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Dossier | History and Fiction

Against the Archive: Decolonial Historical Fiction and Indigenous Representations in Micheliny Verunschk's *O som do rugido da onça*

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Abstract

Historical fiction provides a powerful platform to challenge hegemonic narratives and amplify marginalized voices excluded from the archives. However, little attention has been paid to how Indigenous perspectives can reshape understandings of colonialism and capitalism within this genre. This article examines the decolonial historiographical metafiction O Som do Rugido da Onça (Micheliny Verunschk, Brazil, 2021), which recounts the story of an Indigenous girl taken from Brazil to Munich in the 19th century for scientific exhibition. Drawing on literary and historical theories within a decolonial framework, the study analyzes how the novel conveys authenticity, contests the archives and constructs Indigenous subjectivity. Three narrative strategies are examined, labeled here as contradictory records, a non-human narrator, and affirmative speculation. The novel's river narrator unsettles human-centered historiography by exposing coloniality and gendered oppression while presenting non-anthropocentric cultures as a viable future.

Keywords

Decolonial Historical Fiction; Indigenous Representations; Archives and Historiography; Micheliny Verunschk.

Introduction

Historical fiction has a powerful influence on the popular imagination. This literary genre has been critically examined for its intersections with identity, education, historical reflection, the formation of empathy, nationality, trauma, and resistance to oppression (Rodwell, 2013; de Groot, 2010). Historical fiction attracts a wide audience; however, it has also long been a site of tension. It is used, for example, to evoke conservative nostalgia, but also to challenge dominant narratives, amplify marginalized voices excluded from historical archives, and give visibility to women, Black, LGBT, and non-Western experiences of the past (Wallace, 2005; Hower, 2019; Mitchell, 2014).

Recently, interest in the epistemology of historical fiction itself has increased. The authenticity of a historical novel has usually been judged by whether it is consistent with primary sources (Harlan, 2007). Yet, as the limitations of archives became widely recognized, the focus shifted to narrative strategies. Are they used to question archives? To challenge hegemonic narratives? To create an illusion of accuracy, or to give voice to marginalized histories? (Hutcheon, 1988; Saxton, 2020; Addey, 2021). This approach to authenticity raises questions about the epistemology of history, objectivity, alternative regimes of truth, and the inclusion of multiple perspectives on the past. Nevertheless, it remains largely focused on Western contexts. Such an approach to the study of novels about Indigenous peoples in Latin America is still rare, although it could open up innovative investigations into how historical narratives are constructed, contested, and reimagined outside Western epistemological frameworks. This topic is of crucial importance in Brazil, as the experiences of Indigenous peoples in the past are often overlooked because of the lack of qualitative archives.

To address this gap, I propose a case study of the novel *O Som do Rugido da Onça* (The Sound of the Jaguar's Roar, Brazil, 2021), by Micheliny Verunschk. Inspired by true events, the novel recounts the journey of an Indigenous girl taken from Brazil to Munich in 1821 by two renowned German scientists, Carl von Martius and Johann von Spix. Verunschk's novel is fragmentary, self-reflexive and polyphonic. She develops strategies to question historical truth, challenge Western archives and narrate the past from the perspective of an Indigenous character. I therefore read it as a *decolonial historiographic metafiction*.

This study is guided by three questions: 1) How does the novel integrate historical methods, historical sources, and fiction to approach authenticity? 2) What narrative strategies are used to portray Indigenous characters and make their perspectives visible? 3) Does the novel have a historical and/or decolonial performative dimension that intervenes in and reorients contemporary action? To address these questions, the study combines literary analysis, historical theory, and a decolonial approach. The **first part** of the article identifies the narrative strategies the author uses to delegitimize archives and history while constructing the authority of the novelist. I discuss how two strate-

gies, referred to here as *contradictory records* and the *non-human narrator*, enter into dialogue with historical theory and literary methods. **The second part** focuses on the narrative strategies used to construct the subjectivity of the Indigenous character, and thus on the conception of a narrative of Otherness. Here I examine three strategies, which I refer to as *orality, cultural repertory,* and, in particular, *affirmative methods of speculation*. **The third section** briefly discusses how the novel enters into dialogue with contemporary debates, focusing on its *decolonial performative dimension*.

Historical novel: A brief overview

The study of the historical novel is well established in literary studies. Contextual approaches and comparative analyses are often used to identify thematic and stylistic trends (e.g., Lukács, 1962; Shaw, 1983). The genre has its roots in European Gothic novels before undergoing a fundamental change in the 19th century, when realism became the dominant style. The realist historical novel became intertwined with history, an increasingly codified scientific discipline, and adopted a similar regime of truth in which authenticity was linked to archival fidelity (de Groot, 2010).
Postmodern criticism has reshaped this notion by viewing authenticity as a "construction", a sense of accuracy produced through narrative techniques, even when the content is purely fictional (Harris, 2017; Addey, 2021). The use of footnotes, maps, glossaries and primary sources in historical novels is an example of "reality effects" that lend fiction a sense of historical veracity and authority (de Groot, 2015; Saxton, 2020).

In postmodern historiographical metafiction, authenticity is associated with self-reflexivity, the questioning of hegemonic narratives and the facilitation of a pluralistic representation of the past. Although Linda Hutcheon (1988) distinguishes between the historical novel and historiographical metafiction, they overlap as forms of fictional engagement with history (de Groot, 2010). Postcolonial and decolonial scholarship has expanded this critique showing how narrative strategies from realism have been used to reinforce stereotypes and perpetuate colonial power structures (Ashcroft, 1989; Said, 1993; Walters, 2013; Vizenor, 1999). However, little attention has been paid to how narrative strategies can be used affirmatively to express Indigenous experiences and critiques of colonialism in historical novels.

Since the *linguistic turn*, the field of historical theory has devoted growing attention to the narrative nature of its own work. As a result, literary concepts such as "emplotment", perspective and reality effects have become central to the analysis of historical writing (White, 1987). This environment has enabled a reassessment of historical fiction: once deemed secondary, it is now recognized as a form of knowledge production and an essential component of historical culture that shapes how the past is understood and mobilized in the present (Rüsen, 2017; Tozzi, 2022). Historiography and the historical novel share a performative dimension: they orient values, shape perceptions

and guide interpretations, while also fulfilling ideological and ethical requirements (Ricoeur, 1988). Both involve constructing otherness by hierarchically positioning actors as central or marginal and thereby defining identity differences (White, 1978; Rüsen, 2005). Nonetheless, historical fiction is considered more effective than history in exploring marginalized experiences and thus in providing a more comprehensive understanding of human diversity (Rüsen, 2017; Ricoeur, 1988). How Eurocentric sources, "emplotted" by colonial actors, shape historical writing and how Indigenous experiences could be integrated offers, a promising avenue for study. The historical novel is seen as a complementary tool rather than a means of questioning epistemology, an approach that literary studies, in contrast, increasingly advocate.

Studies that combine the historical novel as a literary genre with Indigenous perspectives and self-reflexive narrative strategies are rare in Brazil. Research shows that a realist aesthetic and concepts of authenticity grounded in archival fidelity have long prevailed in the Brazilian historical novel (Sinder, 2000; Baumgarten, 2000; Esteves, 2017). Self-reflexive approaches, such as magic realism and historiographic metafiction, only emerged in the 1980s (Baumgarten, 2000; Esteves, 2017; Santos, 2011). Overall, attention to Indigenous experiences remains a persistent gap in this body of scholarship.

Research on literature about Indigenous peoples in Brazil, encompassing all literary genres, focuses mainly on representations, thematic and contextual aspects (Santos, 2009; Pereira, 2020; Coutinho, 2023). Categories such as Indianism, indigenism, and Indigenous literature are organized linearly to suggest an evolution toward more accurate representations of "the Indigenous". Indianism, a movement supported by 19th-century elites, aimed to create a national identity and reinforce stereotypes about Indigenous peoples (Graça, 1998; Carvalho, 1997). In contrast, indigenism adopts an ethnographic approach to addressing cultural genocide (Coelho, 2012; França, 2014). Although authenticity here is based on direct experience with Indigenous communities, critics have pointed to a tendency toward misrepresentation, particularly because the authors themselves are not Indigenous (Graça, 1998; Graúna, 2013). Drawing on millennia-old oral traditions and authored by Indigenous peoples themselves, Indigenous literature emerged in Brazil in the 1990s, introducing an innovative element into this context. Indigenous authorship, understood as an act of sovereignty and self-representation, is itself a marker of authenticity (Graúna, 2013; Thiél, 2013; Dorrico *et al.*, 2018). Memory, orality, protagonism, ancestral knowledge, decoloniality, resistance, justice, and otherness are central themes in this literary movement (Potiguara, 2018; Munduruku, 2018; Jekupé, 2020; Krenak, 2019).

While this innovative field has focused primarily on defining and legitimizing Indigenous literature in Brazil, little attention has been paid to the potential of historical fiction and to self-reflexive strategies of authenticity. Furthermore, contemporary works by non-Indigenous authors remain

outside its scope, even when they address Indigenous themes. Research on historiographic metafiction centered on an Indigenous protagonist is therefore an innovative approach to bridging gaps between literary studies, decolonial theory, historiography, and Indigenous literature in Brazil.

Methods

O Som do Rugido da Onça (Companhia das Letras, 2021) is a novel by Micheliny Verunschk, a non-Indigenous author who addresses physical, cultural, and epistemological violence against Indigenous peoples in Brazil. The aim of this study is not to classify her work; however, it is accurate to describe it as a *decolonial historiographic metafiction*. The novel is fragmentary, self-reflexive, and polyphonic; it interrogates archival sources, questions hegemonic historical narratives, and foregrounds marginalized subjectivities – typical features of historiographic metafiction (Hutcheon, 1988). However, the protagonist here is an Indigenous person situated outside the ontological boundaries of Western culture. This implies a double decentering of Otherness, both narratively and epistemologically. The novel questions Eurocentric frameworks of knowledge and subjectivity and proposes alternative regimes of truth. Its metafictional structures therefore constitute a decolonial project.

The story begins in 1821, when two renowned German scientists, Carl Friedrich von Martius and Johann Baptist von Spix, are on an ethnographic expedition to Brazil. They bring a collection of "artifacts" back to Munich to display in scientific exhibitions, including eight Indigenous children from different ethnic groups. The plot revolves around one of these children, Iñe-e, a 12-year-old girl from the Miranha ethnic group, whom the scientists exhibit in the Munich palace as an example of a "primitive" human being. A few months after her arrival, Iñe-e dies.

To analyze the book, three key analytical questions are posed: 1) How does the novel integrate historical methods, historical sources and fiction to approach authenticity? 2) What narrative strategies are used to portray Indigenous characters and make their perspectives visible? 3) Does the novel have a historical and/or decolonial performative dimension that intervenes in and reorients contemporary action? To address these questions, the study draws on literary analysis, historical theory and decolonial theory. The decolonial framework is based on the concepts of the coloniality of subjectivity and knowledge (Quijano, 2000), which are discussed in more detail in the following analytical sections. The literary analysis (Herman, 2001) is grounded in narrative aspects (plot, characters, narrator) and intertextuality (paratexts, historical sources). The parameters used in historical theory are historical methods, performativity, and narrative (White, 2014; Rüsen, 2017; Tozzi, 2022; Ginzburg, 1989; Ricoeur, 1988).

History and Fiction: approaching the authentic past

The concept of the coloniality of knowledge, developed by Aníbal Quijano (2000), describes the role of the sciences in establishing Western Europe as the center of global intellectual conceptualization within the context of modernity and colonialism. Ethnography and historiography, presented as neutral disciplines, actively contributed to the construction of racial hierarchies that legitimized colonial domination, slavery, genocide and the marginalization of Indigenous and African knowledge. Universal history, in which Europe was seen as the sole source of knowledge and progress, portrayed Indigenous peoples as primitive, barbaric, savage, obsolete and violent.

Research in historical theory reminds us that knowledge and archives are constructed; they function as mechanisms of power rather than neutral entities (e.g., Derrida, 1996; Farge, 2013). Decolonial scholars argue that historical narratives and ethnographic records from the 19th century are largely colonial constructs designed to justify European hegemony. Therefore, it is crucial to produce narratives grounded in alternative positions of knowledge and voice (Quijano, 2000; Mignolo, 2010). *O Som do Rugido da Onça* clearly enacts a decolonial performativity in relation to archives and history. Its aim is to undermine the authority of *Reise in Brasilien* (1817–1820), the ethnographic work by the German authors Spix and Martius, long regarded as a canonical text in historiography.

This section analyzes two narrative strategies that Verunschk employs to present *Reise in Brasilien* as an instrument of Eurocentric power while simultaneously affirming the legitimacy of multiple epistemologies. The first strategy, which I refer to as *contradictory records*, engages with historical methodology to contest hegemonic voices in the archives. The second strategy, which I call the *non-human narrator*, draws on literary theory to rethink perspective and allow Indigenous narratives to emerge. Here, historical and literary methods are explored to legitimize alternative voices, epistemologies, and historicities through the historical novel.

Contradictory records, unreliable narratives: the novelist as a historian

Verunschk's novel is characterized by precise factual records: the exact date of a letter; a quantified list of plants, animals, rocks, and artifacts that Spix and Martius took from Brazil to enrich Munich's natural history museums. This obsessive concern with factual precision is a powerful literary strategy that both historiography and the realist historical novel employ to create "reality effects". Narratives saturated with verifiable information appear authoritative and objective. In historical fiction, these reality effects legitimize the story and suspend the reader's disbelief (Barthes, 1986). In historiography, they operate as proof of scientific validity (White, 1978).

Quotations from a range of primary sources – travel chronicles, newspapers, autopsy reports, private letters, and diaries – function as authenticity strategies. They lend Verunschk an authority that positions her not only as a novelist but also as a rigorous historian who has conducted archival research. In this novel, however, precision is merely a game, a tactic aimed at satirizing the regime of truth assumed by readers. Aware that they have internalized the link between factual accuracy and truth, Verunschk subverts this expectation by focusing on records that contradict one another. This method, which I call *contradictory records*, destabilizes assumptions and encourages reflection on how historical knowledge is constructed.

Comparison is a common methodological practice in historical scholarship (Farge, 2013). The credibility of information is ensured by critically comparing multiple primary sources. Comparison serves to verify or refute information; when contradictions emerge, further investigation is required to uncover their cause. Historians also juxtapose sources to uncover the biases and intentions behind each document. Finally, comparison helps fill gaps through indirect evidence and inference (Ginzburg, 1989). Verunschk explicitly adheres to these procedures to expose inconsistencies in the work of Spix and Martius, especially in their depiction of Indigenous peoples. Her novel interprets the personal and political motives behind these contradictions, including efforts to enhance the prestige of Western intellectuals, reinforce notions of European superiority, and strengthen Europe's global intellectual leadership. This approach highlights the effects of power asymmetries on modern historiography and stresses the usefulness of archives for narrating the history of Otherness.

A key example is the comparison of records describing how Carl von Martius acquired eight Indigenous children to take to Munich in 1820. To this end, Verunschk relies on two important primary sources: Martius' travel diaries, which constitute the original field journals of *Reise in Brasilien*, and the letters of the Bavarian queen, Karoline Friederike Wilhelmine von Baden. In his diary (and in the book), Martius explains that he visited the Miranha Indigenous community to buy artifacts for European museums; however, the Miranha leader (Tuxaua) insisted on giving him children. In his writings, Martius presents himself as someone who wants to save the children from the Indigenous environment, which he describes as "depraved", "cannibalistic", "lascivious", with a "bestial appetite", "demonic", "drunk", "degenerate", "brutal", "savage" and "repulsive".

Verunschk's novel suggests that this terrifying description of the Miranha ethnic group was added to the notes a decade later, when Martius revised them for the third volume of Reise in Brasilien. Nevertheless, he records it and presents his intervention as an act of benevolence and compassion: "I took these unfortunate beings from the cruel ones with even greater devotion because I knew that if they stayed here without anyone caring for them, they would inevitably die of fever" (Verunschk, 2021: 32). Martius does not question the practice of offering people as "objects". Instead, he presents himself as a protector who is morally superior to the Tuxaua. The condition of children living

in "barbarism" serves as the perfect justification for his "rescue". The ethical paradox is that his "rescue" disregards the children's wishes: Martius removes them from imminent danger only to place them in a different form of precarity under his control. In contrast, the Indigenous Tuxaua is portrayed as cruel and indifferent to the lives of his own people. This narrative, published in *Reise in Brasilien*, was "official", widely accepted and endorsed by institutions, including in historical texts.

However, the diaries of Martius and the letters of the Queen of Bavaria are contradictory records the novel analyzes to provide different versions of these events. In one letter, Queen Karoline von Baden reveals that Martius bought the Indigenous children "for two axes" (Verunschk, 2021: 76 XIX)[1]. Accepting the children as a gift makes the German ethnographer appear as a paternal benefactor, whereas purchasing them, in contrast, makes him a direct actor in the system of slavery and human trafficking. Verunschk exposes the colonial and capitalist foundations of modern scientific ethics by showing how Indigenous children have been reduced to objects of trade.

Martius' account of how the Indigenous boy and girl who arrived alive in Munich came into his possession is also marked by contradictions, omissions, and ambiguities. He reports that he took the boy with him because "he was the son of the leader of an Indigenous horde who had fallen in battle", but he later crossed out this sentence in the diary (Verunschk, 2021: 33)[2]. In a contradictory record highlighted by Verunschk, it becomes clear that when Martius acquired the boy, he knew he was separating the child from his family, as this quote shows: "I pointed to the handsome Juri boy and the foreman pulled him out of the line. The boy's father did not accompany him, but followed me with a look: was it a question or was it anger? I have never forgotten that look" (Verunschk, 2021: 36)[3]. Martius also depicts the Indigenous girl Iñe-e alternately as a gift, as a slave of the Miranha people, and as a slave of a local governor (Verunschk, 2021: 34-36).

The systematic use of contradictory records emphasizes that omissions, distortions and deceptions may have been common among Western ethnographers. Having established the discrepancy, Verunschk examines Martius' motives. She concludes that his image as the "savior" of Indigenous children is a self-serving misrepresentation designed to disguise colonial practices while reinforcing Europe's image as the guardian of science, morality, and universal salvation. The agenda behind *Reise in Brasilien* raises complex epistemological questions about the coloniality of historical knowledge (Quijano, 2000). Why has this narrative been accepted as true for so long? Verunschk's novel suggests, first, that it conformed to prevailing racist, Eurocentric prejudices, and second, that historiographical methods based on written sources favor the Western view.

1 "Ele foi capturado com muitos outros e comprado por esses senhores, por dois machados".

2 "Era filho do líder de uma horda indígena que morrera em combate."

3 "Eu ap xontei para o belo rapaz juri, o capataz o retirou da fila e o pai do menino não o acompanhou; em vez disso, seguiu-me com um olhar fixo: era uma pergunta ou era raiva? Eu não me esqueci desse olhar".

In major archives, the surviving documents were mostly written by Eurocentric elites, while Indigenous voices were rarely recorded or honored (Smith, 1999). This absence does not mean there were no Indigenous versions, but that they could not be formally included in the historiographical debate. In Verunschk's novel, Martius is aware of this privileged position. He consciously uses his monopoly on writing to ensure that history is recorded in his favor, as the following excerpt illustrates:

> Paper will bear whatever is written on it. Martius knows this. [...] He is convinced that the written word endures and that, because it does, it is superior to the spoken word, which evaporates, which is lost as soon as it is spoken. It is therefore necessary to exercise caution in what one writes. Every word must be measured, its precise form found, mistakes corrected, passages rewritten. [...] Martius crosses words out. He has to cover his tracks. (Verunschk, 2021: 32)[4].

Verunschk points out visible erasures and revisions in the drafts of *Reise in Brasilien*. The search for small traces, clues, and seemingly insignificant details in documents, such as marginal notes, erasures, or alterations, is a key element of the evidential method in which Ginzburg (1989) compares the historian to a detective of the past. Here, however, it is Verunschk, the novelist, who plays the role of detective. In her novel, Martius' erasures are interpreted as evidence that the information was later altered in order to deceive. His writing is represented by the metaphor of "polishing a stone", a deliberate act of reshaping the truth, taking into account the power dynamics involved, and editing until an official version of the facts is achieved. This critique does not end with *Reise in Brasilien*, but extends to the author, the scientific culture he reflects, and the archives themselves, which are largely Eurocentric and almost useless for telling the history of Otherness.

It is important to note that in Verunschk's novel the *contradictory records* do not lead to a relativistic dead end under the pretext that "we can never know the truth" because the sources are distorted. Instead, they show that the archive alone cannot convey a plural history, so new approaches are needed for a more pluralistic understanding. In doing so, the novel encourages readers and historians to reconsider the primacy of written sources. At the same time, it opens the way for literature, as an epistemic approach to the past, to create this narrative of Otherness. Verunschk makes this awareness explicit in the novel and explains how she approaches it: "I lend Iñe-e this voice and language [...] because this is the only means available now. The most effective. [...] Moreover, this voice and this language are used because it is through them that one can hurt most

4 "O papel suporta qualquer coisa que se deseje. Martius sabe. A palavra escrita permanece, eis no que acredita, e por sua permanência está convicto de que ela se confirma como superior à voz, que se dissipa, que se perde tão logo é proferida. É preciso ter, portanto, cautela com o que se escreve. Medir cada palavra, encontrar as vestes que lhe cabem com exatidão, corrigir, reescrever, remendar as falhas. Então, Martius escreve primeiro para suplantar a limitação da memória, a evaporação da voz, depois pela obrigação com o rei e principalmente para se convencer e convencer aos outros".

deeply" (Verunschk, 2021: 15)[5]. *O Som do Rugido da Onça* thus transcends its fictional framework and becomes a meta-critical reflection on ethics, politics, and the possibilities of writing history today. In this way, the novel articulates a performative dimension that resonates with the fields of decolonial studies and historical theory.

A non-human narrator: fictional truths in the *margins* of a river

Having established the inadequacy of historiography for representing alterity, Micheliny Verunschk proposes a decolonial practice of decentering through historical fiction. This section analyzes a narrative strategy that I call the *non-human narrator*, through which she draws attention to a figure that often remains hidden in historiography: the historian as narrator. The idea that every historical work is mediated by a "narrator" is widely accepted in contemporary historiography (e.g., White, 2014). However, the consequences of this insight are rarely fully internalized. The presence of historians usually remains invisible, but in their texts they primarily function as third-person narrators. They select, organize, and establish relationships of continuity and rupture, thereby assuming the role of interpreters and constructors of meaning who orients action in the present (Rüsen, 2005). Limited by the archives, historians can access only a few viewpoints of the past. Their practice involves choosing a perspective and voice and positioning subjects as central or marginal, heroic or villainous (White, 1978).

In Verunschk's novel, by contrast, history is told by an omniscient, *non-human narrator*: a river called Isar. What makes this narrator so compelling is that it stands as the very antithesis of the historian: *ancient, omniscient, omnipresent* and *immortal*. Isar knows everything that has happened and is happening, and is therefore far superior to historians in terms of knowledge. This reversal entails profound changes in perspective, identity, conceptualization, historicity, and meaning, reshaping how history is constructed.

The Isar River is described as a very *old* creature, "born from the stoicism of a block of ice", which has "learned to roar with the beasts of the Ice Age" (Verunschk, 2021: 106) 6. The river is always in motion. It is *omnipresent* and connects ice, sea, sky, earth, flora, and fauna in an eternal cycle of change. This narrator is like a god: it can move freely through time and space and observe the thoughts, feelings and intentions of all beings on Earth. Having witnessed every event of the past, Isar possesses knowledge of events not accessible to historians, including the experiences of Indigenous peoples. This privileged position opens the possibility of telling a truly *pluralistic* history. In the novel, this plurality emerges through fictional representations that incorporate the emotions of

5 "Empresta-se para Iñe-e essa voz e essa língua [...] porque agora esse é o único meio disponível. O mais eficiente. [...] Ademais, usa-se essa voz e essa língua porque é com ela que se faz possível ferir melhor."

6 "Nasceu da estoicidade de um bloco de gelo, aprendeu a rugir com as feras da era glacial".

characters absent from the archives, such as Jörg, a farmer living off a monastery's leftovers; Hans, a homosexual man from the Middle Ages; enslaved Indigenous peoples on rubber plantations; and Indigenous children brought to Munich, among others. Animals and the river are also portrayed as beings with their own history, their own needs, and their own voice.

The river does not depend on records; it is the archive itself. Therefore, its narrative is not an interpretation but a revelation of what happened. The *antiquity, omnipresence,* and *immortality* of the *non-human narrator* lend it a unique historicity. Isar is a being that precedes social structures and has already witnessed their collapse; therefore, it is indifferent to human ideologies. Capitalism, liberalism, and modernity appear as tedious instruments of power that some humans create to justify their domination. Isar's *immortality* ensures an unbiased perspective, detached from any belief system, as the following extract illustrates:

> The world is a *pasture* full of wonders for those who have eyes to see and a soul to believe. I believe in nothing; I am a river. I go and come back, I know the ground and the sky, I share the common language of all waters. I cross time. I die and am reborn (Verunschk, 2021: 60)[7].

Unafraid of death and thus free from many of the anxieties that haunt people (and historians), Isar is unconcerned with the implications of its ideas, its legacy, or its social position. Its narrative can be *impartial*, free of hope, fear, or judgment. While Martius corrects, rewrites, and amends the errors of his text to convince the reader, Isar is free to tell the truth.

The concept of time, fundamental to historical thinking, is irrelevant to this narrator. Isar takes a holistic view of the formation of mountains, rivers, and of the evolution of species. These traits influence the narrator's choice of themes considered relevant and alter the hierarchy of subjects, whether central or peripheral, protagonists, minor characters, or villains. The concept of history, traditionally focused on human life, is expanded to include non-anthropocentric dimensions of existence. This narrator does not see humans as the center of history, but merely as one animal among many, whose life is a brief and distinctly melancholy chapter in the life of the planet. "Humans are sad animals," concludes the river (Verunschk, 2021: 60)[8]. The Westerners in particular seem pitiable to the narrator, but Isar shows interest in and sympathy for some Indigenous characters. The river recognizes in them a way of life closely aligned with the logic of the planet. The lives of Indigenous peoples, guided by an ethic of adaptation to and coexistence with their environment, illustrate the "true history" better than the lives of "modern" people, whose wars, economic endeavors, and pointless constructions work

7 "O mundo é um pasto de maravilhas para quem tiver olhos de ver e alma para crer. Eu em nada creio, sou um rio. Eu vou e volto, conheço o chão e o céu, compartilho a língua comum a todas as águas. Atravesso o tempo. Morro e renasço. Engulo e regurgito. Sei dos animais tristes que são os homens."

8 "Sei dos animais tristes que são os homens."

against nature and happiness. These themes align with the philosophy of Indigenous authors such as Ailton Krenak (2019) and Davi Kopenawa (2015), who are explicitly mentioned in the book.

Antiquity, omnipresence, omniscience, and *immortality* grant the *non-human narrator* capacities that historians lack for writing an *impartial* and *pluralistic* history. This narrative strategy positions fiction as more effective than historiography in providing an "authentic" narrative of the past. Within the novel, Isar, a fictional narrator, emerges as a more reliable source for writing the history of the Indigenous girl Iñe-e than the ethnographic records of Spix and Martius. Ultimately, fiction is legitimized as a "counter-archive" for writing histories of Otherness.

The use of a *non-human narrator* is also a deliberate strategy to undermine hegemonic narratives. On the one hand, it helps Verunschk portray concepts such as civilization, rationalism, progress, and anthropocentrism as delusions of grandeur. On the other hand, the novel questions Eurocentric binaries such as nature/culture, irrational/rational and primitive/civilized (Quijano, 2000). It also encourages reflection on the meaning of life and opens space to imagine other possible futures. By removing Western man from the position of conceptual protagonist, the novel makes room for other logics, ethical frameworks, axiologies, cosmologies, and epistemologies. In doing so, her novel takes on a decolonial performativity.

A Narrative of Otherness

The analysis of authenticity in historical fiction generally oscillates between adherence to the archive or its subversion; in both cases, the records remain the central point of reference. Questioning primary sources, unmasking their agendas, and exposing their omissions are central decolonial practices (Mignolo, 2010). Yet the spaces opened by this critique must also allow for new voices that challenge silences without reproducing stereotypes. This is the major challenge of Verunschk's novel.

The representation of Indigenous peoples is a point of tension in Indianist and indigenist literature in Brazil, that is, in works written by non-Indigenous authors, as in the case of Micheliny Verunschk. Even when well intentioned, these traditions have often reduced Indigenous characters to archetypes, either idealizing or stereotyping them and neglecting their diverse languages, histories, cultures, and cosmogonies (Dorrico, 2018; Munduruku, 2018). As a result, Indigenous scholars are sometimes skeptical about the ability of outsiders to create accurate representations. Indigenous authorship, on the other hand, affirms intellectual sovereignty and ethical commitment to memory, oral traditions, Indigenous cultural repertoires, and the visibility of historical injustice, violence, cultural erasure, and racism (Potiguara, 2018; Krenak, 2019; Kopenawa, 2015). Indigenous literature, when grounded in lived experience, enables the authentic portrayal of cultures, beliefs, and realities from an insider perspective (Munduruku, 2018; Graúna, 2013; Jekupé, 2020).

For an *outsider* writer like Verunschk, developing an Indigenous character is, by definition, an arduous exercise in otherness. The historical novel as a genre presents an additional challenge: the author must portray a character from a culture other than their own and place that character in a specific historical context. Verunschk seems fully aware of these tensions. Her choice of a metafictional structure appears not merely as a stylistic innovation but as an ethical statement that the indigenist tradition must become more self-reflective regarding its positionality. In her novel, she engages with the thematic concerns and ethical questions raised by the Indigenous literary movement, suggesting that dialogue with this tradition is indispensable.

Verunschk's novel is clearly concerned with *oral tradition*, including the narratives, myths, and rituals of the Miranha people, to whom Iñe-e, the novel's protagonist, belongs. This concern is also reflected in Iñe-e's linguistic style. Her language tends toward the tangible and experiential, focusing on metaphors related to nature and the body – a recurring narrative strategy in the indigenist tradition (Graça 1998). Sadness materializes, for example, in the metaphor of a constricted heart, a "tiny featherless bird's heart, reduced to prey fallen from its nest", which underlines the deep connection between Iñe-e and her environment (Verunschk, 2021: 13)[9]. After the character's death, her "spirit" is embodied in a jaguar. From that point on, the narrative adopts a literary dialect, using slang, repetitions, rhymes, and colloquial accents to explore complex philosophical ideas. This "spoken language" is similar to the *oralidade rosiana* – an allusion to the Brazilian regionalist literary tradition popularized by João Guimarães Rosa. These examples reveal the persistent inability of indigenist literature to develop strategies capable of harmonizing a character's voice with their own ethnic tradition.

The ethnic subjectivity of the Iñe-e is characterized by cultural repertoires that include the cosmologies, epistemologies, and historical narratives of the Miranha group, which confront the Eurocentric framework. References to everyday elements such as *jenipapo*, blowpipes, hyacinth macaws, *jurema,* and *beijus* are complemented by an appreciation of technologies, medical practices, and the use of local medicinal herbs that affirm cultural knowledge and autonomy. The novel also depicts how the arrival of Europeans alters gender relations and leads to a loss of power for women in Miranha society, which aligns with decolonial theory (Lugones, 2016).

Using magical realism, Verunschk explores the ontological code of Miranha culture, highlighting belief systems and philosophies that emphasize the character's close connection with nature and the cosmogony of her world. Iñe-e perceives the Isar River as a living being endowed with history, wisdom, and language. She recognizes animal intentions by observing their body language and sounds. These aspects legitimize other ways of knowing and illuminate a central feature of Indigenous cultures: a non-instrumental relationship with nature, understood as a living entity rather than as an object or commodity. The perspective of Isar, a wise, non-human narrator, aligns with Iñe-e's percep-

9 "[...] o coração se tornara muito pequeno dentro do peito, minúsculo coração de pássaro sem penas, reduzido a presa caída do ninho".

tions, effectively validating the Indigenous worldview. Her journey echoes Ailton Krenak's (2015) call for a "re-enchantment" of the world, suggesting that we are fundamentally all part of nature.

By exploring the narratives, myths, and rituals of the Miranha people (for example, the myth of Niimúe), Verunschk reconstructs Iñe-e's *cultural repertoire* and adds depth to both the character and her imaginative universe. After Iñe-e's death, her "spirit" is embodied by a jaguar. She is transformed into a "world spirit" that inhabits a space between the human and environmental realms. From this point on, the novel also explores the narratives and myths of other Indigenous groups. This approach may aim to forge a pan-Indigenous "grand narrative," suggesting that all ethnic groups, despite their singularities, share an epistemology linked to nature and together create a coherent vision of the world. Although this perspective is valuable in suggesting a collective Indigenous resistance, it risks turning Iñe-e into a collection of fragmented elements, and diluting rather than strengthening her ethnic identity.

Speculative methods: Evidence, experience and gender.

The *visibility of historical injustice, violence, cultural erasure and racism* against Indigenous peoples is a central theme in Indigenous literature today (e.g., Potiguara, 2018). Verunschk addresses these issues through a series of innovative, and powerful narrative strategies. To humanize the character of Iñe-e and give her a memory and a history that extend beyond the historical record, the novel explores four aspects: *factual evidence, contextual evidence, personal experiences informed by gender*, and *fiction*. Taken together, these strategies form a method I call *affirmative speculation*. This process integrates historical research, critical theory, personal experience, and fiction to create space for what might have happened to Iñe-e and, most importantly, to explore her emotional landscape, which is essential for developing a complex character with real agency.

Speculation is a point of tension in historiography, but many authors argue for its careful, controlled use when approaching narratives about marginalized groups. Critical fabulation (Hartman, 2007) and the evidential method (Ginzburg, 1989) treat speculation as a methodology grounded in evidence and informed by historical context. In this framework, speculation is not an act of random, unfounded or free guessing; rather, it is a meticulous exercise in deduction based on *factual evidence* (traces and clues in the sources) and *contextual evidence* (historical research and contemporary social codes). Saidiya Hartman (2007), for example, looks for subtle traces in the sources and uses a contextually informed imagination to create credible narratives about the inner experiences of enslaved people in the United States, particularly Black women.

In Verunschk's novel, *affirmative speculations* about Iñe-e rely on three types of evidence. First, they draw on *factual evidence* in the writings of Spix, Martius and the Queen of Bavaria, which inform Verunschk that Iñe-e undertook a long sea voyage from Brazil to Munich; that the Atlan-

tic crossing was accompanied by severe storms; and that six Indigenous children and hundreds of animals died, their bodies thrown overboard. Second, they draw on *contextual evidence*, that is, extensive historical research that informs us about the context of these ships, which were often sites of degradation, deprivation, violence, and systematic abuse against the bodies of women and men. At this point, we have a clear picture of the violent environment in which Iñe-e was placed, but we do not have access to how she felt about this experience.

The third layer of the affirmative speculative method is the author's *personal experience informed by gender*. The author's life experiences, including memories and emotions, can serve as a powerful lens for this creative process. In this case, Verunschk's gendered experience, shaped by the patriarchal norms of Western culture, allows her to perceive subtle traces of Iñe-e that might otherwise go unnoticed. Verunschk's experience as a woman grounds her imagining of what it might feel like to occupy public or private spaces dominated by multiple men, including the sense of physical insecurity and the fear of objectification or assault. This lived experience enriches the speculative dimension. It enables a representation of Iñe-e's vulnerability aboard the ship that is concrete, embodied, and profound rather than merely abstract. Although projecting personal experience onto the past is dangerous for the historian, it offers the novelist a powerful tool for interpretive depth, empathy, and realistic portrayal.

The intersection of *factual evidence, contextual evidence,* and *personal experience* provides an effective narrative method for speculating about Iñe-e's emotions. The fourth step is the use of *fiction* to actively shape the narrative. In a scenario where a twelve-year-old girl is alone and separated from her family in a hostile, predominantly male environment in which others have already died, it is almost inevitable to conclude that she has experienced fear, insecurity, sadness, and grief. It is also plausible to assume that she has been harassed. While the historian can only conjecture, infer, or speculate, the novelist can assert this because she has the tool of *fiction* at her disposal. Verunschk does not speculate about whether Iñe-e was abused aboard the ship: in the novel, Iñe-e wakes up "with the captain's hands between her legs." (Verunschk, 2021: 68)[10]. Iñe-e's feelings are not just hinted at but explicitly stated: "In her rage, she would even have killed her own father" (Verunschk, 2021: 51)[11]. Here, *fiction* turns a hypothesis into an event, a narrative fact, an indisputable part of the past. This process removes ambiguity, creates a different plot, and drives character development. It also intensifies the imagery and makes the memory of suffering much stronger. Projection can lead to distortion; however, in this case, authenticity is not tied to factual accuracy but to the articulation of a previously silenced narrative that encourages reflection in the present. Authenticity is thus grounded in possibility and legitimized by the justice of the cause, namely the agenda for decolonial and Indigenous rights.

10 "Relembra o dia no navio em que acordara com as mãos do capitão entre suas pernas."

11 "E, na raiva que sentia, teria matado até mesmo o próprio pai."

A key experience explored in Verunschk's novel is the subalternization of the Other. Iñe-e perceives Eurocentric structures and turns a critical gaze back on them. In this dynamic of the gaze – her view of Europeans and their view of her –, a decolonial theme comes into focus: the dehumanization of Indigenous peoples in the context of modernity (Lugones, 2016; Quijano, 2000). The public exhibition of Iñe-e during "scientific" presentations, later known as "human zoos", is a striking example of dehumanization, objectification and instrumentalization. Verunschk draws on *factual evidences* that Iñe-e was exhibited to scientists, aristocrats and the bourgeois public in the Munich palace and quotes a letter in which Spix refers to the girl as a "living exhibit" (Verunschk, 2021: 104)[12]. In the novel, newspaper reports (*contextual evidence*) describe how the South African woman Sarah Bartmann was "trained like a bear to obediently enter and leave her cage" (Verunschk, 2021: 83)[13]. This historical research illustrates the racist milieu in which Iñe-e lived, where Indigenous peoples were reduced to mere specimens of primitiveness, passive objects without feelings or subjectivity, serving as trophies of Western racial superiority.

Gender-specific experience also seems to influence the author in this example. Verunschk depicts the exhibition at the Munich palace as an event that claims to be educational in order to legitimize the curious, meticulous, insatiable gaze of European men upon Iñe-e's female body. As a "scientific" object, it is plausible to imagine that she could be examined and touched, deprived of the intimacy normally afforded to white women. Finally, fiction allows Verunschk to transmute speculation into plot, turning conjecture into lived reality, as the following excerpt illustrates:

Unlike the boy [Juri], who is naturally curious and lively, Iñe-e avoids looking directly at the White spectators. She glances at them out of the corner of her eye, just enough to discern who they are. [...] To her horror, a man approaches. She feels his hands slide first into her hair, then down to her chin, and pry open her mouth as his eyes scrutinize her teeth like a malicious light. She remembers the day on the ship when she woke up and felt the captain's hands between her legs. [...]. She already knows and detests this choreography of gestures, because it hurts her in many ways. When the man finishes his examination and turns to the boy, Iñe-e can still feel the residue of his fingers on every place he has touched (Verunschk, 2021: 67-68).[14]

Through a gender-sensitive lens, Verunschk approaches the girl's feelings beyond the obvious. In the novel, the violation affects not only Iñe-e's body but also undermines her sense of

12 "[...] peça de apresentação viva."

13 "[...] fora adestrada como um urso, [...] que entrava e saía de sua jaula obedientemente."

14 "Ao contrário do menino [Juri], naturalmente curioso e vivaz, Iñe-e evita olhar os brancos diretamente. Espreita-os de soslaio, o suficiente para intuir quem são. [...] Para seu horror, um homem se aproxima dela e, então, ela sente as mãos dele primeiro em seu cabelo, depois escorrendo para o queixo, abrindo sua boca, enquanto os olhos como uma luz maligna examinam-lhe os dentes. Relembra o dia no navio em que acordara com as mãos do capitão entre suas pernas. [...]. Essa coreografia de gestos ela já conhece e detesta, porque a machuca de muitas maneiras. Quando o homem termina de examiná-la e passa a investigar o menino, Iñe-e sente ainda o visgo dos seus dedos moles em cada lugar dela que ele tocou".

security and dignity. It generates constant fear that the situation may recur, a persistent feeling of humiliation, anger, disgust, and shame, as well as a sense of *emotional misalignment* with the dominant culture (De Vuyst, 2022). The novel also articulates possible strategies of resistance for the Indigenous woman, such as avoiding direct eye contact, which manifests in a change of posture: she appears anxious and shy, and her body expresses the tension of self-protection. The next stage of this process may have been to conceal her Indigenous identity to shield herself from humiliation if she survived – a theme developed further in the next section.

Affirmative speculative methods, combined with *contradictory records* and a *non-human narrator*, suggest that indigenist literature strives for a renewal consistent with an ethical mission: to affirm Indigenous knowledge, expose injustice, and strengthen the memory of resistance. Verunschk approaches historical epistemology with creativity, decentering dominant narratives while challenging two foundational myths of Eurocentrism: first, the notion that the history of human civilization is an evolution that begins in a state of nature and culminates in Europe; and second, the view that the differences between Europe and non-Europe are natural (racial) rather than the consequences of a history of power (Quijano, 2000). These conclusions confirm that the historiographical metafiction proposed by Verunschk is a form of knowledge production about the past guided by a decolonial intention.

Contemporary Indigenous women: a decolonial journey

This section briefly examines how Verunschk's novel addresses the decolonization of subjectivity in the present. In decolonial theory, the concept of coloniality refers to a matrix of power established with modernity that continues to shape various aspects of contemporary life. The marginalization of Indigenous peoples, their knowledge and their subjectivities through the imposition of racial categories is understood as a construct that serves the interests of power. Coloniality is not merely a past event, but persists (Quijano, 2000).

How this matrix of power affects Indigenous peoples in Brazil today is a central theme of Verunschk's novel. The metafictional structure allows the author to move between the historical past and the present to reveal the continuity of colonial violence in Brazil. More than a postmodern technique, the metafictional structures here also function as a decolonial strategy to emphasize continuity. A scene in which Martius explores the Brazilian flora and fauna is juxtaposed with a contemporary scene of a brutal storm causing death, chaos, and flooding. Raoni, a real-life contemporary Indigenous leader, appears on television speaking out against the construction of a new hydroelectric power plant (Verunschk, 2021: 23-24). This sequence serves as a metaphor for coloniality and Indigenous resistance, suggesting that environmental destruction and ethnic conflict, axes of modern power, persist today and lead to catastrophic environmental consequences. The character Josefa, who lives in contemporary São Paulo, is the central link between past and present in Verunschk's novel.

Josefa's story illustrates the process of *decolonizing subjectivity*. Subjugated by Eurocentrism, she hides her Indigenous ancestry and adopts the habits of the hegemonic culture. At first glance, this mechanism may appear to be passive submission to dominant power. However, it is a form of agency, a complex, painful strategy for coping with the racism, discrimination, hypersexualization and symbolic violence she has had to endure. Josefa's ethnicity does not disappear; it is deliberately concealed to protect her from being perceived as inferior by society. This practice gives her access to spaces of affect and knowledge, including universities and art galleries, but always on the condition that she keeps this aspect of herself hidden. She inhabits a liminal space, caught between two worlds, evoking feelings of loneliness and confusion. The constant need to prove her worth creates an invisible barrier that prevents a sense of belonging, yet she remains largely unaware of the roots of these feelings.

History serves as an important catalyst for decolonization in Verunschk's novel. Josefa sees a portrait of Iñe-e in a museum and understands it as a representation of her own subalternity. This moment marks a decisive turning point, as she links her personal history to the broader collective context of violence against Indigenous peoples. This discovery changes Josefa, who reinterprets her feelings of loneliness and inferiority as consequences of the historical process of domination rather than as individual failures.

History, once a tool of erasure and humiliation, becomes an instrument of healing, a means of understanding systemic injustice and reframing her personal narrative. The process of decolonization entails reconstructing subjectivity by affirming otherness rather than imitating a Eurocentric model (Quijano, 2000). Josefa's illusion of assimilation gives way to a journey to rediscover her Indigenous origins. For the first time, she appears interested in her family's past and begins to search for the reasons behind the suppressed stories and memories. This decolonial process allows her to forge a new identity that embraces her ancestry with pride and knowledge. In this sense, Verunschk's novel shows that decolonization requires rewriting history from the perspective of those who have been silenced.

Discussion

This article examines the concept of authenticity in the historical novel *O Som do Rugido da Onça* (2021) by Micheliny Verunschk. In this study, her work is described as a decolonial historiographical metafiction because it is a self-reflexive narrative that questions Eurocentrism, exposes the power relations behind historical writing, and incorporates the marginalized experiences of Indigenous characters. In this novel, authenticity is therefore not tied to factual accuracy. Rather, the author employs several strategies to show the limits of the archive, two of which I would like to emphasize: *contradictory records* and the *non-human narrator*.

The strategy of *contradictory records* derives from historiographic methods (e.g., Ginzburg, 1989) and consists of comparing conflicting primary sources. Erasures, details and alterations in the accounts of Spix and Martius, for example, call into question their portrayal of Indigenous groups as primitive, cruel, and irrational, as well as their portrayal of the West as the center of rationality and morality. In this sense, the historical method serves a decolonial purpose. This approach encourages reflection on the reliability of Eurocentric archives, the constructed nature of historical knowledge, and the intentions behind the production of records, such as reinforcing European superiority and intellectual authority.

The second strategy is to create a *non-human narrator*, the Isar River. This narrator is *ancient, omnipresent, omniscient,* and *immortal*. It has witnessed all past events and functions as the largest archive in the world. Isar can recount the history of Indigenous peoples through a narrative that is not an interpretation, but a direct revelation of what happened. It can therefore present a *pluralistic* and *impartial* history. Through this *non-human narrator*, Verunschk indirectly highlights the limitations of historians, who are constrained by historicity, archives, ideology, and personal intentions. Her novel goes beyond its fictional framework and serves as a meta-critical reflection on ethics, politics, and the possibilities of historical writing today. It therefore has a performative dimension that aligns with the fields of decolonial studies and historical theory. Here, authenticity is associated with *impartiality,* a *plurality* of perspectives, *Indigenous ethics,* and a *non-anthropocentric view of the world*.

To construct the subjectivity of Iñe-e, the Indigenous protagonist of the novel, Verunschk explores orality, and the cultural repertoire of the Miranha ethnic group, making visible historical violence and resistance, in line with themes considered central to Indigenous literature (Potiguara, 2018; Krenak, 2019; Kopenawa, 2015; Munduruku, 2018). The oral tradition is reflected in the narratives, myths, and cosmogonies that accompany the novel, as well as in the literary dialect spoken by the protagonist. Iñe-e's language centers on metaphors drawn from nature and the body, a recurring theme in the indigenist tradition (Graça, 1998). Later, the novel adopts a literary dialect reminiscent of the Brazilian regionalist tradition (*oralidade rosiana*). Such examples suggest persistent limitations in indigenist literature in developing narrative strategies that harmonize the voice of an Indigenous character with their ethnic tradition. The *cultural repertoire* of the Miranha group, including cosmogonies, epistemologies and historical narratives, is also an integral part of Iñe-e's subjectivity. In Verunschk's novel, Indigenous knowledge and autonomy are affirmed through references to everyday objects, medical practices and a holistic view of the environment, in keeping with Indigenous ethics and decolonial theory (e.g., Quijano, 2000; Krenak, 2019). After Iñe-e's death, her jaguar embodiment draws on myths from various Indigenous groups. This choice evokes a positive notion of a pan-Indigenous epistemology rooted in nature but may also, unintentionally, dilute the character's specific ethnic identity.

Historical *violence against Indigenous peoples* is a central theme in Verunschk's novel, which she explores through an intersectional and powerful narrative strategy, referred to here as *affirma-*

tive speculation. This approach interweaves historical methods, literary criticism, decolonial gender studies, and creative writing into a productive interdisciplinary dialogue. It combines *factual evidence* (historical sources), *contextual evidence* (historical research), *personal experience informed by gender* (the writer's emotions), and *fiction* (creative writing) to produce credible narratives about Iñe-e's emotions under subalternization. The Indigenous character critically mirrors Eurocentric structures, and in this interplay of perspectives the novel addresses an important theme in decolonial theory: the dehumanization of Indigenous peoples in modernity (Quijano, 2000; Lugones, 2016).

Coloniality, that is, the continuity of the Eurocentric power matrix and its effects on Indigenous peoples in the present-day (Quijano, 2000), is central to Verunschk's novel. The decision to use a fragmented metafictional structure allows the narrative to move between the historical past and the present, serving as a decolonial strategy that emphasizes the continuity of coloniality today. A contemporary character, Josefa, embarks on a search for her Indigenous identity. Josefa's process of *decolonizing subjectivity* (Quijano, 2000) is triggered by her encounter with the portrait of Iñe-e in a museum, rather than by reading traditional historical texts. In this way, the novel underlines the value of art, and, by extension, of historical fiction, as a means of stimulating reflection and curiosity, in short, of triggering processes of understanding personal experiences of marginalization within a broader context of colonialism and violence. Historical narrative, once used as an instrument of colonial power, erasure, and subalternization, becomes a tool for healing that allows the Indigenous character to reconstruct her trajectory in accordance with resistance and ancestry. It suggests that decolonization also entails rewriting history from the perspective of those who continue to be silenced. The historical novel, therefore, offers an effective approach to producing historical knowledge.

Verunschk's historiographical metafiction is firmly guided by a decolonial aim. Its authenticity is tied to questioning Eurocentric narratives, including marginalized experiences, and creating space for alternative ways of thinking that align with the ethics proposed by the Indigenous literary movement. In this way, the historical novel can contribute to justice, visibility, and the broader decolonial agenda for Indigenous rights.

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