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A Case Among Cases, A World Among Worlds: The Ecology of Writing Among the Kashinawá in Brazil

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This article discusses the conflict between local knowledges and global knowledges in the specific case of indigenous literacy in northwestern Brazil, where global knowledges are represented by the "ideological" (Street, 1984) theories of literacy and "utilitarian" models of writing (Scollon & Scollon, 1995), and local knowledges are represented by the multimodal texts produced by the Kashinawá indigenous community. Whereas "ideological" theories of literacy purport to take into account local knowledges and practices, they are in this case incapable of understanding indigenous multimodality due to what I call a graphocentric habitus. I read this as an indication of the extent to which prevailing literacy theories are not sufficiently aware of their localness; this may be due to their insertion within the colonial difference (Mignolo, 2000) power and knowledge collusion, which tends to "universalize" dominant knowledges and subalternize local knowledges.

Key words: literacy, writing, indigenous education, multimodality

To see ourselves as others see us can be eye opening. To see others as sharing a nature with ourselves is the merest decency. But it is from the far more difficult achievement of seeing ourselves amongst others, as a local example of the forms human life has locally taken, a case among cases, a world among worlds, that the largeness of mind, without which objectivity is self-congratulation and tolerance a sham, comes. (Clifford Geertz, 1983, p. 16)

In this article, I focus my research on Brazilian indigenous writing practices, more specifically on those of the Kashinawá indigenous community, which inhabits the

western Amazon region of Brazil and Peru, numbering little more than 4,000, of which 1,200 occupy the Brazilian side of the border in the state of Acre (Aquino & Iglesias, 1994; Monte, n.d., 1996).

What most characterizes the written production[1] of the Kashinawá, both in Portuguese and in Kashinawá, is the profusion of highly colored visual texts, which accompany their alphabetic writing. In spite of recognizing a possible connection between these texts and the local culture of the Kashinawá (Monte, 1996), the nonindigenous disseminators of literacy and writing in this community do not seem to understand how these multimodal[2] texts interact with their local cultural practices. What seems to predominate is the view—prevalent in written cultures—that visual texts are supplementary to and only illustrate a written, alphabetic text. However, if seen as a mere paraphrase of an alphabetic text, the visual text, the resulting multimodality, and the variability and heterogeneity of writing practices in such a culture may be lost. To avoid this, I posit the need for a reappraisal of the status of local indigenous knowledges and their interaction with what are considered to be nonlocal (universal?) theories of literacy and writing on which policies of indigenous education may be unsuspectingly, and therefore, uncritically, based. This is unfortunate in the context of recent proclamation of official recognition of the rights of indigenous communities to establish and run their own schools with their own curricula (see Silva, 1994; Veiga, 1997).[3] As such, I propose in this article to read the present situation as one of two conflicting traditions of "local"[4] knowledges, the "indigenous" (Kashinawá), and the "universal," where the latter refers to contemporary theories of literacy and writing wielded by members of academic institutions of the Brazilian urban industrialized and Eurocentric Southeast. This "universal" body often unintentionally has the effect of subalternizing local indigenous knowledges and runs the risk of perpetuating centuries of subjugation of indigenous peoples, in blatant contradiction to the declared objectives of indigenous education.

I shall attempt to *provincialize* (i.e., relocalize; see Chakrabarty, 1992) both conflicting bodies of knowledge, from what Mignolo (2000, p. 18) calls a pluritopic perspective. That is, a perspective located in the interstices of conflicts between "different knowledges and memories"; as such, both bodies may be seen as mutually constitutive as heterogeneous hybrids rather than substantive homogeneous totalities. This is an attempt to alert the disseminators of literacy and writing among indigenous communities against the dangers of "common sense" approaches; it is especially relevant at this time when, as a result of the official recognition of indigenous schools, a spurt of publications of indigenous writing has appeared, largely tutored by well-meaning nonindigenous persons.[5] These publications (in Portuguese) are aimed at the reading public of indigenous schools all over the country, and many of them become, in fact, textbooks or models of writing for other indigenous communities. If these books continue unthinkingly to reproduce nonindigenous delocalized models of writing, the proposed objective of

the indigenous school as a place for the dissemination of local indigenous knowledges will be at risk.

"Provinciality" (Chakrabarty, 1992) is present in the theories of literacy built on the oral and written dichotomy in the sense that the dichotomy is a product of a perception based on the local characteristics of the culture(s) of its proponents rather than being a feature of nonliterate cultures themselves; this local perception of literacy, through a knowledge and power collusion, then presents itself as "universal."

In academic discourse, there exists the tradition of criticizing prevailing theories in order to substitute them with others considered more representative or authentic in relation to the data at hand; the discursive mechanism involved in this strategy is that of substituting one set of affirmations with another, as if meaning or value naturally and transparently lies in the affirmations themselves (Fairclough, 1999).

To redress this attitude, it becomes necessary to perceive the sociocultural and ideological conditions under which affirmations are produced and meanings constructed. It is with this in mind that analysts such as Bhabha (1994) and Mignolo (2000) emphasize the need to focus on the *locus* or *site* of enunciation. In the field of social anthropology, Geertz (1983), referring to the local conditions of the production of meaning as "instruments and encasements," identified the same need:

> To an ethnographer, sorting through the machinery of distant ideas, the shapes of knowledge are always ineluctably local, indivisible from their instruments and their encasements. One may veil this fact with ecumenical rhetoric or blur it with strenuous theory, but one cannot really make it go away. (p. 4)

This restoration of location, as Bhabha, Mignolo, and Geertz indicate, helps to make audible the silences normally left undisturbed in academic discourses. The restoration of location is necessary as an attempt to restrict or invert the traditional and prevalent drive to universalize in academic knowledge production; with this in mind, my own locus of enunciation lies within a Brazilian academic institution, and across the disciplines of applied linguistics, semiotics, anthropology, and postcolonial discourse.[6]

LOCAL HISTORIES, GLOBAL DESIGNS

Mignolo (2000) posits a highly revealing and denunciatory theory of colonial discourse and knowledge production from a Latin American perspective, connecting coloniality to the concept of modernity, and hence to the development of science, modernization, and technology. This process for Mignolo is characterized by the "work" of a historically devastating discursive and ideological mechanism, which he calls "the coloniality of power and the articulation of the colonial difference" (p. 6).

This mechanism—the cultural basis of European colonization since the 16th century—seeks to subordinate the equal epistemological potentials of various knowledge-producing traditions of those cultures with which the colonial power(s) came into contact. These epistemologies were and are subordinated to the epistemology of the colonizing culture that located them on a lower scale of civilization and progress through what Mignolo (2000) calls the strategies of the *denial of coevalness* (pp. 283–285) and *colonial difference* (p. 13). The result of this is that cultural differences have been translated into differences of value, inaugurating a conflict of knowledges and structures of power; this then becomes the basis for legitimizing the subalternization of knowledges and the subjugation of peoples (Mignolo, 2000, p. 16).

In the conflict of knowledges and the structures of power, the normal procedure has been to "delocalize" concepts of the hegemonic culture(s), universalizing them by detaching them from their local histories and loci of enunciation (Mignolo, 2000, p. 41); this will to universalization is what Mignolo identifies as the *global design* of colonial discourse. Thus European history became "universal" history, European cosmology became "science," and European technology became "modernity." European culture in a similar vein became "civilization." In contrast, the nonuniversalized local knowledges of the subjugated communities remained "local" and are often disparagingly referred to respectively as "memory," "cosmology," "craftsmanship," and "tradition."

Transforming its own local values into universalized "civilization" and "modernity," European colonization then read the local cultures it subjugated through what Mignolo calls *narratives of transition,* attributing to these cultures and their knowledges varying (delayed) stages on a linear evolutionary map of putative "progress" and "modernity"; it also denied them (through the accompanying strategy of the denial of coevalness) the possibility of attaining the status of "civilization," and hence, equality.

In short, colonial discourse has basically consisted of what were and are local histories (of Europe, or the Eurocentric "North"), becoming universal through global designs. It is important to note however that, in spite of the colonial narratives of transition, those cultures that remained local were never totally isolated from, impervious to, or obscured by the hegemonic "universal civilization"; on the contrary, they interacted with it to varying degrees producing what Mignolo (2000) terms "cultures of transience" (p. 301).

The hybridity resulting from the local and global interactions within these cultures of transience is for Mignolo, like Bhabha (1994), not to be rejected as sterile "cross-breed" or "half-caste," nor celebrated as a Hegelian synthesis; for both, hybridity, more than a characteristic of an object, is a characteristic of the loci of enunciation (Mignolo, 2000, p. 41) in which these objects (here, cultures of transience) occur. In this sense, Mignolo prefers the dynamic concept of transculturation to the apparent stasis of the vitiated term "hybrid."

It is important to note that from Mignolo's perspective, the local and global dynamic, though connected to and as the basis of colonial difference, does not restrict to a putative colonial center the prerogative of being the sole source of global designs.[7] In the present perspective of globalization, the local and global dynamic has become a complex network through which cultures and discourses react to and interact with each other. Brazil, for example, like most of Latin America, has historically been subjected to universalizing Eurocentric cultures and discourses, and may be said to be located on the global periphery; however, the hegemonic Eurocentric urban culture of the Brazilian Southeast has global designs in relation to the various indigenous cultures in the rest of the country that it seeks to subjugate.

Given then the hybridity of the loci of enunciation of the cultures of transience, transculturation may be seen as the rearticulation of global designs from the perspective of local communities; in other words, through transculturation, the "local" is transformed by, and itself transforms, the "universal" of colonial difference. It becomes clear then that the locus of enunciation of colonial difference is traversed by the unequal coexistence of conflicting (hegemonic and nonhegemonic) ideologies, cultures, and disciplines. For Mignolo, in short, to perceive the epistemological dimension of the colonial difference is the first vital step toward transforming it. How can this be perceived and what is the connection between the local and global dynamic, cultures of transience, narratives of transition, the power and knowledge collusion, and theories of literacy and writing?

LITERACY AND WRITING AS LOCAL KNOWLEDGE WITH GLOBAL DESIGNS

Much has been written about the "great divide" between the written and the oral and the subsequent discussions about autonomous and ideological theories of writing. Although "autonomous" theories conceive writing as a product or technology with intrinsic benefits independent of any given language or culture, "ideological" theories see writing as a representational system that interacts with the language it purports to represent and the sociocultural values of the community of that language (Gee, 1990; Street, 1984); hence "ideological" theories see writing as closely dependent on local knowledges. In Brazil, specifically, with the Freirean heritage implicitly overshadowing minority educational policies such as those of indigenous education and the dissemination of literacy (Freire, 1972), the "ideological" nonautonomous perspective has been long present and has stimulated subsequent interests among disseminators of literacy in the more recent "ideological" proposals such as those of Street (1984) and Barton (1994).[8]

Ong's (1982) influential study of orality and literacy may be read as an example of a *narrative of transition,* describing the introduction of writing into oral cultures, and positing oral cultures on an earlier stage of historical development in re-

lation to written cultures. However, Ong's narrative is untypical of autonomous theories and narratives of transition in that it generously allows for moments of nonlinearity, exemplified by his concept of secondary orality; this refers to cultures in which orality has not been totally eliminated by writing, but coexists with it. In this sense, Ong's narrative of transition also allows for transculturation to be perceived.

Barton's (1994) study of literacy, based mostly on research carried out within regional (hence "local") communities in Britain, is more sensitive to the local and global dynamic and the power and knowledge collusion; this permits him to be more aware of the pitfalls of narratives of transition and hence to avoid postulating orality as necessarily anterior to (and more primitive than) writing. Instead, Barton considers writing as a *symbolic system* that interacts not only cognitively but also culturally with a particular community; as such, he reduces the hitherto predominant accent on writing as a *representational system* and shows that writing within a given sociocultural context interacts with and is integrated into various and heterogeneous (involving varying degrees of orality) *events* and *practices*:

> As well as communicating—representing the world to others—literacy is important in representing the world to ourselves. It is part of our thinking; it is part of the technology of thought. Language and literacy are used to define reality, and not only to others, but also to ourselves. Literacy, then, has a role in the ecology of the mind. (1994, p. 45)

Apart from the nonautonomous theories of literacy, the model of writing that prevails in Brazil, and is hence uncritically extended to indigenous schools, is that defined by Scollon and Scollon (1995) as the *essayist utilitarian model* with its demands for "clarity," "brevity," and "sincerity." In spite of the claims for the universal validity of such a model of writing, the Scollon and Scollon (1995, p. 99) clearly locate the origins and ideology of such a model of writing as Eurocentric. The variability and heterogeneity of local writing practices, such as multimodality, may be lost when the utilitarian model is universalized and becomes synonymous with writing itself; a manifestation of this is when the presence of visual texts are seen as decorative, *excessive,* and are deemed to detract from the three desirable qualities of so-called good writing. Whereas the disseminators of literacy seem to be aware of the localness of their theories, the same may not be said of the disseminators of the essayist utilitarian model of writing, who insist on its universality and naturalness; in many cases the disseminators of literacy also unwittingly disseminate the utilitarian model of writing.

Thus, from the perspective I occupy, literacy and writing are deeply connected to local cultural habits and to the processes of naturalization of a given sociocultural world available in a given community. As it stands, the "ideological" Freirean perspective largely seems to reveal its respect for the local. However, cau-

tion is required, as may be seen when Kress (1997)—in an attempt to recover the complexity of orality often suppressed when seen from the perspective of the oral and written dichotomy prevalent in written cultures—calls attention to the importance of *synaesthesia* in human communication in the following terms:

> Different ways of making meaning involve different kinds of bodily engagement with the world—that is, not just sight as with writing, or hearing as with speech, but touch, smell, taste, feel. … If we concede that speech and writing give rise to particular forms of thinking, then we should at least ask whether touch, taste, smell, feel, also give rise to their specific forms of thinking. … In our thinking, subconsciously or consciously in our feelings, we constantly translate from one medium to another. This ability, and this fact of *synaesthesia,* are essential for humans to understand the world. (p. xvii)

Though it may be apparent that contemporary, "ideological" theories of writing and literacy may often be, at times even self-consciously, *local,* it is with the "suppressing" and the "forgetting" of the synaesthetic wealth of communication that it becomes clear that such (local) views of writing and orality acquire *global designs* in Mignolo's (2000) sense. As such, for an uncritical observer of a written culture,[9] possibly even one aware of the localness of his or her perspective, only those characteristics of human communication representable in writing are readily perceptible or visible in an act of nonwritten verbal communication, which is then defined as "oral." By perceiving and judging oral cultures from this angle, written cultures *universalize* or *globalize* their localness and transform, in Mignolo's terms, their local perspectives into *global designs*. This is the genesis of what I shall call a *graphocentric*[10] view of orality and writing.

A rereading of the theories of writing and literacy,[11] which I have examined above, reveals the often taken-for-granted fact that the locus of enunciation of these theorists of literacy lies within written cultures and constitutes their graphocentric bias toward the cultural practices defined as "oral." In other words, as Kress (1997) implicitly warns, theorists and disseminators of literacy run the risk of observing the "oral" practices of a given community essentially as *lacking* writing; that is, those aspects of oral communication (such as its synaesthetic complexity) not representable in and through writing may not be visible to these theorists. Moreover, they may not see in nonliterate cultures (that is, they may see the *lack* of) the communicative *practices* and *events* they are familiar with in their own written cultures; this blindness[12] may hinder their perception of the complex cultural heterogeneity that exists in these cultures, and where writing as they know it is apparently absent.[13]

As an articulation of the colonial difference in Mignolo's terms, what is clearly at play here are once again the *global designs of the local,* or the *denial of coevalness;* in other words, the local practices of a written culture (in this case the

roles of writing and literacy from a graphocentric perspective) are universalized, values are attributed (positive to writing and being literate, negative to orality and being nonliterate), and the communities without these written (but with other, unseen) practices may be—and often are—seen as deficiently *oral*.

A patent manifestation of this graphocentrism and the global designs of theorists and disseminators of literacy and writing is the difficulty in perceiving and understanding as meaningful the multimodal texts such as those of the Kashinawá, even though these same theorists and disseminators may be privy to the "ideological" and Freirean views and hence aware of the *localness* of literacy.

This graphocentrism is explainable through Bourdieu's (1990) concept of the habitus, defined as a set of dispositions that lead social agents to act and react in certain ways; as such, these dispositions establish practices, perceptions, and attitudes that repeat themselves unconsciously. An unsuspecting theorist or disseminator with a *locus of enunciation* in a hegemonic, Eurocentric, written culture—and therefore with a *habitus* of a written culture, accustomed to seeing writing as a representation, albeit local, of speech—would thus risk seeing nonalphabetic communication from a graphocentric globalizing perspective as meaningless or deficient.

For my present purposes, it is important to bear in mind at this stage that this same locus of enunciation from which theorists and disseminators of literacy speak is also (i.e., besides the graphocentric *habitus*) traversed by the colonial difference and its attendant denial of coevalness. In order to avert symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1990), a change in the graphocentric habitus may be necessary before the hegemonic culture becomes capable of understanding the communicative cultural practices of cultures in which alphabetic literacy is not prevalent; this of course necessarily involves an attendant transformation of the colonial difference.

Heath (1982) and Scollon and Scollon (1981) in their analyses of literacy in local peripheral communities—albeit within the "First World"—show examples of how sociocultural harm is wreaked when writing is considered only from a graphocentric representational perspective. In the communities they studied, they identified the symbolic violence and its resulting social damage with the view that writing was merely a homogeneous unifying technology, a necessity for "education" and "progress." The complex cultural practices existent in these communities were invisible to the defenders of the graphocentric stance. Alphabetic writing, as the local practice of a hegemonic group, once inscribed in the power and knowledge collusion and ensconced within the colonial difference, all too easily becomes *delocalized,* acquires global designs and seeks to deny coevalness to other, competing, local knowledges and modes of communication. Another manifestation of the global design of a delocalized graphocentrism is the view that it is only through writing that local communities can have access to "progress" and "culture." Given the graphocentric double-bind, one wonders whether this view is the cause or the consequence of the acquisition of writing. Literacy and writing then,

though self-consciously not ideologically neutral, require on the part of their disseminators an acute critical awareness.

KASHINAWÁ LOCAL KNOWLEDGE AND THE MULTIMODAL TEXT

The visual texts produced by the Kashinawá consist of two basic types of drawing: the first type, a set of highly codified multicolored or monochromatic geometric patterns, called *kene,* may appear on their own on the cover page of an exercise book, in miniature form in a corner of a page (see Figure 1, number 3), or as a right-angled frame on one, two, and sometimes three sides of a page (see Figure 1, numbers 2 and 4), or even as part of a multimodal set containing alphabetic text and *dami* drawings (see Figure 1, numbers 6–8); *kene* drawings may also cover, like tattoos, *dami* figures. *Kene* patterns also appear on basketry, woven into textiles, decorating ceramics and pottery, and in ceremonial bodily tattoos. With the advent of writing in the community, *kene* began to appear on paper. The second type of drawing, called *dami,* is a soft figurative line drawing, not necessarily in color, depicting plants, animals, or humans. There is no preoccupation in using perspective. This type of drawing rarely consists of only one figure, and generally
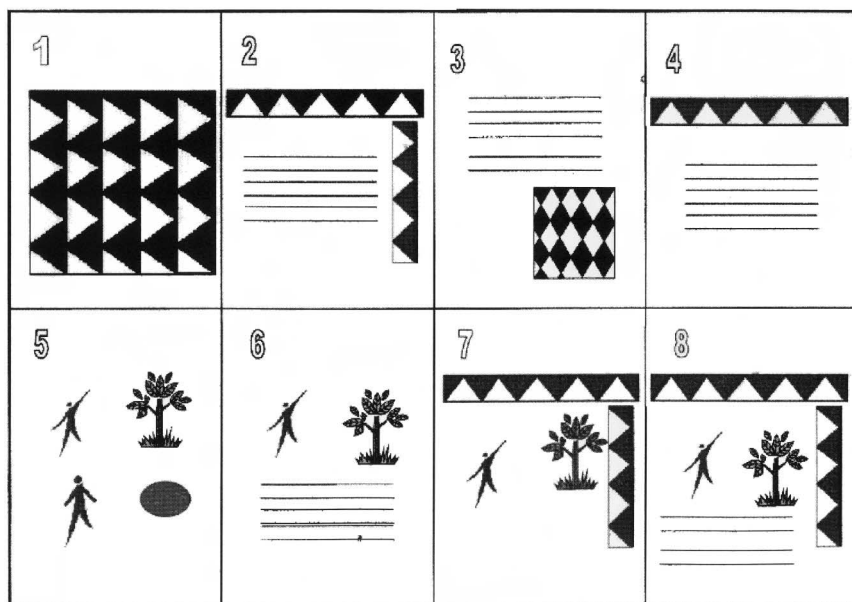

FIGURE 1   Possible combinations of kene, dami, and alphabetic text in Kashinawá multimodal writing.

the figures contained are organized in a scene or in narrative form. *Dami* may appear alone or together with alphabetic text or with both alphabetic text and *kene* graphics (see Figure 1, numbers 5–8).

In order to understand the meaning of Kashinawá multimodality from a pluritopic perspective[14] and avert the possibility of the symbolic violence that accompanies the colonial difference, there is a need to understand aspects of Kashinawá cosmology and its attendant concepts of identity, otherness, and transformation. It is known that in Amazonian cultures in general, the local forms and concepts of social, political, cultural, and cosmological spheres are intrinsically interconnected (Carneiro da Cunha, 1999; Turner, 1988). In view of this interconnectedness, and considering that writing on paper as such is a form of material production, one needs to understand, from the perspective of local knowledge, the connection between multimodal writing and Kashinawá cosmology, politics, and sociocultural organization. In short, Kashinawá multimodal writing, far from being a random phenomenon, is a cultural practice and an integrated part of local knowledge.

In her ethnographic study of the Kashinawá, Lagrou (1996, 1998) defines their concept of identity as a scale between the pole of the *I* and the pole of the *Radical Other*. This cosmological ideology apprehends Radical Otherness as dangerous, but at the same time desirable, representing an insoluble and irresistible paradox where there is no other solution but to allow oneself to become Other. This is a strategy of survival seen as permissible only in the face of potential death, a means toward regeneration after death. The value given to this transformation and to the (albeit dangerous) need for the Radical Other is symbolized in Kashinawá culture by the figure of the anaconda, which periodically changes skin and is seen to survive because of its capacity of constant mutation. The anaconda is also the mythical goddess figure, which brings wisdom, knowledge, and culture.

In Kashinawá multimodal texts, the geometric abstract shapes of the *kene* graphics are seen to metonymically represent the patterns on the skin of the mythical anaconda. As such, *kene* is seen to be an indication of the presence of the anaconda, indicating the path toward the potentiality or process of transformation, and therefore, survival. There is profound respect for the anaconda figure as a manifestation of the inapprehensible power of the Radical Other (it can never be seen in its totality, only partially, metonymically, and through partial visions of the pattern of its skin); this respect appears in the highly codified geometric *kene* graphics and in the great cultural value attributed to these graphics, which paradoxically represent simultaneously a superhuman force, death, and survival. On the other hand, the uncodified and freer drawings of the *dami* figures are seen to represent the product of the transformation process indicated by *kene*. While *kene* incorporates the almost unrepresentable (hence abstract) power of transformation itself, *dami* is seen as representation. As representation, *dami* stands in the place of, or represents something absent—the force of mimesis. On the other hand, *kene* does not repre-

sent; it just is, indicating the performative, potential, dynamic value of "becoming," or poiesis.

Curiously, in the Kashinawá language, the word for *writing* is *kene*. The Western and graphocentric view of writing as a system of secondary representation (supposedly of speech) would seem to equate writing in this sense to the Kashinawá *dami*. However, by equating writing with *kene,* the Kashinawá demonstrate how in their local knowledge they attribute to writing an inapprehensible force, seeing it as a path toward transformation, with a value nearer to the performative *poiesis* than to the representative *mimesis*.

A second, interconnected aspect of Kashinawá local knowledge necessary to understand the phenomenon of multimodal writing, is that of the *nishi-pae* ritual. In this ritual, consisting of the ingestion of *ayahuasca* (known in delocalized universal knowledge as a "hallucinogenic" concoction; Langdon, 1996), synaesthesia attains a peak value. Through the *nishi-pae* ritual, the Kashinawá believe they gain access to the higher cosmological realms where, through contact with the anaconda, they can acquire the knowledge they seek and thus synaesthetically implement a "translation" of the knowledge gained from the higher realms to the everyday. The consumption of *ayahuasca* provokes a vision consisting of two phases: The first phase is marked by the vision of geometric *kene* shapes seen to be indicators of initial contact with the anaconda. This ritual, considered to be a *performance* of Kashinawá cosmology, enacts the contact with the anaconda and hence the paradoxical contact with the simultaneously feared and revered Radical Other, resulting in the dissolution of the I. This first phase of the *ayahuasca* vision performatively enacts this poiesis; no message is received; it is a phase of pure becoming. Once contact has been established with the anaconda, the second phase of the vision begins. At this point the vision becomes populated with *dami* figures and a visual narrative unfolds in a dream-like sequential form. The vision is considered to be the message, knowledge, or wisdom acquired from or delivered by the anaconda.

Whereas the first phase indicates the presence of the forces of transformation and the dissolution of the I, the second phase carries out the transformation itself, in which the message or knowledge acquired through the visual narrative transforms the previous I into another, new I, now strengthened and renewed. Thus, whereas the first phase of the vision indicates the presence of the messenger (the anaconda), the second phase indicates the message itself. Where the first phase indicates the *process* of transformation, the second phase indicates the *product* of the transformation; in other words, the first phase is *experience* whereas the second phase brings the *expression* of the event (see Table 1).

For Lagrou (1996, p. 206), the *nishi-pae* ritual performs another aspect of Kashinawá ideology and connects yet another cultural intertext with multimodal writing. This has to do with the acquisition of new knowledge or new external objects or elements of food; everything that comes from outside the zone immediately adjacent to the home must be cooked. In other words, before being

TABLE 1
Significance of the Appearance of Kene and Dami
Figures in the Kashinawá Visionary Experience

Kene	*Dami*
Geometric	Figurative
Dissolution of I	New I
Process	Product
Messenger	Message
Presence	Absence/re-presentation
Experience	Expression
Poiesis	Mimesis

brought home, external elements should be transformed or domesticated. Whereas women are not permitted contact with the Radical Other, located beyond this zone, in this case seen as the "foreigner" or nonindigenous member of the dominant Eurocentric culture, it is expected that men penetrate deeper into the external reality. This ideology establishes that in the process of contact with the external, the male, once in the external world, isolated and distant from home, should allow himself to be transformed into the Other. Once transformed, he now in turn transforms what he has acquired from the external Other; once this acquired alterity has been domesticated and transformed, the man can now safely take it with him and return home for others to enjoy its benefits. One thus sees in Kashinawá local knowledge the presence of a *dialectics of otherness* where the subject is transformed into the object (Other) and back into the subject, though now constituting a new subject.

Given all these cultural intertexts present in Kashinawá local knowledge, how is one to understand their multimodal texts as a manifestation of the interaction between the previously mentioned aspects of local knowledge and writing? Having analyzed the compositional aspects of published and unpublished multimodal Kashinawá texts on paper, based on texts gathered ethnographically from this community over the past three years, on interviews with members of the community, and on other available ethnographies of the Kashinawá, in Table 2, I summarize the values attributed by local knowledge to *kene* and *dami* and then propose paths toward an understanding of the various multimodal combinations possible between alphabetic script, *kene* and *dami*:

I posit the following readings of six possible combinations available in Kashinawá multimodal texts (see Figure 1):

1. *kene* + f: The text following the graphics has maximal knowledge value (see Figure 1, number 1).
2. *kene* + alphabetic text: The multimodal textual unit has maximal knowledge value (see Figure 1, numbers 2, 3, and 4).

TABLE 2
Significance of Kene and Dami Figures on Paper in
Kashinawá Mulitmodal Writing

Kene	Dami
Experience	Expression
Emphasis on presence of messenger	Emphasis on message
Indicates maximal knowledge value	No knowledge value
Indicates container of something with potential for transformation	Indicates content already transformed
Reinforces the value of the alphabetic text	Repeats/illustrates something in the alphabetic text or something already known

3. *dami* + f: The text has no knowledge value: "art for art's sake" (see Figure 1, number 5).

4. *dami* + alphabetic text: The visual text repeats, paraphrases, or illustrates the alphabetic text; the multimodal unit has no special knowledge value (see Figure 1, number 6).

5. *kene* + *dami:* The text contains a message recognized by the (Kashinawá) reader as having maximal knowledge value (see Figure 1, number 7).

6. *kene* + *dami* + alphabetic script: The text contains a message recognized by the (Kashinawá) reader as having maximal knowledge value (see Figure 1, number 8).

One may thus conclude that, for the Kashinawá, a text with only alphabetic writing, with neither of the two types of drawing, cannot be considered a text per se (that is, considering "text" as a container of information or knowledge or meaning). This is because, if alphabetic writing appears on its own on paper, it would acquire the value of *kene* (remembering that the word means "writing" in Kashinawá); as such, the merely alphabetic text would indicate only an "experience," or the "possibility of expression," with no "message" present. Hence the necessity for the Kashinawá to add figures or sets of figures to an alphabetic text.

These uses of *kene* and *dami* in its multimodal writing demonstrate that, true to its local knowledge, this community did not simply and passively acquire writing as a mere technology of representation; on the contrary, as it does with everything that comes from outside, it allowed itself momentarily to be transformed by writing (at the learning stage), but soon appropriated and transformed the very writing itself, adapting it to its (the community's) own cultural needs and local knowledge, producing a transcultural, hybrid phenomenon. However, the Kashinawá multimodal texts should not be read as static hybrids in the sense Mignolo rejected previously. Considering that writing is an indication of the presence of, and the contact with, the hegemonic delocalized nonindigenous Eurocentric Brazilian culture, hybridity as transculturation is present in the Kashinawá locus of enunciation

itself, and not just in the written objects (multimodal texts) it produces. This process of transculturation, which produces the multimodal text, is dynamic and productive, unlike the stasis of a sterile hybrid. Contrary to Gee (1990), according to whom the force of writing as a secondary delocalized public discourse is capable of transforming a primary local discourse, we here see a case of a local primary discourse (Kashinawá local knowledge and its preliterate concepts of *kene* and *dami*) transforming the apparently delocalized and, hence, secondary discourse of alphabetic writing.[15]

This then is the dynamic of transculturation (rather than mere *convivial contact* between proximate parties), where each subjects the other to processes of transformation, and neither leaves unscathed; in this case neither the local knowledge present in literacy and writing on one hand nor in the Kashinawá community on the other hand leave the context of contact unscathed. More specifically, the multimodal Kashinawá texts exemplify Mignolo's (2000) strategy of the *denial of the denial* of coevalness (p. 287) and demonstrate that local knowledges apparently disqualified by hegemonic knowledges (represented here by the graphocentric stance) with global designs do not passively succumb but undergo a process of translation or transculturation (represented here by the extension of the significance of *kene* and *dami* from weaving, basketry, tattoos, visions, and paper). In this process of transcultural translation the hegemonic knowledge is also itself transformed (as happens with writing in its contact with Kashinawá local knowledge). In the case of the Kashinawá, their cosmology and ideologies help in this process; like the anaconda, they see the path to survival as one that requires constant changes of skin. They also see the necessity to undergo radical change in the face of death, where the change effects a transformation or translation through which survival and an afterlife become possible. The death they perceive themselves to be in the face of (hence the need to undergo radical change) may metaphorically be the death represented by manifestations of Eurocentric hegemonic culture and its consequences: destruction and invasion of their environment, deforestation, and so on.

It is thanks to this dialectic of otherness[16] (with no desire for global designs) present in their local knowledge that the Kashinawá have survived the consequences of the delocalized "common sense" (D'Angelis & Veiga, 1997) originating in the so-called "natural attitude" (Fairclough, 1999) and the global designs of nonindigenous disseminators of literacy and writing. Resisting the simple reproduction of graphocentric views of literacy and utilitarian models of writing, the multimodal texts of the Kashinawá bear testimony to the possibilities of local knowledges of resisting but not rejecting external, dominant influences in a way different to those of the communities described by Scollon and Scollon (1981) and Heath (1982) in North America. Unlike the Kashinawá, these communities did not seem to have the benefit of the same dialectic in their local knowledges; an aware-

ness of these possibilities of local knowledges is even more urgent today in Brazil where indigenous education is back on the agenda.

In my analysis I have attempted to undertake what Mignolo (2000, p. 85) called a strategy of *border thinking*, which he considers fundamental to "de-subalternize" local knowledges and release them from the mechanisms of colonial differences. Border thinking consists of thinking from dichotomous concepts rather than ordering the world in dichotomies. As such, rather than an us and them, colonizer and colonized, master and slave perspective of looking at the world *in* dichotomies, I have sought to think *from* these dichotomous concepts, in which depending where one is located and where one's locus of enunciation is, the dichotomous distinctions between the local and the delocalized become blurred and are redeployed (but are no less pernicious nor do they cease to exist). Border thinking is only possible from within, that is, from a location traversed by the various discourses in conflict; in my specific case as an academic disseminator and theorist of literacy and writing, before my contact with the Kashinawá and their writing practices, I too shared in the graphocentric stance of literacy and writing theories, located within the colonial difference and its power and knowledge collusion. However, struck as I was and contaminated by the evidence of multimodality in my contact with Kashinawá writing, I did not remain unscathed. But first I had to *want* to understand these texts, and not simply reject them. I had to adopt an ethnographic stance unfamiliar to me as an applied linguist at the time. Like Geertz (1983, p. 16), I had to be prepared to see myself as a form of local—and not universal—knowledge confronting contrasting forms of other local knowledges; I had to be aware that "the shapes of knowledge [including my own] are ineluctably local" (Geertz, 1983, p. 4). Although, as an applied linguist—privy to the "ideological" literacy stance—I was aware that language and literacy are used to define reality (Barton, 1994, p. 45), and I was less aware this referred not only to the reality of others, but also to my own reality. I had to implicate myself within a dialectic of otherness, to allow myself to be transformed by a Radical Other and be translated before I was able to translate. In other words, I had to deconstruct the power and knowledge collusion of the colonial difference and deny its accompanying denial of coevalness before I could perceive the localness—the "ecology of the mind" (Barton, 1994, p. 4)—of my own theories and valorize, not eradicate, the localness and ecology of the mind of Kashinawá multimodality. Finally, Mignolo (2000) may sound idealistic when he says "The transcending of the colonial difference can *only* be done from the perspective of subalternity, from decolonization, and therefore from a new epistemological terrain where border thinking works" (p. 45). However, through border thinking, decolonization starts from within, and the possibility becomes real and apparent as exemplified by the Kashinawá community's quietly defiant use of multimodality, reaping benefit from the colonial difference, more than simply a case among cases, a world among worlds.

ENDNOTES

[1]My focus here is on Kashinawá writing produced by adults, in general males, and in the indigenous teacher development courses organized by the CPI do Acre in northwestern Brazil. My material includes manuscripts and printed materials and interviews with the producers of this material.

[2]Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, p. 183) define a multimodal text as one that communicates through more than one semiotic code.

[3]Indigenous schools had previously existed in Brazil, run mainly by missionaries, but they were officially obliged to follow the Brazilian national curriculum. Local indigenous knowledges were not permitted in the curricula of these schools.

[4]My analysis of local knowledge is different from that of Sillitoe (1998) who also calls for an acceptance of local indigenous knowledges; Sillitoe speaks from a different locus of enunciation, from within the "First World," and presupposes the distinction between the "west and the rest."

[5]It is important to note the pernicious effect that publishing has on Kashinawá multimodal texts. The original constitutions of multimodality are generally lost in the editorial process. Authorship of the published texts is attributed, however, to the indigenous writers.

[6]I adopt here a transdisciplinary perspective that involves blurring disciplinary boundaries (Mirzoeff, 1998, p. 287), requiring disciplines to acquire new histories and new means of representation, thus "creating a new object which belongs to no one" (Mirzoeff, 1998, p. 6). This new object is itself created by asking new questions, by changing the problems previously focused on in a particular discipline, and not blindly and habitually repeating established methods (see Mignolo, 2000, p. 306). This also involves assuming a *transcultural* (Mignolo 2000; Mirzoeff, 1998; see below) perspective *across* (hence *trans*) disciplines, conscious of how one's own locus of enunciation (Mignolo, 2000) is dichotomously or multiply traversed by a multiplicity of disciplines and histories.

[7]In fact, Mignolo (2000) shows how the colonial center itself was (although unknowingly) transformed by local cultures in this complex network.

[8]For more on the topic see Signorini (2001).

[9]For a criticism of writing originating in an oral culture, see Plato, who seems to fear the power of synaesthesia in oral culture as mere distraction and diversion; Plato fears that these qualities may pass unimpeded into writing, which could thus become a potentially pernicious form of communication. (see Burke, 1995).

[10]For further discussion of graphocentrism see Menezes de Souza (2000, 2001).

[11]See also, for the "autonomous" perspective, Goody (1977), Goody and Watt (1968), Havelock (1986), and Olson (1977).

[12]See Finnegan (1970) for a discussion of how oral poetry in Africa was always seen by observers from what I have referred to previously as a *locus of enunciation* positioned within a written culture in which the categories of written poetry predominated.

[13]See Boone and Mignolo (1994) for examples of this in pre-Columbian America.

[14]See Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, p. 183) for an emphasis on a transdisciplinary analysis to understand the integrative nature of the multiple codes of meaning in a multimodal text.

[15]I have yet to conclude my analysis on the specific effects of the interaction between Kashinawá local knowledge and the essayist utilitarian model of writing.

[16]See Viveiros de Castro (1992) for how this strategy has characterized Amazonian cultures.

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