


The collaborative artistic creation “Bordar-Lands: las cartas son el tejido,” by Colectivo Ayllu

A criação artística colaborativa “Bordar-Lands: las cartas son el tejido”, do Colectivo Ayllu

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ABSTRACT: *In this article, we aim to discuss the aesthetic and political inflections performed in the collaborative creation titled “Bordar-Lands: las Cartas son el tejido,” by Colectivo Ayllu and exhibited at the 35th Bienal de São Paulo. In it, one can notice the presence of collaborative writing whose visuality is constructed throughout the performance and gestures of the most varied bodies inscribed in the fabric panel. Following the movement indicated by the gestures in the materiality of the piece, the analysis focuses on the associative relationships suggested from the spiral located in the center of the composition and the mention of “clandestine historiography” present in another fragment, and articulates references related to the field of semiotics, performance, decolonial studies, and religions of African origin. Hence, we seek to understand how certain cultural symbols related to Indigenous and Afro-diasporic peoples are resignified, which in turn constructs a position against colonialism.*

Keywords: *Colectivo Ayllu; collaborative creation; visual languages; decolonial creation; orality.*

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RESUMO: *Este artigo objetiva discutir as inflexões estéticas e políticas presentes na criação colaborativa intitulada “Bordar-Lands: las cartas son el tejido”, realizada pelo Colectivo Ayllu e exposta na 35ª Bienal de São Paulo. Nela, nota-se a presença de uma escrita colaborativa cuja visualidade constrói-se pela performance e pela gestualidade dos mais variados corpos que inscrevem o painel-tecido. Seguindo o movimento indicado pelos gestos na materialidade da peça, a análise tem como foco as relações associativas sugeridas com base na espiral alocada no centro da composição e na menção à “historiografia clandestina” presente em outro fragmento, e articula referenciais relacionados ao campo da semiótica, da performance, dos estudos decoloniais e das religiões de matriz africana. Com isso, busca-se apreender de que maneira ocorre a resignificação de determinados símbolos culturais relacionados aos povos originários e afrodiáspóricos que, por sua vez, constroem um posicionamento contrário ao colonialismo.*

Palavras-chave: *Colectivo Ayllu; criação colaborativa; linguagens visuais; criação decolonial; oralituras.*

Introduction

Based on the concept of decoloniality as praxis, several collectives emerged in the Abya Yala¹ and its diaspora, proposing a theoretical-political practice aimed at thinking and acting differently. Such is the case of Migrantes Transgresorxs [Transgresorxs Migrants] (2024), a collective of racialized, migrant, Black people, several refugees with different sexual and gender identities (neo-colonized, precarious, transfeminists and intercultural — LTIGB), constituted in 2009 in Madrid. As a result of the Migrantes Transgresorx, as of 2017, another formation was established: The Ayllu Collective. Inspired by the *Quechua* concept, the name Ayllu means non-biological community or family and indicates the focus on community thinking and being in community in the artistic work carried out by the Collective. According to Alex Aguirre, member of Ayllu: “We came from different contexts, from the territories of Abya Yala, from anti-racist movements and sexual dissent, researchers, artists, and because of this energy we got together, also having the Migrantes Transgresorxs as a reference and link to the Ayllu Collective” (*apud* CARRERA; COLECTIVO AYLLU, 2020 p. 1, free translation).

The Ayllu Collective stands out for carrying out political-artistic actions and sociocultural practices with the contribution of different collaborators who explain the experiences and oppressions faced mainly by dissident and racialized bodies. Composed by Alex Aguirre Sanchez, Leticia/ Kimy Rojas Miranda, Francisco Godoy Vega, Lucrecia Masson Córdoba, and Iki Yos Piña Narváez Funes, the collective is defined as a “collaborative group of research and artistic-political action formed by racialized migrants, sexual and gender dissidents of former European colonies in Latin America and the Caribbean” (CARRERA; COLECTIVO AYLLU, 2020, p. 1, free translation).

1 “Abya-Yala” is an expression derived from the Kuna language used to designate the territory we know today as the “American continent.” “Yala” is the denomination for land, territory. “Abya” denotes mother, mature young, vital blood. Together, the terms transmigrate to conform to new meanings: land for all, territory in full maturity, living land, blood land. It is an ancestral area that welcomes everyone” (IGREJA; RAMPIN; CAMACHO, 2017).

It should be noted that, at the heart of the political project of the Collective, there is a critique of whiteness as a European heteronormative colonial ideology. Its performance challenges narratives centered on Europe and the Spanish state and proposes past rewritings in the present. This involves interventions in the memory to rethink the construction of history and the past, with the purpose of provoking questions and shocks in colonial structures. Thus, the practice of Ayllu presents itself as a daily research of aesthetic-political action, based on critical studies of white supremacy.

In particular, in this article, we discuss the aesthetic and political inflections present in the fabric panel “Bordar-Lands: las cartas son el tejido” [*Bordar-lands: the letters are the fabric*] (Figure 1), exhibited at the 35th Bienal de São Paulo [São Paulo Biennial], which took place in 2023. This creation, sized 290 x 390 cm, which resulted from a workshop with the same title, was attended by several collaborators² and, according to the Collective: “In this workshop, we write letters-fabrics to someone from there, someone who is alive or who has left this earthly plan, someone real or fictitious, someone from the past or the future, human or not, for whom there is an ancestral love” (COLECTIVO AYLLU, 2023, free translation). The collaborative production of messages in fabrics resulted in a kind of “open letter,” composed of writings that were embroidered, sewn, painted, and/or silk-screened (Figure 1).

According to our hypothesis, this collaborative creation not only materializes a practice of aesthetic production/creation, but also reverberates pungent semiotic arrangements that call for a fable-like political episteme, capable of creating new images of the past and the future. Therefore, we intend to explain the way in which the panel configures an image that exposes the stitching, the borders, and the between-place of migrants seeking the resignification of an ancestry that aims at the past, the present, and the future as (re)existence.

2 The collaborators are: Alla Soïb d’Nadah, Abigail Campos Leal, Aldones Nino, Anderson Feliciano, Bárbara Esmeria Rãé, Bia Marins, Bruno dos Santos, Camila Fontenele de Miranda, Constanx Alvarez Castillo, Dilma Angela da Silva, Gisela Casimiro, Malu Avelar, Manauara Clandestina, Ricarda Wapichana Vicente de Araújo, Tao Itacaramby, and Uarê Erremays.

Figure 1 – Fabric panel “Bordar-lands: las cartas son el tejido,” exhibited at the 35th Bienal de São Paulo



Source: Ayllu Collective (2023).

As a methodological strategy of analysis, we sought to understand both the visualities and the resignification of certain symbols, considering the way they are materialized in the fabric panel in which, as will be discussed, the dissident body that inscribes and writes is an essential part of the composition. It is about following the movement suggested by gestures and, through them, infer possible meanings or abductions (GELL, 2000) that emerge between the different temporalities that synchronically articulate in the piece. Thus, the delimitation of the theoretical-conceptual references and, especially, the articulation between them, took place due to what was raised by the materiality of the work itself, which allowed us to dialogue with authors of the fields of semiotics (PEIRCE, 1990; LOTMAN, 1996, 1998, 2021), performance and gestures (ZUMTHOR, 1993, 1997; FLUSSER, 1994; TAYLOR, 2013), decolonial studies (ANZALDÚA, 1993; 2000; MIGNOLO, 2019; PAIVA, 2022), and religions of African origin (VERGER, 1994; PRANDI, 2001; PORTUGAL FILHO, 2022). It was this path that allowed us to grasp, in the relationship between image and word, how the

configuration of oralitures (MARTINS, 2021) operates, which emphasize the performance and the inscription of corporalities in messages of affections, tributes, desires, prayers, confessions, statements, and protests.

From Migrantes Transgresorxs to the Ayllu Collective: crossroads and borders

The title of the collective creation “Bordar-lands: las cartas son el tejido” refers, first of all, to the act of embroidering, in which the first part, “Bordar-lands,” relates to the work of Gloria Anzaldúa (1993) “Borderlands/la frontera: la nueva mestiza,” which refers to the idea of territories and borders. In turn, the word “lands,” situated right after the verb (*Bordar*, to embroider) and separated from it by a hyphen, suggests the act of “embroidering lands.” However, the sound of “Bordar-lands” is similar to “borderlands,” which refers to the border. By playing with the words, we can hypothesize that “Bordar-lands” implies delineating and/or sewing borders between different lands and/or territories.

Due to the complement of the title, it is possible to consider that the “lands” are the letters addressed to those “for whom there is an ancestral love” — which, in turn, have a Panchronic dimension, as they relate to the present, the past or the future; therefore, these are messages that tend to and dismount the logic of linear time. It should be noted that the word “fabric” (*tecido*, in Portuguese) derives from the Latin *textu*, in such a way that every fabric is also a text, something that implies an entanglement, a weaving that results in a specific ordering.

In the face of these relations, we notice that the title does not refer to geographical borders, but rather to the continuous redefinition of sign and symbolic borders arising from the act of embroidering letters/messages to someone belonging to any time/space. Here, we understand the border according to the perspective proposed by the semiotician of culture Iuri Lotman (1996), who situates it as a space for delimitation between different semiotic individualities and, at the same time, for translation between them, in such a way that borders are never stagnant

and predefined; on the contrary: they are constantly redefined by the exchanges established between different cultural spheres that are also modified by these transits.

Likewise, Anzaldúa (1993) operationalizes the concept of border beyond the physical aspects of territory and from a perspective of her own existence as a woman, feminist, Chicana, and lesbian. The panel puts in motion subjectivities (and temporalities) that, through letters, reverberate in a collectivity silenced by the historiography of the European colonizer. This is an important aspect to be considered in “Bordar-Lands: las cartas son el tejido,” because the title seems to allude precisely to the condition of those who live the diaspora and oppose the hegemonic structures based on this place of transition, of displacement of the corporalities in connection with their ancestry and in a movement of (re)existence. It is a way of perceiving and representing the existences and performances of bodies at borders, in order to rescue a sensitivity that does not separate bodies from their constitution, conditions, and cultural situations. A way of being and feeling that is in constant movement.

Far from limiting itself only to the fabric panel in question, this way of perceiving and placing oneself concerns the activity of the Collective as a whole. From the creation of *Migrantes Transgresorxs*, in 2009, to the constitution of the *Ayllu Collective*, in 2017, there were several theoretical productions, artistic creations, and pedagogical practices of its members and collaborators, so that it is possible to observe a repertoire of collective procedures of alternative and counter-colonial epistemes of thought, which operate, from our point of view, through crossroads (MARTINS, 2021) and borders (ANZALDÚA, 1993). For Leda Martins (2021, p. 35, free translation):

The crossroads is a radial place of centralization and decentralization, intersections and deviations, text and translations, confluences and alterations, influences and divergences, mergers and ruptures, multiplicity and convergence, unity and plurality, origin and dissemination. Operator of performative and also discursive languages, the crossroads, as a third place,

is a generator of diversified sign production and, therefore, of plural senses. In this conception of crossroads, the kinetic and slippery nature of this enunciative and performative instance of the knowledge there established is also highlighted.

Conversely, the thought of Anzaldúa (1993) specifies a state of consciousness that does not echo in the repetition of the identity canons crystallized by the action arising from history; on the contrary, the three identity references of Anzaldúa (white, Indigenous, Mexican) are claimed in order to be transformed and resignified within a new historical and subjective narrative:

So, don't give me your tenets and your laws. Don't give me your luke-warm gods. What I want is an accounting with all three cultures — white, Mexican, Indian. I want the freedom to carve and chisel my own face, to staunch the bleeding with ashes, to fashion my own gods out of my entrails. And *if* going home is denied me then I will have to stand and claim my space, making a new *culture* — *una cultura mestiza* — with my own lumber, my own bricks and mortar and my own feminist architecture. (ANZALDÚA, 1993, p. 22).

Both in Anzaldúa (1993) and Martins (2021), it is possible to envision the notion of permanent movement and transformation, or rather, of transgressive actions that seek ruptures of the civilizing, geographical, and capitalist colonial codifications. And, hence, the artistic-political practices of the Ayllu Collective resonate and are inscribed as a project of decolonial resistance and disobedience, in order to “preserve what each community needs to be able to re-exist” (MIGNOLO, 2019, p. 7, free translation).

This perspective, in turn, allows us to situate the production of the Collective as part of the decolonial turn in the field of Arts that, as Paiva (2022, p. 77, free translation) points out, implies a “collective artistic authorship” that defies the idea of a unique creative subject for the benefit of a doing that emerges based on different alterities and their perception-cognitive dimensions, which involve even a series of

materials that equally perform several agency forms in the creation processes. Therefore, there is the constitution of a gnosiology in which the “process of organization” (PAIVA, 2022, p. 77, free translation) takes on a central role, from which a new territorialization takes place for knowledge and doings that, historically, have been relegated to something inferior by hegemonic thinking in the field of Arts. Thus, we notice how “the decolonial reinforces the idea that the Arts are part of a structural change” (PAIVA, 2022, p. 77, free translation) that necessarily implies a new “possible world.”

Bordar-lands: the letters are the fabric

In the materiality of “Bordar-Lands: las cartas son el tejido,” there is one aspect that cannot be disregarded: the act of embroidering and/or sewing. In this regard, Peixoto (2020) states that, in the context of the studies on the “arts of the needles,” “the dimension of risk (and danger) that embroidery made with porcupine’s sharp spines, or with other pointed instruments, sheds light on it, does not usually occupy the foreground of analyses” (PEIXOTO, 2020, p. 77, free translation). With this, the author draws attention to the risk involved in the making of pieces through sewing and embroidery, which implies “thinking the arts of the needles as the arts of risk, of taking risks” (PEIXOTO, 2020, p. 78, free translation), whose making encompasses a body movement and learning, which imply a specific performance.

The act of embroidering and sewing, by which the fabric/text is brought about, in the collaborative creation of the Ayllu Collective, also allows us to infer about the risk involved in writing the letters — and/or their own story — aimed at those “for whom there is an ancestral love” which, in turn, can refer to someone of the present, the past, or the future. The choice for the needle, as a form of inscription on a surface, also refers to the memory of bodies that, historically, have been on the verge of extermination, as the biopower exerted by colonialism is primarily imposed upon them.

According to Taylor (2013), one of the key features of colonialism in the Americas was characterized by the colonizer’s contempt for the bodily performance of the original peoples, then deemed primitive and “delayed,” unable to produce and/or share knowledge. In this context, performance and orality are closely related, considering that, as Zumthor (1993; 1997) and Flusser (1994) state, the latter is not limited to what is uttered, because it refers to body gestures that not only accompanies the voice, but that precedes it or even dispenses with it. It is a communicational/cultural environment marked by the centrality performed by the body and its expressive forms.

As performance is inseparable from the visuality of “Bordar-Lands: las cartas son el tejido,” we can understand how, in its materiality, there is the update and, at the same time, the expansion of the memory of the original peoples through the translation operationalized by writing/embroidery. In its irregularity, the cursive writing present throughout the panel enables to recover the body movement that produced the inscription, which would be impossible if typographic letters were used, characterized by standardization and impersonality. It is a kind of translation operationalized by the memory related to the primary orality — that is, still devoid of the alphabetical writing — distinctive of the original peoples, in which the alphabetical writing, instead of potentiating logical forms of reasoning, confers visuality to the gesture and to the performance.

At the same time, as Flusser (1994) points out, the act of writing implies not only dealing with a surface, but pressing it, entering it, and marking it, so as to forge a trace and/or sign that, even erased, becomes part of the material used for the inscription. Hence, a palimpsest of impressions is created, resulting in the spatialization of memory by the overlapping of different temporalities that synchronically persist, something very distinct from the attempt of colonialism to destroy the knowledge of the original peoples and, at the same time, to impose their gnosiology as the only way of being in the world. As Anzaldúa (2000) states in the essay (letter) that she herself wrote to the Third-World women writers:

The act of writing is an act of creating souls, it is alchemy. It is the search for a self, for the center of the self, which us, women of color, are led to think as the “other” — the dark, the feminine. Don’t we start writing to reconcile this other within us? We knew we were different, separate, exiled from what is deemed “normal,” the white-right. And as we internalize this exile, we perceive the foreigner within us and, very often, as a result, we are separated from ourselves and from each other. Since then, we are seeking that self, that “other,” and each other. And in widened spirals, we never return to the same places of childhood where the exile took place, first in our families, with our mothers, with our fathers. Writing is a tool to penetrate that mystery, but it also protects us, it gives us detachment, it helps us to survive. And what about those who don’t survive? The remains of ourselves: so much flesh thrown at the feet of madness or faith or the State (ANZALDÚA, 2000, p. 232, free translation).

By the performance of dissented bodies in interaction, an inscription is outlined in the present, which updates a striking trait of the constitutive episteme of Abya Yala because, as Flusser (1994, p. 37, free translation) points out, “it is not true to say that writing establishes the thought. Writing is another way of thinking.”³ In the collaborative creation “Bordarlands: las cartas son el tejido,” we precisely identify a thinking with the body or, even, a kind of cognition supported by ancestry, which is managed through it. Thus, it is observed that:

Although the performative practices of Indigenous and African peoples were prohibited, demonized, coerced, and excluded, these same practices, by several processes of restoration and resistance, ensured the survival of a body of knowledge that resisted the attempts of its total erasure, either by its camouflage, by its transformation, or by numerous modes of recreation that have toned down the entire process of constitution of the American hybrid cultures (MARTINS, 2021, p. 22, free translation).

From this perspective, the memory of knowledge is constantly recreated and shared by the orature of memory, that is, by oral and bodily performative repertoires, habits, whose techniques and procedures of transmission

3 In the original: “Es falso decir que la escritura fija el pensamiento. Escribir es más bien una manera de pensar”.

are also means of creation, sharing, reproduction, and preservation of knowledge (MARTINS, 2021, p. 98, free translation).

Producing borders between messages-fabrics by the collective act of embroidering, the fabric panel is placed as a patchwork that allows creating various modes of combination between the parts, all possible and valid. We will discuss one of these reading paths, perceived through the associative relations that start from the spiral-written image, until reaching the mention of clandestine historiography.

Located at the center on the right side of the panel, on a piece of white fabric, you can see the spiral-shaped sentence embroidered with black and white threads and drawn with red ink, which unfolds in the following words: IYÁMI OSORONGÁ, WITH LOVE I GREET THE GREAT ANCESTRAL MOTHERS GRATITUDE STRENGTH WISDOM RESPECT SACRED DIVERSITY AXÉ. In its center, the spiral figure drawn in black color has the mythical name “Osorongá,” and is bent left until the Yoruba term “Axé” (Figure 2).

Mythical figure of the ritualistic practices of Yoruba religions, the Ìyàmi [my mother] (VERGER, 1994, p. 16) are Ancient Sorceresses and Mothers. One of the best known is Iá Mi Oxorongá (PRANDI, 2001), Ìyàmi Òsòròngà (VERGER, 1994) or Ìyámì Osóronga (PORTUGAL FILHO, 2022)⁴, which are “owners of female bellies” (PORTUGAL FILHO, 2022, p. 18, free translation) and, overall, cause fear in most people due to their unrestricted powers of witchcraft, which act as “an aggressive, powerful force” (VERGER, 1994, p. 16, free translation) that can be both destructive and constructive. According to Reginaldo Prandi (2001, p. 348, free translation):

The Iá Mi Oxorongá are our first mothers, primordial roots of the human lineage, they are sorceresses. They are ancient mothers-sorceresses, our ancestral mothers. The Iá Mi are the beginning of everything, of good

4 The way of spelling the word “IYÁMI” varies according to the way each author cited in this article wrote it in their research.

is passed on from mother to daughter, so that the latter can develop it in her adulthood (PORTUGAL FILHO, 2022, p. 24).

The gesture of embroidering the mythical name “Iyámi Osorongá” at the center of the spiral allows to call for and summon the Ancestral Mothers with the intention of honoring them affectively, in addition to thanking them. In the spiral scripture, the presence of the Ancestral Mothers radiates through the actions of the senses of words until reaching the “Axé,” in order to compose a circuit of vital forces and energies. It is another temporality, distinct from the historicism proposed by the Western modern order, which narrates history by linear, diachronic, and evolutionary logic. According to Martins (2021, p. 53, free translation), in the “ontology of time in the Yoruba cosmogony,” time “simultaneously bends forward or backward,” that is, a spiraled conception founded on ancestry, considering that

Ancestry is cleaved by a bent, recurring, ringed time; a spiraling time, which returns, restores, and also transforms, and which falls upon everything. An ontologically experienced time as contiguous and simultaneous movements of retroaction, prospection, and reversibility, dilation, expansion and containment, contraction and relaxation, synchrony of instances composed of present, past, and future (MARTINS, 2021, p. 63, free translation).

As a figure of space, the spiral provokes in time other dimensions beyond linearity and allows to diagrammatically visualize the way in which the manifestation and updating, for example, of myths, rites, and symbols take place in different contexts through the functioning of memory. In this sense, it is possible to establish the dialogue between the proposal of the performance of ancestry by the spiraling time of Leda Maria Martins (2021) and the functioning of the cultural memory proposed by Lotman (1996).

For the author, the cultural memory is manifested through data processed in signs, texts, and senses, which are, first of all, updates of the languages under construction and the sign arrangements, that is, events

that approximate the sign existence with making oneself present in culture. However, a configuration that lasts in time is only possible due to its historical or mythical processing through the continuous translation of traditions, in which the performance of memory provokes the distension of the present between the past and the future.

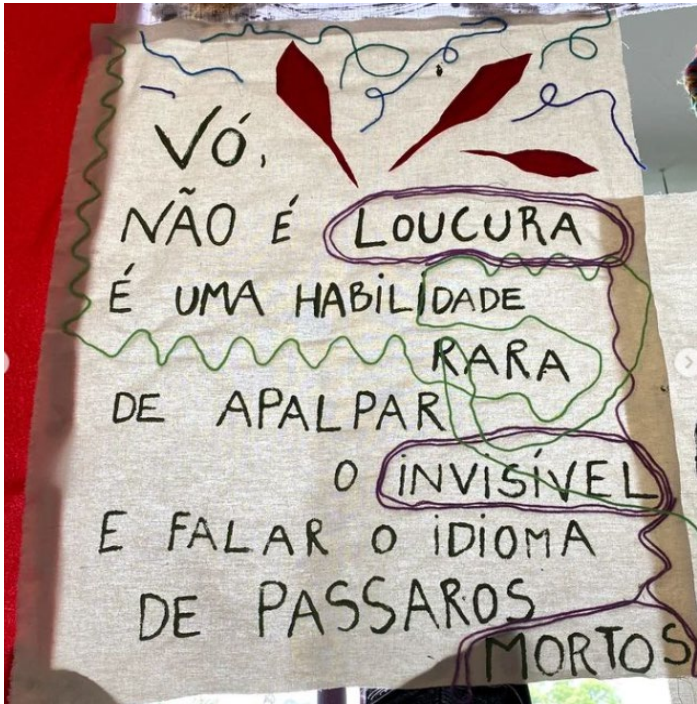
The articulation of signification by the presentification of the past and/or the future is a mnemonic processing, in which the relations between languages, for the production of texts of culture, are constituted by tensions and confrontations between the parts or temporal qualities that synchronically take place in the culture and not only one after the other. In this regard, memory is processed, above all, by spatial logic, which allows several sign temporal configurations to coexist together by a space of coexistence between different temporalities.

The perspective of spiraled time, or the spatialization of time, which promotes the agency of ancestry and the translation of traditions among Black African peoples, also seems to be articulated in other configurations of the collaborative creation “Bordar-Lands: las cartas son el tejido,” if we take into account that, at the end of the bend of the spiral text, the word “Axé” is inscribed, which points to the letter-fabric right beside it.

In it, drawn with black ink on a white fabric, the following sentence is written: “Grandma, it’s not madness, it’s a rare ability to touch the invisible and speak the language of dead birds.” Through a purple thread, the words “madness,” “invisible,” and “dead” are circumscribed and connected, and with another green thread, a part of the word “ability” (*habilidade*, in Portuguese) is highlighted, so that the word *idade* (in English, “age”) can be expressed, in a playful game that represents a word within another (*idade* within *habilidade*). In turn, this other highlighted word is connected by the green thread with the word “rare” (*rara*, in Portuguese), composing the sentence *idade rara* (“rare age”, in English), resulting, therefore, from another, the “rare ability” (*habilidade rara*) (Figure 3).

The spiraling time constituted by the message that mentions the “Iyámi Osorongá,” upon reaching the letter-fabric to someone’s

Figure 3 – Snippet of the “Grandma, it’s not madness” fabric panel



Source: Ayllu Collective (2023).

grandmother, promotes the association, by similarity, between the Ancestral Mothers and the “Grandmother,” the idea of ancestry and the “rare age” and also between the power of sorceresses and “rare ability.” Moreover, the mention of the ability to speak the language of birds once again seems to summon the Ancestral Mothers, as the “Iá Mi arrive into the world with their evil birds” (PRANDI, 2001, p. 348, free translation). That is why, according to Verger (1994, p. 17, free translation), “Ìyàmi is often called *eleye*, the bird’s owner,” and “the terms *eye*, bird, or *eleye*, bird’s owner, are employed interchangeably, because the bird is the power of the sorceress,” “at the same time, her spirit” and, also, the one responsible for “doing evil deeds.” This proposition is also defended by

Portugal Filho (2022, p. 22, free translation), when the author states that “Íyámì Eleye is the one that becomes a bird, whose procreative power is represented.”

In the fabric panel, the resignification of the mythical figure of the Íyámì is only possible as a form of translation of traditions, if we look at the way the name of the sorceresses is articulated as a mnemonic symbol. The symbol is a type of sign whose meanings are somewhat regulated by coercion and correction of norms, laws, rules, habits, agreements, and/or contracts (PEIRCE, 1990). Such an understanding of the symbol is, to a certain extent, shared by Lotman, who places it as a cultural text that contains and preserves information that is known in different civilizations, as if it preserved primeval senses that are regulated by the very mind of culture, understood as an intelligence generated by the relations between different sign systems.

In this sense, Lotman (1996; 1998; 2021) also understands the symbol from the perspective of memory, as it is constituted as an arrangement capable of containing, in a condensed way, the maximum of information. In ancient civilizations or communities, the mnemonic symbol was used as a device capable of storing information aiming at, above all, expanding and diffusing it, and not only conserving it. It is a semiotic mechanism that strains past and future at the time of its various and distinct updates, when the mnemonic symbol expands in other contexts by being resignified without, however, its ancestral information being dispelled. Its updates are presented in events of both the past and the future, demonstrating the ability of cultural memory to make time management complex by the diachronic and synchronic perspectives of culture.

The spiral time that is made present, translates and resignifies the mnemonic symbol of the Ancestral Mothers, which begins with the spiraled sentence and follows to the letter-fabric addressed to the grandmother, also reaches the largest fragment of the collaborative creation: a red rectangular piece-fabric that is at the center the “Bordar-Lands: las cartas son el tejido,” in which one can see, in the

upper part, the word “Mother” and, in the lower part, “Bernadete,” drawn in black ink. The words are connected by a black thread that starts from the letter “e” of the word *mãe* (In English, “mother”) until it reaches the name “Bernadete.” At the end of it, a ball of read yarn skewered with several sewing needles with white pearls tips makes up a kind of celestial sphere (Figure 4).

Figure 4 – Snippet of the “Mãe Bernadete” fabric panel



Source: Ayllu Collective (2023).

The most prominent piece in the fabric panel is a tribute and reverence to the 72-year-old Yalorixá Mãe Bernadete (Mãe Bernadete Pacífico Moreira), leader of the Pitanga dos Palmares Quilombola community, located in Simões Filho, state of Bahia (Brazil), who was brutally murdered with twelve shots on August 17, 2023, six years after the assassination of Binho do Quilombo, her son Fábio Gabriel Pacífico dos Santos. For a long time, the matriarch and Quilombola individuals received threats from “real estate speculation groups,” according to Denildo Rodrigues’s statement, from the National Coordination of Articulation of Black Rural Quilombola Communities (*Coordenação Nacional de Articulação das Comunidades Negras Rurais Quilombolas – Conaq*), according to

the article titled *Quem era Bernadete Pacífico e o que se sabe sobre seu assassinato* [“Who was Bernadete Pacífico and what is known about her murder”], published on the *G1* portal on August 18, 2023 (BBC, 2023). According to the article, written by Camila da Silva (2023) for the *Carta Capital* portal, in one of her last public statements, Mãe Bernadete said that she was a “Black woman of difficult life, because being Quilombola means resistance.”

By honoring her, the creative and collaborative proposal of the Ayllu Collective still makes it possible to relate her to the Yoruba mythical figure of the Ancestral Mothers. Perhaps for this reason, the piece-fabric embroidered on the left side of the piece-tribute is a statement of protest against hatred and violence against the peoples of Abya Yala, which, as aforementioned, refers to one of the names with which the original peoples named their lands, later baptized America by the Europeans (ALMEIDA, 2017). In it, in reference to the mother’s image, we identified embroidered, in black wool threads, the outline of the face of a female figure (Figure 5) surrounded by sentences and expressions in different languages: “return abya yala,” “stop killing us,” “Pindorama,” “kaimen manawyn”, “anna pata anna yan,” “our land, our mother.” Below, on the left, there is a twenty-dollar bill from Guyana’s bank, whose South American country, Guyana, is linked to the Caribbean region.

These scriptures express the basis of a decolonial thought through the inscription of subjectivities and corporalities manifested by collaborative performance in different Indigenous languages: “anna pata anna yan” (our land, our mother, in the Macuxi language — the Indigenous tribe that inhabited the region of Guyana); “Kaimen manawyn” (meaning gratitude, in the Wapichana language — the Indigenous tribe also inhabitant of Guyana); “Pindorama” (America, in Tupi-Guarani language). There is also a kind of signature painted on the panel: the name “Baydykyruab” refers to one of the collaborators, Ricarda Wapichana, an Indigenous woman who participated in the workshop with

Figure 5 – Snippet of the “Return Abya Yala” fabric panel



Source: Ayllu Collective (2023).

the Ayllu Collective and was part of the educational team at the 35th Bienal de São Paulo.

It is noteworthy that the use of Indigenous languages is a mark of struggle against the processes of colonization, in such a way that it was agreed to resume calling America according to the original language, Abya Yala (living land or flourishing land), as well as the Kuna people, from Colombia and Panama. In Brazil, the name “América” was Pindorama, which in Tupi-Guarani means “land of palm trees.” According to researcher Eliene Almeida (2017), the use of the Abya Yala name represents a way of coping with the denomination “Latin America,” given by the invader.

Still according to Almeida (2017), coloniality, as a heritage of colonialism, more than shaping modern structures and institutions, penetrates into mentalities, imageries, subjectivities, and epistemologies, shaping contemporary societies. Thus, coloniality is present in various aspects of social life: work, sexual relations, subjectivity, authority, and the Eurocentric knowledge. It is expressed in several hierarchies, such as ethnic, racial, sexual, gender, knowledge, language, and religious, thus constituting a complex system. In order to fight this system, the formulation of a decolonial thought seeks alternatives, a return to traditional knowledge, respecting ancestral knowledge and practices. According to Almeida (2017, p. 71, free translation), “the modernity/coloniality group understands that beyond the coloniality of power, there are also the dimensions of knowledge, of beings, and of nature.”

We observed, therefore, that the collaborative production of the fabric panel is also permeated by a resistance movement in/of Latin America with a view to valuing the ancestry of the original peoples who inhabited the region before being invaded by the European colonizer and having their ways of life and culture despised and denied. A decolonial historiographical view of the contact between the original peoples who inhabit or inhabited the territory now called Latin America, including Brazil, means understanding how Europe invaded these cultures, made unfeasible, subordinated, and repressed their ways of life, alterity, and ways of producing knowledge.

This process marginalized symbolic knowledge and worlds, creating representations of subordinate subjectivities of these social groups, and denying them the right to exist as culturally distinct peoples and as epistemic individuals. It also involves understanding how this process is updated and acquires new shapes, subjects, and dynamics. When considering the various practices of the Ayllu Collective, especially in a context of migration and erasures, the movement of creating and “bordar-lands” operates a territorialization of ancestry, which implies understanding it as part of a whole, a space of several memories that are collectively fabled.

It is also possible to glimpse this fable-like and decolonial weaving in the texts that arise, to a certain extent, based on individual and collective experiences as a mechanism of (re)interpretation of narratives of the past and the present. It is a “clandestine historiography,” an expression that is embroidered in the panel (Figure 6), which suggests a given indiscipline necessary to confront the colonizing narratives and practices around the world. Something that Mignolo (2019) calls epistemic disobedience, because operating under decolonial logic implies:

Figure 6 – Snippet of the “Clandestine historiography” fabric panel



Source: Ayllu Collective (2023).

Working for re-existence. To re-exist is something different than to resist. If you resist, you get stuck with the rules of the game that others have created, specifically with the narrative and promises of modernity and the necessary implementation of coloniality. There cannot be a single model of re-existence. (MIGNOLO, 2019, p. 6, free translation).

This piece of the panel seems to address a collective ancestral body, in an almost imperative attempt of a cry, a call to the need for a critical (and collaborative) fable as a form of (re)existence.

The panel extensively uses words, which demonstrates the strong bond with a tradition of orality, a mark of the original cultures. However, as we previously mentioned, the word here is also an image (embroidered, painted, drawn) and composes, together with the variety of types and colors of fabrics, what Leda Martins (2021) understands as oraliture. It is a perspective that eliminates the dichotomous view between text and image by understanding certain performative practices as the orthography of knowledge and of different natures, “including a philosophical knowledge, in particular an alternate and alternative conception of time, its reverberations and impressions and orthography in our way of being, of proceeding, acting, fabling, thinking, and desiring” (MARTINS, 2021, p. 26, free translation).

Thus, we can state that the fabric panel is constituted as a collective and collaborative oraliture, a body-canvas as a body-image that postulates connections “whose reception and perception have the power to also affect and prolong, in time, the images and their adherence” (MARTINS, 2021, p. 52, free translation). In the wake of this thought, the visuality of the panel is articulated by means of mnemonic symbols, it gathers a memory of memories, in a kind of survival “which, by combining in itself a set of sign data (traces, colors, movements, voids, reliefs, and so many other sensitive and sensory points),” constitutes “a form that thinks” (MARTINS, 2021, p. 52, free translation) in a very specific way.

Final considerations

When we look at the trajectory of the Ayllu Collective and, more specifically, at the fabric panel “Bordar-lands: las cartas son el tejido,”

we understand that collective and collaborative production does not concern only a mode of artistic creation and/or disruptive process of the hegemonic, but rather a gesture that is based on an aesthetic-political posture toward the world. In other words, collective and collaborative practices confer the very (re)existence of subjectivities and bodies that are inscribed in the Collective.

In her essay *Falando em línguas: uma carta para as mulheres escritoras do terceiro mundo* [“Speaking in languages: a letter to the third-world women writers”], Gloria Anzaldúa (2000) makes explicit, in a striking way, what she feels about her existence and her writing as a Black, lesbian woman: “Who gave us permission to practice the act of writing? [...] There is a recurrent voice within me: Who am I, a poor *Chicanita* from the end of the world, to think I could write?” (ANZALDÚA, 2000, p. 230, free translation). In the collaborative workshop “Bordar-lands: las cartas son el tejido,” we identified more than one practice that seems to align with the tensioning of Anzaldúa (2000) It is, simultaneously, a process and an episteme that summons a counterpoint.

This episteme, in turn, demonstrates a very characteristic compositional trait of the Visual Arts produced in the context of decolonality, that is: the presence of the body and, consequently, of the gesture and performance as an inseparable part of the visibility of production. More specifically, in the case of the creation discussed in the present study, we can also make hypothesis about the risk (by the use of needles) of those who venture to write and/or inscribe their own story and/or memory, in which embroidery, understood as a process of building and redefining borders, results in producing a letter written by multiple voices against colonialism.

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