

Between inherited violence and rupture: decoloniality and childhood in *Longe de mim*, by Lindevania Martins /

Entre violência herdada e ruptura: decolonialidade e infância em 'Longe de mim', de Lindevania Martins

*Patricia de Sousa Silva**

PhD candidate in Letters at the Graduate Program in Letters of the State University of Maranhão (PPGLEtras/UEMA), in the field of Literary Theory. She holds a Master's degree in Letters/Literature from the Federal University of Maranhão (UFMA), in the concentration area of Language, Culture, and Discourse. She also holds a specialization in Literature Teaching from the State University of Maranhão (UEMA) and a Bachelor's degree in Letters from the same institution.

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-1602-1326>

*Deyse Gabriely Machado Brito Cordeiro ***

PhD candidate in Universidade Estadual do Maranhão (UEMA), funded by FAPEMA, in the field of Literary Theory, under the supervision of Professor Silvana Maria Pantoja dos Santos (Postdoctoral). She holds a Master's degree from the Graduate Program in Letters – Bacabal (PGLB) at the Federal University of Maranhão (2023), and a Bachelor's degree in Portuguese Language and Literature from the same institution (2021).

 <https://orcid.org/my-orcid?orcid=0000-0001-6000-8985>

Received: 26 jul. 2026. **Approved:** 29 jul. 2026.

How to quote this article:

SILVA, Patrícia de Sousa; CORDEIRO, Deyse Gabriely Machado Brito. Between Inherited Violence and Rupture: Decoloniality and Childhood in 'Longe de Mim', by Lindevania Martins. *Revista Letras Raras*. Campina Grande, v. 15, n. 2, e7707, sep. 2026. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.2254212.

ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the short story *Longe de Mim* (2019), by the contemporary writer Lindevania Martins, from a decolonial perspective, with the aim of understanding how the colonality of gender structures the protagonist's experience of adultization. The narrative problematizes the universalized notion of childhood by presenting the trajectory of Josi, a young girl living in a context of social vulnerability marked by domestic violence and emotional instability. In this setting, childhood ceases to function as a space of protection and becomes permeated by demands

*

 professorapatricia12345@gmail.com

**

 deysemb19@gmail.com

that anticipate adult responsibilities and by forms of gender-based violence, imposing a premature understanding of the adult world. This study adopts a qualitative, bibliographic, and interpretive approach, conducting a critical analysis of the narrative based on the theoretical contributions of Walter Mignolo (2017), María Lugones (2020), Lélia Gonzalez (2020), and Rita Segato (2021). It is grounded in the hypothesis that adultization is not an isolated phenomenon but rather the result of historical legacies of subordination produced by coloniality. The analysis demonstrates that dynamics of exclusion, articulated through gender relations and socioeconomic inequalities, directly shape the experience of childhood. Furthermore, by inscribing an unexpected gesture of rupture, the narrative also points to the possibility of disrupting this cycle of violence, highlighting the potential of literature as a space for the critical problematization of the enduring legacies of coloniality.

KEYWORDS: Decoloniality; Childhood; Adultization; Coloniality of Gender.

RESUMO

Este artigo analisa o conto Longe de Mim (2019), da escritora contemporânea Lindevania Martins, a partir de uma perspectiva decolonial, com o objetivo de compreender como a colonialidade de gênero estrutura a experiência de maturidade precoce da protagonista. A narrativa problematiza a noção universalizada de infância ao apresentar a trajetória de Josi, uma menina inserida em um contexto de vulnerabilidade social, marcado pela violência doméstica e pela instabilidade afetiva. Nesse cenário, a infância deixa de se configurar como espaço de proteção e passa a ser atravessada por exigências que antecipam responsabilidades e por formas de violência de gênero, impondo uma compreensão precoce do mundo adulto. O estudo desenvolve uma pesquisa qualitativa, de caráter bibliográfico e interpretativo, por meio da análise crítica da narrativa, fundamentada nas contribuições teóricas de Walter Mignolo (2017), María Lugones (2020), Lélia Gonzalez (2020) e Rita Segato (2021). Parte-se da hipótese de que a adultização não constitui um fenômeno isolado, mas resulta de heranças históricas de subordinação produzidas pela colonialidade. A análise evidencia que as dinâmicas de exclusão, articuladas às relações de gênero e às desigualdades socioeconômicas, incidem diretamente sobre a experiência da infância. Ademais, ao inscrever um gesto inesperado de ruptura, a narrativa também aponta para a possibilidade de fissuras nesse ciclo de violência, evidenciando o potencial da literatura como espaço de problematização crítica das permanências coloniais.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Decolonialidade; Infância; Adultização; Colonialidade de Gênero.

1 Introduction

Contemporary Brazilian literature has become a fertile space for examining historically marginalized experiences, particularly those involving childhoods shaped by structural inequalities. Within this context, Lindevania Martins's short story *Far from Me* (*Longe de Mim*) emerges as a narrative that challenges the notion of childhood as a protected and universal stage of life by portraying a trajectory marked by violence, precarity, and the premature assumption of adult responsibilities. Far from constituting merely an individual account, the story engages broader questions concerning the social conditions that produce and regulate particular forms of existence.

Published in 2019, the short story portrays, through direct yet sensitive language, the lived experience of a young girl growing up in an unstable domestic environment characterized by the recurring presence of different male figures and relationships shaped by economic and

emotional vulnerability. Within this setting, the home becomes a space of tension and risk, where power relations operating upon women's bodies are made visible. The narrative thus turns its attention to the dynamics of everyday life, revealing how broader historical structures become materialized in the concrete experiences of its characters.

The protagonist, Josi, occupies the center of the narrative as a subject directly implicated in the conflicts that permeate the family environment. Throughout the story, she is gradually compelled to assume roles and responsibilities that exceed the legal protections associated with a healthy childhood. This displacement intensifies as she becomes increasingly exposed to violence and affective dynamics that require an early understanding of the adult world. The narrative conflict is therefore constructed through the tension between what would ordinarily be expected of childhood and the concrete demands imposed by her lived reality, revealing an experience profoundly marked by what Lugones (2020) terms gender coloniality, whereby the interlocking oppressions of race, class, and gender produce historically naturalized forms of violence and subalternization—a dynamic that the short story critically exposes.

At this point, the concept of precocious maturity becomes central, understood here not as an individual characteristic of the protagonist but as the outcome of specific social conditions. Josi's experience demonstrates how certain childhoods are shaped by processes that prematurely impose responsibilities, reconfigure affective bonds, and restrict possibilities for lived experience, producing trajectories in which childhood, as conceived by modernity, is never fully realized.

This understanding resonates with Manuel Jacinto Sarmiento's (2009) perspective within the Sociology of Childhood, according to which childhood constitutes a historically constructed social category marked by profound internal differentiation. From this perspective, there is no single or universal childhood but rather multiple childhoods produced within distinct social, cultural, and economic contexts, making it possible to understand why certain children are systematically deprived of the conditions historically associated with childhood itself.

Against this backdrop, this study addresses the following research question: How does gender coloniality shape the protagonist's precocious maturity and contribute to the impossibility of a full experience of childhood? It is hypothesized that, in the short story, adultification does not emerge as an isolated or circumstantial phenomenon but rather as the expression of a patriarchal legacy of violence and subordination that extends across generations. In this sense, the protagonist's trajectory not only reflects her individual experience but also reveals the continuity

of historical structures that condition the ways girls situated in contexts of vulnerability live, grow, and come to understand themselves.

By bringing literature into dialogue with decolonial thought, this analysis draws upon the theoretical contributions of Walter Mignolo (2017), María Lugones (2020), Lélia Gonzalez (2020), and Rita Segato (2021) to demonstrate how Lindevania Martins's narrative exposes the mechanisms through which certain childhoods are systematically denied, particularly those shaped by the intersecting dynamics of race, gender, and class. Rather than merely representing the loss of childhood, the short story reveals the structural conditions that render such loss possible—and, in many cases, inevitable.

2 Gender Coloniality and Patriarchal Legacy: Generational Continuities of Oppression

Understanding the forms of violence and subordination that shape the trajectories of female characters in contemporary Latin American literature requires acknowledging the persistence of colonial structures in the organization of social relations, particularly when considering the intersecting axes of social class and race. In this regard, Aníbal Quijano's concept of the coloniality of power makes visible the ways in which the hierarchies established during the colonial period continue to organize modern societies. According to Quijano, coloniality constitutes an enduring pattern of power that articulates racial, economic, and cultural classifications, thereby structuring relations of domination that persist long after the formal end of colonialism.

According to Quijano, the coloniality of power is grounded in the racial classification established during the colonization of the Americas. As the author argues:

In the Americas, the idea of race served as a means of legitimizing the relations of domination imposed by conquest. Subsequently, the constitution of Europe as a new identity following the Americas, together with the expansion of European colonialism to the rest of the world, led to the development of a Eurocentric perspective on knowledge and, with it, to the theoretical formulation of the idea of race as the naturalization of these colonial relations of domination between Europeans and non-Europeans (Quijano, 2005, p. 118).

Although Quijano's formulation was instrumental in making explicit the persistence of colonial hierarchies in contemporary societies, several decolonial feminist scholars have argued

for the need to expand this perspective by incorporating gender as an analytical dimension into studies of coloniality. Among these contributions, María Lugones's (2014) work stands out for proposing the concept of gender coloniality, highlighting how the modern/colonial system established a specific regime for organizing relations between men and women.

As Lugones argues:

"Coloniality" does not refer solely to racial classification. Rather, it is a broader phenomenon—one of the axes of the system of power—and, as such, it permeates the control of access to sex, collective authority, labor, and subjectivity/intersubjectivity. It also permeates the production of knowledge from within these very intersubjective relations (Lugones, 2014, pp. 2–3).

From this perspective, colonialism was not limited to economic exploitation and political domination but also entailed a profound reorganization of gender identities. The imposition of a European patriarchal model gave rise to new forms of social hierarchization, redefining the roles, sexualities, and social positions assigned to women. Within this context, women—particularly those living in situations of social vulnerability—came to occupy structurally subordinate positions within an order that regulates and controls their bodies.

In this regard, the patriarchal structure engenders power relations that permeate different spheres of social life, from institutions to the domestic sphere. As Saffioti observes, within the patriarchal gender order, "power is male, white, and, preferably, heterosexual" (2001, p. 31, author's translation). This configuration demonstrates that gender hierarchies do not operate merely as isolated mechanisms of domination but rather as components of a broader social system in which inequalities of gender, race, and class intersect in the production and maintenance of asymmetrical power relations.

Within this framework, the reproduction of these structures occurs not only through formal institutions but also through everyday processes of socialization within family life. From this perspective, family relationships become a privileged site for the transmission of norms and expectations that shape the experiences of men and women from childhood onward. It is within this environment that particular conceptions of gender roles, sexuality, and authority are continually reiterated and naturalized, producing effects that extend across generations.

The persistence of these configurations reveals that patriarchy is sustained not only through the direct imposition of domination but also through the perpetuation of hierarchical practices and values reproduced within social relations. From this perspective, gender coloniality operates as a long-term mechanism that shapes women's trajectories, producing life courses

marked by persistent social asymmetries and culturally constructed expectations that constrain women's autonomy. Thus, the conditions of vulnerability experienced by many women result not merely from individual or temporary circumstances but from social arrangements that are reproduced over time, transmitting from one generation to the next specific forms of subordination and control over women's bodies.

Within this context, the family plays a central role in the perpetuation of these systems of power, since, as Gerda Lerner (2019, p. 296) argues, this institution “not only mirrors the order of the state and educates children to follow it, but also creates and continually reinforces that order.” Although the family sphere is often associated with protection and care, it may also function as a site for reproducing the social hierarchies that organize gender relations.

It is within this environment that social norms, expectations, and roles are continually transmitted, naturalized, and internalized, shaping women's trajectories, which are often marked by the early assumption of responsibilities and restricted autonomy. In this regard, Lerner (2019, p. 324) further observes that “wherever the patriarchal family exists, patriarchy is constantly reborn, even where patriarchal relations have been abolished in other spheres of society.” From this perspective, the family not only reflects the broader patriarchal order but also constitutes one of its principal mechanisms of historical continuity, ensuring the intergenerational reproduction of the inequalities that shape women's lived experiences.

In the short story *Longe de Mim*, this logic is manifested in the trajectory of Rosana, Josi's mother, whose life gradually comes to revolve around the successive presence of men who temporarily occupy the domestic space. The family's small and precarious house becomes a site of male circulation, where different “uncles” enter and leave the lives of both mother and daughter, revealing a dynamic marked by instability and emotional as well as economic dependence.

The normalization of these relationships reveals the effects of gender coloniality on the organization of everyday life. The constant presence of men within the domestic sphere is not merely the result of the mother's individual choices but rather an expression of structural conditions that constrain her possibilities for existence. In this context, dependence on men emerges as a survival strategy within a social order that has historically restricted women's autonomy.

In light of these considerations, situating the characters' story within the dynamics of gender coloniality makes it possible to understand that Josi's precocious maturity is not an

isolated phenomenon. Rather, it emerges from the circumstances of abuse and violence experienced by her mother, to which Josi herself is also exposed and of which she ultimately becomes a victim. The girl's trajectory thus emerges as the product of a historical system that extends across generations and, from childhood onward, shapes the lives of women whose experiences are structured by the intersecting dimensions of race and social class.

In light of these considerations, Josi's experience reveals not only the immediate effects of gender inequality but also the continuity of a historical pattern of oppression transmitted across generations. Her trajectory demonstrates how the structures associated with gender coloniality and patriarchy are continually reproduced over time, shaping women's lives through the premature assumption of adult responsibilities, exposure to abuse, and the denial of the possibility of experiencing childhood fully.

2.1 Denied Childhoods: Coloniality and Precocious Maturity

The understanding of childhood as a distinct stage of human life, endowed with its own rights and specific characteristics, is the result of a historical and social process that did not develop uniformly. According to Philippe Ariès (1986), the modern conception of childhood as a protected stage of life is relatively recent, emerging through the social transformations that took place between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Although Philippe Ariès (1986) demonstrated that childhood is a historical construct rather than a natural or immutable reality, contemporary Childhood Studies have expanded this perspective by emphasizing that childhood is also shaped by profound processes of social differentiation. In this regard, Manuel Jacinto Sarmiento (2009) shifts the discussion from the historicity of childhood to the plurality of children's experiences, arguing that there is no single childhood but rather multiple ways of experiencing it, shaped by factors such as social class, gender, ethnicity, and culture. As Sarmiento argues, children's living conditions are diverse:

[...] because the structural conditions of society tend to produce inequalities and reinforce social stratification across the different social categories to which children also belong, including social class, gender, ethnicity, culture, place of residence, and physical and psychological differences (Sarmiento, 2009, p. 18).

From this perspective, important distinctions emerge in both the concept and the experience of childhood from diachronic and synchronic standpoints. From a diachronic

perspective, understandings of childhood have changed over time. In medieval European societies, for instance, children were regarded as miniature adults who actively participated in adult activities and shared a common social life while remaining constrained by the physical limitations of their more fragile bodies (Ariès, 1986). By contrast, even after childhood came to be recognized as a stage of life deserving specific care and protection, the structural dynamics of the modern world—including its social, economic, cultural, subjective, and gendered dimensions—have continued to hinder the realization of the conditions necessary for a genuinely child-centered experience. This, in turn, highlights how different forms of coloniality also shape childhood.

In discussing the relationship between coloniality and childhood, Pozzer (2018) argues that the major transformations in the social understanding of childhood began in the eighteenth century. These changes, however, primarily benefited children from bourgeois families, who came to be recognized as subjects requiring specific forms of care, education, and protection. In this sense, childhood emerged alongside the rise of a more self-conscious bourgeoisie and the expansion of industrial production and its techniques. Consequently, the modern conception of childhood was shaped by interests rooted in capital, which constitutes one of its fundamental structural foundations.

Within this framework, Schérer (2009, p. 18) discusses the demand for "integral pedagogization," arguing that it established a conception of childhood governed both by its own prerogatives and by the duties and forms of conduct expected of adults. From this perspective, childhood is conceived by adults, who subject children to particular forms of treatment prescribed by the cultural conventions of a given society. Consequently, if the culture of a society—consolidated through adulthood—is guided by ambitions fostered by industrialization and intensified by capitalism, children's ways of being are likewise shaped by these same social values.

Thus, examining the forms of control over labor, knowledge production, culture, and subjectivity reveals some of the dimensions that structure the modern/colonial system. The ideals underpinning modernity give rise to a discourse grounded in progressive principles, the organization of institutions, and the establishment of civilizational frameworks that guide social life. However, this same process simultaneously advances a project of invisibilization and subordination.

According to Walter Mignolo (2017), this contradiction materializes through the "other side" of modernity, or its "darker side." This occurs because the structures of modernity not only organize economic and political relations but also legitimize particular ways of thinking and experiencing social life. In this context, it becomes evident that coloniality also permeates childhood, since certain childhood experiences are socially legitimized because children are provided with the resources necessary to ensure their protection and the exercise of their rights, whereas others remain rendered invisible or marginalized.

Thus, the Western world-system follows a trajectory that "offers with one hand what it has already stolen with the other on its path toward the colonial-modern order of individual citizenship" (Segato, 2021, p. 90). In this respect, the author's critique exposes the contradictions embedded in the very promise of the universality of rights, making explicit how many children's lives are shaped by repeated violations of their rights, preventing them from fully experiencing what the modern world itself defines as childhood.

This relationship becomes even more pronounced in the case of girls' childhoods, especially those shaped not only by gender but also by racial and class relations. In this context, Lélia Gonzalez calls for a critical examination of the social, racial, and gender inequalities that characterize Latin America. The anthropologist argues that:

The dual nature of their biological condition—racial and sexual—makes them the most oppressed and exploited women in a region characterized by dependent, patriarchal-racist capitalism. Precisely because this system transforms differences into inequalities, the discrimination they face takes on a threefold character, given their class position (Gonzalez, 2020, p. 142).

From this perspective, when considering Black girls living in contexts of social vulnerability, a fourth intersecting axis must be added to race, gender, and class: childhood itself. In this case, childhood is not merely a stage of life but a dimension that intensifies exposure to relations of dependence and vulnerability. As such, these girls' experiences are marked by intersecting inequalities that reveal how certain subjects are drawn at an early age into social structures that limit their full access to experiences associated with childhood, forcing them to assume responsibilities typically assigned to adults. Excluded from the full realization of the modern ideal of childhood, these experiences are therefore shaped by coloniality.

Such dynamics further demonstrate that the inequalities produced by coloniality not only restrict access to rights but also redefine the temporalities of childhood. In vulnerable contexts shaped by race and gender, many children are drawn at an early age into responsibilities,

violence, and survival dynamics associated with the adult world. Within this framework, the concept of "denied childhoods" emerges—a category employed in this article to describe trajectories in which a protected childhood never materializes and early maturity is imposed by material and social conditions, thereby anticipating roles traditionally associated with adulthood.

In this regard, "denied childhoods" are closely aligned with the idea of childhoods that cannot fully exist—that is, childhood experiences whose realization is structurally prevented by relations of coloniality, gender, race, and class inequalities, and by the material conditions of existence. It is not merely a matter of childhood being interrupted but of its impossibility to fully come into being according to the universalizing promises of modernity.

In this way, literature, as a vehicle for artistic and social reflection, becomes a privileged space for observing how these structures manifest in children's lived experiences. It is within this context that the trajectory of Josi, the protagonist of Lindevania Martins' short story *Longe de Mim* (2019), unfolds. The narrative centers on a girl who lives only with her mother in a single-mother household, where both seek ways to survive in the face of hardship. This dynamic draws the child prematurely into the responsibilities and violence of the adult world, demonstrating how structural inequalities restrict the experience of childhood. From this standpoint, the following section analyzes the short story to examine how literature reveals the marks of coloniality in the experience of childhood.

3 Between Mother and Daughter: Legacies of Violence and Acts of Rupture

The analysis developed in this section is based on the understanding that the narrative employs internal focalization, as the events are presented through the perspective of Josi, the story's narrator-protagonist. By limiting the reader's access to the girl's subjective experience, the short story allows violence to be apprehended gradually, as Josi herself seeks to make sense of the situations she witnesses and experiences.

This narrative choice precludes a totalizing view of events and fosters a sense of proximity between the reader and the protagonist, allowing the loss of childhood to be perceived not as a predetermined condition but as a process that gradually unfolds throughout the narrative. In this way, the narrative voice not only recounts episodes of violence but also constitutes a

fundamental element in articulating the critique of the patriarchal and colonial structures that shape the characters' everyday lives.

3.1 Heritage, care, and early adultification

The short story *Longe de Mim* (*Far from Me*), by Lindevania Martins, portrays childhood not as a protected space but as a territory permeated by structural violence. Through the trajectory of Josi, a ten-year-old girl who lives with her mother, Rosana, the story reveals how the domestic sphere can become a site where patriarchal relations and the colonality of gender are reproduced. In this context, the recurring presence of male figures in the household—especially the arrival of Fernando—intensifies this violence and pushes the protagonist into responsibilities and experiences incompatible with childhood. The narrative thus demonstrates how the denial of childhood is intertwined with gender, racial, and class inequalities, forming the core of the protagonist's lived experience.

From the very beginning of the story, the protagonist is placed in a position that challenges the conventional boundaries of childhood. Following Uncle Paulo's disappearance, the girl begins to take on responsibilities that belong to the adult world. The narrator herself recalls that, faced with the absence of a male figure and her mother's despondency, "it fell to me to close the wide-open doors of the wardrobe and put away the empty hangers" (Martins, 2019, p. 5). At another point, this transfer of responsibilities becomes even more apparent when Josi states, "Later, I cooked the meal she refused to eat" (Martins, 2019, p. 6). These episodes reveal a reorganization of roles within the household, in which the child comes to assume responsibility for the family's care and emotional support.

This reversal of roles becomes explicit when the narrator acknowledges that, as she embraced her vulnerable mother, "it seemed as though I were the mother and she the daughter" (Martins, 2019, p. 6). This passage reveals a process of premature adultification, in which childhood is progressively permeated by responsibilities, fears, and experiences that belong to the adult world. As Heleieth Saffioti (2001) observes, patriarchy is sustained not only through formal institutions but also through everyday practices that normalize inequality and shape the division of roles within the family. In this light, Josi's experience demonstrates how the domestic sphere can become a site where hierarchical relations are reproduced, subjecting girls to

responsibilities and forms of emotional vigilance that undermine their ability to fully experience childhood.

This process of premature maturity does not occur in isolation but is directly shaped by the living conditions that structure the family environment. The narrative portrays a home marked by emotional instability and the recurring presence of different male partners in the mother's life. This dynamic exposes the girl to situations of distress and symbolic violence, contributing to the development of an early awareness of the power relations that permeate the domestic sphere. Questioning her mother about the succession of men who come into their home, Josi declares, "I'm tired of having so many 'uncles'" (Martins, 2019, p. 14), expressing not only discomfort but also a critical awareness of the instability that defines her family life.

Rosana's trajectory, in turn, suggests that these conditions are not limited to the protagonist's experience but form part of a broader pattern of female vulnerability. She is portrayed as a woman marked by unstable intimate relationships and by a dependence on men that she herself regards as inevitable. When questioned by her daughter about the need to bring men into the family home, she replies categorically: "A woman needs a man" (Martins, 2019, p. 14). This statement reveals the internalization of social norms that associate women's survival with male presence, highlighting the enduring force of patriarchal structures in shaping social relations.

Within this context, Rosana's experience can be understood through the lens of the colonality of gender. As Lugones (2014) argues, this system of power organizes social relations through hierarchies that naturalize women's subordination and restrict their possibilities for autonomy. In the story, this logic manifests itself in the way the mother internalizes the belief that her survival depends upon the presence of a man.

Rather than representing an individual choice, this statement reflects the internalization of social expectations that tie women's existence to emotional and economic dependence. As Saffioti argues, "the social construction of male supremacy requires the social construction of female subordination" (2001, p. 29), so that female identity has historically been produced in relation to men.

This dynamic becomes even more evident in the way Rosana instructs her daughter on how to behave toward her new partner. Rather than questioning the circumstances that give rise to her daughter's discomfort, she insists on the need for adaptation and tolerance. At one point, she tells the girl to be a "good girl" (Martins, 2019, p. 11) with the man and to have "patience and

just pretend” (Martins, 2019, p. 16). These instructions reveal the transmission of survival strategies grounded in silence, accommodation, and submission in the face of male violence.

This dynamic can be further understood in light of Rita Segato's (2018) reflections, which interpret gender oppression as part of a broader "pedagogy of cruelty"—that is, a set of social practices through which the devaluation of certain lives is taught and normalized. As the author states, “la pedagogía de la crueldad consiste en todos los actos y prácticas que enseñan, habitúan y programan a los sujetos a transmutar lo vivo y su vitalidad en cosas”¹ (Segato, 2018, p. 13, author's own translation). From this perspective, female oppression no longer appears merely as an isolated event but emerges as a process of social learning through which power relations are organized. In the story, this pedagogy manifests itself in the protagonist's exposure to symbolic and physical violence, gradually leading her to understand—and ultimately internalize—the implicit rules that structure power within the family.

Against this backdrop, the relationship between mother and daughter reveals a complex dynamic rooted in a historical legacy of oppression. Although Rosana appears as a caring and protective figure, she also reproduces practices and discourses that contribute to the perpetuation of the very social dynamics that constrain her own autonomy. As Josi observes, interprets, and responds to these experiences, she develops an early awareness of the inequalities that permeate the domestic sphere.

3.2 Violence, the Coloniality of the Body and Rupture

The protagonist's early maturity emerges not only in response to the immediate circumstances of her life but also as the outcome of the historical reproduction of gender inequalities. The narrative demonstrates how conditions associated with the coloniality of gender and patriarchal structures tend to reproduce themselves within domestic life, creating continuities across the experiences of women from different generations. In this way, Josi's childhood becomes the site where the intergenerational transmission of vulnerabilities, responsibilities, and violence—which constrains the possibility of a fully realized childhood—is revealed with particular force.

¹ “The pedagogy of cruelty consists of acts and practices that teach, accustom, and condition subjects to transform what is alive and its vitality into objects” (Segato, 2018, p. 13).

The domestic sphere constitutes the central setting of the narrative and provides the backdrop against which patriarchal dynamics unfold, centering on the relationship between mother and daughter and, consequently, on the violation of childhood. These dynamics become even more pronounced when a new “uncle” enters the story. Following Paulo’s departure, Rosana begins a relationship with a new partner, Fernando, who gradually becomes a regular presence in their home.

To understand the centrality of the domestic sphere and the presence of this new figure within the household, it is useful to draw on Saffioti (2001), who identifies the private sphere as a privileged locus of gender-based violence. Although such violence is not confined to the domestic sphere, it is there that the exercise of male power over women is most often legitimized. Within this context, the introduction of this male figure disrupts the caregiving bond between mother and daughter, as the household becomes the space where impositions and violations take root. The appropriation of domestic space illustrates this patriarchal logic: “She had already given him the key, and he felt like he owned everything. He would come in whenever he pleased, open the fridge, and lie down on my couch” (Martins, 2019, p. 22). In this way, the appropriation of the home without consent normalizes male domination and reinforces everyday violence.

Building on this established dynamic, the story moves on to reveal more severe forms of violence, demonstrating how such practices become progressively more brutal within the privacy of the home. Through this lens, the narrative constructs a scene in which violence is no longer merely suggested but becomes explicit, as it is simultaneously witnessed and only partially understood by the child:

I cleaned the coffee table. I dusted the couch. I put the empty bottles into a bag and threw them away. As I began spreading the sheet over the couch, I heard moans. I stopped. She had already explained to me that it was nothing serious, just something grown-ups did for fun. I finished making up the couch and lay down. That was when I heard screams coming from her bedroom: it was my mother, crying and desperate. (...) I grabbed a hammer. I made such a commotion that, with no other choice, someone finally unlocked the door. On impulse, I raised the hammer with both hands, ready to strike him. He flung the door open. He was naked, and I was so frightened, so shocked, that I froze. Knowing exactly what was happening to me, he burst into laughter and stroked the pointed part of himself (Martins, 2019, p. 12).

After dinner, Josi remains responsible for keeping the home in order. This caregiving dynamic reveals that domestic tasks are assigned not only along gendered lines—since, within a patriarchal framework, caring for the home is regarded as a feminine duty—but also, as

previously noted, through the early imposition of responsibility upon the child. Although these everyday practices gradually erode the child's experience of childhood, this dynamic is abruptly disrupted in the scene that follows.

The sound of moans and, subsequently, screams shatters the atmosphere of normalization. Although the protagonist has internalized her mother's words, which seek to preserve the child's innocence by describing the noises as "grown-ups playing," she recognizes the abnormal nature of the situation. As she attempts to cross into the most intimate space in the house—the bedroom—Josi assumes yet another responsibility: even before fully understanding what is happening, she tries to save and protect her mother. However, upon entering the room, what is revealed is not merely the confirmation of violence but its intensification in another register. Fernando's exposed body places the scene within a dimension of humiliation and intimidation that operates on two levels: the relationship with the woman and, simultaneously, the relationship with the child.

The violence directed at the mother is clearly situated, within patriarchal dynamics, as belonging to the social and sexual order. According to Carole Pateman (1993), the *social contract*² encompasses the relationship between men and women, thereby legitimizing men's access to and domination over women's bodies. Although the characters are not formally married, this logic nonetheless governs their relationship, as the structure of modernity/coloniality reinforces patriarchy by permitting and legitimizing the unlimited appropriation of women's bodies, particularly those of Black women.

Thus, the dynamics of the colonial system, by reinforcing relations of imposition and subordination in their most extreme forms, also legitimize physical violence against women. Segato (2021, p. 91) argues that women and children "are always targeted by the colonizer to reaffirm his moral superiority." Regarding the child in the story, another potential victim of domination, violence assumes even more complex contours. Josi's presence before Fernando's naked body, coupled with her paralyzed reaction and the perpetrator's laughter, constitutes a situation of violation in which the boundaries between the adult and child worlds are brutally shattered. This violence is not confined to the physical realm; it also operates on symbolic and

² Pateman (1993) argues that sexual differences establish a relationship between freedom and subjection, such that marriage constitutes a social and sexual pact that makes explicit men's rights over women. Within this contractual framework, only men are recognized as social individuals, a conception that positions them as proprietors endowed with legitimate and unrestricted access to what is constructed as their property—namely, women.

psychological levels. In this sense, the child is exposed to a violent and sexual experience for which she lacks the emotional resources to make sense of what has occurred. The scene lays bare the denial of childhood, as Josi is abruptly thrust into a reality marked by sexualization, fear, and vulnerability—a dynamic that intensifies throughout the story, as illustrated in the following excerpt:

— Are you all alone, little girl? (...) Good. That means we can understand each other. Just the two of us. (...) — You're a very pretty little girl. Already becoming a young lady. Before long, you'll be a woman. You'll be even more beautiful than your mother. Every man will want you. Just like I want you now. (...) — I've never liked women with children. They're too much trouble. But a daughter—that's a different story. He ran his rough hand through my long hair, over my shoulders, and across the buttons of my blouse. I shuddered. — You trembled. You liked your uncle's touch, didn't you? I bet you're enjoying this. I bet you'll turn out even more of a slut than your mother. He leaned closer and pressed his lips against my neck. Thinking only of getting away from him, and taking advantage of the fact that he was crouching, I shoved him hard to the ground and ran out onto the sidewalk (Martins, 2019, pp. 17–18).

The narrative demonstrates, once again, that violence becomes entrenched within the private sphere, as underscored by the fact that the child is home alone, thereby creating an even more severe context for the sexualization of the child's body.

In light of Lugones's (2020) perspective, this violence can be understood not as an isolated event but as the expression of a historical logic that renders certain bodies available for exploitation. The author argues that the coloniality of gender institutes a biological dimorphism and a hierarchical order that primarily dehumanizes racialized women, who are frequently perceived as open, sexually available, and stripped of protection. Maldonado-Torres (2018) likewise highlights this coercive process by demonstrating that the colonial imaginary constructed an image of women of color as hypersexualized, placing them within a "porno-tropical tradition" in which they are portrayed as naturally promiscuous and available for male desire.

This "tradition" is reenacted in the scene under analysis, particularly in Fernando's assertion that Josi is "already a young lady" and that "every man will want" her body. By projecting onto the child a sexuality that does not belong to her, the abuser not only anticipates her incorporation into an economy of male desire but also inscribes her within a tradition of objectification rooted in colonial structures.

The coloniality of gender becomes even more evident in the perpetrator's assertion that, although he does not like women with children, "a daughter is a different story." This statement

reveals the perception of the female body—even in childhood—as accessible, available, and vulnerable. Thus, it becomes evident that childhood, although modern conceptions associate it with care and protection, is not universally realized. Shaped by intersecting axes of gender, race, and social standing, Josi's experience reveals a childhood captured by relations of domination, reinforcing her denial as a subject of rights while also pointing to the socially recurrent dynamic between stepfather and stepdaughter—a relationship historically marked by abuse and silencing.

In this sense, Josi's reaction—pushing him away and running away—can be read as a gesture of (re)existence that, although momentary, destabilizes domination. Her escape temporarily disrupts the attempt to capture both her body and her subjectivity, revealing that even in contexts deeply marked by violence, cracks remain through which practices of refusal and survival emerge. It is this trajectory of (re)existence that culminates in the story's ending:

— It's your fault, Fernando. You took too long. — You bitch! You slut! He dumped all the pasta over her. I don't know what came over her, but she shouted back, — Your mother's the slut! He rose from the table and began smearing the remaining pasta across her face, forcing her mouth open and stuffing it until my mother began to choke. Her frail body seemed so small beside his large, heavy one. [...] I ran. I don't know why I fled and left my mother alone with him. But I ran as fast and as hard as I could, and before long I was far away. (...) When I returned, frightened by the approaching darkness, my legs were no longer shaking. (...) I followed her gaze and found his body lying on the floor, the trail of blood ending beside him. Covered in blood, he lay motionless. As I realized what had happened, I suddenly felt a surge of confidence, joy, and the urge to smile. I asked quietly:
— Was it hard?
— Yes. My dress got caught on the button of his pants. (...)
— Can I help you push? — I offered. — No need.
— So how did you do it? — I used the kitchen knife. The big one. (Martins, 2019, p. 30)

Following another episode of physical violence, triggered by Fernando's complaint that the food had gone cold, the story's conclusion radicalizes the dynamics of oppression. At the height of the violence, which once again unfolds within the private sphere, Josi's first impulse is precisely to flee that space. As the home fails to provide her with protection, the child is effectively forced out of it. It is within this context that the rupture challenging colonial patriarchy takes shape, giving rise to the mother's radical response.

Upon her return, the discovery of Fernando's lifeless body shifts the narrative from a regime of submission to an act of defiance. By using the kitchen knife—a utensil she routinely

employed to prepare her abuser's meals—Rosana subverts the domestic space, redefining it as a territory of resistance.

Furthermore, Josi's response to the scene is marked not by fear but by joyful confidence. The child, whose experience throughout the story is shaped by violence and the denial of her childhood, begins to participate, albeit symbolically, in this act of rupture by offering to help conceal the body. Such an attitude blurs the boundaries between victim and agent, indicating that even in contexts deeply structured by coloniality and patriarchy, possibilities for (re)existence and the reappropriation of one's body can emerge.

Thus, the story gives rise to a praxis that disrupts and fractures the established order and, for that very reason, may prove unsettling. In this way, the action that unfolds within the possibilities afforded by the narrative functions both as a response to and as a way out of coloniality, fostering the decolonization of gender insofar as it breaks with the naturalization of female submission, for bringing about the decolonial turn requires.

The logic that follows is not permitted by the logic of power. The movement of these bodies and relationships does not repeat itself. It does not become static or fossilized. (...) From this fractured locus, the movement sustains creative modes of reflection, behavior, and relations that are antithetical to the logic of capital (Lugones, 2014, p. 948).

The narrative thus concludes with the protagonists' departure: "We walked to the bus station (...) I was carrying Nina, still wet, and the puzzle Uncle Paulo had given me in a bag. (...) Later, from the bus window, I watched the city fade away" (Martins, 2019, p. 32). As she leaves behind a city marked by experiences of violence, Josi preserves elements of her childhood by carrying her toys, signaling that, despite these ruptures, her childhood remains an ongoing process. In this way, the narrative reveals that, even in contexts deeply intersected by coloniality, patriarchy, and the denial of childhood, ambiguous and complex forms of (re)existence emerge. These forms do not fully restore order; rather, they destabilize and displace the very order that has historically relegated these bodies to a condition of subalternity, thereby allowing the story's ending to be read as an act of rupture through a decolonial lens.

Conclusion

The analysis developed throughout this article has demonstrated that the narrative of *Longe de Mim (Far from Me)* is not limited to depicting individual experiences of violence but is

woven into a broader historical fabric in which coloniality, patriarchy, and intersectional inequalities intersect, as argued by Lugones (2020). By shifting the interpretive focus beyond the episodic dimension of events, it becomes evident that the characters' experiences are shaped by enduring structures that organize and condition their lives.

From this perspective, the coloniality of gender emerges as a decisive interpretive framework for understanding not only the persistence but also the everyday reproduction of female subordination, especially within the domestic sphere. Far from constituting a neutral or protective space, the home becomes a site where hierarchies are reproduced and practices of control, silencing, and violence are continually reinforced. It is within this context that Josi's childhood is gradually displaced, giving way to an experience marked by the premature assumption of responsibilities and early exposure to forms of violence structurally imposed upon her. Early maturity, in this sense, is not a deviation or an exception but rather the consequence of these very structures, which reshape the temporalities of life and impose adult experiences upon young girls.

The notion of "denied childhoods," linked in this study to the idea of childhoods rendered impossible, confirms that childhood, as conceived by modernity, is not a universal experience. Rather, it is historically conditioned, and its realization depends on social markers that distribute protection, care, and recognition unequally. The protagonist's trajectory demonstrates how gender, race, and class operate together in producing the unequal conditions of possibility for childhood itself, so that the right to experience childhood is systematically undermined, if not altogether denied.

At the same time, the narrative also reveals fractures within this system of domination. Although situated within a context of violence, the characters' final actions introduce a dimension of rupture that unsettles, albeit provisionally, the logic of submission that confines them. These gestures do not restore an idealized order; instead, they challenge the structures that have historically sustained oppression. In this sense, literature emerges not only as a space of critique but also as a field for imagining possibilities — however precarious — of (re)existence.

Finally, by bringing literature into dialogue with decolonial thought, this study has sought to demonstrate that childhoods shaped by the coloniality of gender are not merely denied but structurally prevented from being fully realized. Reflecting on these childhoods therefore requires recognizing the limits of modernity's universalizing promises while also calling for the construction

of other possibilities of existence — ones in which experiencing childhood ceases to be a privilege and becomes, in fact, a right.

CRedit
Acknowledgement: Not applicable.
Financing: Not applicable.
Conflicts of interest: The authors certify that they have no commercial or associative interest that represents a conflict of interest in relation to the manuscript.
Ethical Approval: Not applicable.
Contributor Roles:
SILVA, Patricia de Sousa Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. CORDEIRO, Deyse Gabriely Machado Brito Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

References

- ARIÈS, Philippe. *História social da criança e da família*. Rio de Janeiro: Guanabara, 1986.
- GONZALEZ, Léila. *Por um feminismo latino-americano: ensaios, intervenções e diálogos*. (Org.) RIOS, Flávia; LIMA, Márcia. 1. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 2020.
- LERNER, Gerda. *A criação do patriarcado*. 1. ed. São Paulo: Pensamento-Cultrix, 2019.
- LUGONES, María. Rumo a um feminismo descolonial. *Estudos Feministas*, Florianópolis, v. 22, n. 3, p. 935-952, 2014.
- _____, María. Colonialidade e gênero. In: HOLLANDA, Heloisa Buarque (org.). *Pensamento feminista hoje: perspectivas decoloniais*. Rio de Janeiro: Bazar do Tempo, 2020. 53-83.
- MALDONADO-TORRES, Nelson. Analítica da colonialidade e da decolonialidade: algumas dimensões básicas. In: BERNARDINO-COSTA, J.; MALDONADO-TORRES, N.; GROSGOUEL, R. (org.). *Decolonialidade e pensamento afrodiaspórico*. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica, 2018.
- MARTINS, Lindevania. *Longe de Mim*. Buenos Aires: Editora Martins, 2019.
- MIGNOLO, Walter. Colonialidade: O lado mais escuro da modernidade. *Revista brasileira de ciências sociais*. vol. 32, n. 94, 2017.
- PATEMAN, Carole. *O Contrato sexual*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1993.

POZZER, Suzan A. *Infância e (de)colonialidade: reflexões sobre a formação humana*. Dissertação (Mestrado em Educação) — Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Florianópolis, 2018.

QUIJANO, Aníbal. Colonialidade do poder, Eurocentrismo e América Latina. In: *A colonialidade do saber: eurocentrismo e ciências sociais. Perspectivas latino-americanas*. Buenos Aires: CLACSO, Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales, 2005, p. 117-142.

SAFFIOTI, Heleieth. Contribuições feministas para o estudo da violência de gênero. *Cadernos pagu* (16) 2001: pp.115-136.

SARMENTO, Manuel Jacinto. Estudos da infância e sociedade contemporânea: desafios conceituais. *O Social em Questão*, Rio de Janeiro, ano XX, n. 21, p. 15-44, jan./jun. 2009

SCHÉRER, Renè. *Infantis: Charles Fourier e a infância para além das crianças*. Trad. Guilherme João de Freitas Teixeira – Belo Horizonte: Autêntica Editora. 2009.

SEGATO, Rita. *Contra-pedagogías de la crueldad*. 1. ed. Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros, 2018.

_____, Rita. Gênero e colonialidade: do patriarcado comunitário de baixa intensidade ao patriarcado colonial-moderno de alta intensidade. In: *Crítica da colonialidade em oito ensaios: e uma antropologia por demanda*. Rio de Janeiro: Bazar do Tempo, 2021.