we begin by exposing the difficulties posed by the use of modern literary and philosophical categorizations – autodiegesis and heterodiegesis, subject and alterity, author and reader. Next, we examine certain enunciative problems established by the autodiegetic figuration of a non-Western historical subject, as well as certain interpretative marks constituted both by the reading repertoire and by the horizon of expectations (ISER, 2013). By way of conclusion, we present the realignment of the epistemological perspective adopted to account for the intended investigation.

**Keywords:** Subject and Alterity. Indigenous Narrative. Animist postulates.

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<sup>1</sup> Master in Theory of Literature and Comparative Literature (currently Doctorate student in science of literature and CAPES scholarship holder)

Student enrolled in the Graduate Program in Science of Literature - PPGCL - Faculty of Letters/UFRJ

<sup>2</sup> De. in Communication and Culture

Associate Professor at the School of Social Communication and the Graduate Program in Psychosociology of Communities and Social Ecology - EICOS - Institute of Psychology/UFRJ

## INTRODUCTION

The reader of *The Fall of the Sky: Words of a Yanomami Shaman* (KOPENAWA and ALBERT, 2015) will soon realize that the text under his eyes does not resemble, properly, the categorization called autobiography, despite an inevitable approximation that, due to the effect induced by the narrative technique, he will make to the extraordinary domains of retrospection and self-understanding of another *self*. Precisely on the subject of the difficulty of conforming this complex cultural object according to any repertoire textual genre, the anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (2015), in the preface he offers to the Brazilian edition of this work, anticipates for this reader certain clues that will unfold in the course of this leafing.

This is a book about Brazil, about a Brazil — certainly, it is ostensibly 'about' the existential trajectory of Davi Kopenawa, in which the Yanomami thinker and political activist, speaking to a French anthropologist, talks about the ancestral culture and recent history of his people [...], explains the mythical origin and invisible dynamics of the world, in addition to describing the monstrous characteristics of Western civilization as a whole and predicting a disastrous future for the planet — but, in a very special way, it is a book about us, the Brazilians who do not consider themselves Indians. Because with *The Fall of the Sky*, the level and terms of the poor, sporadic and strongly unequal dialogue between indigenous peoples and the non-indigenous majority of our country change, the one composed of what Davi calls "Whites" (napë) (VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 2015, p. 12).

Specifically, in the field of literature studies, we not only resent this "poor, sporadic and strongly unequal dialogue", but also the scarcity of works in which the indigenous enunciations themselves are heard, instead of the imaginary voices of *Peris* and *Macunaímas*. Resorting to the theoretical subsidy gathered for an extensive research carried out later<sup>3</sup> — in which we dealt with the imprecision of travel chronicles, as autodiegeses situated on the thresholds of literature, ethnography and history — we believe that it is appropriate to use such a framework then apprehended for the work of reconstituting non-evident meanings, requested for the effort of intersemiotic translation of this narrative, also written in the first person singular.

However, when resorting to epistemic paradigms applicable to the examination of the enunciation of the modern Western person, we find serious restrictions, related to its comparison with peculiarities manifested by the narrative subject in question. Led, therefore, to the necessary redirection of theoretical focus to deal with the issue, we resume

<sup>3</sup>The preliminary results of this research were published in issue 23 (Imaginaires de la limite) of the journal *Amerika: mémoires, idéntites, territoires* (Université Rennes 2).

the drafts previously written to recompose them, however, according to a report of errors. Thus, we begin the present work, discussing the inadequacy of two theoretical comparisons previously rehearsed in the study; then – and by way of explanation for the initial failures of our interpretative path – we will then briefly expound concepts concerning the "Aesthetics of Reception and Effect", with which we have engendered unsuccessful hermeneutic constructs; and, finally, we will point out the change in the epistemological perspective adopted, which, we hope, will give appropriate treatment to the complexity of the problem we propose to deal with.

### **AUTOBIOGRAPHY, HETEROBIOGRAPHY, OR UNIDENTIFIED OBJECT FOR AMERINDIAN CULTURES?**

In the field of literary studies, texts in which, formally, the use of the first person of the discourse predominates, as an index of recognition of reliable narrative identities, are classified as autodiegetic. Thus typified as a textual product in which the narrator personifies and reenacts his personal existence, the narratives of the self can encompass several subgenres, such as memoirs, personal novels, diaries, self-portraits, testimonies, autobiographical poems, etc.

From the formalist perspective of literary studies, in the essay "The Autobiographical Pact", Philippe Lejeune (2014) proposes that the autobiographical text model must meet the following requirements: a) present itself as a narrative in prose, or in verse; b) to report an individual life, the real or imaginary history of a personality, the chronicle of an event or the succession of events experienced by the author/narrator; c) the identity of the author, whose name alludes to an individual who had (or has) a real existence, must be linked to that of the narrator of the diegesis; d) the identity of the narrator must be linked to that of the protagonist of the diegesis, which the perspective retrospectively.

With these definitions in mind, let's look at the following excerpt:

You don't know me and you've never seen me. They live in a distant land. That's why I want you to know what our ancestors taught me. When I was younger, I didn't know anything. Then, little by little, I began to think on my own. Today, all the words that the ancients possessed before me are clear in my mind. These are words unknown to whites, which we have always kept. I therefore wish to speak to you of the very remote time in which animal ancestors metamorphosed and the time in which Omama raised us, when the whites were still very far from us (KOPENAWA and ALBERT, 2015, p. 74).

As long as it meets the four items listed by the French theorist, the above excerpt

leaves no doubt as to the type of autodiegesis it represents. In fact, in addition to the work *The Fall of the Sky: Words of a Yanomami Shaman*, the other news that comes to us from Davi Kopenawa – a certain "succession of events experienced and/or protagonists in the historical diegesis" (KOPENAWA and ALBERT, 2015) – leave no doubt as to his position as a narrator who, in the first person singular, composed such an account in retrospect.

Furthermore, Lejeune – an author repeatedly cited in the "postscriptum" section of the work we are dealing with – observes that, prior to any autobiographical project, a "pact" is presumed between author and reader, in which the former assumes the commitment to show himself truthfully in the publication of his narrative, hoping that the latter will accept his word as true. And, given the referential nature of the autobiographical pact, on the creative level, the main requirement imposed on the writing of the text corresponds to the authorial dexterity to integrate into the composition two dynamics inherent and complementary to the identity (protagonist) described in actions (narrator): the introspective movement, which consists of the accurate exposition of an inner life; and the retrospective, in which events chained under a certain past temporal sequence are remembered.

According to the French theorist, even the affixing of a second signature to the cover of the autobiography, that is, the signaling of different presences of a narrator and an editor<sup>4</sup> in the same work – two identities in heterobiographical cohabitation not so rare in the subgenre – does not call into question its authenticity, since "the autobiography composed in collaboration as it is practiced today, in a more or less confessed way, [...] recalls that the 'true' is itself an artifact and that the 'author' is an effect of contract" (LEJEUNE, 2014, p. 137). In fact, in the study "The autobiography of those who do not write" (LEJEUNE, 2014, pp. 131-224), the scholar suggests that:

By relatively isolating the roles, the collaborative autobiography questions the belief in a unity that, in the autobiographical genre, implies the notion of author and that of person. It is only possible to divide the work because, in fact, it is always divided, even if those who write ignore it, since they assume the different roles (LEJEUNE, 2014, p. 137).

However, Lejeune (2014) points out the prevalence of cultural conjunctures – coinciding with the publication of Jean Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions* – which, from a certain historical moment, shaped the European continent as the propitious and exclusive environment for the development of the autobiography subgenre and, moreover, made it

<sup>4</sup>The cover of the work features anthropologist Bruce Albert as its co-author.

characteristic of this type of narrative to constitute a means of assimilation, or learning, through which the possibility of authorship of one's own history was inaugurated for the common man (LEJEUNE, 2014).

Thus, if in the understanding of this literary theorist, the autobiographical subgenre signals the claim of a broad subjective domain, eventually ignored until the eighteenth century by the Western individual, it seemed appropriate to us, even before returning to the question of the enunciation of the indigenous subject in the autodiegesis studied, to take into account the observation made by the narrator-protagonist of the text we investigated:

[Our ancients] knew nothing of the custom of the whites to draw their words. [...] The whites, on the contrary, do not stop fixing their gaze on the drawings of their speeches pasted on paper skins and making them circulate among them. In this way, they study only their own thinking and, thus, only know what is already within themselves. But their paper skins do not speak or think. They just stand there, inert, with their black drawings and lies. I prefer our words by far! (KOPENAWA and ALBERT, 2015, p. 455).

Such an excerpt indeed raises a new question for the present work: assuming that an autobiography – or any book, as a media, cultural object, or bundle of paper skins – does not belong to the imagination of (and does not circulate in) the Yanomami nation, we then ask ourselves, with whom would Kopenawa intend to communicate through this alien artifact to his culture? And as this question calls for our reflection a necessary critique of the episteme and the "autobiographical pact" proposed by the French literary theorist, we seek a second opinion on this textual genre in the language studies of the philosopher Georges Gusdorf (1991), who also reflects on the narratives of the self.

In the essay "*Condiciones y límites de la autobiografía*", the French philosopher bases his analysis of a narrative identity not exactly on the invariability of a function in autodiegetic texts, but rather on a more attentive contemplation, effectively directed to the individual who has proposed the act of self-description and/or narration. It is not, therefore, an abstraction that is the autobiographical protagonist, but the person himself, limited by his human body and by the world in which he lives, who is considered capable of engendering an expansion beyond such biological and spatio-temporal conditionings, starting to star, in the field of culture, acts in which a certain creative freedom is manifested – the theme that effectively occupies this author.

Thus, more attentive to what the narrative subject is able to express than to the formalistic syntheses enunciated about its typification, Gusdorf (1991) suggests, despite the privileged perspective he has on the object-subject of his narrative, that the autobiographer

seeks to configure his protagonist identity in order to project it in an illusory and autonomous instance, in which – like Narcissus fascinated by the charm of his reflection in the reflecting pool – he does not conform based on relations with beings and places in the course of time, but only as a witness of himself; in the same way that, after all, it proceeds with its scenarios and other participants in this peculiar reality.

In order to mark distinctive marks for autobiographical composition, Gusdorf (1991) compares it with other examples of modern autodiegeses. Thus, the French philosopher suggests that, when composing a diary, the author is not obliged to follow any model of ordering events, but is only willing to write down states of mind and impressions about facts in which he is involved. Once such a random and irregular succession of records had been collected, he could present it as a kind of image of his life. Unlike this mode of composition, the autobiography asks its author to place himself at a distance from what he presumes to be his own history, in order to write it according to a principle of coherence, disposing in causal relation the events experienced and the transformations conferred on his identity, as if by the effect of such a temporal process.

Associating the self-report with another autodiegetic species, the French philosopher then refers to the example given by:

Rembrandt, fascinated by his Venetian mirror, endlessly multiplied his self-portraits, as Van Gogh would later do, testimonies of himself and signs of the new passionate restlessness of modern man, determined to elucidate the mystery of his own personality (GUSDORF, 1991, p. 05).

Emphasizing, however, that this pictorial genre does not intend to depict a certain present moment in the life of its author, Gusdorf evaluates that the emergence of the autobiographical model presumes a solipsistic superimposition, in which, just as artist and model become a single one, the historian also begins to treat himself as the very object of history (GUSDORF, 1991, p. 03). Thus, sometimes mimicking long-term processes, sometimes presenting itself with creative expression, an autobiography always attempts to report the course of an unusual existence on the historical plane, *"in the yuxtaponiendo imágenes instantáneas, sino componiendo una especie de filma siguiendo un guion preconcebido"* (GUSDORF, 1991, p. 01).

Diverging from Lejeune's postulations, the French philosopher observes this psychic phenomenon first in St. Augustine's *Confessions*, and not in Rousseau's later homonymous work. However, Gusdorf (1991) concedes that, successively assimilating the great



achievements of Modernity – Great Navigations, conquests of unknown territories, rise of empirical sciences, development of new products and technologies, promotion of international trade, etc. – to the peculiar conjunction of Christian doctrine with classical thought, old conceptions of a theocentric world were dissolved, and a new and self-referred modality of human protagonism was established in the imaginary European. In this sense, it would in fact be from Rousseau's Confessions that, from the metropolises of the West and at the end of the eighteenth century, the common man would begin his withdrawal from collective life to retreat into his singular and unrepeatable existence, whose ephemeral duration would well justify, for the benefit of future generations, the effort to record it.

Thus, Gusdorf (1991) concludes that the subjective and modern sense of individuality – which manifests itself in the autobiographical subgenre as a concern with the remembrance of a private past and as an abstraction about the originality and value of one's own existence – would be nothing more than the social effect of a certain set of historical events carried out by the so-called Western Civilization. In view of this, going beyond the sociocultural conditioning factors pointed out in the literary studies referred to above, this author asserts that the autobiographical model, as well as the imaginary that concerns it, would have nothing universal, that is, that they would not necessarily be able to find such coherence in other human cultures. Nevertheless, since it is characteristic of the now hegemonic civilizational model that it does not intend to escape the ethnocentric model itself conceived – and, moreover, assuming the index of verifiability of the autobiographical narrative genre from the presence of a historian who, simultaneously, is the narrator and the protagonist of this specific way of telling stories – it is not surprising that, In the field of attempts to communicate with elements of the dominant culture, some foreign historical character ends up strategically making use of such a way of thinking that it does not concern the imaginary itself. It was for this reason, according to Gusdorf, that Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, the Mahatma, placed himself in an autobiography, mimicking a type of expression of himself that was totally foreign to him, just to present to English-speaking readers the dimension of the tragic encounter that took place between European conquerors and the ancient Indian civilization, as well as the crimes perpetrated by the United Kingdom against this world about to disappear (GUSDORF, 1991).

Retaining, therefore, from Philippe Lejeune's postulations, that autobiography configures the individual according to a certain enunciative peculiarity capable of imbricating three moments of the "I's" that are presented in it, namely, the author, the

narrator and the protagonist, in the composition of an account that is both introspective and retrospective of their experiences; as well as, from the saying by Georges Gusdorf, that the identification of such a narrative subject with certain developments of Western modernity can in no way be taken as a spontaneous expression of the first person of the discourse beyond the cultural sphere of the West itself; we realize, as Kopenawa states, that in fact:

The thinking of the whites is different. His memory is ingenious, but it is entangled in smoky and obscure words. The path of his mind is usually tortuous and thorny [...]. They only contemplate without rest the paper skins on which they have drawn their own words. If they do not follow its course, their thinking loses its way. It is filled with oblivion and they become very ignorant. Their sayings are different from ours. Our ancestors did not have skins of images and did not inscribe laws on them. Their only words were the ones that uttered their mouths and they did not draw them, so they never distanced themselves from them. That is why whites have always been unaware of them (KOPENAWA and ALBERT, 2015, pp. 75-76).

So, if, on the one hand, the delimitations that Lejeune and Gusdorf impose on the subgenre do not restrict our intention to analyze *The Fall of the Sky: Words of a Yanomami Shaman* from the Autobiographical Subgenre, on the other hand, they demand a look at the innovation and textual specificity that it presents, as suggested by the anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro in the preface he offers to the work:

[...] *The falling sky* is an unprecedented, composite and complex 'object', almost unique in its kind. For it is, at the same time: a singular biography of an exceptional individual, an indigenous survivor who lived for several years in contact with the Whites until he reincorporated himself into his people and decided to become a shaman; a detailed description of the poetic-metaphysical foundations of a worldview of which we are only now beginning to recognize wisdom; a passionate defense of the right to exist of a native people that is being swallowed up by an immeasurably more powerful civilizational machine; and, finally, a shrewd and sarcastic counter-anthropology of the Whites, the "people of the commodity",\* and of their unhealthy relationship with the Earth — conforming a discourse that Albert (1993) lapidarily characterized as a "shamanic critique of the political economy of nature" (VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, In: KOPENAWA and ALBERT, 2015, p. 27).

## **OF YANOMAMI IPSEITY, OR IT WILL BE PROPER TO THE INDIGENOUS BEING TO ALWAYS BECOME ANOTHER**

Although the figuration of the subject in the text by Kopenawa and Albert (2015) has shown itself to be divergent in several aspects (it is not Western, it is not modern, it does not claim authorship of the story itself) from that studied by Lejeune (2014), we focus on the treatise *The Self as Another* (Ricoeur, 2014), in order to compare the autobiographical model with the life of its narrator, but, in what way do narrative structures borrow their meanings from practices inherent to the actions, relationships and connections of human



life, or, more specifically, from how the narrative subject was constituted who, as Viveiros de Castro (2015) points out, managed to survive the extermination of his clan, resist the cultural assimilation stimulated from within the dominant society, to achieve reintegration into one's nation and also to become another (shaman) within it.

After revealing to his reader that he is following a certain clue left by Aristotle (2002), Ricoeur (2014) points out that the construction of the subject's identity is presented through a double conformation, verifiable both by its standard of stability – in which it is recognized by the aspects of its uniqueness, similarity, frequency and constancy in time –, as well as by its pattern of nonconformity, in which innovation, represented by the *self*, imposes itself by virtue of dispositions conferred on identity over time – resulting, on the one hand, from the incorporation of habit into its conformation, "with its double valence of habit that is being, as it is said, contracted and habit already acquired" (RICOEUR, 2019, p. 122), and, on the other hand, of a succession of "*acquired identifications* by which a portion of another enters the composition of the same" (RICOEUR, 2019, p. 122).

In order to account for the apparent paradox contained in the proposition of one *self* as *another*, Ricoeur proposes to converge three different philosophical propositions, namely, (a) to point out the prominence of a certain "reflexive mediation" (the reflexive semantics of the pronouns "si" and "se") over the agent or sufferer "I", usually manifested by the first person singular as the "immediate position" of the subject (RICOEUR, 2019, p. xi); (b) consider the ambivalence of the identical (notion of identity), as a function of its attachment to the *idem* or *ipse regimes* (RICOEUR, 2019, p. xiii); and (c) observe the occurrence of complementarity between the *self* and the *other than the self*, within the scope of its own dialectic, both under the influence of the problematic inherent to the conception of identity-ipse, as well as under that of a dialectic re-enacted between the characters of sameness of *idem* and variability of *ipse*, (RICOEUR, 2019, p. xvi). Through this approach, the philosopher intends to find a way to distinguish the differences and point out the correlations established between the personal and narrative forms of the subject:

To say oneself is not to say I. The self sets itself - or is disposed. The self is reflexively implicated in operations whose analysis precedes the return to itself. In this dialectic between analysis and reflection, the dialectic between ipse and idem is grafted. Finally, the dialectic between the same and the other crowns the two dialectics (RICOEUR, 2019, p. xxxiii).

In the context of scholastic philosophy, the concept of ipseity is denoted as the property of an individual being only himself, and not another, by virtue of a peculiar attribute

that distinguishes him from others; in the meaning given to it by Martin Heidegger, this term does not lend itself to the qualification of living beings in general, but rather by the specificity with which it designates "man's own being as a responsible existence (Da-sein)" (JAPIASSÚ & MARCONDES, 2001). Approaching both meanings, Ricoeur retains from the Middle Ages the aspect of differentiation of substance between *one and the other*, and accepts from the modern category the presupposition of a certain identity that can be revealed as becoming in the existence (that which undergoes changes in time) of a human being. Thus, from each designation of ipseity, the French philosopher selects heterogeneous characteristics: in the first, of a static nature, he is interested in signaling the permanence of the elements of distinction established between the identical being and its otherness; and, of the second, of a dynamic nature, it takes advantage of aspects that, because they reflect inescapable differentiations that have occurred in the temporal dimension, impose themselves on the being whose re-identification demands a constant reflection on *itself*. As a function of the way in which this concept will be employed in the general plan of his narrative theory, Ricoeur implies these different nuances of the philosophical word "ipseity" in the enunciative dimensions (personal, narrative and ethics) of a word derived from the pronoun *idem*: "identity". According to the affixing of two Latin demonstratives, the thinker delimits the semantic field of this noun: *identity-idem*, or sameness, and identity-ipse, or ipseity, sometimes in a re-signified value both in relation to the scholastic and the Heideggerian.

However, when we are faced with the following passage, neither does the dialectic pointed out by the French philosopher seem to account for the presence of this *other* that insinuates itself into the narrative subject of a narrative previously characterized by the referential use of language, rather than by marks of literariness:

When my wife's father made me become someone else, everything happened as I have just described. With the yākoana, he first took away all my strength. His spirit, which we call Yākoanari, gradually ate my flesh. I was so weak that I felt sorry! The xapiri then washed all the acid and salty smell from my chest. They also cleaned my bowels of all the remnants of putrefying flesh. They made me lose all strength and made me go back to being a baby. After some time, my father-in-law called other spirits to come and settle with me. He said to them, "This boy, to whom I give yākoana a drink, desires you and wants to become a spirit in turn! Do you accept to do your presentation dance for him?". And the xapiri answered him: "Awei! It is one of yours. We have always danced for their ancestors. We know you. Since it's his turn to love us, we'll come and dance for him!" (KOPENAWA and ALBERT, 2015, p. 143).

In fact, according to this and numerous other descriptions made by Kopenawa (KOPENAWA and ALBERT, 2015) throughout the work in question, this presence of the *other* in the composition of *the self* (narrative subject) bears little resemblance to this slow, constant and gradual intertwining *ipse/idem*, as proposed by Ricoeur's philosophy of language (2014), better evidencing itself as a radical, although reversible, the process of transformation of the same human individual into a non-human individual.

## STRANGENESS DURING THE ACT OF READING

In the face of these theorizations that are presumably inadequate for the study of the text in question, we therefore pay attention to our own formation of the reading repertoire, in order to examine certain points of estrangement, or unusual images, that occurred in this encounter with the work of Kopenawa and Albert (2015). The category "repertoire", as Robert Jauss (1994) defines it in the context of the Aesthetics of Reception and Effect, is configured as the capacity or experience manifested by the reader, in relation to the "previous knowledge of the genre, form and theme of already known works, as well as the opposition between poetic language and practical language" (JAUSS, 1994, p. 27) – , an explanation that motivates the theoretical inflection that follows.

In order to highlight the discrepancy observed between what is presumed to be the fullness of a human existence and the history that can be made of it, in the essay "The interaction of the text with the reader" the theorist Wolfgang Iser (1979) resorts to the aphorism of the literary Arnold Bennett: "one cannot put the whole of a personality in a book" (ARNOLD BENNETT, *apud* ISER, 1979, p. 104). In the context of a long reflection on the "activity of constitution", <sup>5</sup>Iser points out with this quotation not only the defective character inherent to the structure of representation, but also the impossibility of the plenitude of the real showing itself in an intentional object that, necessarily, is subject "to a

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<sup>5</sup>In Iser's sense, "activity of constitution" corresponds, *roughly speaking*, to a system of combinations that, elaborated by the reader with the asymmetries presented in the reading, performs a complementary function to the system of combinations that is constituted in the text itself. Based on Merleau-Ponty's reflection, according to which, "the lack of a sign can itself be a sign and the expression does not consist in the fact that there is an element of language to adjust itself to each element of meaning, but in the influence of language on language, which suddenly changes in the direction of its meaning. [...] If language renounces enunciating the thing itself, irrevocably expressing it (MERLEAU-PONTY, *apud* ISER, 1979, p. 91), the German theorist proposes that, in view of the insufficiency of connections offered by the text "system", the reader establishes, with such a set of voids and negations that he must fill, the function of "central switch" that will guide his own activity of interaction with the text (ISER, 1979, p. 91-92).

referent, classifying it according to the presence or absence of certain traits" (ISER, 1979, p. 103).

Notwithstanding the foreseeable deficiencies in the process of textual representation of the individual, Iser suggests that the aforementioned "personality" make itself known, as proposed by the Polish philosopher and literary theorist Roman Ingarden, as a dynamic figuration capable of progressively filling the incompleteness "of each aspect with the next" (ISER, 1979, p. 103), in order to project itself as an illusion that simulates a reality. In fact, Iser understands that "even when the character is conceived in such a way that he is capable of mirroring his reality, this is not an end in itself, but a sign", whose communicative purpose is not exhausted as a mere projection of a plausible reality, nor as a resemblance to the lived world, since, according to Adorno, "art is in fact the world again, as equal to it, as it is unequal to it" (ADORNO, *apud* ISER, 1979, p. 104).

Such an argument seems to offer us a key to understanding not only the "breaks of continuity" in the planes of the real configured by Kopenawa and Albert, but also for actions, or reactions, demanded of the reader, who will be responsible for filling what Iser calls *voids* (ISER, 1979), that is, the recovery of elements of cohesion that, separated from the discourse by temporal cuts, intertextualities, fragmentations or omissions, or even by the author's non-intentionality, ask the reader's imagination (production) to fulfill a certain *desirable continuity* of communication.

Thus, the result of our study will become transparent a continuous and pragmatic exercise of attention of the category called by Iser *implicit reader*, as an "almost enunciative presence of the subject of observation" who, in view of the potential relationship signaled by the "voids", takes advantage of indeterminate spaces (freed from the positions denoted by the texts) to fill them with acts of projection (*Vorstellungsakte*) capable of establishing connections between the intended meanings with the textual objects and the activated capacity of representation of such a reader. (ISER, 1979). This concept prefigures in a real reader, simultaneously passive and active, the subjection to the instructions of the text and the interest in answering the questions posed by it, in an interlocutory or reception act, which is activated in the *act of reading* itself, a concept also known as reader/text interaction. According to the meaning of the theorist Antoine Compagnon, based on the so-called *implicit reader scheme*, the *act of reading consists of*,

[...] in concretizing the schematic vision of the text, that is, in common language, imagining the characters and events, filling in the gaps in the narratives and

descriptions, building a coherence from scattered and incomplete elements. Reading presents itself as a resolution of enigmas (according to what Barthes called the "hermeneutic code", or the hunting model, cited in relation to mimesis). (COMPAGNON, 2012, p.149)**element.**

In this sense, in order to point out the already mentioned bad encounter pointed out by Viveiros de Castro in an excerpt previously transcribed – and if the interlocutory abstraction called by Iser *implicit reader* can refer to ourselves Brazilians – it occurs to us that, in our own case, probably, the *repertoire*, that is, the literary references about the indigenous for such readers, may have begun to be based on a certain story, in which, despite the good humor it manifests, the contempt directed at the extermination of autochthonous nations during the process of colonization of Portuguese America predominates: *The adventures of Hans Staden*, rewritten by Monteiro Lobato (1954), based on the work *Two Trips to Brazil*, by the German arquebusier Hans Staden.

Present in the literacy of Brazilians until the end of the 1970s, one can take as the inaugural moment of such a "dialogue" this curious paraphrase, in which, "fictionalizing" the life of an individual whose existence was truly real, a literary character narrates the story of the captivity of the mercenary Tedesco by Tupinambá warriors. "Dona Benta" is addressed to an audience made up of her grandchildren and toy objects that, touched by Lobato's condon, manage to acquire consciousness and discretion in the cozy hall of the "Sítio do Picapau Amarelo". Associating Staden's story with the appropriation of indigenous territories by "civilization", the character praises the mystifications and cunning employed by the captive to escape the fate reserved for him by the indigenous people, who:

They had a much lower degree of intelligence than the whites. Hence the ease with which the Peros and the Spaniards, in much smaller numbers, were able to dominate them. In this case of Hans, for example, we witness the struggle of intelligence against brutality. Intelligence, with its tricks and tricks, ended up overcoming the scolding force of the number (LOBATO, 1954, p. 109).

The regrettable ethnic depreciation was present in numerous inaugural acts of reading. Furthermore, returning to the unequal encounter between the original nations and the majority of "napë" readers in our country, it should be noted that, in the context of the extensive Brazilian textual production in which the presence of the indigenous is represented (travel narratives, historical treatises, religious plays, novels, poems, etc.), the latter generally appears as the object of narration and/or description. The cognitive mistake, or restriction imposed on the incorporation of such identities into the national imaginary,

manifests itself even in ethnographic texts. Nevertheless, as the anthropologist Oscar Calavia Sáez informs us:

it could not be said that this collective hypostasis is exclusive to Brazilian ethnography, nor even to ethnography in general: other primitives, other minorities, the nation-states themselves are often subjected to it. But it certainly gains a special status within a legal order in which the Indians have a place as a collective person as opposed to the individual person who serves as a measure of the rest. That is, what we find in Brazil is not only an individualistic order with corporative nuances, but an individualistic order with corporative nuances in which an explicit collective exception is a reserved mark of the ethnic minority. The standard is more rigid than we might think: if, as we have seen, autobiography is absent from Brazilian ethnology, biography without more is equally a gap (SÁEZ, 2006, pp. 189-190).

Through this bibliographic path, we understand that the notions of subject, author, narrator, identity, ipseity are not only not sufficient to account for the narrative of *The Fall of the Sky: Words of a Yanomami Shaman*, but also, and perhaps above all, that the repertoire of the average reader does not give him the tools to penetrate the complexity of the worldview presented in the text.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Once we have reported the interpretative challenges that the work *The Fall of the Sky: Words of a Yanomami Shaman* imposes on the Napë reader (especially on us, the Brazilians), as well as the problems of *in-definition* and the processual dynamics that constitute the narrative subject that are posed in it, we return to Sáez (2006) and deduce from him relevant peculiarities about the Amerindian autobiographical subject. In fact, scholars of Amazonian ethnicities observe that, when the *self* referring to the autodiegetic narrative identity manifests itself, it almost only does so in solemn accounts and in front of an interested audience: either it will be claiming warlike glories, or defending itself from the accusation of a certain forbidden practice of witchcraft, or even recounting trips to remote topological spaces (the sky, the bottom of the river, the cities, other forests, other worlds in short) and encounters with other living beings (whites, other indigenous, animals, spirits, etc.), that is, to fulfill shamanic attributes.

According to the Spanish anthropologist, although the ritualized forms of such voices differ, shamans, defendants, and warriors tend to allude in these speeches to the testimonies of *others* who are absent, in order to corroborate the veracity of their statements. Furthermore, Sáez (2006) reveals that, when referring to *themselves*, Amazonian indigenous people do not shy away from confusion with other neighbors,



whether they are existing companions, enemies, ancestors, predatory or hunting animals, or even spirits of the forest. From such a reading, it could be inferred, preliminarily, (a) that the Amerindian narrative identity is distinguished from the self-referential fiction constituted in Western modernity as self-contemplation and movement of individualistic introspection; (b) that, on the contrary, normally the enunciative type of the Amerindian self tends to mix *the self* with *other voices* – even those absent from the usual communal coexistence; (c) that this quality of subject, evidently not conformed by the singularity of its attributes and by a presupposed voluntary and natural expressiveness of these qualities, is also not made explicit by the citational discourse it pronounces, as a type of collective identity – an *I* that is *others* – since, according to Sáez, such narrative voices, in their own way, also refer to singularities and, therefore

they cannot be placed peacefully in the mouth of a collective subject. To begin with, the path of this citational discourse goes far beyond the earthly dimensions of the sociological knot. [...] More than to dissolve the self within the group, this presence of the collective serves as a limit to the confusion of the self with entities beyond the group itself. After all, the end point of this other becoming, if it were not socially controlled, could only be identified with death (SAEZ, 2006, 187-188).

We thus observe that, contrary to the self-absorption and self-allocation at the center of what it takes as its own history, characteristic of the Western and modern autobiographical subgenre, indigenous narratives centered on a subject seem to manifest the expansiveness of subjectivation in discourses that are not necessarily retrospective, but ahistorical. (SAEZ, 2006). Following the trail of such an inference implies escaping from the dichotomous Western totalizations – subject/object, collective/individual, savage/civilized, cause/consequence, nature/culture, etc – eventually expressed in the references concerning the theorizations that we had been using until then. For this reason, we turn to the work *Cannibal Metaphysics*, by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (2015), in order to present the brief summary that follows, with which we will conclude the present.

The Brazilian anthropologist proposes that the Amazonian indigenous person is ontologically constituted from a reflexive dualism of a mythological ordering, which, like the modern Westerner, opposes appearance and substance. However, distinguishing itself from the latter – a legatee of religious traditions that organize a peculiar understanding of the world from a body, universally objective (all humans resemble and recognize each other), and one of subjective interiority, or essence, or soul, or memory (all humans are singular and distinguishable) – for the former the reference of similarity, or the universal, it resides

in the soul, while the datum of singularity is located in the body. According to Viveiros de Castro (2015), there is yet another distinction to be observed: this similarity of souls (of people, animals, plants, stones, rivers, hills, utensils, etc.) does not correspond properly to a homogeneous perception of the world, since it is corporeality that determines what is understood as the world, that is, it is the sensory capacities that affect the "clothes" of beings, and not its essences.

Calling such an abstract animist construct "Amerindian perspectivism", Viveiros de Castro (2015) suggests that, contrary to the antinomy nature/culture engendered by Western and modern (naturalist) ontology, it is under a certain logic presumed as a predator/prey relational dynamic that not only two, but an enormous diversity of worlds are constructed: the body of man is food for the body of the jaguar; the body of the tapir serves as food for the body of man; and thus, In the realm of subjectivities, the persons of the man, the jaguar and the tapir, would perspective themselves, as well as other beings and entities, from the way their bodies apprehend and experience them. In this way, the relativization of the meanings attributed to substances according to the *person* who observes them is explained: what man sees in disgust as carrion, the vulture regales as the sight of a roasted fish; the drink enjoyed by the jaguar, which it calls beer, man understands to be blood; and the same entity that presents itself to him as mud from which he deviates, In the understanding of the dolmen, it is equivalent to a temple to be visited. It should be noted that, according to the theoretical construct of Viveiros de Castro, the need to become other seems to meet only the interest and curiosity of the indigenous, and this metaphysics is considered – given the lack of interest of non-humans in the experience of perspectives other than their own – as an attribute of these beings who, *strictly speaking*, wear human clothes (VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 2015, pp.44-45).

The concept of Amerindian perspectivism, however, is not constructed as knowledge and a way of being based on everyone's experience, since only through the arts of shamans will access to this "invisible prosopomorphy of non-human beings" be fulfilled. Viveiros de Castro then explains to us:

Amerindian shamanism can be defined as the ability manifested by certain individuals to deliberately cross bodily barriers between species and adopt the perspective of "foreign" subjectivities, in order to manage the relations between them and humans (VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 2015, p. 49).

Hence, the perspective experienced by the shaman when assuming not the clothes,

but the "form of the Other", allows him to contemplate non-human beings as they conceive themselves beyond their clothes, that is, as *persons*. Such an encounter with strange forms, or the exchange of perspectives, according to the author, constitutes "a dangerous process, and a political art – a diplomacy" (VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 2015, p. 49). This is because it is known to jaguars, for example, that the jaguar-shaman, possibly among them, is a person like any jaguar is, although he does not appear to them in jaguar form.

In order for such a conception of the world of the other to configure a knowledge, or "common sense", which is also constituted based on the knowledge of the "other", it is necessary that, after his return to communal life, the shaman shares with the other neighbors and relatives the account of the encounter experienced, describing non-human beings to them, not through their objectification. but by the personification of these bodies and, above all, by explaining how such beings figure themselves and how they see their others – including humans themselves. Thus, to a certain extent, the curiosity that Amerindians have to know how the "others" see them is indistinguishable from a certain yearning of Western man. However, going against the desire manifested by the Western individual to compose and star in any story that seems to him, ontologically, the indigenous subject is constituted by the incorporation of what *is different from himself* – or assimilation of his *otherness* – either by submitting to it or by submitting to it. By following this ethical conduct of seeking to integrate the "other" into oneself, either through becoming-other, or through the act of ingesting it, the indigenous and Western humanities also diverge in this aspect of curiosity. (VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 2015, pp. 50-51).

From the theoretical references provided by the contemporary anthropological field, or, more specifically, by the concept of Amerindian perspectivism, we believe we have found the correct course of our investigation about the enunciative problem of the person of Kopenawa. In effect, the shamanic discourse is shaped in reference to a *self* distinct from the common indigenous – therefore, autobiographical in its own way – but simultaneously, as a travel narrative, reverse anthropology, prophecy and, in the case of the work in question, also as a letter addressed to enemies.

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