



Grafting Indigenous Ways of Knowing Onto Non-Indigenous Ways of Being

The (Underestimated) Challenges of a Decolonial Imagination

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Abstract This article examines issues that arise when Indigenous epistemologies are interpreted through non-Indigenous ontologies in research settings. I use the concept of grafting to refer to the act of transplanting ways of knowing and being from a context where they emerge naturally to a context where they are artificially implanted. I start exploring this context through a poem that outlines the difficulties Indigenous people tend to face when inhabiting academic spaces whose architecture is built on the violent historical foundations of modernity. Next, I briefly outline critiques of recognition and inclusion in political and educational spheres to highlight how liberal discourses have tended to offer only conditional forms of integration that support dominant ways of thinking by presenting them as benevolent and inclusive. I then turn to a discussion of the implications of this analysis for Indigenous research methodologies. I conclude with tentative suggestions for further work in this area.

Keywords: Indigenous, knowledge, methodology, onto-epistemology, grafting, imaginary, academia, decolonial, assimilation, racism, eurocentrism

Introduction

While recognizing the need for positive scholarship advancing the field of Indigenous research methodologies, the main concern of this paper is the utilitarian risk to all-too-quickly instrumentalize and embrace Indigenous research methodologies as quick-fix solutions to or escapes from deep-rooted and ongoing (neo)colonial thinking. The contribution of this article lies in problematizing this process by offering a synthesis of insights and questions that have been asked at the margins or outside of the field of education. Rather than providing packaged solutions to the problems

raised in this paper, my intent is to draw attention to the need for a form of engagement that is not afraid of difficulties, complexities, impossibilities, and the limits of thinking – a form of practice that speaks indirectly, combining wit and wisdom without reducing the world to what can be captured by thought. I argue that this form of thinking is inherently 'Indigenous' and that it can help us imagine each other, education, and research 'otherwise'.

My starting point is the difficult paradox faced by Indigenous peoples across the world. On the one hand, there is the need to survive within modern societies based on an unsustainable single story of development as social-economic accumulation. On the other hand, there is the need to, *at the same time*, keep alive and pass down alternative possibilities for noncapitalist existence based on reinvigorated ancestral ways of knowing and being (Ahenakew, Andreotti, Cooper, & Hireme, 2014; Alfred, 2005; Battiste, 2002; Cajete, 2000; Coulthard, 2014; Kovach, 2009; Kuokkanen, 2008; Marker, 2004; Royal 2009). Mainstream practices and policies in education have focused solely on the former orientation, especially contemporary policies framed by ideals of economic competitiveness in global knowledge societies. Indigenous educational initiatives, while selectively supporting the first orientation, have drawn attention to the second orientation in their call to protect, revitalize, and uphold the value of Aboriginal cultures, languages, and identities, emphasizing their contribution to global human heritage (Battiste, 2005; Donald, 2009; Penitito, 2010; L. T. Smith, 2012).

However, recent scholarship has problematized how strategies of inclusion and integration of Indigenous knowledges have created a form of inclusion where dominant norms and populations still determine what can be said and how (Ahmed, 2012; Battiste & Henderson, 2009; Coulthard, 2014; Donald, 2009; Penitito, 2010). This can be seen when Indigenous culture is instrumentalized in the name of school attrition, retention, and achievement (Cooper, 2012). In this article I use the concept of grafting as a visual narrative for this process. Grafting is used in biology as the process of transplanting something from one organism into another (e.g., hybrid plants or cell/skin implants). Grafting, in itself, is neither good nor bad. Indeed, hybridity can be a generative process. However, in the context of grafting Indigenous knowledges into non-Indigenous ways of knowing, we are operating with severely uneven environments shaped by historical circumstances where the grafting/hybridizing does not happen as a mutual exercise, but as assimilation. Grafting, in this sense, can further contribute to the elimination of Indigenous peoples as distinct Indigenous peoples both in their relationship with the state, in their relation to the land, and in terms of the perceived worth of their knowledge.

First, I start with a brief overview of problematic aspects of the interface between Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of knowing. Second, I illustrate the complex context of Indigenous experience in the academy through a poem, and I address it through the literature. Third, I introduce the critique of recognition and inclusion at a broader political level through the recent scholarship of Glen Coulthard (2014) and Sara Ahmed (2012) before I turn to a discussion of implications for Indigenous research methodologies. Finally, drawing on the work of Vanessa Andreotti (2016), I present Vanessa's cartography of frames of thinking of the modern subject that maps the reasons why inclusion/integration is inevitably problematic. I conclude with a few ideas of how we can begin to experiment with strategies to subvert grafting in Indigenous research.

The Severely Uneven Interface Between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous World Views

As a Cree scholar whose upbringing was outside middle-class sensibilities, I feel I have had to graft myself into the academic context. I wrote the poem 'Academic Indian Job Description' to express some of the difficulties I have experienced myself or have seen others experience in grafting their Indigenous subjectivity and grounded normativity (Coulthard, 2014) into academic contexts and expectations. Excerpts of this poem illustrate what is subsequently outlined in the literature.

Academic Indian Job Description: Have To Know [Excerpt]

have to know
western knowledge and education
plus the critique of
western knowledge and education

have to know
indigenous 'culture' and education
plus the critique and the critique of the critique of
indigenous 'culture' and education

have to know
how to embody expected authenticity
and how to embody expected critique
of expected authenticity

have to know

when and where to use indigenous literature and style

and when and where to use the Western canon and style

to build legitimacy and credibility for indigenous thought and experience

have to know

when to vilify, to romanticize, to essentialize

when to apologize, to complexify, to compromise

when and who to be accountable to and why

have to know

how to reject modernity, how to be a modern Indian

how to ignore contradictions

how to deny incommensurabilities

have to know

when and how to perform at the same time

competence, confidence, boldness, heroic rebelliousness

and humility, compliance and gratitude for the opportunity

have to know

how to respond to (or hide from)

'allies' seeking self-affirmation and redemption

through helping you and your community

have to know

how to be an intellectual, an activist, a therapist, and an entrepreneur

how to improve retention, attrition, and social mobility

and how to stop exploitation and ecological disaster

have to know

how to educate 'your people', liberal allies, immigrants, rednecks, colleagues

how to relate to gang members, business sponsors, elders, politicians

how to speak with the crows, the trees, the sea, and the media

have to know

languages lost and found of family, communities, earth, spirit

languages imposed of nation, property, individualism, competition

and institutional academic language of secular liberal humanism

have to know

how to indigenize and decolonize

disciplines, protocols, ethics, and methodologies

to make critical research feel good for non-indigenous people

have to know

how to package all of this in a foreign English language

to convince top ranked journals and performance analysts

that you, too, against all odds, have market value

have to know

how to live with the guilt of having credentials, a secure job

and the awareness of compliance with a rigged system

built on the broken back and wounded soul of your family members

Apply online now.

The denial and denigration of non-Western ways of knowing has been part and parcel of European colonialism and a primary means by which the universality of Western knowledge was asserted (Andreotti, 2011; Santos, 2007; L. T. Smith, 2012) and used as a justification for the dispossession, destitution, and genocide of populations who were perceived to be lacking knowledge of universal worth (but who occupied lands of strategic importance). Contestation of this epistemological dominance has resulted in the successful exposure of Western prejudices against Indigenous knowledge and growing inclusion of Indigenous worldviews in the curricula and research for mainstream schools (Battiste & Henderson, 2009). Notwithstanding the importance of these developments, a growing number of Indigenous scholars have critiqued the way this inclusion of Indigenous ways of knowing and being in mainstream institutions are conditional upon their incorporation into the onto-epistemological norms and values of liberal pluralism (Ahmed, 2012; Andreotti, Ahenakew, & Cooper, 2011; Coulthard, 2014; Grosfoguel, 2012; Povinelli, 2001, 2002; A. Smith, 2009).

This critique points to the fact that when Indigenous knowledge is recognized by mainstream knowledge production mechanisms, it tends to be presented through the frames of Western epistemology rather than on its own terms. Yet, as Battiste (2002) suggests, 'there are limits to how far [Indigenous knowledge] can be comprehended from a Eurocentric point of view' (p. 2). Western frames cannot comprehend, for example, the way Indigenous knowledge places 'animals, plants, and landscapes in the active role of teacher' (Marker, 2004, p. 106) or the notion that knowing 'literally

comes from the ground, above, and beyond, from the wisdoms of continuous meta-physical engagements and familiarity with “all our relations” (Ahenakew et al., 2014, p. 222; see also Battiste & Henderson, 2009). Santos (2007) refers to this limitation of Western legibility as ‘abyssal thinking’, stating that, on one side of the abyssal line, there is knowledge considered to be objective and to have universal worth; on the other side there are values and traditions with only local (if any) value. Those who lean towards the edge of the abyss to explore what they can see perceive themselves as objective, neutral, and transparent (devoid of ‘culture’) and select and describe what they see according to what can be made intelligible within their own cultural referents and imaginaries.

Kuokkanen (2008) sees this inability to think beyond one’s referents as the basis for mainstream’s society’s failure to recognize and reciprocate the gift of Indigenous ways of knowing. As a result, patterns of epistemological dominance remain in place, and cognitive injustice continues to be the central object of critique in Indigenous studies and other fields. In response, Santos (2007) advocates for developing an ‘ecology of knowledges’ that recognizes the ‘plurality of heterogeneous knowledges (one of them being modern science) and on the sustained and dynamic interconnections between them without compromising their autonomy’ (p. 11). In this ecology, every knowledge system offers both indispensable gifts and limitations, which also means that each requires the complementary co-presence of other systems. In this article, I extend Santos’s insights to affirm that many Indigenous worldviews are already multiepistemic, enacting the ‘ecology of knowledges’ he describes. For instance, Cajete (2000) has illustrated the Native American medicine wheel as a multi-perspectival and multimodal tool of engagement with the world (see also Ahenakew et al., 2014; Andreotti, Ahenakew, & Cooper, 2012). However, my main argument points to the practical difficulties that arise in the enactment of an egalitarian simultaneity of incommensurable worldviews in a historical context of severely uneven grounds of negotiation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Very seldom we ask what is lost in translations between global/cosmopolitan and Indigenous/local knowledges (cf. Bhabha, 1994; Castro, 1992; Souza, 2012). Very rarely do we ask how Indigenous peoples cope with the conflicting demands that come from living in multidimensional worlds (cf. Abram, 1996; Alexander, 2005; Andreotti, Ahenakew, & Cooper, 2012; Castro, 1992; Ermine, 1995), as my poem illustrates.

I draw on Indigenous studies and related literatures that emphasize the need to maintain a place for existential approaches to knowing and being alongside (though not in place of) political demands for more ethical recognition of Indigenous worldviews (Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement, 2009; Alexander, 2005;

Buendia, 2003; Garrouette, 1999; Jackson, 2010; Mika, 2013; Royal, 2009). These theoretical insights suggest that in many worldviews, human knowledge cannot adequately capture the ineffable nature of our spiritual and material interdependencies and reciprocal obligations with both human and non-human beings, including the Earth itself. **Appreciating these limits of knowledge might in turn enable more humble ‘conversation, not domination, with a range of relational knowledges’** (Alexander, 2005, p. 109), which could ‘support both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to expand their frames of references and open new possibilities for co-existence’ (Andreotti, Ahenakew, & Cooper, 2012, p. 235).

In response to cycles of destruction initiated by colonial approaches to knowledge, in my conclusion I will use these theoretical insights to briefly explore initial steps to transform spaces of knowledge production between Indigenous and non-Indigenous spaces, from conflict and appropriation ‘to sites of hope and possibility’ (Brayboy & Maughan, 2009, p. 2). **However, before initial steps can be articulated, it is indispensable to take an honest look at the problems of inclusion without the need for excuses, appeasement, or angry accusations.** This is the main task this article is set to perform. Looking into this problem in a nonutilitarian way (not expecting quick fixes) is the only way to contemplate the magnitude of the task before us: the task of decentering and disarming the modern subject and her/his strong desires for progress, futurity (conservation of privilege), anthropocentric and innocent agency, and totalizing forms of knowledge (Andreotti, 2014; see also Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013). These desires normalize and naturalize the hegemony of modern subjects (both non-Indigenous and Indigenous) in defining the terms of engagement with Indigenous cultures and prevents the emergence of other possibilities of co-existence that can accommodate ‘ecologies of knowledges’ and pluralities of being.

In the next sections, I work through selected literature from the macro to the micro contexts of recognition of Indigenous worldviews in research to show how assumptions about the universal value of modern ways of knowing and being rigorous limits the legitimation of Indigenous ways of knowing in research methodologies. Acknowledging that the research and literature on Indigenous research so far has legitimately and mainly focused on the creation of interface methodologies that could support Indigenous people in carrying out research within academic spaces with/for Indigenous communities (Kovach, 2009; L. T. Smith, 2012), I want to take it a step further and focus on the barriers, difficulties, and possibilities of ethically working towards a different relationship. I acknowledge the inherent heterogeneity of Indigenous communities and the necessity of a collaborative academic task to

articulate the problems of representation, interpretation, and translation between different onto-epistemologies and cosmo-visions. Drawing on recent literature in Indigenous studies, I start with critiques that point to the wider social, political, historical, and institutional contexts of liberal recognition and then move to the specific contexts of Indigenous research methodologies.

The Wider Political Project: Inclusion as Assimilation

In the book *Red Skins, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*, Glen Coulthard (2014) states that the promise of reconciliation in the liberal politics of recognition is deceptive because it continues to serve the interests of the settler-colonial state. Coulthard argues that liberal recognition is a form of assimilation and that reconciliation is used as an excuse for settler-states to advance their project of access to and control of lands and resources, which ultimately requires the elimination of Indigenous people as distinct people within a geographical space. The implication of Coulthard's argument is that ultimately, from the liberal perspective and power to define the terms of inclusion, Indigeneity is a difference that makes no difference to business as usual. **Even when it is framed as challenging epistemological hegemony, inclusion is never meant to pose a threat to ontological or metaphysical hegemony.**

In this sense, Indigenous perspectives and peoples can be recognized and included only when they fit within the frames of modern institutions. In addition, Coulthard (2014) draws on Marxist critiques of capitalism to show how capitalist accumulation depends on the exploitation and control of both labour and Indigenous lands. Therefore, the promise of inclusion into the capitalist dream of affluence and social mobility, which is the dominant way of being, depends on the acceptance of integration as assimilation into a specific form of existence based on self-interest, wealth accumulation, and consumer consumption that only makes sense within, and is inevitably dependent on, markets and settler states. Coulthard shows how government apologies and other strategies of reconciliation serve to deny responsibility for ongoing colonization by placing colonial violence securely in the past and affirming an agreement to 'move forward' where the terms of engagement are defined by the economic interests of settler states.

Similarly, Sara Ahmed's (2012) book *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* shows how the uneven dynamic of this wider political project translates into institutional policies and practices of 'diversity'. Focusing on ethnographic work carried out in higher education institutions in different countries, she

illustrates how Eurocentric educational systems simultaneously give voice to and silence minority groups. She outlines how the will to 'include' diversity/Indigeneity in institutions, curricula, and research becomes a wall to diversity/Indigeneity. In other words, a commitment to inclusion may ironically and paradoxically be used to prevent the transformation of systemic racism within institutions because it reinforces the naturalization of the 'norm' and prevents diversity/Indigeneity from becoming habitual. For instance, she illustrates how, by making diversity/Indigeneity visible, the mainstream is made invisible/normal and how benefitting from diversity commitments creates a debt for diverse bodies. She refers to this as a politics of 'stranger making', 'how some and not others become strangers, how emotions of fear and hatred stick to certain bodies, how certain bodies become understood as the rightful occupants of certain spaces' (p. 2).

She presents racism and whiteness as a disguised systemic phenomenon where one social group has the power to define what is normal, natural, and desirable in ways that make this very power invisible because the power itself is also presented as normal, natural, and desirable. Within this logic, if this group perceives Indigeneity as desirable, it will also define what is desirable about Indigeneity. This means that undesirable aspects, such as challenging the power to create definitions or making the invisible power visible, may not be tolerated. By announcing a declared commitment to Indigeneity, institutions and individuals have an excuse to avoid talking about their systemic racism. By creating a contained and controlled space for Indigeneity to be expressed, they naturalize their alleged normality as naturally benevolent. Through strategies of inclusion created to 'welcome' the 'stranger' into educational spaces, dominant social groups reassert their territoriality. Thus, the Indigenous and other 'strangers' are made to feel as if they should perform to expectations and even feel grateful for being allowed to exist in 'other people's' spaces. Their success depends on whether they perform the authorized and expected content of Indigeneity they were brought in to express, as the poem illustrates. They are also expected to make those who have opened and enabled the space for diversity feel good about themselves.

Echoing the complexities expressed in the poem presented before, a young Indigenous female honours student has recently described her experience with this form of inclusion.

They tell us they want Indigenous people here, but I feel that just the fact that I breathe for myself may offend them. I am constantly exhausted because I have to continuously watch myself in performing the gratitude expected of me, and I

never know if I am getting it right. They assume I want the same as they do and they cannot see or hear past that assumption. (Personal communication, March 12, 2015)

The point that I am trying to make is that it is essential to have a broader critical view of the wider institutional context of inclusion and integration of Indigenous knowledges and methodologies in modern institutions in order to advance the promotion of Indigenous thought in academia with eyes wide open. I now turn to a discussion of grafting and Indigenous methodologies to illustrate the implications of this argument.

Indigenous Research Methodologies

For the past 15 years, Kaupapa Māori Research (KMR) has acquired the status of the most prominent Indigenous research methodology in academia and has been extremely successful in mobilizing discourses about and interest in moving beyond the colonial orientation of research *about* Indigenous peoples towards a research *by, for, and with* Indigenous peoples (L. T. Smith, 2012). KMR shifted the focus of traditional research towards improving Indigenous livelihoods, strengthening Māori language, and legitimizing Indigenous knowledges in modern institutions, especially in health and education. KMR has also been criticized from conservative (Openshaw & Rata, 2007) and progressive (Cooper, 2012) standpoints. The critique that is relevant for this paper is one that shows the paradoxes of KMR in trying, at the same time, to center Māori knowledge(s), to critique Western science (relying on critical theory), to legitimise itself in modern institutions (through publications and applicable and intelligible models), to raise the profile of Māori in the imaginary of the modern nation state (speaking to national referents and desires), to provide a universal framework that could be transferred to different contexts, and to honour heterogeneities and specificities of different Indigenous groups within Aotearoa/New Zealand. While acknowledging the brilliance and success of KMR in holding spaces and inspiring Indigenous people to be involved in research, the juxtaposed aims inevitably create different types of unresolved and unresolvable contradictions, especially when it is funded by modern institutions and the modern nation state, which both limits and constrains how far the boat can be rocked.

In North America, both Kovach (2009) and Wilson (2008) have tried to challenge Western paradigms by proposing new Indigenous methodologies. Kovach recontextualizes many of the intentions of KMR in relation to Cree epistemology – and many

of the inevitable contradictions. She acknowledges that the 'indigenous research framework mirrors a standard research design familiar to qualitative researchers' (p. 44). Her statement points to the challenge of introducing newness in terms that are intelligible and familiar to the dominant research ontology. Wilson addresses this challenge by talking about 'research as ceremony', focusing on relationships with ideas, concepts, and communities. He states:

I found that an Indigenous research paradigm can also be understood in terms of its ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology. It is the uniqueness of these four elements that in part hold an Indigenous research paradigm apart from other research paradigms. (p. 71)

Like Kovach, in using non-Indigenous ontological categories to translate or to make Indigenous processes intelligible, Wilson also reproduces a kind of grafting that seems to maintain primary loyalty to accepted notions of time, progress, reality, and being.¹

Thus, when we are carrying out research in a context that is primarily non-Indigenous, using alphabetic and computer literacies (rather than orality and sensuous and metaphorical land engagement), being funded by the state (through our jobs or research agencies), and aspiring to be legitimised in academia, grafting is *inevitable*. As I mentioned before, it is not necessarily a problem as a strategic move (as L. T. Smith, Kovach, and Wilson can attest), but it becomes a problem when we cannot recognize what is lost in translation. What happens when the root of the plant and the land that sustains it are severed from the plant's body? It is highly problematic when we assume that this is a neutral exercise without consequences or when we cannot even recognize that we are grafting.

For those of us writing within academia, the first small step we need to take is to make grafting visible. Making grafting visible means writing in a way that makes what is invisible noticeably absent so that it can be remembered and missed. Learning to write like this means resisting the temptation for certainty, totality, and instrumentalization in Western reasoning by keeping our claims contingent, contextual, tentative, and incomplete. Another step, already used widely in Indigenous literature, is to make what is absent *present*, by using devices that redirect reading from a prosaic to a poetic orientation (Hiroa, 1974) or from the rational to the metaphorical mind (Cajete, 2000). The prosaic and rational readings that modernity has socialized us into try to capture the world in a monorational logic lodged in a mind separated from the body. The task of poetic and metaphoric writing is to invite other senses to take part in the reading process. An example of turning absences into poetic presences in

research is expressed in this poem gifted to me by my Tuhoe brother and colleague Hemi Hireme from Aotearoa (New Zealand), as we were discussing this article:

Birds inviting you in
 Rivers whispering connections
 Mountains outsmarting you
 Bushes talking to each other
 The land speaking in colours
 Your body remembering how
 To hear with your eyes
 To see with your ears
 Your flesh merging with the tree
 Greeting older and younger relations
 Bowing to life renewing itself
 Your stomach acknowledging
 The wholeness of family
 The only true universal
 Resisting separability

Beyond writing for academic journals or even providing solutions for communities, at the heart of this process to subvert grafting is the need for remembering forgotten ancestral literacies that situate Western sciences within a relatively useful, but ultimately a severely limited, framework for conceptualizing existence. I propose that unless we look carefully at the frames of reference of the schooled modern subject, the ways we are oversocialized within it, and the dynamic of grafting, we will not be able to grasp the magnitude of the task before us, and we continue to risk mistaking assimilation for resistance when we promote Indigenous practices in academia. To illustrate this proposed 'way forward', I now turn to an exercise of mapping that was developed by Andreotti (2016) to exemplify how the onto-epistemological grammar of modernity (see Ahenakew et al., 2014) persistently circumscribes what we can imagine as 'recognition', 'inclusion', and 'alternatives'.

The Limits of the Modern Subject

Andreotti (2016) has produced several cartographies that help visualize investments, desires, paradoxes, and contradictions (that are often denied) in our oversocialization in modern ideals. The cartography of the modern subject (reproduced here with permission from Andreotti as Figure 1) represents the frames of reference of

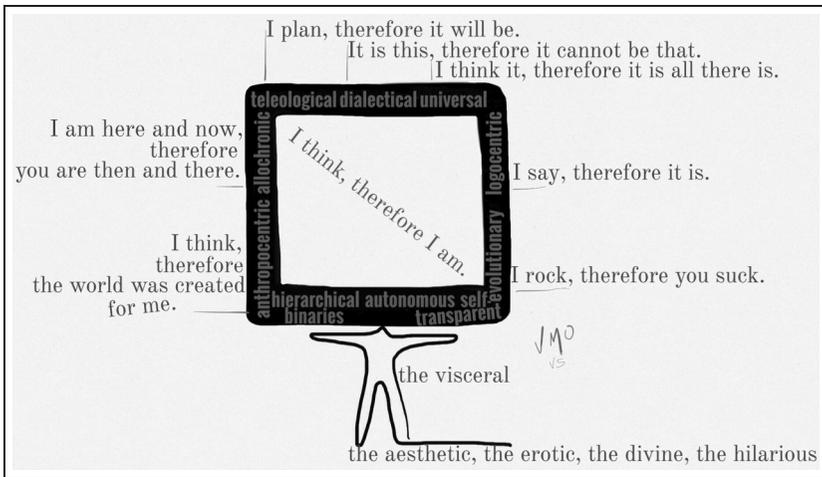


Figure 1. Boxhead (Andreotti, 2016)

modernity juxtaposed on a square-headed Cartesian subject who 'thinks, therefore he is' and whose relationship with the world is mediated by her/his cognitive repertoire of meanings, rather than by her/his senses. Each side of the square head represents different and enduring referents that circumscribe her/his relationship with reality. Although not all referents may surface at the same time, they ascribe coherence and legibility to what we recognize as research and research methodologies. The angles of Boxhead represent desires for seamless progress, development, and evolution carried out by human agency through the use of objective knowledge to control the environment and engineer a perfect society.

Each referent brackets a way of creating meaning that buffers his sense of reality. Logocentrism compels him to believe that reality can be described in language (Andreotti, 2016). Universalism leads him to understand his interpretation of reality as objective and to project it as the only legitimate and valuable worldview. Anthropocentric reasoning makes him see himself as separate from nature and having a mandate to manage, exploit, and control it. Teleological thinking makes him want to plan for the engineering of a future that he can already imagine. Dialectical thinking makes him fall in love with a linear logic enamoured with consensus, solutions, and resolutions and averse to paradoxes, complexities, and contradictions. Allochronic and evolutionary thinking make him judge others according to criteria where he is represented as being in the present of (linear) time while others are in the past and where he leads humanity in a single path of evolution. Andreotti (2016) states that:

At first glance, the picture of Boxhead suggests that there is an outside and an inside of a box. However, if we imagine his life-force as the line that draws the box, we may gain three important insights. First, that the very desire for an outside of the box comes from within the box itself; therefore escaping the box is not really an option as it only re-inscribes the box. Second, that we are already free to draw different things—but as a line that draws, we are viscerally entangled with each other and entrapped within historical/collective choices. So, third, in order to draw different things, we need to use reason itself to analyze the existing angles of the box and consider the full extent of these choices for the past 500 years and seven generations to come. In this sense, we might hold our Boxhead modern subject not as a pathology to be demonized, but as a teacher offering important lessons. (p. 84).

The Boxhead picture helps us recognize that we have historically inherited an imaginary circumscribed by specific referents and that these referents also form the DNA of our modern institutions and forms of knowledge production, especially educational and research institutions. These institutions have a specific national mandate to reproduce these referents to construct a sense of social cohesion and intelligibility, which has the effect of reproducing onto-epistemic hegemony. Thus, our self-image and desires for security, certainty, control, comfort, and autonomy have depended on the reproduction of these referents and the denial of other possibilities of knowing or being.

In this context, Indigenous logics are only welcome when they do not effectively threaten to change the status quo, when it is made the 'same'. In this sense, Indigenous knowledges and methodologies can be either incorporated as a colourful (but insignificant) alternative to what is considered 'normal', which confirms the benevolence of the proponent of inclusion, or perceived as something that is already integral to the dominant logic and therefore also insignificant, given that it offers nothing new. The all-too-common resistance to Indigenous difference is based precisely on a desire for the security of 'remaining the same' and keeping power (the universalization of one type of knowing and the subordinate position of certain knowers) flowing in ways that are 'safe' to those in a position to choose to 'tolerate', 'include', or 'integrate' Others.

Andreotti's (2016) framework may help educators and researchers have a glimpse of the magnitude of the task of imagining beyond our colonial historical legacies in terms of configurations of thought, affect, and in(ter)dependence (Andreotti, Fa'afai, Sitomaniemi-San, & Ahenakew, 2014). It prompts us to move from sense-making to

sense-sensing, displacing the centrality of Western reasoning. It also may help us address the systematic production of ignorance precisely when one is claiming to 'know', to 'help', to 'represent', to 'give voice to Indigenous people', or to 'integrate' Indigenous in research.

Concluding Thoughts

This paper was written to begin to 'make what is invisible noticeably absent' during the instrumentalization of Indigenous knowing and being in research. While appreciating the need for advancing the use of Indigenous methodologies in academic settings, this article calls for a careful consideration of the paradoxes and limitations of translating insights between Indigenous and non-Indigenous spaces. My objective was not to discourage people from taking up Indigenous methodologies but to encourage us all to do so with critical eyes wide open in relation to the agendas of institutions and to our own imperfect translations.

I have used the concept of 'grafting' to draw attention to the need to historicize the referents that circumscribe modern subjectivities and knowledge production – the framework that determines the intelligibility of Indigenous knowledges in academic settings. My argument is that grafting is inevitable, but it only becomes a problem when its existence and limits are not recognized. I proposed three small steps to subvert grafting in the research process: (1) making grafting visible by highlighting the absences of our modes of inquiry and learning how to write tentatively about our data and findings, (2) using metaphor and poetry to disrupt sense-making and prompt sense-sensing in the experience of readers, and (3) turning our attention to and historicizing the referents that circumscribe Western frameworks of reasoning so we can recognize these referents in our researcher-selves and in our writing. In my tentative efforts to resist and subvert grafting, I included poems and a drawing in this text as illustrations of the process of mobilizing ancestral literacies that can appeal to the senses and displace the obsessions of the modern intellect.

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Note

1. And here I am not even touching upon the discussions about the problematic imposition of ethics procedures on Indigenous research, which is a topic for another article (see Tauri, 2014; Tuck, 2009).

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