

The Colonial Pole: Reflections for an Equatorization of Knowledge

El polo colonial: reflexiones para una ecuatorización del conocimiento

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RESUMEN

Este artículo examina la persistencia de las jerarquías epistémicas coloniales en la modernidad, entendidas como fuerzas que configuran el conocimiento, las identidades y los mundos en torno a centros dominantes. Con este fin, se introduce el concepto de «ecuatorización del conocimiento» como una herramienta tanto analítica como política en el marco del capitalismo contemporáneo. A partir de un análisis teórico y metafórico, se emplea la idea de la gravedad como una provocación crítica para explorar procesos como la normalización, el blanqueamiento, la heteronormatividad y el control epistémico. La metáfora gravitacional ofrece una vía clara para comprender cómo los sistemas de poder colonial sostienen el conocimiento dominante al tiempo que marginan otras epistemologías. Al destacar la relevancia epistémica y ontológica de los Orixás, cuyos modos de existencia no giran en torno al centro colonial, la adopción de una perspectiva ecuatorial contribuye al desarrollo de categorías analíticas alternativas que permiten al pensamiento crítico distanciarse de los legados coloniales de violencia, desigualdad y borramiento.

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PALABRAS CLAVE

Colonialismo, estudios decoloniales, producción del conocimiento

ABSTRACT

This article examines the persistence of colonial epistemic hierarchies in modernity, seen as forces that shape knowledge, identities, and worlds around dominant centers. For that, we introduce the concept of «equatorization of knowledge» as both an analytical and political tool within contemporary capitalism. Drawing on theoretical and metaphorical analysis, we use the idea of gravity as a critical provocation to explore processes such as normalization, whitening, heteronormativity, and epistemic control. The gravitational metaphor provides a straightforward way to understand how colonial power systems sustain dominant knowledge while marginalizing other epistemologies. Highlighting the epistemic and ontological significance of Orixás, whose ways of being do not revolve around the colonial center, adopting the «equatorial perspective» helps develop alternative analytical categories that enable critical thought to distance itself from colonial legacies of violence, inequality, and erasure.

KEYWORDS

Colonialism, decolonial studies, knowledge production

1. Introduction

This paper introduces the formulation of a *colonial pole* that would exercise a stronger *gravitational* pull of knowledge, concepts, things, and beings. From a modern-colonial perspective, this universal attraction governs how imagination, creativity, and possibility are distributed, shaping what is recognized as living, as a subject, or merely as an object. The goal is to articulate a theoretical framework that accounts for processes of Eurocentric epistemic whitewashing while opening analytical paths that unsettle them. Rather than proposing total alternatives, this paper contributes to the careful constructions of oblique categories that operate simultaneously as analytical tools and political interventions. Thus, both disrupting Eurocentric imaginaries and amplifying conditions of thought and resistance in the face of a colonial legacy of violence and sustained social inequality.

Accordingly, in modern physics, primarily inspired by Einstein's theory of relativity, gravity is considered a long-range attractive force. It is also described as acting in a field on planet Earth, stronger at the poles and weaker at the equator. Consequently, due to a combination of factors, including Earth being an oblate spheroid (a squashed sphere), with its radius being less at the poles and greater at the equator, this positioning places the first closer to the core of the planet and the latter more distant, thereby weakening the gravitational pull at the equator. Moreover, the rotational acceleration, which is maximum at the equator and zero at the poles, also weakens the gravitational force at the equator and strengthens it at the poles.

Analogous to Dipesh Chakrabarty's movement of provincializing Europe, the concept of a colonial pole, and by extension, the gravitational force, is a helpful metaphor for the decolonization of knowledge. By admitting a structural force that bends and pulls concepts and ideas — normalizing, whitening, straightening, and dominating knowledge— we align ourselves with Chakrabarty (2008). The assimilation of gravitational force operates in a dual sense. At first, it serves as a metaphor for the colonizing process of not only producing and alienating the «others» but also defining knowledge. Attending to European needs and ambitions while also bending what is «outside» to benefit existing systems further. On a second note, by utilizing a universalist scientific proposition, the theory of gravity, we aim to cause discomfort. The uneasiness would lead to a layered critique of the instrumentalization of knowledge as a tool of domestication. Insofar as we communicate such prerogative in terms that themselves maintain the status quo, we create a liminal space of hermeneutical possibility. One that can be a catalyst for Equatorization. Therefore, it is our goal to introduce the notion of Equatorization as an alternative, a social, cultural, intellectual, and political praxis.

For the argument presented in this article, the Equatorization of knowledge and the alienation of science are articulated in three settings: Gravity, Time, and the Equatorization and Alienation processes. Before addressing power, it is necessary to establish the field in which it operates. We approach power through difference articulated as otherness, a historically constructed absolute selected as the primordial foundation of power. In the following section, we briefly outline the logic of a specific colonial form of otherness, which lays the groundwork for the analyses as a whole, followed by Gravity, where we construct a general power structure of global action. In such a context, metaphors and analogies are a powerful medium of translation through which power becomes intelligible and operative. Moreover, the construction of the physical

theoretical paradigm of gravity and its interpretation as a power structure shaped by glocal politics, capable of bending and twisting concepts. After that, we place time as a construct of power, intertwined and altered by gravity. The concept serves to show the colonial disruptions and distortions that maintain the status quo. Finally, with the Equatorization and Alienation processes, we present our provocations and alternatives that could offer an exogamic production of intellectuality.

This article advances the thesis that contemporary regimes of knowledge remain structured by a colonial pole whose gravitational force normalizes, hierarchizes, and universalizes epistemic forms, while marginalizing alternative ontologies and modes of knowing. As its main contribution, the paper proposes the concept of Equatorization as a decolonial epistemic praxis that weakens this gravitational pull, enabling the displacement and reconfiguration of concepts, bodies, and analytical categories beyond hegemonic centers of authority. To develop this argument, the article is structured as follows: first, it introduces the metaphor of gravity to conceptualize colonial power as a relational force shaping knowledge, time, and otherness; second, it examines how this force operates through processes of whitening, normalization, and epistemic control, drawing on Afro-diasporic and decolonial perspectives, particularly the figure of Exu; finally, it articulates Equatorization and alien perspectives as non-prescriptive, situated alternatives that open space for plural, contingent, and politically engaged epistemic trajectories.

2. Crossroads and metaphors

To situate our formulation of a *colonial pole*, this paper begins with a study of Exu's representations by Brazilian historian Laís Azevedo Fialho (2019). The choice for her thesis, focusing on the fictional writings of PJ Pereira (2013, 2014, 2015) —specifically, the allocations and redeterminations of the figure of Exu in African-Brazilian religiosity— is not only driven by the empirical work. Additionally, it stems from our firsthand knowledge of her academic and activist trajectory, marked by a deep preoccupation with the practical consequences of academic theorization of Black Brazilian lives. Laís A. Fialho is a member of the Maracatu Baque Mulher, founded in 2008 by master Joana Cavalcante, the first woman to lead a Maracatu Nation. Maracatu is a Brazilian dance and musical style that represents the cultural resistance of mainly West and Central African people forcibly removed and then enslaved in Brazil, combined with local indigenous populations' religions. Furthermore, the historian is also a daughter of Candomblé. In general lines, Candomblé is an African diasporic religion practiced in Brazil, centered on the worship

of the Orixás and rooted in religious traditions from West and Central Africa. It should not, however, be understood as a monolithic faith, as it encompasses diverse ritual practices and regional expressions. As such, the theoretical, the musical, and the spiritual are always intertwined in her life and work.

Holding both a licentiate and a master's degree in history from the State University of Maringá (Paraná, Brazil), Fialho integrates religious practice into her writing and analysis, producing work that transcends the written word. In a country like Brazil, where aspects of non-European or non-North American cultures are often marginalized and erased, mobilizing interpretations that reconnect with the ancestral and highlight blackness is a revolutionary act.

Acknowledging the presence of the Orixás is more than a spiritual act; it expresses ideas of blackness that are independent of and not defined by whiteness. Positioning blackness in terms of this ontological religious practice is to attribute a different meaning to life, thereby creating a safe space for healing and caring. Engaging in religious practices, as Fialho does, also facilitates institutional change, as policymaking can be informed by academic research that guides it. As such, we ask Exu's permission to enter his domain, as Candomblé teaches that nothing is done without his consent. Respecting him as an actor is vital to both Fialho's argument and ours. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that references to Yoruba cosmology, Candomblé, and figures such as Exu in this article do not assume a uniform, transhistorical, or culturally uniform system. According to Fialho (2019, p. 103), there is no single, fixed way to represent Yoruba culture or figures. Instead, we must understand that representations are created within ongoing conflicts, in which both Yoruba and Afro-diasporic ideas are often diluted or erased to make them more acceptable within a racist social order.

In her study, Fialho points out that the *«alleged universalism of the Eurocentric thinking erases and silences the complexities and conflicts present in the myths of Exu»* (2019, p. 148, authors' translation). Attending to complexity and conflict allows Exu's contradictions and ambiguities to emerge as constitutive rather than anomalous. A Yoruba proverb illustrates this non-linear temporality: «Exu killed a bird yesterday with a stone he threw today.» Such dynamism is not exclusive to Exu's domain, but also part of subjectivity, sometimes man, sometimes woman, here and there, on the crossroads of time and space. It is therefore necessary to peel away epistemological violence produced by the gravitational pull of the colonial pole, i.e., the devaluation of Yoruba representations, the reduction of Exu to the Christian devil, and the religious hate and

persecution faced by Candomblé practitioners in Brazil. Understanding structural racism (Almeida, 2019) as a constitutive element of social order, embedded in economic, political, legal, and cultural structures, and reproduced through institutions and everyday life, helps us grasp the authority of colonial discourse, which still promotes specific narratives of otherness, objectivity, and modernity to place someone as the (global) north and another as the (global) south. Elucidated by Fialho (2019, p. 149):

in order to make Exu the protagonist of a best-seller, it was necessary to whitewash and silence some of his more controversial aspects. Furthermore, the only ones with the authority to do so were the white middle-class men who did not belong to any Yoruba religious practice (translation by authors).

The snippet from Fialho's thesis leads to a complex discussion of subalternity and the whitewashing of blackness. Narratives that define upholders of a «true humanity» and the power relations between those deemed developed and those cast as others have been central to decolonial and African studies. Fialho situates the debate in a Brazilian context, arguing that by positioning Exu as the devil, assigning subalternity to blackness, representations of the violent and sexually aggressive black man are constantly reiterated. She further examines portrayals of Exu created by a white author who does not practice Candomblé, in which a transition occurs, from the crossroads of uncertainty to a prescriptive dominant logic. The Orixá's fundamental characteristics are diluted to render him more palatable to white audiences.

The movement described above constitutes what we refer to as gravitational force —a long-distance attracting force that bends and transforms objects as it pulls them. The colonial pole, in this sense, generates radical discomfort, a reaction to the gravitational pull it exerts. As the motion unfolds, representations are progressively reshaped. Exu, for example, is distorted and transformed as he is taken closer to the pole.

Unpacking this metaphor requires engaging with multiple layers of epistemological thinking. To do this, the essay is organized into subtopics that develop the argument step by step. First, by discussing power structures and the performance of otherness, we establish a foundation for understanding representations within the colonial structure. Drawing an analogy with gravity's effect on time, this section explores the operational logic of the colonial pole, especially its use of temporal regimes and binary distinctions. Next, we introduce the concept of Equatorization as an invitation to decentralization. Through this notion,

we propose a movement that involves both dislocation and the creation of new possibilities. Here, imagination and ambiguity play essential roles, and Exu once again becomes crucial for the dynamism required by an Equatorization. Finally, as the paper concludes, borders come into view, limitations are exposed, and the uncertain possibilities of bodies, orbits, and satellites are examined.

3. Gravity and Time: artifacts and ephemerality

Gravity, as a way of understanding, along with Chakrabarty (2008), suggests that the concepts and notions used in science today are predominantly European. Through their use, gravity pulls people and objects toward the colonial pole, ratifying the colonial force inherent in science. The otherness performed by the pole is meant to preserve its position and conserve its mass, pulling towards a whitening view. The contradictions themselves are only intelligible as such on a binary referential. Once it is overcome, they might transform into something else that produces other types of descriptions and consequences, which might orbit the planet or simply move away from it.

3.1. Otherness: a tale of non-whiteness

At this stage, it is necessary to interrogate the notions of otherness and alterity further. Such concepts represent a dense and lengthy ontological production in the scientific realm. In this regard, anthropology is a key interlocutor, as it has incorporated these concepts more systematically than any other discipline. Embedded in the anthropological method, the reliance on fieldwork and ethnographic research gauges the validity of the science. To better comprehend the historical construction of others, this article draws on Fatima El-Tayeb's (2011, p. 14) account of the European prescription of otherness as distant and exotic. According to El-Tayeb, the European continent positions itself as a neutral space, an ominous entity exempt from racialization, while race is displaced elsewhere. Those situated outside Europe—both physically and epistemically—are denied participation in its dialectical movements.

While this framework has been progressively challenged in anthropology, primarily through efforts to engage others without completely sacrificing them to our logic or abandoning our own (Maniglier, 2006), the almost tautological depiction of the other as a distant, less human creature remains a component of the colonial pole's power structure that persists in everyday interactions. The process by which others are defined—who they are, how they live, and where they belong—is continually reshaped and reimagined to serve colonial

interests. As Fialho (2019) demonstrates, Exu has often been depicted in the media as the Christian devil, while in the works of PJ Pereira (2013, 2014, 2015), the Orixá is reshaped to meet the expectations of a white audience. In both cases, alterity is distorted and instrumentalized, bent to fit a predetermined role that is then normalized and circulated globally.

Identity is anchored in a socially constructed body infused with prescriptions, which, according to Butler (2009) expose and articulate the body within distinct institutions of power that reorganize political frames in relation to specific identities. This claim is reinforced by Oyèrúnmi (1997, p. 7) who argues that bodies are not only «enshrined with differences and hierarchies», but also function as sites through which such hierarchies are produced and sustained. From this perspective, dualisms could be understood as reiterations of the foundational male/female binary. Consequently, positions of power and space are inscribed within bodies. Other dualisms —such as nature/culture, public/private, and visible/invisible— operate as variations of the same power structure. According to Judith Butler (2009, p. 3), «to be a body is to be exposed to social crafting and form, and that is what makes the ontology of the body a social ontology».

The body inhabits the world, and the iterative processes through which bodies are constructed shape perception and experience across everyday contexts, whether in urban spaces or within institutions such as the judicial system, migration offices, and others. Through *corpo-território* [*body-territory*], Rocha Oliveira (2025, author's translation) examines the dictatorial state-driven repression of indigenous peoples to sever their relationship with the land, the body as both the site of oppression and of resistance. Hence, the notion of *corpo-território* shows how power structures operate simultaneously on bodies, territories, and modes of existence. Hence, difference —also prescribed from a specific reference point— is used to *read* bodies and (re) position them. Violence, in diverse forms and intensities, is used to correct, stop, condition, or eliminate. The identities are seen as fixed positions that should not be changed. The use of visual sensory descriptions (*read, see, observe*) at this point demonstrates the power of sight in colonial cultures, as the prime sense, bodily perception of others is conditioned by vision, appearance, and «what people look like.» Contributions of the Crip theory show the existence of a compulsory able-bodiedness (McRuer, 2006), as a hierarchy of bodies that are «functional» and able to be guided by an ideal of beauty and capabilities, be they cognitive or functional.

Contrary to the way identities are prescribed, the process of self-identity recognition is guided by contradiction and instability, only

gaining signification and coherence by a core enunciated as the self. In this manner, the recognition of the pertinence to a group is not fixed, nor is it a stable notion, immutable, or yet assimilated from a rite of passage that condenses the individual to a perpetual identity (Brah, 1996). Both notions, although confronting in some ways, can overlap to understand the ontology of a body, as it is a plural field of individual and social interactions. Furthermore, colonial power structures are constituted on multiple bases that guarantee their mass and, therefore, their gravitational pull —i.e., the projection of identities or othering to sustain power among colonial agents. However, when trying to grasp a global structure of power, it is necessary to understand it as a complex network of overlapping dimensions. Although analyzing a local situation or specific dimensions of the structure, they will always intersect and retain the same level of complexity as the global ones.

Yedaide and Gambino (2025), in their study of contemporary processes of territorial reconfiguration, introduce the notion of onto-epistemic gentrification to analyze how colonial hierarchies of exclusion and epistemic displacement are reproduced. For them, the sanitizing difference regulates which forms of knowledge and existence are considered legitimate. Alternatively, by emphasizing interterritoriality, reexistence, and Abya Yala as a living territory, the authors call for a vigilant and critically engaged epistemic practice.

The binary relation —colonial forces producing narratives on otherness as a way to establish a hierarchy— mobilize a somewhat Hegelian (2017) dialectic movement of power. Brewing the ideal of universalism as a final absolute ontology that comes from the colonial pole. What is outside of «true knowledge» is deemed unfit, or it must be warped into an acceptable form. The Hegelian (2017) dialectic dependence can be applied, on some level, to understand the reliance that the colonial pole has on the construction of otherness. The power structure operates through the sedimentation of the pole's mass, i.e., the self is constructed on the negation of the other (*we are for they are not*). The power structures of the colonial pole, as we aim to describe them, have a further complication to the binary opposition. In a Hegelian dialectic movement, the colonial pole (thesis) produces the other (antithesis), and both result in a synthesis. However, the process is flawed and unbalanced, leading to contradictions that undermine the understanding of both the thesis and the antithesis.

Universalisms produce generalizations that often erase the identities, problems, and issues of different people. The moral frameworks embedded in scientific practice are repeatedly reaffirmed within the horizon of the colonial pole and the broader scientific project, functioning, often

implicitly, as normative guidelines for (Western) humanity. Although such frameworks may be interrogated, the authority and positionality required to do so are usually concentrated in the same places, limiting the scope of critique and ensuring that change remains contained in the institutional purposes of coloniality. This article does not seek to evaluate the ethics or morals of science as such; instead, it aims to demonstrate that the colonial pole's projects are formulated under specific historical and epistemic conditions, which can be disrupted to undermine the power structures they sustain. With this in mind, the following section advances to assemble gravity as the operative power structure of the colonial pole.

3.2. Gravity and Mass

Foucault (2001) conceived a triangle with the vertices law, truth, and power. The relations of power, according to the philosopher, are marked by discipline. Power institutes truth and disciplinarization, forging docile and useful bodies of knowledge. The body becomes the focus of forces, and its disciplinarization is the correlated effect. Therefore, the vision of the dispositive of sexuality, of sex itself, is conformed. The latter is socially defined and results in the acceptability of relations from the power structures. The structuring of the said triangle refers to the constitution of knowledge. Defining the discourse of righteousness and truth, in the sense that even the sciences (the information) will be built to justify the discourse of the right and socially accepted truth. Thence, the importance of the Foucaultian proposal to perform the archaeology and genealogy of everything that is socially incorporated as truthful, in other words, the study of its social, historical, cultural, and economic formation, aligning with the questioning of its basis and prerogatives. The power relations between sciences and the imposition of social norms date to the very creation of the field. The apparatus of power focusing on bodies is part of social formulations worldwide; however, a binary division persists in how we perceive it. Although there is no control over an individual except by «their» body, our conceptualization still produces a division between the self, consciousness, and the body, a sensory vessel.

Mass is one vital component of the gravitational force. How do different places come to have more mass, thus having a stronger gravitational field? Tensioning the anecdote, playing with the concepts of the natural sciences, to describe, or more accurately, to narrate movements that are claimed to be in the field of humanities, goes as an exercise of Equatorization (further debated in the next chapter) in itself. Creating dissonance and friction by incorporating concepts from the hard sciences in this setting helps produce a layout that overlaps with colonial structures. Likewise,

overlapping topographic maps, satellite views, written descriptions of space, and so on. With each different dimension added to the pile, one can intersect experiences and make contradictions evident. By focusing an analysis on a specific spot, it is possible to capture the whole nature of intermittency (Strathern, 2004).

Essentially, with the notion of «intermittent nature of intermittency,» it is possible to create overlapping dimensions of different proportions and positions without the illusion that culture, writing, sight as a sense, and so on, will establish themselves in a course and linear form. These background references widen the view and spark creativity in conceiving new positions and arrangements. Through this choice, it becomes possible to perceive different life paths that diverge from a binary setting imposed by state forms, as observed in Brazilian schools (Carniel, 2018) and universities (Costa and Carniel, 2022). Even though the places might not all have the same mass, they all have the same level of complexity. The juxtaposition of scales (or maps) and their interaction with creativity enable different paths to be taken. Each juxtaposition results from the previous one. Not in a linear form, but instead, full of flaws and gaps. Therefore, creating partial connections and maybe an alternative relational form, that crumbles the signal or distorts the gravitational force of the colonial pole.

3.3. Timeless times

The historical allocations also reinforce the narratives of the colonial perspective, as Biko (1987, p. 95) reflected on colonial attempts to distort and disfigure the past. This distortion of time creates a memory that is narrated by colonial forces as the precursors of modernity. Accordingly, Nzegwu (2004) presents a sense of unawareness about how deeply rooted the scientific and everyday definitions are in the practices, methods, and manners of the Judeo-Christian tradition and the social conventions of European cultures. Furthermore, scientific knowledge and ideas about nature are historically shaped within power relations in Southern Africa and beyond (Rapchan and Carniel, 2021). As a result, nature becomes a privileged site for governance and control, while indigenous forms of knowledge are often marginalized in favor of dominant scientific rationalities (Macamo, 2016). The implicit homogenization sustains the belief that difference is expressed as a degeneration from a primordial form, both moral and scientific (Oyěwùmí, 1997).

Drawing on Muñoz's (2008) concept of ephemerality, it is possible to foster a notion of time warping around colonial artifacts. The ephemeral is a powerful agent of destabilization. However, first, temporality needs to be understood; the colonial pole and its intense gravity can warp the fabric

of time, condensing history or even the fixed position of colonial artifacts. Time becomes linear, and constricts definitions to last, to be timeless. In other words, through the gravitational force, the colonial pole bends away ephemerality in its agents and broadcasts the notion that things outside the pole «age faster». The presence of time-fixedly warped reproduces the idea that European concepts are perennial. Society, modernity, humanity, civilization, men, women, and time itself are examples of such perceptions. Working as conduits for the gravitational power of the colonial pole, they are reproduced effortlessly daily and activated when *observing* other cultures. Ephemerality, as an agent of transformation and action, calls forth the crack in this facade. The colonial pole acts as if it could observe everything from everywhere, a visual omniscient being.

Additionally, in the Kantian tradition of apprehending the world as objective, time becomes a category of understanding this real world, which is not immediately accessible to humans. The postulation of time in such settings is a condition for the warping of the colonial artifacts. If time is accessed in other forms, or even not at all, the broadcast will suffer. Once more, the disruption in different notions of time, or its irrelevance to other cultures, shines a light on the hollow vessel of the capitalist enterprise of time as a regulatory agent. In different cultures, as temporality represents knowledge through memory and wisdom, the power relations are institutionalized to establish authority for those who have achieved longevity.

By pulling the representations of Exu to the pole, they are transformed, partially because Western cultures are sight-based, in contrast to some Yoruba cultures, as the visual does not hold such nobility. Furthermore, gender definitions, in some Yoruba traditions, do not appear as they do in European languages (Oyèwùmí, 1997). The power structure will bend and reconstruct the representations of Exu, provoking an epistemicide of the Orixá and corresponding to a deeper project of the eradication of the other, of the colonial other. Even so, negation is not the only movement that the colonial pole does to African and African-diasporic cultures; it also assimilates a distorted version of them. Hence, the whitewashing in religions, for example, can not be bothered by difference, unless in an assimilative manner, phagocytosis¹.

1 Phagocytosis is the process by which specific living cells called phagocytes ingest or engulf other cells or particles. ('Phagocytosis | Definition, Process, & Examples' n.d.). Once more, evoking the natural sciences produces a tension in the metaphor presented in this paper; the goal is to disturb, to create dissonance.

Nonetheless, as Serafim and Fialho (2022) show, in Brazil, contemporary representations of Yoruba-derived divinities are shaped by processes of literary adaptation, translation, and mediation that respond to specific historical and social contexts. Highlighting that these representations may emphasize specific attributes while silencing others, resulting in partial and often Westernized visual and narrative regimes (p. 491). Simultaneously, claims about visuality and symbolism are confined to these mediated configurations rather than encompassing Yoruba cultures as a whole, acknowledging that Afro-diasporic religious knowledge functions through plurality, context, and ongoing resignification rather than fixed visual codes (Fialho, 2019, pp. 82-91).

In the context of knowledge production, oral knowledge and traditions were considered invalid because they could not provide a stable and faithful insight into the past. The election of written tradition as the vessel of truth is more connected to the fact that Europeans had it and therefore needed to legitimize it, than to its ability to «preserve» history. In a movement similar to the scientific negation of religion and mysticism, it positions itself on a higher hierarchical ground, capable of perceiving, understanding, and describing reality. Nonetheless, such idiocrasies have been strongly dismantled, no longer admitting the oral traditions as incapable of representing historical events.

Gravity distorts time; the colonial tradition becomes embedded in a different temporality, one that «allows it to watch history,» enabling concepts to endure much «longer» than those distant from the pole. So powerful is gravity here that colonial nations can look to their history through an evolutionary, linear perspective and produce writings that would be timeless, which they are not. Such historical accounts would be more valuable than the history of the Other Ones, the non-Europeans. The structure that maintains the gravitational force is so dense that it requires what is considered concrete facts, established as absolute truths. In contrast, ephemerality does not exist in the scientific field. There are contradictions in both written and oral stories, and they are undeniable and essential parts of culture. The movement of treating oral tradition as valid has infiltrated colonial logic, and with it has come turmoil in the consideration of truth. However, it is not only necessary to consider the validity of diverse traditions and raise questions about the formats of the pole, but also to make a further disruption.

It is essential to acknowledge the historical approach to oral and written traditions. However, it was surpassed mainly throughout the seventies and eighties, and still retains residues, especially in countries where the scientific project is continually challenged. The process of

assimilating oral traditions and questioning written ones as static and vessels of truth paved the way for interpretations, such as those required by the Equatorization process.

4. Equatorization and Alien perspectives

At this point, it becomes necessary to undertake an exercise of detachment from the colonial pole through what we call an equatorial perspective. Rather than assuming a complete rupture with dominant epistemic structures, this perspective starts from the recognition that power relations are unevenly distributed and historically sedimented. The equatorial position marks a zone of weaker gravitational pull, from which concepts, bodies, and forms of knowledge can be displaced, rearticulated, or projected beyond hegemonic centers. It is from this positional awareness —attentive to power, scale, and location— that the proposal of Equatorization emerges.

For analytical clarity, it is necessary to define what is meant by Equatorization in this paper explicitly. Equatorization designates a decolonial epistemic praxis through which knowledge, subjectivities, and analytical categories are displaced from hegemonic centers of authority toward positions of reduced normative constraint. It operates by weakening processes of universalization, normalization, and epistemic hierarchy, allowing situated, relational, and non-stabilized forms of knowledge to circulate. Rather than instituting a new center or canon, Equatorization produces conditions for plural epistemic trajectories that remain contingent, partial, and politically situated.

From this equatorial position, it becomes possible to imagine movement otherwise: launching ideas, creating aliens², displacing artifacts, and projecting bodies and concepts beyond stable orbits. Paradox, contradiction, and ambiguity are not obstacles to this process, but its very conditions. *Equatorizing* things means making them alien, taking them out of orbit, or just creating new satellites. Distancing oneself from the gravitational pull of the colonial pole requires a decolonial orientation toward space, imagination, and uncertainty —a search for trajectories that are not governed by the demand for coherence, permanence, or universal legibility.

2 The definition of alien according to the Oxford dictionary is a creature from outer space, but also in U.S. English, it can mean someone who is not from «this» country, a foreigner. Placing the double meaning of outer space and foreigners allows creativity, imagination, and contradiction to flourish as imperatives for the process described as Equatorization. An alien is a creature that is not fully comprehended. ('Alien_1 Noun - Definition, Pictures, Pronunciation and Usage Notes | Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary at OxfordLearnersDictionaries.Com' n.d.)

In this sense, Equatorization is a call for decolonization. The goal of this metaphor is not only to describe movement away from the colonial pole and toward the Equator, but also to enable the launch of ideas into space. To clarify this proposal, it is necessary to acknowledge its nuances. First, dissociation is always a plural and situated process: the poles and their productions cannot simply be ignored, as power relations are historically constituted and not easily undone. Positionality, therefore, becomes central. One must assess their location within global and local structures in order to determine how movement is possible and which forms of displacement may effectively weaken the gravitational pull of colonial concepts.

As presented in Fialho's (2019) work, representations of Exu have broadly circulated in spaces dominated by white, non-devotee audiences who, due to limited engagement and distance from Afro-Brazilian religious practices, have produced superficial, detached portrayals of the Orixá. The productions that depicted Exu in a positive or complex light rarely reached the mainstream, whereas those that characterized him as the Christian devil or reduced him to a «lesser» figure stripped of contradiction were widely disseminated and actively promoted. Aligned with Oyěwùmí's analysis, Fialho explores how elements of Yoruba symbolism are selectively assimilated into colonial categories deemed universal. In this context, the call to reorient the geography of knowledge —to shift the position of reason and to unlearn the colonial epistemic structures enforced by the educational institutions and reproduced in the control of gender, sex, and familial practices (Tlostanova and Mignolo, 2012) becomes central. The plurality of paths outlined here constitutes the groundwork for the proposed process of Equatorization to take shape and expand.

Moreover, as one approaches the Equator and gravity's pull weakens, it should become easier to launch ideas into space. As previously explained, the power structures, the gravitational pull of the pole, are reproduced by a web of words, concepts, and actions that amplify the attraction and extend the colonial pole. Therefore, the task of Equatorization cannot be completed solely by distance, as gravity will still be at work. However, it is at the precise point of a lesser pull that things can be launched. So, what does it mean to do it? Here, we return to the figure of Exu as representative of the movement and its transformative energies. Creativity, transformation, ambiguity, and uncertainty - these words represent the process of alienation, of getting things out of Earth. Furthermore, dislocating reason, poking holes, and overlapping methods, tales, science, and metaphysics, achieve the point at which a body of mass would either orbit the planet or drift away in space, perhaps never to return. As the metaphor becomes

more poetic or abstract, the room for creativity increases, and so does the room for contradiction. It is not without its risks, yet the potential for transformation is already there, just like in the Yoruba saying about Exu: «Exu killed a bird yesterday with a stone that he only threw today.»

Regarding a descriptive methodology, or a «head-to-toe» account of the concept of *orbiting the planet*, would be counterproductive. The act of a prescriptive technique works against the very purpose of the alienation process, in which new descriptive forms can be produced. Therefore, a series of trial and error and a construction «as it goes» seems more appropriate and even precise than observable construction from a tainted referential. Perhaps, a method of poetic embodiment could be narrated as one twirls around the planet. Insofar as the current questions and producible answers are not the goals of this paper, curiosity and insufficiency are powerful fuels for movement and action.

The questions that might seem easily answered or even irrelevant constitute an essential aspect of perception. Although the perception and perspective have been extensively debated by Taylor and Viveiros de Castro (2019), much can be inferred from the presented notions. The primordial care for the body represents the very first and last steps of the Equatorization process. It is the body, after all, the mass that initially constitutes *us* and ultimately will be consumed with *us*. The phrasing prior to even is a hostage of the division of body and mind, presented as the self and the body in which it inhabits. Overlapping conceptions of bodies and the potency of consciousness make it a challenging task; the pull to separate them proves itself a worthy adversary. Subsequently, catapulting whatever the result becomes into space can be even more challenging; this is just one example of a ship venturing into the unknown. Upon accepting an idea of a body that does not fit or is not affordable to the gravitational power structure, we condense a vessel through which we can launch a theory that can affect the planet as it orbits it. The mass of the newfound satellite can influence the tides, be felt, observed, described, and theorized, and it can shift political tensions, or it can do none of these. The unpredictability of it is precisely where its agency lies.

Consequently, to become an alien means not to belong to Earth anymore, or at least that would be the initial statement, the loss of humanity. However, the mere presence of an alien disrupts. It leads to questioning of what humanity is and the extension of that category, not only that, but also rendering possible the scope of influence on transformative compositions of knowledge. Uncovering constellations and re-positioning the human perspective, or very much at least the definitions of it. To produce an alien at home means to devise notions that

are not yet fabled, even if they are already present, such as the conduits of time, society, and the body. For example, if alienated, these would not only dismantle the colonial pole but also embroider knowledge. The alien renders space a fictional position, forcing us to rethink what it means to be outside and inside, for example. Challenging the patterns and producing an alien body sets a domino effect that defies the subsequent assumptions linked to it.

Methodologically, the sensory and experiential are key, understood far from the binary division and the embodied, multisensory process of knowledge. The sensible is not intelligible without reason, and rationality is not possible without bodily experience; hence, the overlaying of them in a mix of knots and paths that are neither exclusively one thing nor the other. To perform these into a method, practice, and science, much is yet to be uncovered; nonetheless, an understanding of body and embodiment follows, one that is not stoic, nor holds a statuesque form, but rather one that has multiple configurations and forms, adaptable and mutable, in between, and always filled with partial connections. Establishing the principles to guide the methodological component of alien works, as fuel and ingenuity to expel, requires no fear of contradiction and ambiguity, all at the same time, without excluding responsibility as an absolute. Recognizing the limitations and shortcoming is not only to take accountability for what may be created, but also part of the methodological production as the consequences, as much as can be foreseen, must be reflected on, and the structure and borders need to be well defined so that despite whatever becomes of the alien the frontier of their interpretation, or the knowledge on them, will not pierce what was set. Following this, the final piece of the present essay focuses precisely on the edge of what the concepts presented here have to offer, or the boundaries of what can be done with them.

Transitioning toward the final exposition of the present paper, even though the colonial pole promotes the locus of objectivity and universalism, the dangers of critique fall disproportionately on the colonized, and the validity of science built on these aspects can only function in its cradle. The weaker the gravitational force is, the more the notion of science itself will be harmed. The distance from the colonial pole weakens science, as the true pillars of the structure are mass and gravity, not objectivity. Power holds the position of the colonial scientific enterprise, not clarity or any other theory. Instability is part of the project, to hold truth near and attract what can be fruitful, even if initially repelled as dangerous. Equatorization addresses these issues, as the very use of Exu, as seen in Fialho (2019), proves powerful in negating and denouncing

the said colonial project, thereby transforming paths and opening up scientific validation elsewhere.

5. Bodies at work (final thoughts)

Finally, when considering power structures and shifts in hierarchies, one should not essentialize either the colonial pole or the equatorial masses. Power disputes occur everywhere, new compositions emerge, old ones evolve, satellites become obsolete, and we launch things into space. Upon *looking* at things, distortions are *perceived*, things return to the orbit, or even clash. Thus, such a metaphor is a call for the contradictory, the ambiguous, and the imaginative —the science of the aliens, of the Equator —a claim for a sensoriality that extends beyond the visual. A call for everything that drifts away from the colonial pole and its regulations, whether of bodies or knowledge, of practices or culture. Nonetheless, it is not possible to conceive of an abrupt breach of the long-standing dominant forces; it is merely a process, demanding and uncertain.

Exemplifying practices of Equatorization already at work within cultural production, Guedes de Souza (2024) analyzes Eliane Potiguar's work, rooted in memory, indigenous cosmologies, and collective struggle, and showcases writing that articulates epistemologies that do not orbit hegemonic centers. Similarly, the symbolic displacement of the North-South axis, in Joaquín Torres-García's inverted map, functions as a critique of Eurocentric universality. For Pablo Mancilla Carrasco (2023), the map decentralizes the global North as a center of meaning. This reorientation is key to our proposal of equatorization for a change in the locus of enunciation, theory, and creativity.

The choice of format of an essay works in the intended type of contribution to African and decolonial studies. To achieve this, the central idea is a metaphor or anecdote that represents colonial power and knowledge production. Borrowing the concept of gravity from physics, we proposed that, for example, concepts produced in a colonial pole, where the gravitational pull is stronger, will reverberate with that pull. Therefore, when using such artifacts, they will attract and bend theories, analyses, and definitions into a colonial logic. Furthermore, the goal was not only to offer an interpretive view of global power structures but also to propose alternatives. Acknowledging contradictions, ambiguities, and limitations is vital to this proposition. Moreover, the two main alternatives we proposed were as follows: firstly, an Equatorization, which involves distancing oneself from the colonial pole to the weakest point of gravitational force, and then launching objects that will escape gravity, orbit, and evolve into something else. Secondly, an alien perspective,

that operates subsequently to the Equatorization, requires the most ambiguous and imaginative proposition, in the sense of its unknown characteristics, of the (un) predictability of its consequences, it might become a meteor, it might cease to exist, or it might not even be possible to achieve.

Contradiction, imagination, ambiguity, ephemerality, and limitation are the five words that represent this essay. Therefore, there is no other way to destabilize power structures than to dismantle their knowledge and the way it is produced. We do not intend to be prescriptive, given the limitations of an essay. The urge to an Equatorization should not come with an unquestionable, unbendable method. Nonetheless, borders are necessary, and positionality is an important feature; i.e., when facing disputes over validity, scientific knowledge might cling to the gravitational pull to create some force capable of legitimizing the perspective. The aforementioned case is all too real in non-European and North American contexts, where sciences face constant challenges posed by neoliberal dismantling projects and waves of disbelief. How, then, to *Equatorize* the knowledge when one needs the status quo to preserve one's scientific field?

Of many possible answers, two are essential to this paper. The first is a proposition, and the second is through the acknowledgement of limitations and their importance. Imagining with Oyěwùmí (1997, p. 03) The notion of world-sense, replacing worldview as a limiting and exclusionary prerogative that serves compulsory able-bodiedness (McRuer, 2006), enables the broader sensoriality, thereby achieving equity between senses and experiences. In other words, the rupture of the social normative construction of a specific type of body creates a rift in how we perceive, experience, and interact with bodies. The cascade effect overlaps experiences in a non-hierarchical manner, folding into a juxtaposition of traditional concepts that are, consequently, ripped from the colonial pole. The proposition can be attained through the orbit of concepts such as world sense, which will change the way people encounter reality and, therefore, the methods used to access it. On those paths, Exu appears once more, not as a subject of research, but as the agent he is, Fialho (2019) under the agency of the entity walking on a crossroad that has similar effects to Oyěwùmí's production, that is, the creativity, contradiction, and limitations that allow theorization to be fruitful without a «bad translation», or a whitening wash of the other. Untangling the connections and binds does not mean untying all the knots; it means precisely addressing the ones that were not possible to undo, recognizing the complexities, and working with the movement and mass as they orbit the planet.

Throughout the process of Equatorization, the figure of the alien may function as an alternative stance that foregrounds the need for humans—and with them, the concept of humanity—to pause and reconsider their actions. If the prevailing notion of humanity and its values are not merely vessels of colonial power, but also active agents of segregation and violence, responsible for imposing half-lives, they must fall. Perhaps, without gravity, mass can remain mass, the pole can become nothing more than a location, and locations can coexist in plurality and diversity without hierarchical ordering. Time fluctuates without a fixed sequence, and otherness ceases to operate as a rigid binary. Becoming alien, or something otherwise, is not about creating or essentializing a new group, but rather about decentralizing, destabilizing, and de-essentializing frameworks of identification.

In a deliberately poetic and uneasy closing gesture, in the hope that discomfort may prove productive, we foreground limitation as a crucial analytical resource. The pursuit of a theory of everything risks complacency; by contrast, sustained attention to frontiers allows them to be displaced, reworked, or even dissolved. Acknowledging the limits of limitation, even in its redundancy, entails both respecting the applicability of an idea and moving beyond the unease that borders produce. Just as the theory of relativity cannot answer all the questions it raises, the colonial pole is not offered as a totalizing explanation, but a proposition — an invitation to feel uncomfortable, to remain unsettled and unsatisfied, to resist closure, to equate, and to alienate.

Contribución de autoría

Kaue Crima Bellini participó en las fases de conceptualización, curación de datos, análisis de datos, adquisición de fondos, redacción del borrador original, y redacción, revisión y edición del texto final.

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