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The City and the Forest: Lessons on Consumption in Daniel Munduruku's *Todas as coisas são pequenas*

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In *Liquid Times* (2007), Zygmunt Bauman contends that we live in a society of hunters, characterized by the end of utopia in the modern sense, that is, the end of utopia as an imagined future of prosperity that we aim to reach through progress. Instead, we embark on a never-ending race toward the next goal, the next promotion, or the next successful acquisition of goods.

To further explain what he means by a society of hunters, Bauman contrasts three types of societies, using three different metaphors for the type of individual that characteristically makes up each society in question. These metaphors are based on the relationship that each one of the types has with the future. These types are the gamekeeper, the gardener, and the hunter. The gamekeeper corresponds to the pre-modern subject, who operates in the world in such a way as to prevent the balance created by the divine from being disturbed. The gardener, in turn, is the modern subject, who believes he/she can plan the future and, with careful control, not only maintain but also create harmony. The hunter, on the other hand, as the subject of liquid modernity, is described by Bauman as follows:

> Unlike the two types that happened to prevail before his tenure started, the hunter could not care less about the overall "balance of things," whether natural or designed and contrived. The sole task hunters pursue is another "kill," big enough to fill their game-bags to capacity. Most certainly they would not consider it to be their duty to make sure that the supply of game roaming in the forest will be replenished after (and despite) their hunt. If the woods have been emptied of game due to a particularly profitable escapade, hunters may move to another relatively unspoiled wilderness,

> still teeming with would-be hunting trophies. It may occur to them that sometime, in a distant and still undefined future, the planet might run out of undepleted forests; but if it does, they wouldn't see it as an immediate worry—and certainly not as *their* worry. Such a distant prospect will not after all jeopardize the results of the current hunt, or the next one, and so surely there is nothing in it to oblige me, just one single hunter among many, or us, just one single hunting association among many, to ponder, let alone do something about it. (100, emphasis in the original)

This article explores the depiction of this society of hunters in Native Brazilian writer Daniel Munduruku's *Todas as coisas são pequenas* (2008). I argue that, in this novel, by contrasting life in the city with an indigenous way of life, Munduruku not only criticizes the excesses of consumer culture but also suggests that it is possible to introduce change in this society and potentially restore some type of utopia.[1]

The opening lines of *Todas as coisas* speak directly to the race toward nowhere that characterizes the society of hunters that Bauman describes. The protagonist, who is also the narrator, refers to a feeling within us, "um estranho sentimento de saudade, como se a gente estivesse o tempo todo correndo atrás de algo que não está aqui ou, se está, não consegue ver ou pegar" (7) (a strange feeling of saudade, as if we were constantly running after something that is not here or, if it is, it can neither be seen nor touched). The protagonist's name is Carlos, and he is a successful—at least in terms of capitalist standards—businessman who, after a visit to his family, flies to Greece for a dream vacation in the land of the philosophers that he admires. Before he can make it to Greece, Carlos finds himself in the middle of the Amazon jungle; he is the only survivor of his private plane crash. In the jungle, Carlos goes through a process of transformation as he interacts with an indigenous community under the guidance of a pajé.[2] This transformation, as the present article will show, entails an understanding that consumerist city life is destructive and it must and can be replaced with a society in which one can live in communion with others and with nature. In the words of Carlos's mentor, one must always keep in mind that one must never worry about small things and that, when looking at the big picture of the human existence on the planet, all things are, after all, small by comparison. Carlos's transformation represents the hope that it is possible to construct what I propose to call a society of community keepers rather than a society of hunters. For this process to take place, the narrative suggests, it is necessary to understand the damage that city life, with its ideas of progress and capital accumulation, has done to the planet as a whole, to humans, and to their relationships with one another and with nature.

The novel suggests that, like Carlos, one needs to undergo a process of rebirth not by abandoning the city altogether but by becoming willing to change one's practices and, by extension, space, for the better.

My analysis will first focus on the representation of the city as the space of hunter culture, where greed, corruption, and conspicuous consumption abound. Then, I will address the forest as the space of another kind of individual that I would add to Bauman's triad: the community keeper. The latter embodies the Latin American indigenous philosophy of the Buen Vivir, by which an alternative notion of development focuses on "the good life in a broad sense," that is, a non-exploitative relationship between humans and nature in which cultivating communities organized by horizontal relations of power is key (Gudynas 441). Lastly, I consider Munduruku's proposal that the city, as a practiced place (Certeau 117), is a malleable space open to change. I do so by analyzing the process of transformation of the protagonist, a greedy businessman who turns into a symbol of change and hope for the future after his experience living with an indigenous community.

The City Hunter

In *Todas as coisas*, there is a clear association between the city and an unsustainable way of life. As a space dominated by neoliberal capital and its values, the city, which is initially perceived by the protagonist's peasant parents as a promise land, reveals itself as a dystopic place of exploitation, where people are treated by their employers as slaves (Munduruku 23). This view of the city echoes the cosmography of the Munduruku people, which perceives the protection of their territory from the pariwat—a term used to refer to the white colonizer or invader, which appears in *Todas as coisas*, as we will see later in the analysis—as essential to the maintenance of their people's existence (Scopel et al. 92–93). In this way, "[e]m contraste à cosmografia capitalista, que reduz o território à materialidade, a uma paisagem de 'coisas', reificada como recurso a ser explorado, o território para os Munduruku é vivenciado de maneira ampliada, tido como um lugar de vida e de personificação, sendo que o ambiente não é experimentado como meramente produtivo, mas literalmente reprodutivo da vida social" (Scopel et al. 94) (in contrast with the capitalist cosmography, which reduces territory to materiality, to a landscape of "things," reified as a resource to be exploited, [the concept of] territory for the Mundurukus is understood from a broader perspective, as a place of life and personification, given that the environment is not experienced as merely productive, but rather literally as reproductive of social life). This perspective informs the representation of both the city and the forest that drives the plot of *Todas as coisas*.

While he is in the jungle, Carlos dreams that he is confronted with a city that he describes as "fria, inerte, amarga" (Munduruku 50) (cold, inert, bitter). It is a space of corruption, where it is only possible to get ahead (in the business world in particular) if one is willing to bribe others to get what one wants (54). During his time with the indigenous community, Carlos realizes that he has completely surrendered to the toxic mentality of the city. He recognizes that the city is full of vices, such as his strategy to sign multimillion contracts by showering people with fine wine, drugs, and prostitutes. He admits to manipulating people in his favor to make money.

Immediately prior to the accident and his first meeting with his indigenous mentor, Carlos's behavior mirrors the novel's negative portrayal of the city. He defines himself as a workaholic, and he is proud of being rich and considers himself a winner for having been smart enough to use the system to his advantage (21). Echoing the neoliberal discourse on meritocracy, he firmly believes that every material thing he has acquired was a consequence of his own hard work and thinks of his siblings as lazy people who are after his money when his mother dies. Money is such a priority to him that the first thing that comes to mind when the pilot tells him that the plane is crashing is a concern for what would happen to his assets if there is no one to pass them on (37). Even his religious views are shaped by his relationship with capital, evoking the principles of neo-Pentecostal prosperity theology, according to which church members are expected to invest money into their relationship with God in exchange for blessings in this life in the form of commodities. Munduruku's protagonist indicates his inclinations towards prosperity theology by stating that he no longer believes that God likes the poor but rather that he is "rico e mora num palácio maravilhoso, todo decorado com ouro e pedras preciosas"(32) (rich and lives in a wonderful palace, decorated with gold and precious stones everywhere). This image of wealth is what Carlos wants to emulate, and his point of view echoes prosperity theology's abandonment of the ideology of poverty preached by the Christian faith. This perspective was imported from the United States into Brazil in the 1970s, coinciding with the ever more evident failure of the economic growth during the dictatorship to bring about social equality (Sousa 229). Neo-Pentecostal churches have proven to be appealing to various segments of Brazilian society, with some catering predominantly to the middle and upper classes, such as the Igreja Bola de Neve (Snowball Church) in São Paulo, which was founded in 1999.

Completely disconnected from nature, Carlos offers money to his indigenous mentor in exchange for help when he first meets him, without realizing that his money has little or no value in the forest (Munduruku 44).[3] Colonized by a capitalist mentality, he cannot quite comprehend why the mentor

is taking care of him without asking him for anything in exchange (48). He confesses that he misses money and all the things that it can buy, giving us a glimpse at his consumerist life: "É claro que, depois que enriqueci, andava sempre com roupas de grife e carros importados e tinha uma adega de fazer inveja a qualquer beberrão. Eu estava com saudade disso e da paparicação que a sociedade gosta de proporcionar àqueles que têm dinheiro, ou àqueles que fingem ter" (48) (Of course, after I became rich, I would always wear brand clothes and [drive] imported cars and I had a wine cellar that would make any drunkard jealous. I missed this and how much society bows down to those who have money or to those who pretend that they do). His greed makes him see everything as a potential opportunity for profit: when his mentor talks about getting into his dream to save him, the first thought that comes to Carlos's mind is how much money he would be able to make if he could sell this kind of power (54).

The pajé quickly realizes how attached Carlos is to the consumerist lifestyle of the city and decides to name him Irihi, which means "stubborn." He explains to Carlos that Irihi will be his name until he changes his ways, when he will be given a new name (55). Here begins the pajé's attempt to enact a transformation in Carlos by making him leave his old self and embrace a new philosophy toward life and nature. This recalls Amerindian perspectivism, or the idea that there are different points of view from which to know and understand the world and that it is possible to shift perspectives as a way to "know" (conhecer) what must be "known" (Viveiros de Castro 231). Like other members of the pajé's ethnic group, who went to live in the city only to return ashamed of being indigenous and full of wants and desires that are harmful to them, Carlos needs to be cured from the toxic environment of the city. As the pajé states, the city weakens people and makes them sick. It is made up of lies, where everybody puts on a performance, in contrast with the authenticity of life in the indigenous community: "as pessoas não são bonitas, fingem que são; não são boas, fingem que são; não são honestas, fingem que são" (Munduruku 56) (people are not beautiful, they pretend they are; they are not nice, they pretend they are; they are not honest, they pretend they are). Mentoring Carlos is part of the pajé's own process of purification after returning from city (75). The novel thus portrays the city as a toxic environment, where the ways of living lead the body and the soul to a state that requires cleansing.

The city as a place of excessive consumption appears in stark contrast with the forest. Carlos's mentor comments on the indigenous lifestyle in comparison to that of the white man: "Temos a floresta, e isso nos basta. *Pariwat* acha que sempre pode carregar tudo e fica com medo de mudar de lugar. Enche sua casa de coisas pelas quais nutre tanto sentimento que esquece que a vida é apenas uma constante mudança" (60, emphasis in the original) (We

have the forest and it is enough. *Pariwat* thinks that they can always carry everything with them and is always afraid of changing/moving to another place. They fill their house with things to which they become so attached that they forget that life is constantly changing). From this perspective, consumption is not only wasteful but also a weight that holds people back and that ties them to an illusion of control over life that cannot really be exercised. The mentor also remarks that city dwellers tend to consume as if they could hold on to things forever, as if they are immortal, not understanding that, as his people see it, our lives are ephemerous, just one piece of a much larger ecosystem from which we borrow but which we do not actually own. City life, centered in the Anthropocene, values consumption in destructive ways, disregarding other forms of life and the future of this life on the planet. In other words, the city appears as an environment where there is a lack of understanding. To quote Brazilian indigenous activist and writer Ailton Krenak commenting on COVID-19, "não somos o sal da terra. Temos que abandonar o antropocentrismo; há muita vida além da gente, não fazemos falta na biodiversidade. Pelo contrário, aprendemos que há listas de espécies em extinção. Enquanto essas listas aumentam, os humanos proliferam, destruindo florestas, rios e animais" (7) (we are not the salt of the earth. We have to abandon the Anthropocene; there is much more life [in the world] besides us, biodiversity is not hurt without our existence. Much to the contrary, we learn that there are lists of species on the verge of extinction. While these lists grow longer, humans proliferate, destroying forests, rivers, and animals).

According to the pajé, consumerism prevents individuals from having and expressing empathy for others. Filled with individualism, everyday life in the city strips away people's capacity to show care and love, makes them tough and cold-hearted, and dismantles family ties as parents are forced to delegate the care of their children to others to serve the interests of capital.

A consumerist and selfish mentality is embedded not only in the fabric of social life in the city but also in the very architecture of this space. The pajé notes how the city is made up of square boxes as opposed to the circles that shape the physical structure of the community's dwellings. According to the pajé, people in the city like boxes because "dentro dela[s] podem guardar um monte de coisas" (inside them they can keep a bunch of things), therefore accumulating goods that in practice hold them back instead of moving them forward (71). The quest for accumulation that is typical of the society of hunters stalls human creativity and locks them into a mentality that seems impossible to abandon as they become blind to other possible ways of living. Furthermore, it creates social separation and isolates people in fear of one another. This isolation destroys any sense of the collectivity that one can find in those indigenous tribes whose philosophy shapes and is shaped by the architecture of

their dwellings and their relationships to one another and to the world around them. This special arrangement, the pajé explains, also contributes to and is the result of a sense of equality among the members of the tribe, as opposed to the hierarchical relationships one finds in the city.

Lastly, the novel also calls the reader's attention to the shortcomings of capitalist time that characterizes the city, which is constrained by the goals of capital accumulation. According to the pajé, Carlos needs to free himself from the rhythm of the business world, with its rush toward the future and its little patience for listening to others. In other words, the pajé is advocating for moving in the opposite direction of the society of hunters: the constant movement toward a future of pointless accumulation that consumerist society imposes should be replaced with a careful and thoughtful process of evaluation, of listening and taking in, which eventually leads to learning and true growth. In the pajé's words: "Quem fala tudo o que sabe quase sempre não ensina nada, porque não permite que as pessoas pensem sobre o que ouviram" (82–83) (Those who say everything they know hardly teach anything [to others] because they don't allow people to think about what they've heard). The pajé's words reflect the importance of oral traditions in indigenous culture, as opposed to the status of writing in the city. In his article "Literatura indígena e o tenue fio entre escrita e realidade," Munduruku refers to the people of the city as "gente sem memória" (people without memory), who have had to use writing as a tool to address their fear of forgetting. Nevertheless, in the same article, he defends writing as a technique to allow indigenous memory to remain alive in a (white) world that wants it dead.

The guidance of the pajé demands from Carlos, among other skills, the ability to listen and the patience to take the time to process the information that is passed on to him and to learn from it. Through a pedagogical process of living the philosophy of the pajé's people, including interacting with other natives and being tested on a very specific (and symbolic) challenge of finding his way out of a cave, Carlos undergoes a process of transformation that is akin to a rebirth. At the end of the process, he receives a new name. Instead of being a hunter from the city, he becomes a kind of community keeper, as he learns important lessons about solidarity, equality, respect for the planet, and his place in it. In the following section, I further explore the community keeper as the paradigm of the forest and its opposition to the city.

The Community Keeper

As Eurídice Figueiredo remarks in her article on Eliane Potiguara and Daniel Munduruku, Munduruku's *Todas as coisas* "transmite uma visão polarizada,

em que as pessoas do mundo civilizado têm objetivos excessivamente materialistas, enquanto o mundo indígena está integrado com as forças da natureza" (297) (conveys a polarized view in which people from the civilized world have extemely materialistic goals whereas the indigenous world is integrated with the forces of nature). As we have seen, the city in Munduruku's novel is indeed a space of toxic consumption that makes individuals selfish, shallow, and sick. However, as I will show, the polarization between the city and the forest is less stark when we look at how the city appears in the novel as a space that can be intersected by the forest (a floresta) after Carlos's return to the city after his transformation into a potential agent of change. In this section, I will look at how nature, more specifically the forest, contrasts with the city, offering an alternative and sustainable lifestyle from which Carlos has to learn.

Carlos's learning process is also our learning process as readers. We are most likely city dwellers, and we have a chance to be educated by Munduruku's work, which, as scholars such as Miguel Rocha Vivas have noted, has at its core the education of children, young people, and adults from the city on indigenous ways of living (265). The novel functions, to a certain extent, as part pedagogic tool, part self-help for the reader. Indeed, the narrator does take a kind of professorial tone—bordering on preaching—in his observations. In the following passage, the narrator opens the chapter with a direct address to the reader:

> Tudo o que fiz até agora foi incitar seus pensamentos em torno do que vivemos: família, amigos, religião, amor, trabalho. Certamente, a metade do que eu disse foi desprezada e até considerada sem sentido. Talvez a maneira como eu disse possa ter feito você pensar em alguns temas. Isso é bom. A idéia é quebrar paradigmas, modelos preexistentes em nossa mente; gerar desequilíbrio de emoções que nos ajude a ver a vida com outros olhos. Saiba, nada do que vivemos é real. Ou ao menos esta não é a única realidade possível. Eu conheço outras que podem nos ajudar a viver melhor isso a que chamamos de vida. (17)

> (All I have done until now is to entice your thoughts regarding our lives: family, friends, religion, love, work. Certainly, you've ignored half of what I said and even considered it nonsense. This is good. The idea is to break paradigms, [to let go of] preexisting models in our minds, to generate an imbalance of emotions that helps us to see life from a different perspective. Know that nothing we experience is real. Or at least it is not

> the only possible way. I know other ways that can helps us live better this thing we call life.)

The project of opening space for indigenous voices to be heard is not exclusive to Munduruku's literature but rather permeates the work of other prominent Native Brazilian writers, such as Eliane Potiguara. In her study of Potiguara's work, Ângela Mooney argues that "ao escrever, Eliane Potiguara ocupa um espaço antes interditado e abre caminho para que outras vozes também possam romper com o monopólio da representação do indivíduo e das sociedades ameríndias por escritores não-indígenas, criando assim a construção de novas memórias, diferenciadas das versões oficiais" (71) (by writing, Eliane Potiguara occupies a space once prohibited and opens up the path to other voices being heard, thus breaking with the monopoly of representation of Amerindian individuals and societies by non-indigenous writers, in this way constructing new memories that are alternative to official versions [of history]).

Munduruku's and Potiguara's political engagements are part of a shift in Brazil's education that began to take shape in the 1980s with the creation of the Escolas da Floresta and the emergence of a wealth of literary and cultural production by and about the experiences of Native Brazilians. This shift opened up space for a new indigenous identity to be established, one that is constructed by members of indigenous populations themselves in contrast to the views of those who are non-indigenous (Figueiredo 55). Deconstructing European perspectives engrained in the Brazilian imagination, including in literature, Munduruku seeks to present "novos olhares sobre o índio brasileiro, em que não vigorem os estereótipos de barbárie, exótico, preguiça, animália, ingenuidade, canibalismo, atraso cultural e ignorância" (new perspectives on the Native Brazilian, which do not focus on the stereotypes of the barbaric, exotic, lazy, animalistic, naive, cannibal, and culturally backwards and ignorant) (Santos 61).

An essential part of Carlos's transformation is learning to question European stereotypes of Amerindians, which are perpetuated to this date in Brazilian society. On their first encounter, Carlos is afraid that the pajé is a cannibal who will eat him; in the end, he takes what he has learned from the indigenous community back to the city. As a result of his botched flight to Greece to visit the land of the great philosophers he values so much, Carlos learns that there is much knowledge and wisdom to be learned from the indigenous populations right in his homeland: an entire philosophy that was ignored by him when only Western philosophy existed in his repertoire.

Much of this philosophy, when incorporated into city life, echoes the Buen Vivir concept, an umbrella term for different positions on development stemming from indigenous culture from various Latin American countries.

Eduardo Gudynas defines Buen Vivir as "alternatives to development focused on the good life in a broad sense" and adds that

> [i]t is a plural concept with two main entry points. On the one hand, it includes critical reactions to classical Western development theory. On the other hand, it refers to alternatives to development emerging from indigenous traditions, and in this sense the concept explores possibilities beyond the modern Eurocentric tradition. . . . It includes the classical ideas of quality of life, but with the specific idea that well-being is only possible within a community. Furthermore, in most approaches the community concept is understood in an expanded sense, to include Nature. Buen Vivir therefore embraces the broad notion of well-being and cohabitation with others and Nature. (441)

One of the most emblematic moments of the novel that speaks to the Buen Vivir philosophy is when the pajé argues that "[h]omem branco tem que compreender que a vida na floresta é uma troca. Hoje o animal morre para alimentar pajé, amanhã pajé morre para alimentar a terra que vai dar alimento para o animal. É uma troca feita de lealdade" (Munduruku 54) (the white man has to understand that life in the forest is an exchange. Today an animal dies to feed the pajé, tomorrow the pajé dies to feed the soil that will feed the animal. It is an exchange grounded in loyalty). In other words, hunting in the forest is not done for the purpose of greedy accumulation as it is in the city, but, rather, it is rather enacted with the understanding that humans are part of an ecosystem in which they will also be hunted by other animals. Furthermore, the pajé's words suggest a virtually universal notion in Amerindian thought, which is the idea that humans and animals both share a human nature, rather than an animal origin from which humans have evolved (Viveiros de Castro 237). In the Munduruku cosmography, one must ask permission from the "mother of the place" (the invisible being that protects forests, animals, etc.) before using any natural resource (Scopel et al. 94). There is a respect for nature and a perception that one is only a mere part of it, in no way superior to other beings. The predatory culture of the city finds no place in the forest, where, as the pajé notes, they do not prey on the vulnerable: they choose carefully which animals to kill, avoiding those that are in a disadvantageous position and cannot defend themselves (Munduruku 104).

The idea of extracting from nature what one needs as opposed to exploiting it to attain one's desire is a lesson of which Carlos is constantly reminded while in the forest. At first, he cannot quite grasp the concept of being a nomad,

which, as the pajé points out, is a way of life that prevents accumulation of material things (60). As he further teaches Carlos, the pajé shows that the idea of owning things is not part of indigenous culture, where everything is shared and whatever is extracted from nature is seen as simply borrowed. Above all, there is an awareness that future generations should also be able to benefit from what nature has to offer, just as much as they have the obligation to "entregar bonito aos que vêm depois" (69) (pass it along in good condition to those who come later on). This point of view echoes Munduruku's definition of territorialidade for indigenous populations. For them, the concept of territory is not a concrete piece of land that can be delimited or bought and sold but, rather, a place of dream and memory, where one lives fully integrated with nature, extracting from it only that which one needs, without degrading it (Munduruku "Terra e território").

This spirit of preservation and sharing influences the pajé's sense of time, which is focused on the present, not as an eternal trap as is the case in the city but rather as the moment to enjoy life in community. In this sense, the future is not the moving target of accumulation that one day will make you happy but rather the time for those who are living to enjoy what they borrow from nature. The future is, thus, not a utopia that will ultimately never be achieved but rather a very concrete continuation of a present of harmony that is neither put in danger by human actions—particularly by white humans—nor tainted by the disappointment of never being able to accomplish enough. Carlos quickly perceives that "todos tinham um jeito muito próprio de se viver e que tudo se fazia em comum. Eram pessoas que conversavam muito, riam muito, brincavam muito. Havia um estado permanente de felicidade. Parecia que todos estavam sempre de bem com a vida" (92) (everyone had a unique way of living and everything was done in community. They were people who talked a lot, laughed a lot, played a lot. There was a permanent state of happiness. It seemed like everyone was always in good terms with life). He contrasts this way of life with his own experience in the city, which he summarizes as: "[t]odos estão sempre infelizes ou esperando a felicidade chegar no dia seguinte, nas férias seguintes, no dia da aposentadoria. É uma carga pesada viver" (92) (everyone is always unhappy or waiting for happiness to come the next day, the next vacation, or on the day they retire. It is a heavy load to carry in life).

With this perception of time comes a slower pace in everyday life. Unlike in the city, in the forest there is time for listening to others, for processing what one listens to, and for learning. Throughout the journey, the pajé tells stories to Carlos little by little, interrupting them at points that he deems worthy of reflection. At first impatient with the interruptions, Carlos gradually learns the value of pausing and reflecting, realizing that there are alternatives to the frantic pace of city life.

Along with the slower pace, this way of life promotes cooperation rather than competition, as noted by Carlos when he comments on the division of labor in the community. He notes that everyone performs multiple tasks, leading and being led at different times. There is, as he points out, no fixed leadership but rather a system of cooperation in which the task of leading is distributed horizontally among the members of the community. Carlos considers incorporating this system in his management style if he is able to return to the city (122).

In this way, Carlos finds out, as does the reader, that there is much to be learned from the people of the forest and that, as both the pajé notes and Carlos realizes later, they are not uncivilized people (79). Looking from the perspective of the forest, it is the people of the city who are uncivilized in their predatory, greedy, dishonest, and exploitative way of living. As the pajé states of those living in the city:

> Será que não entendem que, se continuarem vivendo suas vidas de modo tão mesquinho, nada sobrará para seus filhos? Quem vai alimentar eles se seus pais destruírem tudo à sua volta? Homem branco não compreende a vida. A fala deles é de morte, de violência, de ódio. Que mal a mãe-terra fez a eles? Não foi ela quem lhes deu a vida? Como, então, podem querer furar seu coração, arrancar seus cabelos, destruir seu sorriso? Não compreendo esse homem que diz ser tão civilizado, mas não sabe cuidar de si mesmo. (144–45)

> (Might it be that they don't understand that, if they continue to live their lives in such a pitiable manner, nothing will be left for their children? Who is going to feed them if their parents destroy everything around them? The white man doesn't understand life. His speech proclaims death, violence, and hatred. What evil has Mother Earth done to them? Wasn't she the one who gave them life? How, then, can they want to stab her heart, pull her hair out, destroy her smile? I don't understand this man that claims to be so civilized but cannot take care of himself.)

These are, however, only some of the many lessons that Carlos learns while in the forest. Indeed, he undergoes a process of transformation that culminates with him receiving a new name, a symbolic moment in the narrative that I will explore in the following section.

Rebirth

While there is a clear and radical contrast between the city and the forest as spaces of destruction and care respectively, the novel indicates that these spaces are not necessarily static, for their dwellers may experience each other's territory. Nevertheless, the experiences of the Natives in the city are always portrayed as negative and, in the case of the pajé, for instance, the experience requires healing upon his return to the forest. Ultimately, the novel suggests that it is the forest that must influence the city and not the other way around. Munduruku indicates the possibility of a change in city culture by representing the process of transformation of the protagonist, who leaves the tribe much less greedy, more empathetic, more patient, and above all more aware of the damage of capitalistic and consumer culture than when he first arrived.

Therefore, the city appears in the novel as what de Certeau would call a "space," that is, a practiced place. Place departs from space, which de Certeau defines as that which "exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables." In contrast, he describes place as "the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence" (117–18). De Certeau proposes that places can be transformed into spaces and vice-versa through stories, which implies that spaces are malleable and therefore subject to change. *Todas as coisas* leaves open the possibility of transforming the negativity of the city into a more positive—because sustainable—culture of sharing and caring rather than consuming and competing. The novel does so by not only tracing Carlos's transformation but also by signaling the positive effect that he can have upon returning home. Following de Certeau, his body becomes a frontier, that is, "a space in between" or a "middle place, composed of interactions and interviews . . . a narrative symbol of exchanges and encounters" (127).

Carlos's transformation happens gradually, culminating with his symbolic journey into a cave, which is a kind of rite of passage that he must endure to be welcomed into the community as one of its members. The cave is a direct reference to Plato's allegory of the cave: by going through it, Carlos is freed from the illusions of city life and he comes out with much more awareness of the world of simulacra that characterizes the city. Among other lessons, he learns that he was a slave to capitalism, and he feels ashamed for having once valued "sucesso, poder, glória e riqueza" (Munduruku 103) (success, power, glory, and wealth). He becomes more patient and learns to listen to others attentively, changing his relationship with time as he abandons the capitalistic rush to always be "productive." As a result, he becomes more attuned with nature, and one day, while spending time by the river, he confesses that he

wants to stay in the forest longer and to feel connected with nature. He describes this feeling: "esse era um sentimento novo para mim. Era como se eu compactuasse com todas as formas de vida que existiam no planeta. . . . Em tudo o que eu fazia, estava inteiramente envolvido por aquela sensação de pertencimento ao universo" (124) (this was a new sentiment to me. It was as if I were in sync with all forms of life that existed on the planet. . . . In everything I did, I was entirely immersed in that feeling of belonging to the universe). As these examples illustrate, he begins to incorporate the values of Buen Vivir, seeing himself as part of nature and envisioning a different way of life and a different concept of quality of life. Indeed, his new sense of community is key in his process of transformation. About living with the indigenous community, Carlos says: "Convivendo com vocês durante esse tempo, consegui aprender muita coisa que eu não entendia antes porque estava totalmente voltado para mim mesmo. Aqui pude aprender que precisamos existir para todos. Nossa felicidade depende da felicidade das pessoas ao nosso redor" (126) (Living with you during this time, I came to learn many things I didn't understand before because I was totally focused on myself. Here I was able to learn that we need to exist for everyone. Our happiness depends on the happiness of the people around us).

After successfully going through his rite of passage in the cave, Carlos's transformation is marked by his name change. He sheds his name, which means stubborn, a negative trait that is associated with his city self. After the rite, he is reborn, as the pajé puts it, and he receives the name Idibi, which means "água, rio que corre em direção ao mar que não teme obstáculos ou barreiras" (153) (water, river that runs toward the ocean and that does not fear obstacles or barriers). The new name suggests positive associations with nature. Therefore, where he was once rigid, he learns to be fluid. While the quality of not being afraid of obstacles is often appropriated by neoliberal thought as a justification for exploitative relationships, in this case it is associated with nature and thus re-signified as a positive force of transformation. Water is commonly associated with transformation, as indicated by rituals, such as christening and baptisms, which mark the beginning of new spiritual cycles in one's life. In the Munduruku cosmography, water is an essential part of collective self-care, seen in medicinal baths, for instance (Scopel et al. 93). In this way, Carlos becomes the very symbol of transformation, or cure if you will, which is embedded in his name. Water, as a force of transformation and new beginnings of positive cycles, also appears in the evocative passage below, which describes one of Carlos's dreams after his rite of passage:

> Lá de cima, via tudo ao nosso redor. Via inclusive a mim mesmo. Via pessoas, automóveis, trens, aviões. Via o progresso da cidade grande e gente sofrendo por isso. O gavião me suspendeu para mais longe e pude olhar o céu e sentir como é boa a sensação de estar voando, livre e desimpedido das amarras do dia-a-dia. Vi dois momentos, vivi duas emoções. Lá no alto, o gavião transformou-se em nuvem e me fez voar com mais vagar pelo céu. Eu pensava que aquela nuvem fosse se dissipar, mas depois ela se transformou em chuva, que fertilizava a terra para depois encontrar com o rio e começar o ciclo de novo. (Munduruku 152)

> (From up above, I could see everything around us, including myself. I could see people, cars, trains, planes. I could see the progress of the big city and people suffering as a consequence of it. The hawk took me further away and I could look at the sky and feel how good it is to fly, free and unimpeded from the shackles of everyday life. I saw two moments, I experienced two emotions. Up above the hawk turned into a cloud and made me fly, wandering even more in the sky. I thought that cloud would dissipate, but then it turned into rain, which fertilized the soil to then meet the river and start the cycle all over again.)

His flight over the city represents his freedom from the negative values of city life. The water breathes renewed life into the city by fertilizing the soil, representing the healing interference of the way of living of the people from the forest in city life. Here there is a parallel between the character and the water: like the rain, Carlos will bring a potentially positive change by reconnecting the city with nature and the values that he learned during his time with the indigenous community. The river mentioned in the quote is also a symbol of Carlos as this agent of transformation. According to the pajé, the river, much like Carlos after he leaves the cave, "vem de dentro do coração da Mãe Vermelha e por isso ele sai distribuindo notícias pelo mundo todo para as pessoas que sabem ouvi-lo" (153) (comes from inside the heart of the Red Mother and because of this it distributes news around the world to people who know to listen to it). To Carlos's initial disbelief in the possibility of change, the pajé responds with hope for a future of less consumerism and more attunement with nature. The pajé states that it is still possible to start over and that all that is needed is to believe that this change is possible (138). Despite the novel's dystopic portrayal of the city, the novel ends with a hopeful outlook and stresses the possibility of rewriting the city and, following de Certeau,

walking the city to create other possible spaces. The novel equally affirms the possibility of the existence of an alternative to the hunter: the community-keeper that Carlos becomes.

The novel ends with a tone of fantastic narrative. Carlos wakes up at the accident site as if his experiences with the indigenous community had never happened. He learns from those who rescue him that it is indeed a miracle that he is still alive and he had been missing for seven days. One of the rescuers tells him "[o] senhor renasceu" (156) (you have been born again). The narrative thus ends with the suggestion that Carlos has been reborn not only figuratively but quite possibly literally as well. In his new life, he shows signs of changing from his previous self. The day after he returns home, he goes to the cemetery to ask his parents for forgiveness. As he puts it, Carlos makes peace with this past and reproduces the respect for his ancestors that he learned from the indigenous community (157).

Carlos continues to put into practice what he learned from the pajé and his community, by sharing his wealth with others and attempting to make a positive impact on society. Carlos creates a kind of university for low-income people, where he shares what he learned during his time in the forest. He describes this university as follows:

> Não é uma universidade igual a tantas que existem por aí e que só querem ganhar rios de dinheiro; ela está voltada ao ensino de práticas alternativas de convivência entre homem e natureza, e os alunos são pessoas que poderão agir na transformação da sociedade. Isso mesmo, na transformação da sociedade, porque ainda acredito na sociedade e acho que ela tem jeito se soubermos manipular suas descobertas e sua inventividade a favor das pessoas. (157)
>
> (It is not a university like so many others out there that only want to make loads of money; it is dedicated to the teaching of the alternative practices of coexistence between man and nature, and the students are people who will be able to participate in the transformation of society. Yes, that is exactly it, the transformation of society, because I still believe in society and I think it can be fixed if we can manipulate its discoveries and its creativity in favor of the people.)

In this passage, Carlos indicates that he has incorporated not only the knowledge that he gained from the pajé but also his optimistic perspective

toward the future of humankind. He does recognize, however, that the path to transforming consumer society into a society of solidarity and communion is a long one. Nevertheless, he is determined to contribute toward this goal. He himself is still immersed in the capitalist world linguistically, as evidenced by the way that he frames his creation of the university as part of his endeavors as an "entrepreneur" (157), which is a term dear to neoliberal thought. If we extend this reflection to the reality of indigenous writers in Brazil, the need to enact activism, like in many other areas of everyday life today, also needs to be met within capitalism itself, as the work of these writers depend on the economy of the book industry to circulate their ideas.

Finally, Carlos realizes that, while he valued Greek philosophers and dreamed of visiting their land, the best journey he could have made was his journey into the forest, where he gained knowledge of the indigenous people with whom he spent his time. He now values this knowledge as something that "pode nos proporcionar um novo modo de pensar, que em nada deixa a desejar aos grandes filósofos gregos" (158) (can provide us with a new way of thinking, which is in no way less than what the great Greek philosophers have to offer).

The knowledge that Carlos acquires during his time in the forest, while coming mostly from the pajé, is ultimately collective knowledge that is produced and shared among the members of the indigenous community. Indeed, as we have seen, Carlos learns from others besides the pajé as he interacts with and participates in the everyday life of the community. In an interview with Cristina Ferreira-Pinto Bailey and Regina Zilberman, Daniel Munduruku highlights this kind of production of knowledge, noting that the idea of the intellectual as someone who thinks for others does not fit with indigenous societies. For him, "todos estão comprometidos com o bem-estar e não precisam de quem pense por eles" (222) (all are committed to the well-being [of everyone] and don't need anyone to think for them).

Conclusion

In the previously mentioned interview, Munduruku makes the following comment when asked whether it is utopic to believe that Brazil will one day become a racial democracy:

> Eu acho utópico, sim. Mas utopia tem a ver com esperança. Eu sou esperançoso. Tenho exercitado minha esperança quando vou às escolas e vejo as crianças desejosas do encontro com o 'diferente' que se apresenta diante delas; quando converso com jovens e observo o desejo da

> revolução; quando encontro indígenas atuando em diferentes lugares e ocupando posições de destaque nos cenários culturais ou político. Diariamente faço minha profissão de fé no ser humano brasileiro. Quero crer e creio na possibilidade da aproximação positiva e numa revolução silenciosa que vai acontecendo no coração de cada cidadão dessa nossa pátria. (223)

> (I do think it's utopic. But utopia has to do with hope. I am hopeful. I am hopeful when I go to schools and I see children eager for an encounter with the "different" that is in front of them; when I talk to young people and I see their desire for a revolution; when I find Native Brazilians doing work in different places and occupying important positions in the cultural or political arenas. I renew my faith in the Brazilian human being daily. I want to believe, and I do believe in positive contact and in a silent revolution that takes place in the hearts of every citizen of our country.)

Munduruku's words indicate that there is potential for change at the individual level, which, one would hope, would lead to deeper transformations at the societal level. This vision of individual transformation leading to collective change might be considered rather unrealistic and, to a certain extent, even capitalist because it is centered on the individual. Nevertheless, it is based on the dissemination of awareness, which presupposes a view beyond the individual. Therefore, it could be seen as a potential starting point from within capitalism, the belly of the beast, which would lead to a less greedy existence of solidarity and respect for the planet and for the life on it.

Without a doubt, Munduruku's novel *Todas as coisas são pequenas* conveys this hope. By depicting the transformation of what seems to be one of the greediest men imaginable, Munduruku affirms the possibility that indigenous culture can have a positive impact on the city, narrowing, if not closing, the gap between hunter culture and everyday practices informed by the Buen Vivir philosophy. His depiction thus proposes that it is possible to envision utopia. The city, as a place of practice, appears as a space that is evil but malleable and open to change.

The transformation of capitalist society, the novel suggests, while initiated elsewhere—in this case, the forest—can ultimately come from within capitalism itself. Carlos, now a new person, is charged with the task to go back to the city and enact change by sharing his wealth with others and by putting his newly acquired knowledge into practice. Like the river that his new

name signifies, he is to run through the city, inscribing new ways of living and therefore changing places into spaces. *Todas as coisas* is, in this sense, a positive narrative of hope that, like narratives by other authors in contemporary Brazilian literature, such as Milton Hatoum (Rodrigues) and Marcus Vinícius Faustini (Bezerra), portrays the possibility of a future of (cautious) hope.

As of August 2020, when this article was written, the challenges that indigenous populations are facing in Brazil under the administration of the far-right-wing president Jair Bolsonaro paint a rather unfortunate picture of the future. With virtually no aid from the federal government, Native Brazilians battle COVID-19, which was brought into the forest by city dwellers, either on their own or with the help of NGOs. Elders and traditional healers, like the pajé in Munduruku's novel, are dying out and, with them, invaluable history, culture, and knowledge is being lost.[4] Munduruku's own community has lost many of these sábios or wise ones (Phillips). Now, more than ever, it is necessary to renew the hope *and the fight* for the alternative to consumer society that *Todas as coisas* portrays. The pandemic has unearthed many of the hidden, negative consequences of consumer capitalism, as leaders profess their disregard for the life of elders or for life in general for the sake of "saving the economy."[5] The pandemic has also made abundantly clear the exploitation of essential workers, as well as the deep individualism of citizens who refuse to wear face coverings to protect public health. On the other hand, it has also unveiled the earth's astounding resilience, as the world watches the planet heal in those certain areas where human activity was forced to come into a halt. Let us hope that one of the lessons learned from this catastrophic reality is that, as Munduruku's protagonist learns, in the big scheme of things "todas as coisas são pequenas" (no material thing is that important).

Notes

1. Like many indigenous writers in Brazil, Daniel Munduruku uses the name of his ethnic group as his last name.
2. Pajé refers to the individual in an Amerindian community who connects its members to the spiritual world through rituals and healing practices. The word comes from tupi-guarani languages and is akin to shaman, a complex and often misunderstood term that refers to a similar role common to the native peoples of Asia and the far south of the Americas (Cesarino).
3. Regarding the value of money for indigenous populations in Brazil, Vanzolini argues that, while the introduction of money into indigenous communities in the Alto Xingu

region via the income distribution program Bolsa Família has certainly resulted in changes in the social relations within these communities, as well as in how they interact with the city, it is inaccurate to conclude that these populations have been naively conquered by capital. Studying the concept of sorcery among the Aweti people, Vanzolini concludes that personal relationships, rather than money and consumer goods, remain at the center of Aweti culture (335). Novo's research, in turn, shows that the Kalapalo people see money not as an end but as a means to obtain desired goods of various types. The author notes that this relationship with money has created a vicious circle, where progressively more money is needed, resulting in communities needing to go more often and stay longer in the city, which increases expenses and, therefore, the need for money (86).

4. According to the Munduruku people, the virus was in some cases brought in by government agents or by members of the community who were forced to go to the city to pick up food because the emergency kits provided by the federal government were either insufficient or simply absent (Phillips).
5. In March 2020, lieutenant governor of Texas, Dan Patrick, following Donald Trump's lead by reopening the economy, suggesting that the elderly would be willing to die from COVID-19 in order to save the country's economy (Beckett).

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