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Gilberto Alves Araújo
Lívia Aparecida de Almeida e Sousa
Elton Jhon Nascimento dos Santos

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Perspectivas do Norte sobre o Sul Global: principios de educação ambiental em Jonathan Foer

Gilberto Alves Araújo[1]
Lívia Aparecida de Almeida e Sousa[2]
Elton Jhon Nascimento dos Santos[3]

***Abstract**: This article critically examines the environmental discourse advanced by Jonathan Safran Foer in We Are the Weather, drawing on critical ecopedagogy, decolonial thought, and climate justice frameworks. Through Critical Discourse Analysis, the study reveals how Foer's narrative individualizes ecological responsibility and depoliticizes the climate crisis by promoting ethical consumption as the central solution. Although affective and ethical in tone, the discourse obscures structural causes such as colonialism, capitalism, and global inequalities, erasing insurgent knowledges from the Global South. The article argues that focusing on behavioral changes like vegetarianism perpetuates neoliberal and moralizing logics that hinder collective action and reinforce social disparities. It also explores how apocalyptic metaphors and the aesthetics of collapse act as rhetorical strategies that foster urgency while undermining political mobilization. In contrast, the study advocates for an insurgent ecopedagogy rooted in territorial struggles, Indigenous knowledge, and grassroots resistance as a viable alternative to consumer-centered pedagogy. The conclusion calls for systemic transformation integrating environmental and social justice, challenging neoliberal affective education through a politicized, collective, and hopeful praxis.*

***Keywords**: critical environmental education, climate justice, environmental communication, North-South disparity.*

[1] *Investigador y Doctor por la Universidad de Witwatersrand (WITS), Johannesburgo, Sudáfrica. Coordinar del Grupo LICEPEX. Dirección electrónica: gilbertoa.araujo@yahoo.com.br Orcid https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8177-0730*

[2] *Profesora de la Universidad de la Fuera Aérea (UNIFA), Río de Janeiro, Brasil. Doctora en Lingüística Aplicada por la UFRJ. Dirección electrónica: livia.a.a.sousa@gmail.com Orcid https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6421-1614*

[3] *Investigador del Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas da Amazonia (INPA), Manaus, Brasil. Máster en Ciencias Biológicas por el INPA; trabaja en taxonomía de Fabaceae y flora amazónica. Dirección electrónica: eltonjhon419@gmail.com Orcid https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8863-9789*

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***Resumen**: Este artículo examina críticamente el discurso ambiental promovido por Jonathan Safran Foer en "We Are the Weather", a partir de marcos teóricos vinculados a la ecopedagogía crítica, el pensamiento decolonial y la justicia climática. Mediante el uso del análisis crítico del discurso, el estudio reveló cómo la narrativa de Foer individualiza la responsabilidad ecológica y despolitiza la crisis climática al proponer el consumo ético como solución central. Aunque su tono es afectivo y ético, dicho discurso oscurece causas estructurales como el colonialismo, el capitalismo y las desigualdades globales, borrando los saberes insurgentes del sur global. El artículo sostiene que centrar la atención en cambios de comportamiento, como el vegetarianismo, perpetúa lógicas neoliberales y moralizantes que dificultan la acción colectiva y refuerzan disparidades sociales. Asimismo, se analizó cómo las metáforas apocalípticas y la estética del colapso funcionan como estrategias retóricas que generan urgencia, pero socavan la movilización política. En contraposición, el estudio abogó por una ecopedagogía insurgente anclada en las luchas territoriales, los conocimientos indígenas y la resistencia popular como alternativa viable frente a una pedagogía centrada en la persona consumidora. La conclusión propone una transformación estructural que articule justicia ambiental y justicia social, que desafíe la educación afectiva neoliberal a través de una praxis politizada, colectiva y esperanzada.*

***Palabras clave**: educación ambiental crítica, justicia climática, comunicación ambiental, desigualdad norte-sur*

***Resumo**: Este artigo examina criticamente o discurso ambiental proposto por Jonathan Safran Foer em We are the weather, com base na ecopedagogia crítica, no pensamento decolonial e em referenciais de justiça climática. Por meio da Análise Crítica do Discurso, o estudo revela como a narrativa de Foer individualiza a responsabilidade ecológica e despolitiza a crise climática ao promover o consumo ético como solução central. Embora se construa em um tom afetivo e ético, esse discurso obscurece causas estruturais como o colonialismo, o capitalismo e as desigualdades globais, apagando saberes insurgentes do Sul Global. O artigo sustenta que a ênfase em mudanças comportamentais, como o vegetarianismo, perpetua lógicas neoliberais e moralizantes que dificultam a ação coletiva e reforçam disparidades sociais. Explora-se ainda como metáforas apocalípticas e a estética do colapso atuam como estratégias retóricas que produzem um senso de urgência ao mesmo tempo em que enfraquecem a mobilização política. Em contraste, o estudo advoga em favor de uma ecopedagogia insurgente enraizada nas lutas territoriais, nos conhecimentos indígenas e nas resistências de base como alternativa viável a uma pedagogia centrada no consumo. A conclusão conclama a uma transformação sistêmica que integre justiça ambiental e justiça social, desafiando a educação afetiva de cunho neoliberal por meio de uma práxis politizada, coletiva e orientada pela esperança.*

***Palavras-chave**: educação ambiental crítica, justiça climática, comunicação ambiental, desigualdade norte-sul*

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1. Introduction

Jonathan Safran Foer's *We are the weather: saving the planet begins at breakfast*, first published in English in 2019 (with an edition in Portuguese in 2020), has become a landmark of contemporary environmental discourse by advancing an ethical narrative focused on the individual's role in mitigating climate change. Originally published in the United States and translated into several languages, the book quickly became a subject of debate in English-language media outlets. In Brazil, the edition issued by Editora Rocco in 2020 received extensive press coverage and rose to prominence among environmental non-fiction titles, appearing on bestseller lists at the country's leading bookstores (Foer, 2020). Its editorial relevance has also been showed in award recognition, including a *Goodreads Choice Award* (Foer, 2019) and the 2020 Green Prize for Sustainable Literature. It was likewise named among the year's best by *Financial Times* ("Best Books of 2019"), *The Guardian* ("Best Food Books of 2019"), and *Fast Company* (Best Climate Books of 2019), according to UCLA Library website in 2025.

Foer's non-fiction, autobiographical prose derives its persuasive force from blending scientific evidence with affective appeals, crafting arguments about diet, consumption, and individual environmental responsibility. Yet this strategy invites multiple lines of critique because it tends to carry an inadvertently moralizing, liberal, and at times depoliticized bias. By centering his case on consumer choices and personal action, the author appears to obscure the structural forces that configure the global climate crisis, such as the dynamics of agro-industrial capitalism, environmental racism (cf. Alves Araújo *et al.*, 2023; Alves Araújo and Sousa, 2020), the coloniality of knowledge, and the systemic inequities between the Global North and South.

Accordingly, the present article undertakes a critical examination of the environmental discourse deployed by Foer in *We Are the Weather*. It mobilizes Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) alongside theoretical reference points from critical Environmental Education (EE), emancipatory ecopedagogy, and decolonial thought. The study seeks to uncover the ideological effects embedded in Foer's narrative. It shows how Foer's discursive architecture naturalizes individualized solutions to structural problems, silences territorially grounded knowledges, and reproduces symbolic power relations that demobilize collective subjects. In doing so, the article aims to enrich debates on the limits and possibilities of contemporary environmental pedagogy. At the same time, it underscores the need for educational practices

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that interweave ecological justice, political emancipation, and epistemic recognition of the Global South.

2. Theoretical reference

This study locates itself within critical EE (Gomes et al., 2023), adopting an integrated theoretical–methodological framework that combines CDA (cf. Alves Araújo, 2021), liberatory ecopedagogy, and decolonial, anti-capitalist perspectives, all grounded in a sociocultural (Freirean) stance. This constellation arises from the need for analytical tools able to interrogate both surface manifestations and the deeper structures that shape ecological knowledge, especially in texts such as the one in question.

The framework rests on the premise that EE is neither neutral nor merely technical: it is a contested arena where worldviews, power relations, and epistemologies vie for hegemony. Consequently, it demands analytic approaches that expose ideological dimensions of environmental discourse while acknowledging the material conditions and historical processes that generate specific ecological knowledges and pedagogies.

It proceeds from the view that today's environmental crisis is more than ecological malfunction. It reflects historical, social, economic, cultural, and geopolitical determinations shaped by coloniality, capital, and epistemic silencing enforced by the Global North (Boff, 2004; Marques, 2015; Yount-André and Zembe, 2023). This insight rejects reductionist solutions (market mechanisms or individual behavior change only) and instead locates ecological crisis within matrices of power, exploitation, and systemic violence inherent to global capitalism.

Accordingly, the framework adopts a critical epistemology that treats environmental problems as inseparable from social justice, economic inequality, and the colonial knowledge matrix structuring global environmental governance. Decolonial theorists show that environmental discourse often reproduces colonial patterns of knowledge extraction, epistemic violence, and marginalization of Indigenous and traditional ecological knowledges.

Within this view, EE is conceptualized as symbolically, politically, and pedagogically disputed, resisting normative, technocratic, and moralizing approaches aligned with neoliberal rationalities and environmental governmentality. Building on Fairclough's Foucauldian insights, it analyses how environmental discourse acts as social control by producing ecological subjectivities ("responsible consumers" or "green citizens") that privatize concern and deflect attention from structural causes of degradation.

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Mainstream EE often reproduces existing power relations by naturalizing capitalist social forms and masking systemic drivers of destruction. Technocratic strategies reduce complex socio-ecological issues to technical management, excluding affected communities from decisions shaping their environments and livelihoods.

As Saylan and Blumstein (2011) note, behavioral campaigns and consumer-oriented solutions depoliticize the crisis by shifting causality from structural forces to individual ethics. Such depoliticization safeguards class interests, preserving power and wealth while simulating action. Emphasis on personal responsibility obscures the disproportionate impacts of corporate actors and elites and burdens ordinary consumers lacking structural leverage. Consumer-oriented EE also reinforces inequality, prescribing lifestyle changes feasible mainly for middle- and upper-class publics while ignoring environmental-justice claims of working-class and racialized communities. Hence, the EE advanced here rejects epistemic neutrality and understands education as a political, communicative, and situated act (Boff, 1999; 2021). Extending Freire, it holds that environmental problems arise from social arrangements benefiting some and harming others.

The communicative dimension stresses dialogue, critical questioning, and co-constructed knowledge, rejecting the “banking” model. It values community ecological insights as indispensable to meaningful EE. The situated dimension acknowledges that ecological problems and solutions are context-bound, requiring attention to historical, geographic, and cultural specificities rather than universal prescriptions.

This study therefore engages scholars committed to critical, liberatory ecopedagogy rooted in social struggle (see. Boff, 1999; 2004; 2021; Carvalho, 2016; Gkiolmas and Skordoulis, 2020; Kassiadou et al., 2018; Marques, 2015; Pedrini and Saito, 2014; Saylan and Blumstein, 2011). Despite diverse contexts, they converge on linking ecological and social justice.

Boff (1999; 2004; 2012; 2021), for example, illuminates spiritual-ethical aspects of crisis while retaining structural analysis. Carvalho (2016) foregrounds cultural and subjective dimensions of ecological learning within political-structural contexts. Kassiadou et al. (2018) emphasize participatory, community-based EE founded on local knowledge and experience. Gkiolmas and Skordoulis (2020) highlight EE’s role in fostering critical consciousness and collective action. Pedrini and Saito (2014) stress culturally responsive approaches that honor local practices across Latin America.

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This comprehensive framework thus enables multi-dimensional analysis that discloses both explicit content and implicit ideology. It shows how Northern environmental perspectives inadvertently reproduce influence or domination over the Global South while ostensibly promoting progressive goals.

3. Methodology

3.1 Focus

The investigation draws on a qualitative, documentary, and critically discursive design. Such terms signal both the nature of the material and the interpretive position assumed (cf. Araújo et al., 2019). Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA framework (1992; 2003; 2015) structures the inquiry and legitimates the choice to privilege meaning over measurement. The textual dimension makes visible the lexical selections, metaphoric patterns, and modal cues in Foer's prose, while the discursive-practice dimension follows intertextual traces and genre conventions that lend authority to moralizing claims. The sociocultural dimension then relates those claims to neoliberal, neo-colonial, and consumerist formations reported in the Latin-American EE literature (Bartosch, 2021; Boff, 2004; Hursh et al., 2017; Marques, 2015).

Because the aim is to explain how discourse organizes power rather than to count its surface tokens, the study aligns with an explanatory purpose. That is, it maps neglected ideological mechanisms in a bestseller circulating in Brazil and links those mechanisms to the wider matrix of coloniality and capital that structures Global-South environmental debates. Quantitative testing is foreign to this purpose and therefore, excluded.

3.2 Analysis unit

The complete Portuguese-language trade edition, *Nós Somos o Clima* (Foer, 2020), functions as the sole unit of analysis. Its selection follows two verifiable criteria. First, the narrative circulates most widely in Brazil, the primary Global-South context addressed by the article's title and argument. Second, a preliminary collation against the 2019 U.S. edition revealed no substantive loss of semantic content, ensuring that analytic inferences remain textually warranted while still capturing language-specific rhetorical shifts.

Paratexts supplied by the Brazilian Publisher (blurbs, marketing copy, and press notes) are excluded, since the study restricts itself to Foer's authored discourse. This bounded corpus keeps the focus tight, permits full-text inspection, and honors the article's declared intention to scrutinize how a Northern narrative re-enters the South through a locally distributed version

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3.3 Analysis processing

Interpretation proceeds through the dialectical-relational motion prescribed by CDA and documented in this study, as shown in Table 1:

Table 1: CDA 3D Mapping – operational view

CDA Dimension	What this study looks into	Typical signals in Foer (as discussed)	Interpreted effect
Text (lexico-semantic & rhetoric)	Lexical clusters, metaphors, modality, moral register	"breakfast," "sacrifice," bathtub/cancer/war metaphors; confessional tone; moral imperatives.	Moralizes consumption; aestheticizes collapse; simplifies causality.
Discursive practice (production/genre)	Memoir + manifesto + popular science hybrid	Personal vignettes + illustrative stats + ethical maxims recurring across chapters.	Legitimates private behavior as climate remedy; depoliticizes conflict.
Sociocultural practice (context)	Neoliberal governmentality, coloniality, green capitalism	Emphasis on individualized ethics; weak attention to structural North–South asymmetries and corporate power.	Recontextualizes climate justice into consumer virtue; erases insurgent knowledges.

Source: Owr elaboration, 2025.

First, a close descriptive pass identifies lexical clusters (e.g., "sacrifice," "breakfast," "bathtub"), cohesive ties, and modalizations that foreground individual responsibility while backgrounding systemic causation. Second, we cross-read those textual findings with Foer's generic hybridity (memoir, manifesto, and popular science). In this composite form, autobiographical vignettes sit alongside statistical snapshots and ethical maxims. Together, they interlock to legitimize private consumption as a climate remedy. Third, patterns are synthesized in analytic memos that relate the discourse to neoliberal governmentality and Global-South erasure, already problematized in the theoretical section.

Coding remains inductive and iterative. Provisional categories (moralization, individualization, epistemic omission) are refined through constant comparison until thematic saturation is reached, as illustrated in Table 2:

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Table 2: Codebook snapshot – operational definitions used in the analysis.

Code	Operational definition	Typical textual signals	Evidence location (Foer, 2020)
Moralization	Frames climate action as moral duty/virtue, not political struggle.	Sin/redemption/sacrifice lexicon; confessionals.	pp. 27, 169, 187.
Individualization	Assigns causal primacy to personal behaviors.	"We are the traffic"; breakfast/plate centrality.	pp. 81, 166-169.
Catastrophism	Persuasion via impending doom imagery.	"Collective suicide," war, cancer metaphors.	pp. 114, 156, 161, 174.
Erasure	Silences agents/knowledges from the Global South.	Absent/rare acknowledgment of Indigenous/territorial politics.	Throughout; contrasted sparingly on pp. 106, 136-139.

Source: Owr elaboration, 2025.

Counts occasionally support pattern recognition, but no inferential or descriptive statistics are applied, in line with the qualitative scope. The result is an integrated reading that discloses how Foer's text, while presenting itself as universal ethical counsel, ultimately normalizes a consumer-centered response and sidelines insurgent knowledges emanating from the Global South.

4. Results

4.1 Redemption through consumption: individualization, moralization, and green market

Foer's environmental discourse (2020, p. 208) is structured around the thesis that "saving the planet begins at breakfast", which encapsulates a logic of individualized responsibility for the ecological crisis. The appeal to change dietary habits (particularly reducing or eliminating meat consumption) is presented as the main lever of environmental transformation. In the light of CDA (Fairclough, 2015), this formulation reveals not only lexical and semantic choices but also connects with dominant social practices, reproducing power relations intrinsic to neoliberal capitalism (cf. Alves Araújo, 2014).

Foer weaves a somewhat emotional and moralizing narrative in which personal testimony assumes a central persuasive role: "Eating less meat, flying less, driving less, having fewer children – these choices are struggles. [...] I still haven't been able to cut dairy and eggs from my diet"[4] (Foer, 2020, p. 169). Such a dynamic process is illustrated in Table 3:

[4] [Brazilian edition] "Comer menos carne, voar menos, dirigir menos, ter menos filhos – essas escolhas são lutas. [...] Eu ainda não consegui cortar laticínios e ovos da minha alimentação".

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Table 3: Rhetorical/discursive strategies identified

Strategy	How it is described in the book	Evidence location	Intended/Observed Effect (per analysis)
Individualization of responsibility	Planetary salvation through dietary choices ("begins at breakfast").	pp. 81, 142, 166–169.	Privatizes blame; shifts focus from structures to habits.
Moralization / liturgy register	Sin, redemption, sacrifice; shared "prayer" rhetoric.	pp. 27, 99, 174, 187.	Produces ethical hierarchy; virtue performance over politics.
Catastrophe aesthetics	Apocalyptic, war, cancer analogies; "collective suicide".	pp. 114, 156, 161, 174, 181.	Urgency without structural pathways; potential paralysis.
Simplifying metaphors	Bathtub (turn off the faucet) reduces complexity.	pp. 74-75.	Overstates single-lever solutions; ignores inequalities/inertia.
Nostalgic return	"Un-invent food"; future should resemble past.	p. 110.	Erases historical violence and current agroecologies.

Source: Owr elaboration, 2025.

This purported "wisdom" is presented as scientific consensus, although it downplays structural issues involving the modes of production, distribution, and exploitation associated with the global capitalist agro-industry. It is true that in a few passages Foer (2020, pp. 106, 136-139) acknowledges economic asymmetries and offers general critiques of the global agribusiness sector. Yet, he seems to do so only insofar as it supports his ultimate goal of criticizing meat consumption: "So, no, factory farming does not 'feed the world'. Factory farming starves the world as it destroys it"[5] (Foer, 2020, p. 138). Nevertheless, the emphasis on an individual ethics of consumption, as Fairclough (2015) suggests, signals an ideological strategy that naturalizes social and economic relations as if they were the outcome of depoliticized personal choices.

Foer (2020) attempts to contextualize and temper this tendency – at times comparable in style to self-help – of stressing individual actions over cooperative and systemic ones. Even so, the author almost invariably returns to the core of his argumentative corollary, mass individuality: "It's [...] true that one person deciding to eat a plant-based diet will not *change* the world, but it's [...] true that the sum of millions of such decisions will"[6] (Foer, 2020, p. 167).

In part, Foer's environmental discourse can be understood as a form of depoliticizing the ecological. The author often obscures the structural causes of the climate crisis and remains

[5] [Brazilian edition] "Então, não, a agropecuária industrial não 'alimenta o mundo'. A agropecuária industrial faz o mundo passar fome enquanto ela própria o destrói".
[6] [Brazilian edition] "É [...] verdade que uma pessoa decidir adotar uma alimentação à base de plantas não vai *salvar* o mundo, mas é [...] verdade que a soma de milhões de decisões vai".

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silent about global inequalities. Such a pattern echoes Hursh et al., (2017), who analyze the neoliberal capture of EE and warn of the risks of individualizing social and environmental responsibility. On the other hand, as Saylan and Blumstein (2011) remind us, ascribing all failure to oppressive systems can serve as an alibi for subjective inertia, hollowing out self-critique, and blocking real possibilities for incremental, engaged change. Hence, a critical and effective approach to the environmental crisis must articulate structural transformation and personal responsibility. It requires mobilizing subjects who grasp both the limits and the potential of their agency in the face of catastrophe. After all, "an ecological attitude is more than the sum of good behaviors"[7] (Carvalho, 2016, p. 180). Changing the plate is not enough.

Although he repeatedly acknowledges this reality, Foer focuses on individuality, behavior, and consumption: "Yes, there are powerful systems [...] that are difficult to disassemble. [...] But no traffic jam can exist without individual motorists. [...] We are the traffic"[8] (Foer, 2020, p. 166). Instead of exposing the links between colonialism and the climate crisis that underlie the notion of sustainable development, Foer (2020) opts for an individualized or mass humanist narrative, which, in Boff's terms (2012, p. 45), represents a spirituality devoid of social justice.

The naturalization of consumption as a route to planetary salvation recurs throughout the work, as when Foer (2020, p. 80) states: "It will be impossible to defuse the time bomb without reducing our consumption of animal products"[9]. Although this argument is supported by data, it partly overlooks the role of large food corporations, state subsidies to livestock production, and the financialization of land (see Boff, 2012, p. 2). Thus, while neoliberal ecological discourse proposes recycling and vegetarianism, multinationals continue exploiting territories, extracting resources, and displacing communities (see Marques, 2015).

From the outset, it is evident that, in the name of an attention economy (see. Alves Araújo, 2020), Foer's work frequently mobilizes a discursive practice characteristic of liberal Northern environmentalism: personalization of the crisis, illustrative data, and family narratives to generate empathy (see. Ribeiro, 2012). Although these strategies are partially valid and effective to some extent, sustainability must be framed not as consumer behavior but as political subjectivity rooted in ecologies of knowledge and care (Feder, 2021; see Boff, 1999; 2004; 2021).

[7] [Original] "a atitude ecológica é mais do que a soma de bons comportamentos".
[8] [Brazilian edition] "Sim, existem sistemas poderosos [...] que são difíceis de desmantelar. [...] Mas não existe engarrafamento sem motoristas individuais. [...] Somos o engarrafamento".
[9] [Brazilian edition] "Vai ser impossível desarmar a bomba-relógio sem reduzir nosso consumo de produtos de origem animal".

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By insisting that climate change can be solved through everyday actions such as "eat a plant-based diet, avoid air travel, *live car-free*, and have fewer children"[10] (Foer, 2020, p. 81), the author participates in this hegemonic discourse by silencing the analysis of global production chains that entail ecological plunder in the Global South (Grynszpan, 2014, p. 73; Tommasiello et al., 2014, p. 55). Boff, by contrast, clearly denounces this structure, suggesting that what is at stake is the global capitalist economic model and its logic of unlimited accumulation, its expansive and predatory metabolism (Marques, 2015), which transforms everything into "commodity put into circulation"[11] (Boff, 2004, p. 95).

Even Foer's literary construction, which appeals to emotional and affective strategies to mobilize readers, reveals a lack of familiarity with the notion of critical ecopedagogy: "'To mobilize people, this has to become an emotional issue'. If we continue to experience [this] struggle […] as a midseason away game, we will be doomed"[12] (Foer, 2020, p. 27). His proposal seems closer to what Saylan and Blumstein criticize as campaign-based EE (Saylan and Blumstein, 2011) than to transformative pedagogical practices. As Mathieson (2021) and Bartosch (2021) argue, critical EE should be grounded in educational ecologies that engage with epistemic pluralities and decolonial practices.

Although he acknowledges the seriousness of the environmental crisis, Foer appears to anchor his analysis mostly within the confines of a "performative" or "behavioralist" paradigm (see Grün, 1996). This model promotes an education oriented toward behavioral adaptation to the system rather than its transcendence. In this sense, many dominant EE methodologies, Foer's included, still operate within rationalist and technocratic frameworks, prioritizing measurable outcomes and adaptive behaviors, as Hursh et al., (2017, p. 12) critique.

Such surface pedagogy risks limiting itself to solutions that can be commodified, such as vegan products bearing an ecological label, reinforcing the belief that the market can be the vehicle for sustainability: "We need to enforce something akin to a carbon tax, mandate environmental-impact labels for products, replace plastic with sustainable solutions, and build walkable cities"[13] (Foer, 2020, p. 167). Yet, as Boff warns, this reasoning "becomes absurd [...]

[10] [Brazilian edition] "ter uma alimentação à base de plantas, evitar viajar de avião, abrir mão de carro e ter menos filhos".
[11] [Original] "mercadoria colocada no circuito".
[12] [Brazilian edition] "'[É] preciso que a questão se torne emocional para [...] mobilizar as pessoas'. Se continuarmos a encarar [essa] luta [...] como uma partida da próxima temporada, estaremos condenados".
[13] [Brazilian edition] "Precisamos praticar algo como uma taxa de carbono, tornar obrigatórios selos ambientais para produtos, substituir plástico por soluções sustentáveis e construir cidades favoráveis a pedestres"

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as if life were a simple commodity placed on the buying and selling counter"[14] (Boff, 1999, p.63).

Despite mobilizing scientific statements and evidence about global warming, Foer (2020) disconnects them from their historical and political contexts. The result is an environmental discourse that tends to be emotive, subjectivized, moralized, and depoliticized: "No animal products for breakfast or lunch. It might not amount to precisely the reductions that are asked for, but it's just about right, and easy to remember"[15] (Foer, 2020, p. 142).

By presenting vegetarianism as a revolutionary gesture, Foer naturalizes a practice historically rooted in the Global North, disregarding its socioeconomic determinants (see Gaberell et al., 2024). On its own, though positive, shifting from a meat-based to a plant-based diet does not solve the climate crisis.

Although veganism can significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions, it is not a standalone solution due to various environmental, economic, nutritional, and systemic limitations (Alcorta et al., 2021; Gray, 2020; Shukla, 2021). Fully plant-based diets can strain water and land resources, threaten biodiversity, and increase agricultural risks, thereby compromising food security. They may also require more agrochemicals, raise waste levels, and impact pastoralist communities. Nutrient deficiencies, high costs, and low global adherence further limit their feasibility. Strategies such as caloric-efficient consumption, improved agriculture, and reduced waste cut emissions without relying solely on veganism (Borenstein, 2020). Partial dietary changes combined with technology offer an effective and realistic alternative to climate targets.

Foer (2020, p. 167) makes it seem that choosing not to eat animal products for breakfast and lunch is one of the most important decisions one can make, although he attenuates the effect of this mantra in certain passages. However, universalizing this choice ignores the realities of hunger and food insecurity across much of the Global South, where the priority is minimum dignified access to food (Alves Araújo and Prandini, 2022), not the ethical refinement of the menu. This environmental discourse that refuses to break with capital structures merely guarantees their systemic reproduction (cf. Carvalho, 2016; Yount-André and Zembe, 2023).

This pedagogy of conscious consumption also fails to address the affective and existential dimension of the crisis, ignoring that the human being is part of a larger ecology not

[14] [Original] "se torna absurdo [...] como se a vida fosse uma simples mercadoria colocada no balcão de compras e vendas".
[15] [Brazilian edition] "Cortando alimentos de origem animal no café da manhã e no almoço. Talvez não corresponda exatamente à redução de que precisamos, mas está dentro da margem e é fácil de lembrar".

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reducible to consumer choices (Lloro, 2020). Forming an ecological subject—rather than merely an ethical consumer—requires pedagogical practices tied to territoriality, ancestry, and local conflicts. There is no environmental justice without socioeconomic justice, popular sovereignty, and a critique of capitalism, as Chico Mendes warned: "Ecology without class struggle is no more than gardening"[16] (*apud* Veiga, 2024, s.p.).

This normative and moralizing EE, instead of fostering critical subjects, produces an ethics of passivity: eating less meat would replace confronting agribusiness, industrial deforestation, and the commodification of nature (Foer, 2020, p. 123). In Foer (2020, p. 55), the body appears merely as a vehicle for conscious consumption, and the territory is rendered invisible as a locus of dispute and resistance. Responsibility for the ecological catastrophe tends to be common to all human beings, across different geopolitical locations, social classes, races, or colonial histories (Foer, 2020, p. 90). The author tends to naturalize universal responsibility while only sparsely considering the asymmetric power structures that shaped the global ecological crisis (see Boff, 2021, p. 16).

The concept of "educational ecology" (Bartosch, 2021) offers an alternative to Foer's universalizing vision by valuing interactions among agents and processes in the educational environment. It understands teaching as practice situated within complex networks of ideas, values, and ecological realities. Rather than a single epistemic truth, it defends heterogeneity, recognizing local knowledges and multiple forms of environmental literacy, and promoting a dialogical, historical pedagogy sensitive to social and ecological contexts.

The obsession with dietary solutions transforms food into a moral battleground, calling upon the individual to seek climatic redemption through ethical choices (cf. Saylan and Blumstein, 2011, p. 45). According to Fairclough's CDA (2015), this moralizes politics, concealing systemic issues (such as agro-food production, colonial land structures, subsidies, and environmental racism) in favor of daily ethical dilemmas. It constitutes a moral colonization of political discourse that reduces radical transformation to performances of virtue (see Fairclough, 2003).

Discursively, Foer (2020, pp. 27, 99, 174, 187) mobilizes religious metaphors (redemption, sin, sacrifice) to construct a kind of environmental liturgy: "And we must do this together: everyone's hand wrapped around the same pen, every breath of everyone exhaling

[16] [Original] "ecologia sem luta de classes é jardinagem".

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the shared prayer"[17]. By admitting the difficulty of adopting a plant-based diet, the author reinforces individualized responsibility in the face of the climate crisis. His moralization of food choices, however, suggests a hierarchy between those who destroy and those who save the planet, ignoring political inequalities and positions within global exploitation chains. In doing so, the argument shifts the focus from the structural causes of the ecological crisis to choices available only to a few, thereby contributing, albeit inadvertently, to an "entire crusade to morally redeem capitalism" (Klein, 2014, p. 40).

The vegetarianism advocated by Foer (2020) is therefore not neutral. As an ethical practice, it may sound legitimate, but as a normative discourse, it can be exclusionary and potentially oppressive when detached from the social and historical structures that condition it. Conversely, our reading of Boff (2021, p. 255) allows us to conclude that ecological ethics is not an ethical menu for enlightened consumers; it is a call to solidarity with the poor of the Earth, with the invisible, with those expelled from history.

4.2 The aesthetics of collapse and prospects for environmental transformation

The language of catastrophe occupies a central place in Foer's work, shaping its entire argumentative structure. The climate crisis is framed as an almost inevitable apocalypse, and the tragic tone serves a persuasive strategy: "if we do not win the war, we will lose the childhood home"[18] (Foer, 2020, p. 114); "Now the entire species threatens itself with mass suicide"[19] (Foer, 2020, p. 174). Foer does acknowledge in a rare passage that the climate crisis will (or would) affect rich and poor differently:

> And although there is a temptation to describe the planetary crisis in apocalyptic terms, imagining total human extinction, the truth is that many of us who live in high-income nations with varied landscapes and sophisticated technology will survive our climate suicide[20]. (Foer, 2020, p. 156)

Yet the tone of impending disaster dominates much of his narrative: "the average world citizen needs to shift to a plant-based diet in order to prevent catastrophic, irreversible

[17] [Brazilian edition] "[...] Precisamos fazer isso tudo juntos [...], as mãos de todos em volta da mesma caneta, cada respiração de cada pessoa expirando a reza conjunta".
[18] [Brazilian edition] "Se não vencermos a guerra, vamos perder a casa".
[19] [Brazilian edition] "agora, a espécie como um todo ameaça a si mesma de cometer suicídio em massa".
[20] [Brazilian edition] "Embora seja tentador descrever a crise planetária em termos apocalípticos, imaginando a total extinção humana, a verdade é que muitos de nós, que vivemos em países com alta renda média e paisagens variadas e tecnologia sofisticada, vamos sobreviver ao suicídio climático".

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environmental damage, [...an] unprecedented environmental horror"[21] (Foer, 2020, pp. 142, 181). Although such discourse properly dramatizes the gravity of the climate emergency, it is built upon a logic of moralized collapsology. This emotive rhetoric fails to structure a political critique or offer viable pathways for systemic transformation. Indeed, a catastrophe-centered rhetoric that relies on fear can paralyze if it is not politicized and converted into individual and collective action, thereby becoming an instrument of domination (Boff, 2004, p. 121).

While it mobilizes affects, the discourse of catastrophe and fear can also obscure power relations, producing subjects interpellated by urgency (cf. Fairclough, 2015) yet deprived of analytical tools for action. As a result, "the emotional perception of these [catastrophic] dangers tends to no longer respond to what is at stake"[22] (Marques, 2015, p. 22). The risk is that climate-collapse discourse may become a mere media commodity or simplistic environmental moralism, a narrative offering little room for popular organization, direct action, or the construction of systemic alternatives, and reduced to dietary change, carbon-footprint reduction, and information sharing.

In this sense, Foer's work aligns with an ecopedagogy of affective obedience, a discursive practice that deploys emotion to discipline rather than to liberate. Garrard (*apud* Bartosch, 2021, p. 48) warns that such openly emotive language of urgency and imminent chaos has yet to yield consistent, truly effective outcomes and therefore should not be prioritized.

From a discursive-semiotic standpoint, Foer (2020) presents personal sacrifice as a moral exit from collapse – an approach that ought to be challenged in favor of a hope anchored in action, restoration, and systemic transgression. By failing to propose collective, decolonial, and politically robust pathways, his narrative becomes an aesthetics of collapse, moving, yet limited. As Boff (2012, pp. 76-77) states, we must envision a new paradigm that guarantees sustainability for Earth and all its beings.

Organizing hope must be grounded in popular struggles, territorial resistances, and collective actions against environmental necropolitics. This outlook resonates with Saylan and Blumstein's (2011) call to overcome ecological impotence through confidence, information, and action. Scholars such as Lupinacci (2020), Fassbinder (2020), Skordoulis (2020), and Reynolds (2020) reaffirm that hope becomes politically transformative only when sustained by

[21] [Brazilian edition] "O cidadão médio do mundo tem de fazer a transição para uma dieta à base de plantas para evitar danos ambientais catastróficos e irreversíveis, [...] um horror ambiental sem precedentes".
[22] [Original] "a percepção emocional desses perigos [catastróficos] tende a não responder mais ao que está em jogo".

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critical consciousness and collective action; otherwise, it merely reinforces hegemonic discourses.

The hope offered by Foer (2020, p. 30) lacks critical and decolonial awareness: it seldom denounces powerholders, neglects structural conflicts, and does not draw upon social movements or collective initiatives. It relies mainly on individual strategies and sentimental narratives (exemplified by the metaphor of a child calling from the bedroom) prioritizing consumer choices and dietary morality. Such hope, although seemingly communal, is depoliticized and aligned with a sentimentalism reflecting the neoliberal pedagogy of affect, replacing political praxis with individual ethics. Consequently, it is palliative rather than subversive, alleviating pain without fostering structural transformation.

Instead of this stance, Foer (2020) repeatedly invokes climatic collapse in terms of “last breath [últimos suspiros]” (p. 169), “end” of the reign (p. 175), “collective suicide” (p. 161), and analogies with great historical tragedies such as the Holocaust. This symbolic structuring of environmental discourse is far from neutral. As Fairclough (2003) suggests, metaphors not only convey emotions; they organize ways of seeing the world and thus exert significant ideological effects by helping construct social realities.

Foer (2020, pp. 74-75) employs the bathtub metaphor—faucet and drain—to illustrate the urgency of cutting carbon emissions at their source (turning off the faucet) rather than relying on compensatory measures such as carbon sequestration (fiddling with the drain). In his view, palliative measures are insufficient if the primary cause of global warming persists. The overflowing tub represents climatic collapse brought about by neglecting the root problem.

Striking though it is, this metaphor simplifies the climate crisis by implying that emission reduction alone suffices. It ignores climatic inertia, socio-environmental inequalities, biodiversity loss, and unsustainable consumption patterns. It may also engender undue optimism about technological fixes and delay structural change, thereby perpetuating fragmented approaches that maintain the current neoliberal system.

By neglecting events such as the transatlantic slave trade, Foer (2020, pp. 138, 174) appeals to middle-class white consciousness/ethics, deploying an implicit and contentious analogy to address the climate crisis. This ambiguous intertextuality suggests that inaction in the face of environmental collapse equals witnessing our own Holocaust. The comparison, however, is problematic, for it conflates distinct historical subjects and obscures the roles of imperial powers, transnational corporations, and colonialism in contemporary environmental injustices.

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Foer (2020, p. 72) also relies on emotionally charged metaphors and clichés, such as an analogy with cancer, which naturalizes the climate crisis as a technical and inevitable phenomenon, thereby concealing its structural and political causes. By likening climate change to a tumor, he fosters a combat imaginary incompatible with paradigms of care and integral ecology (Boff, 1999; 2012; 2021; Carvalho, 2016). This Western viewpoint dismisses ancestral knowledge and Southern epistemologies, reducing socio-environmental complexity to a technocratic, depoliticized narrative that demobilizes engaged collectives.

In sum, Foer's (2020) apocalyptic climate metaphors exceed the purely rhetorical. They articulate an ideology that generates urgency yet weakens critical engagement and ecological justice, as suggested in the synthesis in Table 4:

Table 4: Identified Metaphor-Function Matrix

Metaphor in Foer (as discussed)	Problem framed as	Pedagogical effect	Limitation surfaced
Bathtub (faucet vs. drain)	Technical overflow	Emphasizes emission "source control".	Simplifies multi-scalar crisis; neglects inequalities/inertia.
War/Apocalypse	Existential battle / end times	Drives urgency and sacrifice narratives.	May paralyze; weak links to structural routes for action.
Cancer	Pathology to be excised	Justifies drastic "treatment".	Naturalizes crisis; sidelines political economy.

Source: Owr elaboration, 2025.

Although affectively powerful, their mobilizing force is limited. The supposedly "simple" solution reduces the complexity of environmental collapse to individual consumption, overlooking its historical and structural roots in global capitalism, as emphasized by Marques (2015, p. 47) and Boff (2004, pp. 190-191). Foer's discourse aestheticizes the crisis, treating it as a liberal subject's ethical dilemma and privileging individual conversions over collective, politicized alternatives.

4.3 Silence on the Global South: coloniality, critical ecopedagogy, and climate justice

Foer (2020) offers an ostensibly global environmental narrative, yet one framed by a North-centric perspective. He universalizes the dynamics and effects of the climate crisis, diluting responsibility while ignoring Indigenous peoples, traditional communities, and territories affected by neoliberal policies. His moralizing critique of agribusiness is disconnected from

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global value chains, such as those linking Brazilian agronegócio to Northern capital, when he writes: “Factory farming starves the world as it destroys it”[23] (Foer, 2020, p. 138).

This constitutes an “ideological naturalization” (Fairclough, 2015) that conceals structural causes and privileges individual morality. The Global South is doubly erased: rendered invisible as a subject and silenced as a producer of knowledge and ecological resistance. Foer (2020) ignores “[indigenous] environmental wisdom that goes beyond [...] our most advanced centers of experiments in agroecology”[24] (Boff, 2004, p. 171), thereby dismissing knowledge outside the dominant scientific paradigm.

According to Boff (2004, p. 183), genuine ecology must begin with the poor. By focusing on the Western consumer as the agent of change, Foer obscures structural inequalities and the role of traditional peoples in environmental preservation. Even when acknowledging inequality (Foer, 2020, pp. 106, 136-139), he keeps the spotlight on the liberal urban subject. Thus, capitalism, the cause of the crisis, offers no real solution (Stern and Calderón, 2014).

Consequently, Foer’s global environmental discourse is constructed almost exclusively by Northern institutions that define the problems, prescribe the solutions, and dictate behaviors, without dialogue with historically dispossessed territories (Sarria et al., 2018, p. 62).

The pedagogical program Foer (2020) proposes is grounded mainly in individual practices such as vegetarianism and carbon-footprint reduction. It often overlooks decades-long environmental emergencies in many Southern territories, precipitated by development projects imposed by multilateral financial institutions and transnational corporations headquartered in the North. He briefly notes issues of food and water autonomy in certain austral regions and concedes that, for example, U.S. citizens inflict greater environmental harms than other peoples (Foer, 2020, p. 102).

From an ecopedagogical perspective, however, this consumer-centered, guilt-laden narrative marginalizes the historical role of insurgent peoples. Discussing pedagogy and sustainability, Bartosch and Zapf (2021, p. 81) insist on the need to include, indeed, to center, “neglected or unheard, sources and voices from ecofeminist, postcolonial, indigenous”. We must move beyond Eurocentric environmental narratives and engage with grassroots epistemologies that challenge capitalist and colonial assumptions (Lupinacci, 2020, p. 2).

[23] [Brazilian edition] “A agropecuária industrial faz o mundo passar fome enquanto ela própria o destrói”.
[24] [Original] “Sabedoria ambiental [indígena] que ultrapassa [...] nossos centros mais avançados de experimentos em agroecologia”.

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Foer's liberal ecology fails to recognize Southern environmental struggles or their agents as full political subjects. The "we" he mobilizes is situated (white, urban, Western), reflecting a modern logic that reduces nature to a moral object, disregarding the ontological bonds that Southern peoples maintain with their ecosystems (cf. Boff, 2004, p. 174). His universal ecopedagogy echoes privilege, displacing the environmental crisis onto the Northern consumer and projecting a homogeneous moral agent while neglecting historical coloniality and Southern alternatives (cf. Carvalho, 2016).

Within these terms, the silencing of the Global South in Foer (2020) is hardly incidental; it appears to be the core of a political and epistemic limitation. His proposal remains detached from the forms of resistance and care that emerge from wounded Earth; from occupied forests, polluted rivers, incinerated peripheries, and racialized bodies demanding climate justice rather than "less meat, please".

Even when Foer (2020, p. 137) references "poor" countries, he does so illustratively or abstractly, without locating concrete political subjects: "Consider Bangladesh, the country widely considered to be most vulnerable to climate change. An estimated six million Bangladeshis have already been displaced by environmental disasters […]"[25]. Passages such as this depoliticize analysis, casting the vulnerable as passive victims rather than historical agents. By contrast, critical pedagogy demands that we listen to and incorporate the knowledge of the oppressed (McLaren and Houston, 2004), precisely those who have historically resisted the ecological dismantling wrought by capital and financial speculation.

Systematic failure to acknowledge the plurality of ecological cosmologies and ontologies sustains a dominant discourse premised on the false neutrality of Western science and liberal morality. As Pedrini and Saito (2014) suggest, EE requires dialogue with territories and their epistemologies; technical knowledge cannot silence the knowledge of body and land.

Across its hundreds of pages, Foer's book does not allot sufficient space to expose the systemic, global role of agribusiness or the mining companies ravaging territories in South America and West Africa. Nor does it address environmental-justice struggles in countries such as India, Indonesia, or Mozambique. It is an environmentalism virtually without the South, a discourse that, by ignoring peripheral ecological and territorial conflicts, risks reinforcing the international division of discursive production on climate.

[25] [Brazilian edition] "Pense em Bangladesh, considerado o país mais vulnerável à mudança climática. Estima-se que 6 milhões de bengaleses já tiveram de sair de onde estavam por causa de desastres ambientais [...]".

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Boff (2012, p. 51) denounces the technocratic domination underlying Anglo-Eurocentric environmentalism. For him, the green discourse of elites, grounded in illusory sustainability, remains bound to managing the crisis through scientific rationality and market solutions, without altering structures of power and domination. This is, in part, an enlightened liberal environmentalism oriented more toward conscience marketing than systemic, collective, decolonial transformation (cf. Marques, 2015, p. 489).

Foer's discourse exemplifies a case of discursive recontextualization (Fairclough, 2015): collective themes such as environmental justice are transposed into a neoliberal logic centered on individual behavior. By moralizing dietary practices as responses to the climate crisis, he ignores Global-South geopolitical contexts and erases the collective subjects of these struggles; most notably Indigenous peoples, who are not even mentioned when he discusses forest conservation (Foer, 2020, p. 74).

This omission silences crucial resistances (agroecology, Indigenous cultivation systems, peasant production), reinforcing the warnings of Boff (2012, pp. 24-25) and Alier (2007): the destruction of nature is intrinsically tied to the destruction of its guardians. Foer's refusal to address political conflicts or structural reforms, apart from cursory references to actions such as *Meatless Mondays*, reflects an inadvertent strategy of silencing (Fairclough, 2003), mitigating ecological tensions by excising the poles of key spectrums: capital vs. nature, North vs. South, domination vs. resistance (Fairclough, 2015).

Such logic aligns with green capitalism (Boff, 2012; Marques, 2015), which hollows out ecological critique by transforming it into an appeal for responsible consumption. By underlyingly promoting the figure of a "conscientious consumer" instead of an "insurgent citizen", Foer helps preserve the very structures he aims to reform. Although he occasionally acknowledges that major corporations concentrate responsibility for emissions (Foer, 2020, pp. 122-123), his emphasis on personal change shifts blame and weakens collective political action.

For most of the work, Foer reiterates the discourse of "simple" adjustment, occasionally invoking decontextualized nostalgia that blurs distinct historical pasts and their subjects: "Sometimes, even the most vast and complex problems can be solved with a simple correction,

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a balancing. We don't need to reinvent food, but to un-invent it. The future of farming and eating needs to resemble the past"[26] (Foer, 2020, p. 110).

Foer's rhetoric stages a paradox: by proposing a return to the past, he advances a regressive path that ignores both historical violence and contemporary agroecological achievements. Boff (2012) contends that the future must be built not as a return, but as an ethical and spiritual re-imagination of the world, requiring a new civilizational pact grounded in care, social justice, and integral sustainability (Boff, 2012, p. 122). Moreover, "un-inventing food" presupposes a single way of having invented it, disregarding the diverse knowledges that have, for centuries, forged other relationships with land and food. This epistemic homogenization may thus reinforce a technocratic ecology that dismisses decolonial epistemologies and delegitimizes the practices and resistances of socio-environmental movements.

By failing to consistently recognize the interdependence of environmental collapse and socioeconomic justice, Foer's pedagogy proves unable to build bridges with Southern epistemologies, disregarding that many communities (especially Indigenous, quilombola, and peasant) already live sustainably. They do so not by liberal ethical choice but through a relational ontology with the land, silenced by historical and present colonialism.

Authors such as Tozoni-Reis and Vasconcelos (2014, pp. 82-84) remind us that critical ecopedagogy must reject the ideological neutrality of hegemonic environmentalist discourses and expose the relations of domination structuring global environmental collapse. In Foer (2020), by contrast, there is a systematic erasure of the categories "class", "race", and "coloniality", compromising his environmental discourse's critical potential.

Hence, we are compelled to advocate a pedagogy of climate justice grounded in recognition of historical and territorial conflicts, in the centrality of Indigenous and traditional knowledges, in Latin American critical ecopedagogy, and in anti-capitalist, decolonial struggle. As Boff (2021, p. 85) suggests, Earth needs allied children who fight for her, not merely those who weep for her.

Therefore, rather than an ethical breakfast, we need a planetary insurgency; rather than moral diets, we need pedagogies of confrontation; and rather than expecting the world to

[26] [Brazilian edition] "Às vezes, até mesmo os problemas mais vastos e complexos podem ser resolvidos com uma simples correção, um contrabalanceamento. Não precisamos reinventar a alimentação, mas sim desinventá-la. O futuro da agropecuária e da alimentação tem de ser parecido com o passado".

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change solely from the kitchen, we must collectively build a new world from the street, the territory, rebellion, and agentive hope.

5. Conclusion: between capitalist reasoning and environmental justice

This article represents a significant advance in the critique of environmentally focused discourse with neoliberal tendencies, offering a consistently and systematically grounded discourse-analytical reading of *We are the Weather* [*Nós Somos o Clima*]. In contrast to much of the Global North literature – centered on frames, metaphors, and techno-economic risk (Christensen and Collington, 2024; Cox and Pezzullo, 2020; Lakoff, 2010) – this paper weaves together critical theory, discourse studies (Fairclough, 1992, 2003, 2015) and decolonial epistemologies to unveil the ideological effects and structural silences produced by the liberal pedagogy of ethical consumption.

Departing from the technocratic or aseptic approaches found in authors such as Bednarz et al. (2007), Vikström et al. (2023), and Tranter and Booth (2015), the present study adopts a decolonial environmental-justice perspective, thereby aligning with Moser and Dilling's (2012) critique of the dilemma between scientific authority and civic engagement. We argue that Foer attempts to "resolve" these dilemmas by partly renouncing structural complexity in favor of an ethics of individual blame – a vision contrasted with the notion of eco-justice (see Pereira, 2012), which acknowledges ethical dilemmas without erasing them.

By applying Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA, the article advances methodologically beyond mere frame categorization (Cox and Pezzullo, 2020; Mateu and Dominguez, 2019). It reveals how metaphors such as "bathtub" and "environmental liturgy" operate as semiotic devices of depoliticization, aestheticizing collapse (cf. Marques, 2015; Miles, 2014;) and suggesting a *moralizing collapsology*. This approach extends Barbeta-Viñas's (2022) contribution by showing how modalizations and personal narratives function as instruments of structural erasure and collective demobilization.

The analysis also critiques the universalization of practices such as vegetarianism. Drawing on Alcorta et al. (2021) and Gaberell et al. (2024), it demonstrates how Foer's discourse ignores socioeconomic inequalities and contextual barriers, thereby contributing to what Fairclough (2003) terms "ideological recontextualization." Such omissions are treated as epistemic erasures (Gkiolmas and Skordoulis, 2020), reinforcing the need for EE rooted in territorial and insurgent knowledges of the Global South (Boff, 1999, 2004, 2021; Carvalho, 2016; Kassiadou *et al*., 2018; Ribeiro et al., 2024).

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In consonance with Couto and Couto (2016), this investigation not only exposes Anglo-Eurocentrism in ecolinguistics but also expands its methodological reach. Focusing on Southern epistemologies, it highlights how the absence of Indigenous peoples, popular movements, and traditional communities in Foer (Yount-André and Zembe, 2023) evidences the *colonialidad del saber* denounced by Kato and Pedraza-Jimenez (2021) and by Ribeiro et al. (2024). As Araújo (2019) argues with respect to the MST in such cases, resistance is not absent but silenced within dominant discourses.

This critique of erasure likewise targets the aesthetics of collapse. The apocalyptic use of metaphors – an aesthetic partly addressed by Miles (2014) – is here interpreted as a discursive strategy that can foster paralysis. Against this logic, the study proposes a political-existential approach to collapse, recovering Boff's (2004, 2021) warnings about insurgent spirituality and an ethics of care.

Moreover, the analysis of school, media, and literary discourses shows how the ethos of the "conscientious consumer" displaces the "insurgent ecological subject" (Boff, 2021; Carvalho, 2016). Whereas textbooks and institutional campaigns reinforce consumption moralism (Bonotto and Semprebone, 2010; Yu and Reiss, 2025), this study proposes pedagogies grounded in territorial justice, food sovereignty, and popular insurgency, thereby expanding on those authors' observations (Ribeiro et al., 2024).

Breaking with the "neoliberal affective ecology" (cf. Bartosch, 2021), which disciplines through guilt, we defend an "agentive hope," politicized and situated, complementing the limits discussed by Salinas et al. (2023) concerning alleged Freirean pedagogies. This perspective challenges the passivity promoted by hegemonic environmentalist discourses and calls for a shift from a plate-centered ethics to a collective insurgent praxis.

Such understanding is consistent with Pedrini and Saito's (2014) critical ecopedagogy, which envisions EE aimed at liberation rather than mere ethical adaptation. Rather than legitimizing "green adjustments" that prioritize "low-cost" and "depoliticized" behavior changes, a critical environmental education should foreground collective action and systemic transformation. It should dismantle structures that commodify nature and reduce the crisis to moral terms, thus hollowing out its political and structural content.

This study's close reading of a single, influential text, seems well suited to interpretive depth. Yet, it may also limit transferability beyond the case at hand. In the absence of triangulation (e.g., reception data, policy materials, or comparative corpora), some broader claims about social effects could remain more suggestive than demonstrable. Also, the set of

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peer-reviewed and essayistic references might introduce subtle unevenness in evidentiary weight. Taken together, these choices may eventually tilt the contribution toward insight and hypothesis-generation rather than robust generalization.

Regarding potential bias, the analysis is candid about its critical and decolonial commitments, which, while valuable for framing, might inadvertently foreground certain patterns (e.g., individualization/moralization) while backgrounding others (e.g., hybrid or policy-centric remedies). At times, the preference for insurgent ecopedagogy might also understate pragmatic combinations of individual, institutional, and regulatory levers. These are matters of emphasis rather than errors, and acknowledging them could widen a range of plausible readings.

Given the results of this critical analysis and the gaps identified in the literature review, future research should deepen the study of discursive materials produced by social movements, traditional communities, and territorial networks of the Global South, especially those still marginalized in mainstream scientific platforms. Expanding the scope of CDA in EE to more consistently include non-hegemonic formats (such as community pamphlets, local digital media, oral narratives, and cultural expressions) that weave ecology with social justice, ancestry, and resistance is urgent. In addition, investigating the pedagogical impacts of these alternative discourses on the formation of critical ecological subjects, considering their potential to disrupt dominant ontologies and strengthen emancipatory pedagogies, would be highly relevant. Such studies can contribute to building a more situated, plural, and genuinely transformative environmental epistemology that articulates educational practices with territorial struggles and collective *re-existence*.

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