PRÁTICAS EDUCATIVAS, MEMÓRIAS E ORALIDADES

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Aõbo Rarybere Wyna Ki Heòty? Why not use the language of my people?

ARTICLE

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Abstract
The issues raised in the text revolve around the sound of the maraca through the maintenance and insistence of other modes of existence in the university. Taking as the territory of analysis the authors narratives in their academic and indigenous daily lives, the daily situations of violence and recolonization are problematized. The university city that claims to be “universal”, “democratic”, “diverse”, in its way of functioning, itself points to the urgency of making the problem that such words establish last when they present themselves as words of an education for order and white neoliberal progress. But, what could a tongue on fire do with these words?
Keywords: University. Narratives. Orality. Indigenous resistance.

Aõbo Rarybere Wyna Ki Heòty? Por que não a língua do meu povo?

Resumo
As questões trazidas no texto fazem gira ao som do maracá pela manutenção e insistência de modos de existência na universidade. Tomando-se como território de análise as narrativas das autoras em seus cotidianos acadêmicos e indígenas, problematizam-se situações diárias de violência e recolonização. A cidade universitária que se pretende “universal”, “democrática”, “diversa” em seu modo de funcionamento, aponta ela mesma a urgência de fazer durar o problema que tais palavras instauram quando se apresentam como palavras de uma educação para ordem e progresso branco neoliberal. Mas, o que poderia, com essas palavras, uma língua em fogo?
Palavras-chave: Universidade. Narrativas. Oralidade. Contracolonização Indígena.

1 Introduction

> Who said that depriving a people of their language is less violent than waging war? (Ray Gwyn Smith *apud* Anzalduá, 2009, p. 305).

June 4, 2023 — Didática V building, Federal University of Sergipe. On that rainy Sunday, I "jumped out of bed"[1] very early, rushed to the kitchen, grabbed a cup of coffee, and left "running like the wind." The *Exame de Proficiência em Língua Estrangeira* – EPLE (Foreign Language Proficiency Exam) was scheduled to begin precisely at nine o'clock. I arrived at eight-forty-five and went straight to the room where the test would be administered. At the door, two people identified themselves as proctors. While one of them checked my ID, a young woman suddenly ran out, "terrified," because there was a cat inside the room. Startled, I went in to catch the feline. I knelt down and took it in my arms. One of the proctors shouted toward me: "Hey, ma'am, come back! Leave the cat there—who gave you permission to enter? Leave the room immediately! You're not authorized yet!" I replied, "But sir, I just wanted to remove the cat, sorry." I stepped out, placed the cat in the hallway, and it wandered off. The other proctor, still holding my ID, said, "Your data have already been verified. You may enter now." I did.

On the desks, lined one behind another, the candidates' names were arranged in order. After a few minutes searching for mine in the room "now authorized for me," I finally found it. I sat down with ten minutes left before the test began. The atmosphere in an exam room is always tense, isn't it? Time seems frozen; the air is cold; everyone looks nervous (so was I, especially after the proctor's reprimand); the silence is deafening. Restless, I noticed that on the adhesive label stuck to each desk, beneath the candidate's data, there was a blank space—at least I could draw something, invent a way to "play with time." I began sketching lines, tracing them until the entire space was filled with Indigenous graphic motifs. The lines I drew also traced me.

At exactly nine o'clock, the exam was distributed. As soon as I held those two sheets of paper in my hands, a few instructions followed: "Check your personal information. We will announce the test duration shortly. Those who chose to take the exam in only one language will have until eleven o'clock; those registered for two languages will have until

[1] The first author of this text is an Indigenous woman from the Kalankó and Xukuru-Kariri peoples. For ethical, aesthetic, and political reasons—because entire villages speak along with her—we have chosen to use the first person in many parts of this text.

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one p.m. Good luck." I had registered for only one—Spanish. Upon reading the test, I was startled: the content dealt with the theme of Indigenous peoples, specifically the genocide of the Yanomami population caused by illegal gold mining in the Amazon region. As I read, I reflected on the many forms of ethnogenocide (Núñez, 2022) perpetrated upon our bodies in the most varied spaces—here, in particular, within the university space-time.

> [...] our languages, customs, and ways of life are not merely aspects of our culture detached from who we are, but [...] they are our very life. As the Guarani Kaiowá chief Marcos Veron once said, "*Esto que ves aquí es mi vida, mi alma, si me separas de esta tierra, me quitas la vida*." [...] Ethnogenocide is a form of colonial violence grounded in the effort toward homogenization. It strikes precisely at the multiplicity and uniqueness of each people, each ethnicity, each native nation of a given territory. Perpetrated primarily by the State itself, it is accompanied by police and obstetric violence, by the deliberate production of hunger (as a consequence of the expropriation of Indigenous lands), and by epistemicide [...]. Ethnogenocide seeks to prevent Indigenous peoples from being who we are—in our internal differences, in our ways of life and thought—so that we may become nothing but "Brazilians." In April 2020, the former Minister of Education, Abraham Weintraub, exemplified the racist premise of homogenization when he stated: "I hate the term 'Indigenous peoples,' I hate that term. [...] You can be Black, you can be White, you can be Japanese, you can be of Indigenous descent, but you have to be Brazilian, damn it! There's only one people in this country."
> (Núñez, 2022, p. 55-57).

We, Indigenous peoples, have been the target of countless and repeated attempts at annihilation since 1500, from the North to the South of Brazil. Indigenous bodies are killed every day in this hostile country—not only in the Amazon. The population constituted as Brazilian has never listened to what we had and still have to say. That is the reality: *Pindorama*, from Tupi, meaning *land of the palm trees*, was the name of this territory long before Europeans appropriated and expropriated its resources, including its linguistic ones. They renamed it after what they began to seize and destroy: *pau-brasil* (Brazilwood). That baptism marked a flow of blood and sap, the slaughter of the original beings of this land.

> [...] A man who left Europe and landed on a tropical beach left a trail of death wherever he went. He did not know he was a walking plague, a moving bacteriological war, the end of the world; nor did the victims who were infected. For the peoples who received that visit and died, the end of the world was in the sixteenth century (Krenak, 2020, p. 71).

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To think about colonization, then, is to think about all the deaths it caused. It is to speak of pain, a pain that is rekindled daily, a wound that never heals and, because it is always "open," confronts us. It is to speak of a country, a continent, "civilizedly" built upon Indigenous bodies, upon Indigenous cemeteries. Those who resist, and I stand among them, continue to summon the flesh of the word, of orality like an arrow, in an effort to keep our people alive.

> Fire—they burned Palmares. Then Canudos was born. Fire—they burned Canudos, and Caldeirão was born. Fire—they burned Caldeirão, and Pau de Colher was born. Fire—they burned Pau de Colher, but many other communities were and will be born. Because even if they burn the writing, they will not burn the orality. [...] And even if they burn the bodies, they will not burn the ancestry (Bispo, 2022[2]).

The making of *terra brasilis*, of the urban Brazil of "order and progress," has always aimed at our extermination. In the veins of this country, Indigenous blood flows everywhere. Have you ever heard these phrases? "There are no Indians in Brazil. If there are, they're in the Amazon forest. If there are Indians, they must live in huts, walk naked, be cannibals; they don't study, they don't work, they are a hindrance to our country's progress."

> The city has elevated itself, in the dominant symbolic order, to a privileged place of distance from Nature—to the place of civilization, of modern success, the materialization of progress and development. The city has identified itself with separation from the peasant and, in our invaded continent, that also means distance from the Indigenous, in opposition to the rural, associated with "dependence" on the cycles of Nature. The city has thus become the privileged place for us *not* to be ourselves, to cease looking at ourselves in the mirror, and instead to attempt to live a farce—imitations of what is external, "civilized," "developed," modern-colonial. "Cities are the heart of the reproduction of dominant, colonial, modern, capitalist ways of life" (Ibáñez, 2026, p. 297).

The feeling is that we must constantly beg for someone—the so-called upstanding Brazilian citizen, legitimate, white, male, bound to the cis-heteronormative order and to the neoliberal pact of self-entrepreneurship and commodification of everything—to legitimize what we say, do, and write. This legitimacy has always depended on our whitening, on our

[2] ITAÚ CULTURAL. **Nego Bispo** – Trajetórias [vídeo]. YouTube, 20 fev. 2024. Disponível em: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tqt9BnrolFg.

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adherence to the ongoing white-male-European project of civilization and education. Enough! Let us live our ways of life. Let us speak our languages. Despite so much daily slaughter, we persist here!

Mining kills us. Racism kills us. The colonial-modern city kills us. Educational institutions kill us. The proficiency exam kills us too. What criteria are used to choose specific (European) languages for the design of Proficiency Exams? What criteria continue to be used to sustain, through catechization, schooling, and capitalization, the naturalization of the project to extinguish Indigenous languages?

The proposal here is to occupy—by insisting, as many times as necessary—that we, Indigenous peoples, have our own languages, and that it is through them that we share our knowledge-makings, our science. If the science of white people hastens the end of the world, we are also disputing that word: which practices, which knowledges, which sciences can create ways to slow down the great acceleration of life and death? Or which sciences can hasten the end of capital life, the end of the *Capitalocene*? At the *Festa Literária Pirata das Editoras Independentes* (Pirate Literary Festival of Independent Publishers) in 2019[3], the authors Ailton Krenak and Suely Rolnik issued a shared invitation: to cultivate ideas that might bring forward the end of this capitalist world. To sow gestures of refusal against the world as it has been built by the colonial ideal of progress and accelerated development—an ideal rooted in endless extraction, whatever the cost.

Unpredictable events can always arise, changing the rules of the game, and we can indeed compose and weave with them—to prepare ourselves intellectually and affectively to think and to care in times of barbarity and catastrophe. To think and care together, to create networks not only with humans, nor merely with scientists, but with other-than-humans, generating and sharing gestures, words, and thoughts. In the making of this writing, we “listened” to the affect of revolt, which, like a bonfire, warms the body and leaves a burn upon the tongue. That burning pain seizes us—from the fingertips that touch these letters to the soles of our bare, restless feet. We must keep alive the fire of language

[3] AUTONOMIA LITERÁRIA. **Cosmologias indígenas:** palavras que carregam mundos [vídeo]. YouTube, 5 ago. 2019. Disponível em: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9AQQfwirqNg. Acesso em: 05 jul. 2025.

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and of Indigenous bodies, traces of life where nothing else seems to remain. Let us make another life, even through writing.

But what can be said with a language on fire? The same question I asked in silence with that exam in hand, we will ask again here. In fact, we will ask it aloud, because a language on fire has no purpose other than to set ablaze: Why am I required, in graduate school, to prove my proficiency in a European language when the language of my people—the original language of Brazil—was buried?

That day, I found myself reflecting. Perhaps I already knew the answer. For the Brazilian-European university, Indigenous languages, knowledges, and sciences—like African ones—are considered "savage," "inferior," "useless." The university, imbued with Eurocentric logic, believes that "pure science" and "complete knowledge," those imported from Europe, must be disseminated and reproduced only in English, French, Spanish, or German, but not in native languages. *Pause for a deep breath—we are still alive.*

2 A wild tongue (cannot) be tamed

> They warned that life is a river that speaks. *Wat'u* tells me where my place is, and I listen to it along the path, or crossing. Its name matters little. *Wat'u* is knowing how to read the waters and navigate with them (Arruda, 2021, p. 25).

The denial of our language was a decision made by white people. We were neither consulted nor given the right to deliberate on it. They entered our territory, stole, took possession of our waters, and expropriated; they annihilated our bodies and buried our languages since 1500—and they continue to bury them today. What is the EPLE (*Foreign Language Proficiency Exam*)? Whom does it serve? It is urgently necessary to question this, because "silence buries us" (Anzaldúa, 2009, p. 306). It is time to scream—to set ablaze—to pour out alongside Myriam Krexu[4] and other kin:

[4] *A mãe do Brasil é indígena* (The Mother of Brazil Is Indigenous), a text by Myriam Krexu, an Indigenous woman of the Guarani Mbyá Nation, proclaimed at the *Acampamento Terra Livre* (Free Land Camp) in 2019. The piece is featured in episode 2 of the series *Maracá*, narrated by Maria Bethânia. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w3ciHZgzhVw&t=310s .

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> The mother of Brazil is Indigenous, even though the country takes more pride in its European father, who treats it like a bastard child. Her roots are here, in the ancestral people who wear their history, who write their culture, prayers, and struggles upon their skin. I will never understand the foreign nationalism that so many people embrace. We are a rich, diverse, and resilient country—but a country that kills its original peoples [...], that still marginalizes those who were once enslaved and continue to struggle to recover from the damage. The Indigenous person is not the one you know from the old history books, because he did not write those books—so his version is not always told. He is not only in the village, struggling to survive; he is in the city, in the university, in the job market, in art, on television—because all of Brazil is Indigenous land. You know that story about how "your great-grandmother was caught with a lasso"? That means your great-grandfather might have been a kidnapper—so perhaps you should take more pride in the Indigenous blood that runs through your veins. The mother of Brazil is Indigenous. (Mídia Ninja, 2020).

We, the Brazilian people, act as foreigners in our own country, importing white languages and ways of life. Meanwhile, the slaughter continues—the carnage of our own people, the original inhabitants of this land—as well as of those who, through iron, sweat, tears, *banzo*, and the lash, built what we now call the Brazilian nation. This nation insists on perpetuating the stories of its European father, even knowing that its birth was the result of rape. The mother continues to be violated; even when she screams, even when she screams in Portuguese, she is not heard. Let us scream with her—louder still!

We, Indigenous peoples, have been and continue to be treated as dead letters, as dead nature, as a civilizing burden. The modern-colonial regime demeans and denies our ways of life, our languages, and our knowledges; it has forced and continues to force us to be tamed by the mastery of Portuguese, French, Spanish, English, and German. Starting from the proposition *yes, we are from here and we have our own languages and sciences*, we "set fire" to this "white blah-blah-babble," as Grandma Tonha would say. During a thesis defense, I recently heard the remark, "white people have art." I pondered that sentence for a while before deciding to confront it: if white people have art, what do we have? Or what must we create to face "white art"?

Grandma Tonha would say, "We don't need to create anything, my child. We have the four elements and our people to guide us." We have the fire of orality and ancestry. We belong here—and here we persist. It is with the ancestral-artistic fabulation of my people,

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with our wild language—of fire and in fire—connected to the earth, the water, the air, the living, and the enchanted beings, that we write. We write following traces, sketching paths, Indigenous routes and trajectories.

Did they forget that we speak many languages? *"Jepe'e puku tataypýpe… Mbeguekatuete omombia vaekue ro'y ha pytũ, mbeguekatuete chemombáy vaekue. Jepe'e puku mombyry guive, tesarái keguýpe hendýva. Jepe'e yma, mandu'a rugua, epáy ha emondýi tesarái"* (Delgado, 1994, p. 82-83). Susy Delgado turned poetic language into a defense of the Guarani mother tongue and of the singularity of Paraguayan rural life. In her poetry, she often uses the Guarani expression *tataypy*, which refers to "the place in the peasant household where the fire is lit and kept burning." With the intention of keeping alive the flame of this tradition, the writer dedicates an entire book to it, *tataypýpe* (Sulis; Lentz, year II, p. 625), rekindling, reclaiming, and raising up the mother–original language from its supposed erasure.

The intense process of colonization to which we have been—and still are—subjected has killed and continues to kill: the extermination of bodies, the silencing of languages, the devaluation of our knowledge-makings, all as part of a genocidal, ethnocidal, and epistemic enterprise. Bodies must be tamed, wild tongues subdued, civilized, educated, whitened, made obedient, and numbed.

In the history of the *land of brazilwood*, for more than 523 years, the colonizer's language has reaffirmed the idea that we are "savage" and "uncultured" peoples. Yet what kind of civility and culture[5] are these that, sustained by the logic of swords, revolvers, and other deadly instruments—including the European language itself—continue to leave trails of Indigenous blood? And not only against us, the Indigenous peoples. The terms *genocide* and *ethnocide* correspond to the idea of "race" and to the desire to exterminate a racial "minority." The first refers to physical destruction; the second, to the "systematic destruction of the ways of life and thought of peoples different from those carrying out the destruction.

[5] "*What you, white men—scientists of accelerated progress—call culture, we call a way of life"* (Bispo, 2022). And we do not wish to share in your ways of life, which leave behind traces of unworthy deaths.

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In short, genocide kills peoples in their bodies; ethnocide kills them in their spirit" (Clastres, 2004, p. 56).

Within the so-called civilized body and spirit, what reigns is death—the annihilation of the "other." In the genocidal and ethnocidal logic, there are specific ways of treating difference: "a destiny is reserved for the Other" (Carneiro, 2023, p. 73). In both, what predominates is an idea of evil—the difference as something bad, wrong, undesirable. In the first, what is different is taken as "pure evil" and must therefore be denied: "the others are exterminated because they are absolutely evil." In the second, "what is different may be evil, yet it is possible to 'tame, domesticate that evil'" (Clastres, 2004, p. 56). As previously mentioned in this article, the Indigenous scholar of the Guarani people, Geni Núñez (2022), discusses the inseparability of these violences, presenting the concept of *ethnogenocide*.

The way this colonizing mechanism operates in and upon us disregards our knowledges, calls into question our intellectual capacity to produce knowledge, to make science, to speak in our own name and in our own language. Thus, following Sueli Carneiro (2023), it can be said that the ethnogenocidal enterprise is also epistemicidal: strange peoples are eliminated, along with their strange ecosystems of thought and their even stranger forms of knowledge, labeled as "primitive." We are "gently" and "civilizedly" asked to renounce our strange forms of knowledge, our wild tongues, our very entrails. The colonizing civilization fabricates and kills every day "the Indian," "the savage." We, on the other hand, seek to make be born and to multiply the wildness of our tongues—flames of life in profusion.

3 We, Indigenous peoples, what do we want in the University?

Here lies the civilizing project still in progress: to dominate, to humanize, to include "diversity" through the subjection to a single, "universal" form—*Man*. To operate, time and

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again, an excluding inclusion, a slaughter of bodies, languages, and ways of life, veiled under the logic of benevolent assistance and inclusion. To dominate through subjection to a single mode of producing knowledge. In this sense, all social policies and their services, such as education and the university, are understood as instruments capable of increasing human capital—that is, as pedagogical elements. It is always necessary to recolonize through an education that conveys and naturalizes the form of *Man* (white, male, European, capitalist, self-entrepreneur) as the only face and the only history of humanity (Deleuze, 1992).

"The university is for everyone; it is democratic." That is what they say. But why do we enter the university? The university logic tends to be epistemicidal, aligning itself with the ethnogenocidal project, with a similar purpose: to dominate, to deny, to impose, to humanize. It is necessary, then, to make the question endure, to let it burn: What do we, Indigenous peoples, want in and with the university? Upon entering the university, what is our destiny?

Below is a personal account that is part of the master's dissertation of the first author of this article, available at https://ri.ufs.br/jspui/handle/riufs/15428, which directly engages with the reflections proposed here on the place of Indigenous subjects within the university.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

> *She was the daughter of strong people who had crossed an ocean, who had been separated from their land, who had left behind their dreams and forged, in exile, a new and luminous life. People who had endured everything, bearing the cruelty that was imposed on them (Vieira Junior, 2019, p. 261).*

First, I address my thanks to myself. For this reason, I ask the reader's understanding so that this is not taken as an act of pride or arrogance on my part. I thank myself for never having given up on my dreams at any point in my late educational journey. Like many Brazilians, I was born economically disadvantaged—daughter of a Black father and an Indigenous mother, both illiterate. From an early age, I knew how harsh and merciless reality could be, as it robbed us of childhood and, with it, our will to live.

At the age of seven, my siblings and I were already being raised by our mother alone. At that time, we lived on a farm in the rural hinterlands of Sergipe. Every day at five in the morning, we would get up to collect manure. For those who do not know, manure is cow dung. I could use the term "droppings"; it might sound less harsh, perhaps—but why? Life, during that period, was reduced to the excrement that the cow dropped.

At eight years old, I had never been to school, never entered a classroom. However, because there was no food at home, my mother decided to enroll me in the afternoon shift. I remember that my older brother and I went to school mainly for the snack. When classes ended, we would return to the cafeteria and ask for the leftovers to take home for dinner. I could not read or write and felt uncomfortable in the classroom. In the first year, being there made no sense, except for the snack.

Over time, though, I began to enjoy being in school. Since I had no time to study at home, I made the most of class hours. When I finished elementary school, I had to switch to evening classes because, although I no longer worked with manure, I was cleaning houses during the day. High school was offered only in the neighboring town, so I had to leave home at five p.m. to catch transportation and returned around eleven-thirty at night. The next morning, at seven, there I was again, on my knees with a brush in hand, scrubbing my employer's front porch. Entering high school awakened a greater enthusiasm in me to continue studying. I remember having immense difficulty with writing, reading, and comprehension. Seeing this, a literature teacher encouraged me to read books. He would lend me some, and on the way home, I used the time to read.

At the time, encouraged by him and by other teachers, I decided to register for the vestibular seriado, a type of yearly entrance exam. We took the test every year and accumulated points. I have always been restless about questions related to life, death, and the body. I believe this comes from my ancestry and from knowing where I come from. In 2006, I was admitted to the Philosophy program at the Federal University of Sergipe. In my family, there was no celebration, since they did not understand the importance of it. During the first two years of the course, I commuted every day, traveling about 180 kilometers. I used my travel time to study because I continued to work during the day. At that time, I

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worked as a nanny. My employer supported me a lot. She often said, "Carle, a poor man's daughter only grows in three ways in life: either she steals, prostitutes herself, or studies. You choose." I listened to her in silence, reflecting on her words.

In the third year of the course, I received a scholarship through the Programa de Iniciação à Docência – PIBID (Initiation to Teaching Program). I had also applied for the Student Residence Program and managed to find a place to stay in Aracaju. I knew absolutely nothing and no one there. My life consisted of going to the university in the morning, spending the entire day there, eating on campus, and returning to the shared house only to sleep at night. Those were very difficult times. After completing my undergraduate degree, I continued persevering on my educational path.

Today, I complete another stage of my academic journey, excited to continue on to the next, but closing this one with a feeling of gratitude—to myself, to the universe, and to the encantados (ancestral spirits) who know and can do all things. I know how proud my people are of me. I am deeply grateful to my mother, who has been my example of strength, courage, and determination. Mother, you know what it means to be an Indigenous woman in this country, for you had to face the pain of leaving your homeland because of threats, massacres, and persecution at a very young age. Even without knowing how to read or write, you quickly learned how dangerous it was for us to reveal our identity. I remember well when you used to say to us, "Don't tell anyone at school that you're the children and grandchildren of Indians." Back then, I didn't understand. Now I do, Mother. It was out of fear—fear of dying.

Now I understand how much you and your family had to be strong and resilient to avoid being erased. Today, as an Indigenous woman, as your daughter, I am a source of pride for our whole family, for I am the only one among more than ninety cousins to have completed a higher education degree and entered a master's program at a public university. I can feel how proud you are because it shines in your eyes. I am immensely grateful for all your struggle. If I am the strong woman I am today, who came from "nothing," as many have said, it is thanks to the example of womanhood I had at home. It was from

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you that I learned the "methodology of falling": you taught me that we may fall, but we must fall hard so we can rise even stronger. Truly, I inherited my fierceness from you. I love you.

I thank President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, because if I have come this far, it is also thanks to the support I received during his government. I leave here my deep gratitude. Thank you for making it possible for people like me to keep believing in their dreams, to become active agents in transforming their realities, and to continue seeking better days for their people and their communities. Long live Brazil's public universities! I end with gratitude to the universe, to life... but I remain outraged by the current political situation of this country. Therefore, I conclude shouting: Fora genocida!

3.1 Revisited acknowledgments: the sting of the ant

But why is entering the university considered my merit? Is it really a merit to be in a space that captures bodies, knowledges, and languages like mine in order to produce monoculture? Why is it a merit—*my* merit? To let oneself be tamed—is that a (de)merit? Did I really "come from nothing," as some non-Indigenous people have said? Did I arrive here with no trace of another history, of other forms of knowledge? Why is entering the university so important?

It is important to emphasize: I did not come from nothing. On the contrary, to be in the university, I had to give up much of what remains everything to me—the daily coexistence with my people, with my customs, with my land. Do you know what it means to "come from nothing"? What would it mean to "come from your everything"? Leaving my everything was unbearably painful. Yet I understand that being in this space matters, for by being in it, it becomes possible to handle it as a machine of defense in favor of my people. It is here, in the university, that I access white theories and discourses in order to later propose other positions, other ways of seeing and acting in the world, other ways of shaping and coexisting. The plan is simple: to access, reflect, reject, and counterattack the universal and hegemonic model that produces and validates what is called and accepted as "true and unique" knowledge.

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> Because I have mastered the technique of taming, I soon realized that to face a colonialist society, "at times we must turn the enemy's weapons into defense," as one of my great masters of resistance used to say. Thus, to transform the art of naming into an art of defense, we have also decided to name (Bispo, 2023, p.3).

Entering a public university and a Graduate Program is no easy task. It certainly was not for me. It took hours, days, months, and years devoted to a greater purpose. I knew that to confront strong, deeply rooted enemies, beyond my own immense will, I would need seeds and timespaces of sowing sufficient to transmute the ethnogenocidal educational struggle into a pollination of other ways of narrating, knowing, understanding, and living.

Thus I moved, and continue to move, as Nego Bispo and Maninha Xukuru-Kariri[6] did in their struggle for their people: handling the white arts of naming in order to counter-name. Taking the words that white people use to demean us and making them burn, insisting on sparks of meaning that widen this diminished and self-absorbed capitalist life. That is how we reclaimed the word *wild*—as return, as root, as route of escape, so that, in the face of ethnogenocide and epistemicide, we may joyfully generate collaborative knowledge in defense of collective life, of collectives "built with others in reciprocal ways, and not only by humans" (Haraway, 2023, p. 81).

With the wild word, we confront the transcendent frameworks of modernity and the purifying division between culture–human and nature. With the wild word as a weapon in our hands, we begin to rehearse collaborative and compositionist practices of knowledge; we follow interwoven paths; we compost—"humusities instead of humanities [...] as humus, unraveling the human as *Homo*" (Haraway, 2023, p. 64).

Weaving an ecology of composting practices within the university is not an easy task. When people like me arrive there, the first thing that is questioned is our capacity, as Indigenous researchers, to produce—or, as they say, to "do science." We live with the

[6] CONSELHO INDIGENISTA MISSIONÁRIO (CIMI). Dia Internacional da Mulher: a memória e a luta de Maninha Xukuru-Kariri, guerreira, intelectual e feminista. 7 mar. 2018. Available at: https://cimi.org.br/2018/03/dia-internacional-da-mulher-a-memoria-e-a-luta-de-maninha-xukuru-kariri-guerreira-intelectual-e-feminista/

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constant feeling that we need someone to legitimize us, to grant us permission to speak and write, and moreover, that we must use their theories and speak in their languages. Within this academic logic of erasure, I ask: why are Indigenous knowledges disregarded and disqualified in these spaces?

> Who gave us permission to practice the act of writing? Why does writing feel so artificial to me? I do anything to postpone this act—empty the trash, answer the phone. A voice keeps repeating within me. Who am I, a poor *Chicanita* from the end of the world, to think I could write? How did I dare to become a writer while crouching in the tomato fields, bending beneath the scorching sun, dazed in animal lethargy from the heat, my hands swollen and calloused, unfit to hold a pen? How difficult it is for us to think that we can choose to become writers—much more to feel that we can (Anzalduá, 2000, p. 230).

"Who is this *Nego*? Who authorized this person to write about *quilombos*? As if I needed authorization. About twelve people from the most diverse academic fields came to me. [...] You don't know what a *quilombo* is. It's hard for us to talk" (Bispo, 2022). And feeling this, I say: *we can*. Perhaps the white men of reason fear being bitten by us—creatures of the earth, beings of orality, who do not believe in their transcendental idols: Modernity, God, Reason, Progress, Science.

Our sciences are crawling ones; they think with the feet, with the skin, with the mouth of the world. Who will come along? Some time ago, in a class that felt like a breath, when I was invited to revisit the acknowledgments text, I was "unmade"—perhaps because that trace of myself already announced, in some way, the urgency of becoming-ant: to dig without fear into other grounds, to turn over with dreaming hands the manure, to plow this crooked earth, to hold the pen, to touch the keys, to make writers of these same hands full of life, memory, land, and soil. I found myself again, with maternal fierceness: "to fall and see beauty in the falls. What collapses is also in motion" (Arruda, 2021, p. 19). In falling, I have overcome academic obedience.

> *Mainha me ensinou a ouvir e me esconder... Mainha, o problema foi ter se escondido demais. Eu sonhei. Era tão lindo o mundo que a gente construiu junto. Vamo cantar junto de novo, vamo plantar tudo de novo. Lutar por aquele mundo, que a gente respira junto, que a gente existe!* (GUAIJARA, 2021).

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With hands and dreams rooted in the earth, we transform the arts of naming into arts of defense. It is necessary to remain wild, to keep the wild word in play. Thus I throw myself into digging, into aerating the academic soil, just as ants do. By doing so, I feed on the desire to experiment with wild practices, to exist differently even within the university. "To write oneself is to mark one's own temporality and to assert one's difference in the present" (Rago, 2013, p. 3). Writing-ant of fire in a state of wildness, an untamable writing.

4 What does an untamable language speak?

> "We will have to control your tongue," the dentist said. "We will have to do something with your tongue," I heard the enraged lift in his voice. My tongue holds back, pushing out the wads of cotton, repelling the drills, the long thin needles. "I had never seen anything so strong or so resistant," he says. And I think, how can you tame a wild tongue, train it to be quiet, how do you curb it and put a bridle on it? How do you make it submit? (Anzalduá, 2009, p. 1)

At this point in the text, we hope it is clear to you that you are part of this Brazilian people: your civilization is born of death, of genocide, of ethnocide, of epistemicide. Here is a project of slaughter: kill the bodies, kill the languages, kill the ways of life of us, the original peoples and traditional communities, understood as strange, as "others" to be civilized and schooled through extermination that takes many forms. We are inhabiting the heart of the civilization of monoculture, which makes the colonized and colonizing tongue an instrument of domination. Here is a civilizing project, the one conceived in Europe, by whites for whites, with whites, thinking in white, to make everything white: bodies, tongues, knowledges, arts, ways of life. These whites surely possess the fine arts of homogenizing everything.

At school, I always had great difficulty learning Portuguese, in speaking "correctly." Until the age of eight, I could not pronounce Portuguese words properly, largely because I spent my early childhood entirely with my grandparents, who still held the "gift" of speaking "strange" languages. I could pronounce very few words in Portuguese. My tongue would not allow me to articulate the colonizer's language, no matter how hard I tried. One day my mother said, "Daughter, your tongue is tied." Learning Portuguese brought me discomfort,

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a kind of trauma I still cannot explain. I think that, at that moment, my body was disobeying, reacting to the theft of our language. Today I understand that the problem was never my "tied" tongue; the problem was always in the act itself, in the institution, in the gag, in the colonized grammar, in civilization.

Master Bispo (2023, p. 12) compares colonial domination to training: "there are trainers who beat and trainers who show affection; there are trainers who punish and trainers who give food to create dependence, but all are trainers." The choice of specific languages in the *Exame de Proficiência em Língua Estrangeira* – EPLE (*Foreign Language Proficiency Exam*) is part of this ongoing training project. Language corresponds to the way of life of a people; it constitutes an ecosystem of thought and an ecology of singular practices. If a language is killed, a people is consequently killed.

The requirement of certain languages in the EPLE as a condition for obtaining a graduate degree is understood here as yet another modern–colonial strategy of training. Enough of gags and silencing. We began this text by bringing up the proficiency exam to speak about how our very existence in certain spaces seems to disturb, about how our existence is overcoded and distorted by languages and knowledges about us that were neither produced by us nor even with us—even when such collaboration is falsely claimed. To deal with this disturbance, more and more layers of training are added, including academic ones: "you may speak, but you must loosen your tongue by using white theories and methodologies—true, scientific, academic".

Let us, then, continue to disturb, planting our place and our language. Let us dig out spaces, belongings, and kinships that are also strange within the university—with gabirus, ants, pipes, graphic patterns, trees, animals, winds, and other beings that insist on inhabiting the university city without whitening, or at least without losing tenderness, persisting there. Let us go on speaking in tongues of fire, with fire ants, making this whitened land burn, bleached by so much detergent used to hide the pools of blood that flow there daily.

We, Indigenous peoples, are complex and heterogeneous; through our struggle and resistance, we still keep more than two hundred languages alive. Today there are

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several linguistic trunks or families that persist in Brazilian territory, a cultural heritage that may serve as a birthplace and source of other, less harmful, less brutal, and less violent ways of life.

When I was a child, I used to hear my grandmother Tonha speaking with my grandfather João da Umburana in their language, and I did not understand much. As I grew older, I began to realize that what they spoke was not Portuguese; I thought it was a language from another country. She sang to us and asked us to “open our ears.” Because we sang often, we ended up memorizing the lyrics. We sang in the language, and afterward she explained the meaning of the song.

Even today, the girl with the “tied tongue,” holding on to what remains of the threads and veins of stories, narratives, memories, and “other” languages, does not speak correctly as they demand. I speak with tongues of fire and in fire (Anzaldúa, 2009). When I am in the village with my kin, I speak our home language, a kind of speech closer to the heart; I speak an untamable, wild tongue. The task now, with my tongue of fire, wild and untamable, is to *counter-colonialize* (Bispo, 2019, 2020, 2023) through writings like this one—burning, within the university city

When I am invited to speak at the university, always on April 19[7], I take the opportunity to say once again how exhausted I/we are. And I do not want to hear from universities and their gurus benevolent discourses such as, “It is important to have an Indian here with us. After all, we need representation,” or, “It is for your own good to speak and understand another language.” I have heard such statements within the graduate program itself. What is important? For whose good, exactly? Understand once and for all that “as long as I have to accommodate the English speakers rather than having them accommodate me, my language will be illegitimate” (Anzaldúa, 2009, p. 312).

If people like me are entering universities, both in undergraduate and graduate programs, it is because we have realized *that silence was not enough*. It is necessary to

[7] For institutions, we, Indigenous peoples, exist only on this day. They “celebrate Indigenous Peoples’ Day,” yet they usually honor only the dead. For us, the International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples (August 9) holds true meaning—and we did not even choose the date of that so-called tribute.

act—to act from within the inclusive–exclusive structures. As an Indigenous woman, I have come to understand that we can no longer be reduced to passive objects of researchers and universities. We do not need diagnoses of our ways of being and existing in the world. “Why would we need an anthropologist to diagnose us, to read our customs, our traditions, our culture?” (Bispo, 2020, p. 2).

Here I/we stand, struggling with roots, remnants, and routes; I/we are tracing our lines, building our paths, composing other ways, other methodologies, claiming the urgency of transforming the rules of the game upon which colonial–modern knowledge rests. With a tongue in flames, it is possible to set fire to a deadly world built on fixed foundations that claim to be the only, the possible, the true one. As Grandma used to say, “Sit tight,” and wait for the flames that will rise—they are vital, very different from the murderous fires that are destroying our fauna and flora. These words I now utter as flame will spread with the wind and germinate worlds. “When all this happens, we will finally be able to breathe” (Arruda, 2021, p. 32).

5 Final Considerations

Our people of Pindorama continue to produce and multiply knowledges born from co-becoming with the world. Could there be a science that signals to us the reappropriation of life? (Rolnik, 2018). As Krenak (2020, p. 26–27) reminds us, “the kind of scientists and zombie humanity that we are being called to join cannot tolerate so much pleasure, so much enjoyment of life.” The playful knowledges of the earth, of the waters, of popular teachers and masters who summon humanity to live, to belong, to enter into confluence and (re)produce life in flux, continue to be ignored, discredited, and unvalidated. Here we refer especially to the university space, “the great Institution that holds the true knowledge [...] when we say that our river is sacred, people say: that is some kind of folklore of theirs” (Krenak, 2020, p. 49).

Yet what would become of us if we did not have this capacity to fabulate (with birds, ants, and *encantados*) other worlds—worlds in which we converse with rivers, create

portals, anthills, and spaces to continue existing, echoing, and resounding our voice? Imagination is our power. Our reality is, in itself, fabulated—a movement of infinite creation of life. What academia perhaps does not know is that our fable, our so-called "folklore," whatever name it chooses to give to our reality, is grounded in another logic—one that is not that of the modern–colonial horror story. "Our land is of endless love, the seed will sprout, that is how life is" (LUBO, 2023).

I walk through the yard remembering what my grandmother Tonha used to say; there is something I have never forgotten, a kind of ritual she performed daily with words. In her prayers, Grandma would say...

> *You do not need to understand everything; it is important to feel. You must feel, listen to your own nature, and speak with the earth, the rivers, the stars, the moon, the plants, the animals... they will speak to you too; you will come to know one another. If you do not speak to them, you will not know them, and what you do not know, you will fear. And what you fear, you will destroy*.

I remember we spent hours learning with Grandma, learning our own nature. The university, forged by the "makers of science," the "men of the reason of merchandise," with their mandates of peaceful wars through the expropriation of land and bodies, was the one that isolated and dichotomized human and nature (wild–Indigenous–children–women–mad–Black–animals). Scientific–academic knowledge invented nature; the social and human sciences associated us, the Indigenous, with that nature, creating hierarchies of humanity.

Now we stand against that humanity: we are indeed wild, we belong, our kinship is with the waters, the earth, the plants, and all that you have diminished. You, wise and self-assured white people, are destroying life on earth. You tried to erase my/our existence with the eraser of colonization, naturalizing a single story (Adichie, 2019). That story is killing us, taking away our ground and our breath. But how will you live in isolation, without ground? Are there breathable airs in your transcendent skies? Is it possible to survive without grounding your feet on the earth, without being in composition with other living beings?

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This text denounces, and here we are denouncing, a past that has not passed. A text of duration, a counter-memory that digs into the supposed singular knowledge of the university. Through this writing, we expose the recolonization that takes place every day upon our bodies in this space of knowledge and power, reaffirming the necessity and urgency of walking new paths to counter-colonize through the affirmation of this (my/our) Indigenous history, through the knowledges that flow within my body and people like a river. “The inhabitants of the world, creatures of all kinds, human and non-human, are wayfarers [...] of entangled trails” (Haraway, 2023, p. 63). This writing is, therefore, collective, built amid ruins, made of traces and remnants of bodies, of lives, of dreams; it follows paths, traces of movement, like ants (Rago, 2013; Oliveira *et al*., 2019).

A text that is a sigh, that at once ignites and expands the (my/our) veins and arteries of Latin America, of Brazil, of the smallest of Brazil, leading to a hemorrhagic process, a continuous bleeding. I bleed, yet I staunch the flow with each transfusion I receive in my encounters with fellow women writers of the master’s and doctoral programs; I contain the bleeding through every letter, word, and phrase that appears and that I gather to build this writing painted in urucum red.

Here and there, in the cracks of academia, we exchange knowledges and affections—ancestral, recovered, renewed, accessible, shared, embodied. Ways of knowing and doing that resist, among and within us. Bringing knowledge close to creation, knowledge close to subjectivation, this is how we strive to follow the living trajectories of the people of Pindorama, to tell our stories. Pindorama persists within us, here and now. “Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and malign. But stories can also be used to empower, and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity” (Adichie, 2019, p. 32). Our story burns—told by a wild tongue. Forward, to occupy the university.

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