





ARQUIVO ATLANTICO  
scripts, notes, letters and conversations



Scripts for an  
**audio-essay**



1.

Brazil. The sea, land and law,  
**indigenous stories and a film.**



00:00

00:06           The first image he described to me was of a black flag waving on a beach, just before the appearance of a man wearing a feather headdress in front of a cross. For him, this image seemed to combine the absurdity of the symbols of Portuguese colonialism with the meaningless black of the ISIS flag.

00:25           He wrote: Nothing is more recurrent in the pictorial universe of the colonial explorers than wooden crosses and feathers at the edge of a beach. Today, the black on that flag seems to claim neither the death that took place in those lands nor the darkness that is now imposed on it, but its oil reserves.

00:44           To this image he associated another one: an 1860 painting by Vitor Meireles<sup>1</sup> depicting the first mass celebrated in Brazil, in the first year of the invasions. He told me that one day he will have to make a film that starts with this image, with this image alone, followed by a black rectangle. If they don't see the violence, at least they will see the black.

01:09           He read that on that Easter Sunday of the year 1500, under a large tree, a Christian altar was erected for the first time on the new continent. A mass was celebrated, the land was claimed by the Portuguese crown under the name Terra de Santa Cruz and a stone cross was erected to commemorate the event. Cabral<sup>1</sup> then dispatched a small ship to Lisbon to announce his discovery, and without further ado, sailed to India.

01:43           He wrote: After this long journey, everything makes me think of past or future violence: night trains, air raids, fallout shelters, guerrillas in the forest, family albums, small fragments of war enshrined in everyday life.

02:02           He used to write to me from Africa. He contrasted the time of Africa with the time of Europe and the time of the Americas. He said that in the 19th century, mankind had come to terms with space, and that the great question of the 20th century was the coexistence of different concepts of time.<sup>2</sup>

02:18           **Audio excerpt n°1**  
*O regresso de Amilcar Cabral* [The return of Amilcar Cabral], film by Flora Gomes, Sana

1. Pedro Alvares Cabral is considered the first Portuguese explorer to arrive in Brazil, in the year 1500, near what today is the city of Porto Seguro, Bahia. He was often referred to in school books as the one who 'discovered' Brazil.

2. Sans Soleil, film by Chris Marker, 1983.

na N'Hada, José Bolama, Josefina Crato, Djalma Fettermann, 1976

3. Idem

4. Amílcar Cabral was the leader of the liberation struggle of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde. He was an agricultural engineer, pan-Africanist, intellectual, poet, and is considered one of the most important anti-colonial leaders of the 20th century.

**02:23** He told me that on those islands in the middle of the Atlantic, the women working in the markets used to stare at his camera. He told me that the images of Guinea-Bissau should be accompanied by music from Cape Verde, and that would be his contribution to the unity dreamed of by Amílcar Cabral.<sup>3 4</sup>

**02:38**

**Audio excerpt n°2**

Last discourse of Amílcar Cabral, Rádio Libertação, 1973

“(…) But all in vain. For no crime, no use of force, no maneuver in word or deed of the criminal Portuguese colonial aggressors will be able to stop the march of history, the irreversible march of our own African people of Guinea and the Cape Verde Islands towards their independence. Forward; comrades and compatriots in the historic struggle for National Liberation (…)!”

Translated text: *Return to the Source: Selected Speeches of Amílcar Cabral*, Ed., Africa Information Service and Monthly Review Press, NY and London, 1973.

**02:58**

That morning he dreamed of the sea. A rough and cold sea, like the one of his childhood. He was standing on the sand dunes and saw a huge wave approaching the shore. The waters were dark, muddy, as in the days when the south wind stirred the bottom of the sea and brought to the shores the remains of fish and houses, remains of people and plastics of all kinds.

My older brother was at sea that day.

5. Rio Grande, also known in Mexico as the Río Bravo del Norte, is one of the principal rivers in the southwestern United States and in northern Mexico. The river functions as the Mexico–United States border between the US State of Texas and the northern Mexican states of Chihuahua and Coahuila, Nuevo León and Tamaulipas.

**03:30**

He wrote: My brother liked to go surfing on stormy days. I remember the lightning storms, so common in the summer, that we observed with anticipation from the window. Whenever lightning would strike at the sea, time accelerated, and we couldn't rest until he arrived.

**03:49**

He told me that his brother would later swim across the big river,<sup>5</sup> wearing eight T-shirts and two pairs of jeans tucked into his body, his passport in a plastic bag inside his underwear, and a pair of shoes on his feet. Like this, he would enter the desert, after a journey through

planes and coyotes, the hotels with drug dealers and a debt he would never be able to pay. But that's another story.

**04:13** He told me that colonization is a poverty manufacturing system.<sup>6</sup>

**04:18** He told me that the Mayans and the Kuna, in the region that today we call Panama, had a very clear perception, back in the beginning of colonization, that they were undergoing an invasion that would profoundly alter their ancient territory.

**04:35** He wrote: Through several readings, I ended up with documents of the Portuguese Crown, from the time when the Royal Family was installed in Brazil in the beginning of the 19th century. I found two letters<sup>7</sup> written by Dom João<sup>8</sup> in May and November 1808, in which he declared war on the Botocudos and Bugres.

**04:56** He told me that “Botocudo” or “Bugre” were words used by the Portuguese to refer generically to different indigenous communities in Brazil. The name comes from a certain type of plate that Northern peoples used to attach to their lips.

**05:08** He told me that when he asked his grandmother where their family came from, she

**6.** This sentence came to me while reading Fanon, and somehow, it keeps repeating in my mind as a refrain. Poverty, in the contexts I have inhabited, seems to exist through the imposition of a system of values during the process of colonization. Poverty is the dependence of a certain form of economy that regulates all spheres of life and transform the world into a source of resources. It is through the separation between life and soil, between humans and trees, between beings and rocks, that this process of commodification can happen. This becomes clear when we listen to indigenous voices. Vei-tcha, an indigenous person from the Xokleng community, used to say that they were rich while living the woods for they had everything they needed, despite not owning anything on their own. It is also very triggering to think that David Kopenawa, a very well-known Yanomami leader, calls white people “the commodity people”, or in other words, the people that transforms everything into extractable and marketable things.

**7.** “(...) Being aware of the almost total abandonment in which the general fields of Coritiba and Guarapuava are found, as well as all the lands that flow into Paraná and form the headwaters of Uruguay on the other side, all (...) infested by the Indians called Bugres, who cruelly kill the farmers and landowners, who in the same countries have tried to take sesmarias and cultivate them for the benefit of the State, (...) most of the farms, which are on this road, are depopulated, some because Bugres killed their residents, and others because of the fear that they could be equally victims (...) By these and other just reasons, I do now order to cease the effects of humanity which I had ordered to practice with them, and I order you, from the moment you receive my Royal Letter, you must consider to be in war against these barbarian indians (...)”

Royal Letter of 5, 1808 *About the Indians Botocudo, Culture and Population of the Fields of Coritiba and Guarapuava*. Available in Portuguese at the website of the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies ([www.camara.leg.br/](http://www.camara.leg.br/)). Free translation.

**8.** Dom João VI was the king of the United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil and Algarve from 1816 to 1825, until his death.

9. "We are all Bugres."

10. In 1928, Gunther Pluschow, a German aviator and explorer filmed the formation of new German colony in the State of Santa Catarina. It's one of the few images of that period. The film depicts the arrival of the settlers, the indigenous communities inhabiting the territory, the cutting of trees, the building of houses and finally the formation of a village.

The necessity to engage with this material, to unfold its meanings and understand my implication in that narrative, was the starting point and the basis for the exploration that Beatriz and I developed further within the frame of Arquivo Atlântico.

11. "The script of saffron pages."

replied: We have no history, "nós é tudo bugre."<sup>9</sup>

**05:21** He described to me the body of a woman portrayed in a 1928 film.<sup>10</sup> To her, he wrote: In this historical gap that the encounter with your image reveals, I ask questions. How would you feel to know that, a few years after your body was captured in an image, a white man wrote that colonization in Brazil was made up of mixtures and affections? How was your encounter with the camera, with that man? How did the image of that moment stay in your mind?

**05:51** He couldn't imagine this encounter outside of a context of total violence. And despite that, for the camera, she smiled.

**05:59** He told me that a few years ago, when he decided to investigate violence, he came to think not of sweetness or joy as such, but of time and slowness as a possible answer. To violate violence through *empty-nesses* and *slownesses*.

**06:15** He wrote: I never really believed in poetry, but sometimes, I turn to it to experience deviations. I want to call this story "*O roteiro das páginas de açafão*,"<sup>11</sup> not the name but the color reminds me of those yellow lands of mined gold and blazing sun, of burned green and a blue

darkened by oil or mud, where remains little more than the political despair of a collection of feverish images narrated in haste. *Uma terra que arde no encontro com a carne.*<sup>12</sup>

**06:59** He wrote: This very simple sentence could describe the encounter between the white man and the forest, the disappearance of the forest by men who wish to occupy its soil with cows and cattle, or the soil that burns in rage. A feminine rage, supported by the body of black and indigenous women, and that I want to believe, when I listen to Elza Soares<sup>13</sup> sing, that they are not the cheapest meats on the market anymore.

**07:21** He wrote: The practices repeat, outside of linear time, as Denise explains. And the body of men continues to be the source of total violence, the violence over the body of the earth, the body of women, the body of people, the colonial that never ceases, the same practices, the same, over and over again in these distorted cycles of reality that make no sense and create these bloody misguided totalities.

**07:50** He wrote: I have a photograph of my great-grandmother. My grandfather sent it to me a few years ago. I wanted to show you this photograph. It's a black and white portrait. My great-grandmother's expression is strong, although she looks a bit tired, her eyes are slightly closed. I connect this portrait to another story that my grandfather told me, the story of the mother of this woman, my great-great-grandmother, who was indigenous and was hunted and tied by my Portuguese-great-great-grandfather. It made me think about what you told me the other day. A horrible story that has been for sure repeated in many other families. I wonder if this story follows me or if it only remains in my features and my memory, a memory that I no longer know if it's true. These horrible stories, often repeated by our fathers and grandfathers, echoing in our minds.<sup>14</sup>

**08:52** Then he described a series of prints from a Facebook post in which an indigenous woman appears suspended by her feet by two white men, as when the hunters proudly display their prey. The comments that follow the image say: "My ancestor on my father's side was also caught in the noose." "This story is the same as that of my great-grandmother, who was also caught like that. They say she was a very angry person, I guess she had a good reason."

**12.** "Land that burns in its encounter with flesh."

**13.** Elza Soares is an important black and anti-racist singer from Brazil. In the 1990s, she recorded a song of great success and impact called "A Carne" [The flesh/meat] that says, in its refrain, "the cheapest meat on the market is the black meat." In 2019, she recorded another song, "Não tá mais de graça" saying that "the cheapest meat on the market is not anymore for free."

**14.** Fragment of the conference-performance *Ensaio pro fim do Mundo: Depois do Fim*, by Ana Luiza Fortes and Cia Urso de Araque, Unpublished. Free translation.

15. Blumenau is a city located in the north of Santa Catarina, in southern Brazil.

09:16

**Audio excerpt n°3**

“Despite its urban progress, Blumenau preserves the European characteristics of the past. There it lives the old and joyfull style of 19<sup>th</sup> century Germany.”

*Cerveja em Blumenau*, film from 1970, Brazilian National Archive.

09:27

He read that the city of Blumenau,<sup>15</sup> which appears at the end of the film, was founded by German settlers in 1850. Its foundation coincides with the Land Law of 1850, signed on September 18 by Dom Pedro II, Emperor of Brazil, and registered on page 57 of the Book of Legislative Acts No. 1 on October 2 of the same year.

09:49

He told me that this law consisted of 22 articles, 2,070 words, and regulated the transfer of land to private companies that would have the right to exploit its natural resources and organize the foundation of colonies by people of European origin. In 1874, after several modifications, the law included specific agreements regarding the payment to the agents who recruited white settlers in Europe. In the contract signed with Caetano Pinto, establishing the terms for the ‘introduction of 100,000 Europeans’ in Brazil, this aspect was specified as follows: 120,000 reis should be paid to the agent for the first 50,000 colonists brought to Brazil; 100,000 reis for the next 25,000; and 60,000 reis for the last 25,000. Half of this amount should be paid in relation to newcomers under 12 and over 2 years old.

10:33

He wrote: By that same time, the profession of ‘brugueiro’ was established in south Brazil, which consisted of hunting and killing indigenous communities. The most famous of them was Martin Brugueiro, a local farmer who started at age 18 and ended up coordinating a group of more than 25 people.

“The assault usually took place in the morning. First, we fire some shots, and then we killed the rest with machetes. The body is like the banana tree, it cuts softly. We cut the ears. Every pair of ears had a price. Sometimes, just to show, we also brought with us women and children. We had to kill them all. If not, the survivors would seek vengeance. When they started to dis-

10:48

**Audio excerpt n°5**

“We don’t like to tell this because they finished us, our grandparents. That’s why I don’t like to tell this. That’s why the book they gave us, I took and I burned it. To not see this. Because my grandmother told me that [Martin Brugueiro] was raised by them. They took him as a child and he was raised in the forest by them. And when they go, and they stopped to camp, he knew that the time that they stopped to camp, that they sleep...

he noted. And when he grew up, and he went away, he invited more people and they would come in the morning, on top of them, to kill them.”

Testimony of Kojeco Gakran. Documentary *Laklaño/Xokleng*, produced by the Audiovisual Workshop of the Indigenous Land of Ibirama, 2014.

**10:56** Martin Brugueiro, in an interview, said that he alone had killed more than a thousand Indians.

**11:18** He read that, “to dissimulate the contingency of its foundations and its constitutive violence, modern democracy needed at its inception to envelop itself in a quasi-mythological structure.<sup>16</sup> Little did it matter that the world depicted in these representations did not exactly align with the phenomenal world. Forgoing evidence, one needed only to invoke secrecy and security. Perhaps more than about difference, the era is thus about the fantasy of separation, and even extermination. It is about that which does not fit together, about that which does not unify, about that which one is not disposed to share. This is the question that our era – that of democracy’s inversion – does not stop posing.”<sup>17</sup>

**12:07** He told me that today, countries are connected by fiber-optic cables deposited at the bottom of the Atlantic.

**12:15** He told me that in the last century, it was easier to go from Luanda to Pernambuco than from Maranhão to São Miguel das Missões.

**12:22** In those days, the water in Luanda was flowing from the middle of a building. The water, flowing from concrete like a fountain, was used, shared and sold, and came to supply a whole world of things, a whole series of daily lives.<sup>18</sup>

**12:49** He wrote: I think that only in the places where logic and reason have failed to impose themselves, this reversal can happen. There, the building is no longer culture – the work and invention of men – but becomes part of the gushing nature that shapes reality.

**13:11** He wrote: In that paradise of oddities, the landscape is beautiful, despite the harshness and humidity, despite the greenery and the greyness. At the roots of the

appear, the government stopped to pay us. The troops didn’t have the means to keep paying the expenses. The colonization companies and the settlers used to pay us less. So, the troops started to vanish. Only a few, who would go into the woods in groups of two or three, would keep hunting and killing the ones who stayed in the forests. Getúlio Vargas was already president when I did a [last] attack.” Testimony from the brugueiro Ireno Pinheiro describing the attacks in the highlands of Santa Catarina. Collected by Silvio Coelho dos Santos in 1972. Published in the newspaper *Diário Catarinense* in August 1998. Free translation

**16.** Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, Transl. Steven Corcoran, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2019 p. 23

**17.** *Idem*, pp. 38–39

18. "The Building had seven floors and breathed like a living body, you had to know its secrets, the profitable or pleasurable characteristics of its warm breezes, the workings of its old pipes, the stairs and doors that didn't lead anywhere, various crooks had felt in their skins the consequences of that accursed labyrinth whose creaks betrayed people's movements, and even its residents tried to respect each corner, wall and staircase on the first floor the burst pipes and an awful darkness discouraged the distracted and intruders water flowed in a steady stream and served multiple ends, the whole building's water came from this floor, the business of selling it by the pail, the washing of clothes and cars, Granma Kunjikise was one of the few to cross the flooded territory without wetting her feet or having a tendency to slip "that's a river," she used to say, always in Umbundu, "all that's missing are the fish and alligators." Ondjaki, *Transparent City*, Biblioasis International Translation Series n.22, 2018, Kindle Edition.

19. Oswald de Andrade, is one of the most important figures of the Brazilian modernist movement at the beginning of the 20th century. He is particularly known for his Manifesto *Antropófago* [Anthropophagist Manifesto], published in 1928. Its argument is that colonized countries, such as Brazil, should ingest the culture of the colonizer and digest it in its own way. The text is explicitly inspired in Michel de Montaigne, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud and André Breton and is composed through a procedure of 'deglutition' of some of the most renowned manifestos of the Western culture, such as the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* and the *Surrealist Manifesto*.

misfortune, the ghosts of strong bodies and white skin, who with kicks and shots tried to shape the absurd, emerge. If absurdity took hold, or if it was a failure, I don't really know, but the fact is that in that encounter a crooked gesture was defined, and on top of it, we learned how to walk. Even today we march carrying these memories to the paths of stone and asphalt across the continents.

**13:43** He wrote: Angola and Brazil, as we know it, are a Portuguese invention, just as present-day India is an English invention. There is no nation-state outside of a homogenizing project that is sustained through dangerous and fragile narratives. Difference is never the horizon, but a moment in the past that needs to be overcome.

**14:03** He wrote: When I read the word *açafrão* (saffron) in Oswald's writings,<sup>19</sup> I laughed. I wrote lands of saffron thinking of the plastic bag that you buy in the supermarket as seasoning, but which is actually turmeric and has nothing to do with the much-appreciated Spanish spice. The name came to me, I suspect, from a rhythm – *a ta tão* –, and from the yellow color, like a broken egg yolk spreading on the floors of the kitchen.

**14:30** He told me that in Brazil, the elite was so blind, that back in 1922 the jewels of modernism were made in exportation mode – Poesia Pau-Brasil,<sup>20</sup> the exotic product they wanted to send abroad. The chain of exploitation, my friend, never ceases. Here they cut, pierce, slaughter, remove, everything is uprooted to be sold abroad. In this land of palm trees, even the name comes from the logic of extraction. Brazil, named after wood that sold so well, that fucking wood that no longer exists beyond the borders of a botanical garden.

**15:08** I'm now thinking that thinking of Brazil as Brazil, as a land of mixtures, of fluid identities and kind people, is something the white elite have been doing over a century.<sup>21</sup> And despite being white, still privileged by this skin that was always so hostile to the sun, I'll not think about Brazil. I'll think wood, think coconut, think tortoise, think Paris too, why not? I'll think Angola and Guinea, think *terreiro and terra batida, terra em transe, terra comida, terra corrida, que corre longe quando estala o tambor no golpe pesado do braço daquele rapaz tão giro, tão giro, diria eu à portuguesa, dando giros e voltas ao redor de machado e facão, espora e erva e carvão.*

**20.** "Poetry exists in the facts. The shacks of saffron and ochre in the green of the Favela, under cabralin blue, are aesthetic facts. Carnival in Rio is the religious event of our race. Pau-Brasil. Wagner is submerged before the carnival lines of Botafogo. Barbarous and ours. The rich ethnic formation. Vegetal riches. Ore. Cuisine. Vatapá, gold and dance. (...)" "A single struggle – the struggle for the way. Let's make the division: imported Poetry. And Pau-Brasil Poetry, for exportation."

Oswald de Andrade, *Pau Brasil Manifest*, Transl. Stella M. de Sá Rego. Latin American Literary Review, 1986, Vol. 14, No. 27

**21.** "Poetry exists in the facts. The shacks of saffron and ochre in the green of the Favela, under cabralin blue, are aesthetic facts. Carnival in Rio is the religious event of our race. Pau-Brasil. Wagner is submerged before the carnival lines of Botafogo. Barbarous and ours. The rich ethnic formation. Vegetal riches. Ore. Cuisine. Vatapá, gold and dance. (...)" "A single struggle – the struggle for the way. Let's make the division: imported Poetry. And Pau-Brasil Poetry, for exportation."

Oswald de Andrade, *Pau Brasil Manifest*, Transl. Stella M. de Sá Rego. Latin American Literary Review, 1986, Vol. 14, No. 27

**15:30**                    **Audio excerpt n°6**  
*Terra em Transe* [Entranced Earth], film by  
Glauber Rocha, 1967

**15:51**                    He told me he was ashamed of the painted palm trees at the back of that stupid office, which had seen and heard so much, and continue to be there, prostrate in front of the hysterical traditions of men.

**16:04**                    He wrote: There is some madness embedded in political desire. In this absurd room, I see three men discussing the world. There are no windows, but walls painted with tropical landscapes – large, faded leaves, palm trees and birds and animals.

**16:28**                    He told me he saw a white boy playing golf on a dry landscape, under a cracking sun, and beside him, a black man carrying the clubs.

**16:38**                    He told me he saw a white couple carrying posters, their faces painted in the colors of the national flag, while the black woman in the background carried a stroller with their child.

**16:56**                    He told me that he saw the brown woman who gave them hard-boiled eggs every day at 10am leaving and never coming back. He had seen the house she lived in, maybe a single room, made of wood like the simple houses of the south, doors made of curtains and a big black pig in the pigpen next to the entrance.

**17:17**                    He wrote: I thought all these people I saw in a picture today are already dead, and that scared me.

**17:29**                    He told me that, “civil peace in the West depends, to a great extent, on inflicting violence far away, on lighting up centers of atrocities, and on the fiefdom wars and other massacres that accompany the establishment of strongholds, extractive zones and trading posts around the four corners of the planet.”<sup>22</sup>

**22.** Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, p. 16

**17:57**                    He read that the new Portuguese imperialist project running in the underworld of treaties and bureaucracies involves the expansion of its Atlantic shelf and the possibility of extracting resources through deep sea mining. The new colony, without human inhabitants, will be made with machines at the bottom of the sea.

**18:12** He told me that colonization and decolonization is simply a matter of relative strength.<sup>23</sup>

**18:18** He told me that, still under the parameters of the Land Law, in 1910, it was created in Santa Catarina the Southern Brazil Lumber and Colonization Company, an operative arm of the Brazilian Railway Company. They worked first in the extraction and export of wood, and later in the establishment of new colonies by selling the same lands to the settlers. The Southern Brazil Lumber and Colonization Company explored an area of approximately 1 billion and 800 million square meters.

**18:51** He told me that he saw in that film made in 1928, an araucaria tree being chopped down with axes.

**18:58** He told me that in the south of Brazil, simple houses are often made of wood.

**19:05** He wrote: We, people from the south of Santa Catarina, are always confused by the idea of tradition, something that goes back to the times when Anita Garibaldi joined with that guy Giuseppe and tried to liberate the farms and the pampas that extend until Laguna.<sup>24</sup> If I think about it, I suspect their move was less about occupying those lands

**23.** Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Transl. Constance Farrington, Grove Press, 1963 p. 60

**24.** Giuseppe and Anita Garibaldi are considered heroes for their involvement in the Farroupilha Revolution. Between 1835 and 1845, the province of Rio Grande do Sul, and for a very short period also the province of Santa Catarina, led a war against the Brazilian Empire to establish independent republics in the south of the country. Despite its many interesting aspects, this was a war against the high taxes imposed on the *charque* (dry meat) produced in the south that favored the importation of the same products from Uruguay and Argentina. The revolutionary ideals of the independence struggles in other parts of Brazil and across the Americas influenced the discourse of the republicans, that included in their claims the abolition of slavery. Despite the enormous presence of black fighters during the war, in the final peace agreement signed between the regional government and the Empire, the question of abolition was left aside. The enslaved people that fought during the war kept their freedom, but all the rest of the black population was kept enslaved.

– that were not really the pampas – but about arriving in a prettier port area, or perhaps even having a better coast line in the newly invented country. Perhaps they were even thinking about the tourism to come.

**25.** Gaucho is a term used to describe mestizos who, in the 18th and 19th centuries, inhabited Argentina, Uruguay, and Rio Grande do Sul, in Brazil. They were migratory horseman, adept in cattle work and livestock farming. Today it is also used to refer to anyone, even an urban dweller, who is a citizen of the State of Rio Grande do Sul.

**19:39** As I was saying, in that area, we got trapped between the traditions of the Portuguese fisherman and the horsemanship and livestock farming of the gauchos<sup>25</sup> more on the south, between the chamames and the vaneras, the alvoradas of Santo Antonio and the ribbon dances of June. I remember very well that until I was fourteen or fifteen, parties were still held in the grass, close to the lake, where we ate roasted meat, garlic bread and potato mayonnaise, and danced fandango and vanerão, xote and chamamé – these dances of the Iberian nobility that ended up there, and in the deep ranches of the end of the world, never really got lost.

**20:17** He wrote: Around the age of twelve, I went to live in Santa Rosa, the small village where my father was born and where people are more humble, generous, and a bit less concerned with modernity. I wanted to learn gaucho, ‘tap dancing,’ but I had contented myself with learning partner dances. Natalia, my cousin and I, rehearsed in the afternoons, just after school, in my aunt's living room. From what we learned in this process that lasted so little, I only remember the Maçanico and the Chimarrita. The lyrics of Maçanico say:

*Maçanico Maçanico  
Maçanico do banhado  
quem não dança o Maçanico  
não arruma namorado*

*Maçanico, Maçanico  
Maçanico of the swamps  
those who don't dance the Maçanico  
will not find a boyfriend*

**20:01** Today, when I remembered that I asked myself if the boyfriends I found were the result of that little bit I danced. How many gay boys have been helped by Maçanico, despite its pretension and antiquated gender division?

**21:20** The Chimarrita, somewhat sadder, said:

*Chimarrita morreu ontem  
ontem mesmo se enterrou  
quem falar da Chimarrita  
leva o fim que ela levou*

*Chimarrita died yesterday  
and yesterday she was buried  
whoever talks about Chimarrita  
will have her same fate*

**21:37** He told me that the colony and democracy are two sides of the same body. He told me that one cannot live without the other, that democracy, as a solar body, cannot live without its double, the colony, whatever its name. Its nocturnal body.<sup>26</sup>

**21:53** After that, he wrote: I am starting to understand that wherever the night still reigns, there are no exact sciences. What remains is the great darkness after the sun goes down, the high sky where stars sail, rumors and fear, spirits that dance and all are unexplanations.

**26.** Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, p. 23







2.

Angola. A postcard, family  
**stories, the river and the sea.**



**00:12** The first image she described to me was that of a canoe gliding over a wide river, its green banks so crowded that you could hardly see the shore, the water undulating calm before reaching the sea. She told me that one day she's going to write a book that starts with that image. If the river disappears, at least the memory will remain.

**00:39** She used to write to me from Brazil, she contrasted Brazilian time with Portuguese time and the time in Angola.

**00:49** She wrote: The swamps of Lândana is where the Chiloango River fades. The river is a marshy border and its delta is flanked by mangroves; a painting made of water and green on the central coast of Cabinda,<sup>28</sup> the unique and unrepeatable landscape of that enclave.<sup>29</sup>

**01:11** She liked the fragility of that image in the postcard sent by her uncle long ago.

**01:17** She wrote: I am now on a beach made of thin white sand, old sand that has been already intensely crushed by water. It is a discreet landscape, with few houses, except for the metal pier that cuts across the bay. Here, by the sea, I like to swim. As he does, I swim to think better, but also for pleasure and to keep my body in shape. But also, like the Mozambican poet, *me sinto mais exata dentro de água*.<sup>30</sup>

**01:52** She read that the Atlantic Ocean has a total area of about 106.4 million square kilometers and covers approximately one-fifth of the earth's surface. It occupies an elongated S-shaped basin that extends longitudinally between the Americas to the west and Eurasia and Africa to the east. Its name is derived from Greek mythology, meaning the "Atlas Sea," and that the earliest mention of this name was made by Herodotus in *Histories*, written around 450 BC.

**02:29** She wrote: The Atlantic is at the basis of this debt you talk about,<sup>31</sup> of this collection of horrors and fabricated disagreements, of this history of maritime misfortunes, planned murders, chopped trees and precarity that never ends. That's what you call the unpayable debt? But I was wondering and I wanted to ask you, how do we look at this history against the arrow of time? How do we challenge its logic, interfere in its beginnings and reinvent its end?

**03:14** That night she dreamed of the sea. It was a deep, transparent sea and it was full of slow-moving creatures that seemed to be made of the same melancholic light

**28.** Cabinda is an Angolan enclave in between the two Congos, first kept by the Portuguese, and later integrated into the independent Angolan State.

**29.** Pedro Cardoso, *Foz do Chiloango*, . Published on [redeangola.info](http://redeangola.info).

**30.** Reference to the poem "Paralelo" by Glória de Sant'Anna, in *Livro de Água* [The water book], 1961 published by the author.

**31.** Reference to the book *Unpayable Debt*, by Denise Ferreira da Silva.

as there is in twilight. She didn't know where she was, but she knew these were jellyfish. While she was waking up, she still saw them crossing the walls. It was then that she remembered her grandmother, Dona Josefina do Carmo Ferreira, alias Nga Fina Diá Makulussu, famous interpreter of dreams. According to her, to dream of the sea was to dream of death. She opened her eyes and looked at the large pendulum clock on the wall. It was twenty minutes past midnight. Angola was already independent.

**04:02**

**Audio excerpt n°7**

“On behalf of the Angolan people, the Central Committee of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), solemnly proclaims Angola's Independence before Africa and the World.”

Augustinho Neto, “Declaration of the Independence of Angola,” 1975, Free translation.

**32.** José Eduardo Agualusa, *Es-tação das chuvas*, Ed. Quetzal, 2017 p. 7

**33.** The Haitian Revolution was an insurrection of self-liberated slaves against French colonial rule in Saint-Domingue, now the sovereign state of Haiti. The revolt began on August 22, 1791, and ended in 1804 with the former colony's independence. The revolution was the only slave uprising that led to the founding of a state which was both free from slavery and ruled by non-whites. It is now widely seen as a defining moment in the history of the Atlantic World. In order to recognize Haiti's independence, in 1825 France demanded an indemnity of 100 million francs, approximately \$21 billion (USD) today. Haiti only finished to pay the debt in 1947, more than a century later. This form of debt helped to keep some formerly colonized countries impoverished, and by extension, dependent on external aid and influence.

**04:19**

She thought about it and felt happy about being there, lying in that bed, in the old house of the Ingombotas. What was she doing in that country? Useless question that tormented her every day. But at that moment it had another meaning: what was she doing there? She was lucid and felt nothing, neither the bitterness of the defeated nor the euphoria of the winners (that night she was both at the same time). "Outside, life happens," she wrote. She crossed out the sentence and wrote again: "Out there, life happened/in all its raw splendor." Then she circled the verses and added the date: "November 11, 1975."<sup>32</sup>

**05:20**

She read that Carlota Lucumí, also known as ‘La Negra Carlota,’ was a Cuban woman of Yoruba origin, from the Triunvirato sugar plantation in Matanzas, during the Year of the Whip in 1843-1844.

**05:38**

She wrote: In fact, little is known about Carlota's life due to the lack of documents. Historians say that on that day, on the night of November 5, 1843, slaves from the Triunvirato plantation played drums with more eloquence than ever to mark the beginning of the rebellion, in a unique cry, indecipherable by the masters. The rebellion, which was neither the only nor the first slave revolt, was an epic act to end the mistreatment, punishment and humiliations carried out by the masters and their lackeys.

**06:22**

She wrote: Reading about Carlota, I remember the revolt in Haiti,<sup>33</sup> between 1791 and 1804, back in the

time of the first revolutions and independences, before and at the same time as the Americans were confronting the Europeans. I also remember a song written by Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil, which I heard for the first time when I was in Salvador years ago. Its lyrics say:

*When you were asked to step up on the atrium  
Of the Jorge Amado foundation  
To see from above the line of soldiers, almost all  
black beating the necks of black miscreants  
Of mulato thieves and others almost white  
Treated like blacks  
Just to show the other blacks  
(and they almost all are black)  
And the poor whites just like blacks  
That this is how the blacks, the poor, and the  
mulatos  
and the almost white poor like blacks,  
this is how blacks, poor people and mulattos are  
treated,  
if you go and if you don't go  
think of Haiti  
pray for Haiti<sup>34</sup>*

**07:25** She told me that along with Ferminia Lucumí, Carlota led a group of slaves in revolt in November of that year, and that her memory was also used by the Cuban government in connection with its 20th century political goals, most notably in the Carlota Operation, which was Cuba's intervention in Angola in 1975.

**07:47** **Audio excerpt n°8/9**  
“We couldn’t cross, and when MPLA asked for help, we offered them all the necessary support.”  
“They used to think that when a country offers support, it is because it is looking for oil, diamonds or other natural resources. No, we are only fulfilling an internationalist duty.”  
Speech of Fidel Castro on the internationalist intervention in Angola, 1971.

**08:25** She wrote: At that time in Angola, there were many Cuban soldiers, military specialists and civil technicians, far more than was supposed to be. There were so many Cuban ships anchored in Luanda Bay, that President Agostinho Neto, counting them from his office window, felt a

**34.** Years ago, I met a few Haitians in the bus I took from São Paulo to Florianópolis, the capital of Santa Catarina. At first, I was surprised, it is not common to see foreigners, especially black people, taking the bus to go south. When I realized where they came from, I remember my happiness and expectation that this migratory flow would challenge the racist dynamics of the south. But years later, what we still hear is the narrative of violence, the inhumane conditions in which many of these workers are employed. Ironically enough, many of them have been employed in the meat industry, specifically poultry production. Once again, the film of Pluschow appears to me as a symbol of future disaster. If, through the image of the cow, I was led to reflect on the impact of cattle and soy monocultures in the deforestation and transformation of the natural landscape of the country now, through this image, I'm led to think about our dependence on violent forms of labor and production connected with the needs of the international market. In 2019, Brazil was the world's biggest exporter of poultry meat, frozen bovine meat, soybeans and sugar.

35. Gabriel García Márquez, "Op-eração Carlota," *Tricontinental* magazine, [ed.] 53, 1977. Available at [www.buala.org](http://www.buala.org).

jolt of shame that was very characteristic of his character. "At this pace, Cuba will be ruined." I don't think the Cubans themselves had foreseen that solidarity aid to the people of Angola would reach such proportions.<sup>35</sup>

**09:02** She told me that contacts between the Cuban Revolution and the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) were established for the first time in August 1965, when Che Guevara was taking part in the Congo guerrillas. The following year, Agostinho Neto traveled to Cuba along with Endo, the MPLA commander in chief, and both leaders met with Fidel Castro.

**09:35** She wrote: It was only in May 1975, when the Portuguese were preparing to leave their colonies in Africa, that the Cuban commander Flavio Bravo met in Brazzaville with Agostinho Neto, who asked for his help to transport a load of weapons and discussed with him the possibility of broader and more specific help. Three months after that meeting, commander Raúl Díaz Arguelles traveled to Luanda, leading a civilian delegation of Cubans.

**10:07** She sent me a photograph of an Angolan guerrilla woman named Carlota. In the photo, she smiles shyly to the journalist behind the camera. She is standing, gun in hand, leaning on a concrete wall facing a grey landscape in the colors of the black and white photograph.

**10:38** She read in a newspaper that Carlota purposely stayed behind, that she knew that if they all went away none of them would survive. She told them to keep going, she knew the forest and knew what had to be done.

**10:54**

**Audio excerpt n°10**

Voice 1: My name is Catarina Augusto by birth, currently Baiot by marriage, and better known as Valia, which was my name of war.

We weren't studying, we were just doing training. It was physical exercise. We would get up at 5 in the morning, run, do physical exercises and then start doing military training, with weapons.

Voice 2: I am Deolinda Kangamafuka, better known as Arriet, name of Guerrilla. I was born on August 25, 1953.

(...) We reached a time when we didn't even know what food is like. We only ate tubers.

Kissadi, *gimgamba*, *coconote*... that was our food.

Voice 3: My full name is Domingas Augusto Panzo, Queen N'ginga. I was born in Cage Mazumbo on August 20, 1942.

In the guerrilla we were 68 guerrillas in our section until the moment we were caught by the colonial troops in 1972.

Voice 1: The day we left, that last day we left for the woods, there was an attack after our departure. The Portuguese were coming, and the comrades who were in ambush attacked the group of Portuguese who were coming to our area.

"Mulheres de Armas," fragment of the documentary made under the project "Angola – *Nos Trilhos da Independência*," Tchiweka Documentary Association, 2012.

**11:42** She read that, "the sacramentalization of war and race in the blast furnace of colonialism made it at once modernity's antidote and poison, its twofold *pharmakon*.<sup>36</sup> In turn, it has let loose gruesome passions that are increasingly pushing our societies to exit democracy and, as was the case under colonization, to transform them into societies of enmity. This global setback to the colonial relationship and its multiple reconfigurations does not necessarily spare Northern societies. This world of men without ties (or men who aspire not to be close to others) is still ours, albeit always under new configurations. It is ours in the form of the desire for apartheid and the inbreeding that surrounds our time, immersing us in a hallucinatory dream, that of the 'community without foreigners.'"<sup>37</sup>

**36.** Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, p. 6

**37.** *Idem*, p. 3

**12:33** She wrote: My imagination runs free and fictional images start to intervene in this tired writing, made under the half light of the abatjour of the Portuguese lands where I find myself now. The silent print on the blanket made of thick cotton reminds me of my aunt and grandmother's houses, the weight of the blankets my father praised, and the rawness of the ceramic that extends across the floor.

**13:01** She wrote: What travel shows us is the filth thrown in the face of humanity. So, I understand the passion, the madness, the misunderstanding of travel diaries. They create the illusion of what no longer exists to escape the overwhelming evidence that 20,000 years of history have passed. From these journeys we have inherited multiple loot-

ings that accumulate in yellowish and moldy buildings where the windows are never opened, piled and displaced and scattered through rooms and rooms and more rooms and corridors and cellars, where motherland feasts itself, pregnant with excuses that will never be uttered, at the same time in which, over and over and over and over and over and again, it builds statues to evil men, to worthless men. She told me that everything becomes meaningless.

**14:08** She wrote: The first tree I remember is the baobab, then I remember the velvichias from the Namibian desert that ate children's fingers when they approached. But these weren't really trees so it doesn't matter here. The second tree that I have memory of is the fig tree and then the orange tree and then the loquat tree. She remembers competing with the birds to see who arrived first at the fig tree of their garden.

**14:33** She told me that there are fig trees in many different places and latitudes, and that they are also different according to the place.

**14:41** She wrote me that in his grandmother's garden, in South Brazil, the fig tree was huge and gave a cool shade. She says that he showed her a picture, her grandmother is no longer there but the fig tree is, large and leafy.

**15:02** She told me that another well-known Angolan legend is the Imbondeiro, or the baobab tree. The story tells that, because the Imbondeiro was jealous of other trees, it was punished by the gods and turned upside down: the crown was buried and the roots remained up.

**15:21** She told me that there is another legend that says that if a dead person is buried inside the tree, their soul will exist as long as the plant lives.

**15:29** She told me that there is a river in the city where she was born, the Chiloango. It is in the final part that Chiloango gains the dimension that makes it famous: a vast wet area where roots and water intertwine. The Chiloango delta is a gigantic mangrove that, before it began to be altered by human intervention, had a length of 19 km.

**16:09** She told me that, in the postcard sent by her uncle, the paper is already yellowed, that the green of its banks is already sepia green and that despite the colors being faded, the river is still dense and calm.

**16:28** She sent me a photograph of Cabinda, from the house where she was born. They are both on the balcony, with their round faces like all the faces of children. Both of them look at the camera sweetly, a kind of look that reveals that whoever is behind the camera is someone we love.

**16:52** She wrote: This is a characteristic in the photographs of children taken by their parents, in photographs taken by boyfriends or friends, when the body offers itself to the camera with confidence and with the gift of knowing that they both build an archive of shared affections.

**17:11** She told me that it was a hot day, an unbearable heat, as is the heat of Cabinda. She said that on that day she wasn't born yet or that, even if she was born, they don't remember her.

**17:28** She wrote: Zé remembers the photograph and the house. I ask her to describe it to me. It was a two floor colonial house with a wide and spacious veranda that encircled the building, facing the sea. She said that the sea could be seen from the balcony, that the horizon could be seen from the balcony, that the oil wells could be seen from the balcony.

**18:00** I see in the photograph both of them in front of a two-floor colonial house. Downstairs there is the kitchen and the living room, and upstairs the bedrooms, which opened onto the balcony.

**18:44** She wrote: The transformations of the history of Cabinda were ingrained in the waters of the Chiloango. It is the most important river in the region. As such, it has always been disputed by Europeans. The result is a river with a geopolitical soul. Chiloango is, at the same time, the border between the two Congos, and between the Democratic Republic of Congo and Angola. Once the separation of the waters is completed, it enters deep into Cabinda, where it flows as if it were Angolan.<sup>38</sup>

**19:12** She told me not to enter the woods around Cabinda. There, the war sleeps.

**19:23** She read that there is an undersea cable that connects Cabinda and Brazil. She doesn't know through which city, but she knows it lies 1000 meters under the sea, and that companies of both countries are responsible for its maintenance. She told me that the cable called 'Monet,' that

**38.** Pedro Cardoso, *Foz do Chiloango*,. Published on [redeangola.info](http://redeangola.info).

connects Brazil and Europe, doesn't run near the United States to avoid interventions.

**19:56** She told me that without recognizing the borders, the river that rises in Congo-Brazzaville continues to flow.

**20:17** She read: *A brisa carrega brechas de sorte e cava segredos nos orifícios. Tem carneiros respondendo à música, e toca um peixe-boi na beira do Maragogi. Parece dividido. Esse véu que cobre a margem do rio desliza poeira para dentro do mar, pensamento-chão que caminha na direção do silêncio. Sou erguida pelo vento.*<sup>39</sup>

**39.** Poem by Aline Bernardi, Unpublished.





3.

Portugal. Marine territories, wood  
**and the traces of the colonial war.**



**00:13** The first image she described to me was of an old shop in the high streets of Porto. In the wooden façade, probably very old although well cared for, one can read: “The best Colonial and Brazilian Coffee.”

**00:27** She wrote: I couldn't resist taking a picture. I was wondering if, at the time this sign was made, Brazil was already believed to be an empire, or if it was even a republic. In these days, since I arrived in Portugal, I had been thinking endlessly about these little things, about the coffee and the sugar that, even though seem to represent expired models of exploitation, continue to be produced within the same logic, in the same lands, and exported at gigantic ecological costs.

**00:57** She told me that one day she's going to make a documentary that starts with this image. And that later other images will come, images of facades and businesses, and logos of companies, industries, farms and plantations and...

**01:11** She used to write to me from Angola. She contrasted the time there, with the time here, and the time of others. She told me that in Guinea-Bissau, at the same time as the Portuguese were expelled, people were learning to make films. She told me that in Macau there's only one square that really resembles Portugal. The rest of the city looks like Las Vegas.

**01:39** That night she dreamed of trees. Tall trees, in a dense forest, where the birds sang until late into the night. She didn't know where she was, but she knew the sea was far away. The air was moist and warm. Her body, sweating, moved slowly through the woods. The heat, she thought, comes from the fire beneath the earth, which is gradually rising towards the surface.

**02:10** She wrote: We are descendants of these barbarians that came from overseas, and their inability to understand the forest, to understand that the world is composed by innumerable beings, a super organism constantly renewed by the careful work of its invisible wardens, the xapiris.<sup>40</sup>

**02:40** She wrote: Last night I arrived at the house of a Portuguese man, a very nice guy, friend of friends, who accepted to receive me in these times of wandering and rules that change day by day. I am supposed to write and make of this stay the basis of a kind of literature. The order was im-

**40.** “The forest is alive. It can only die if the white people persist in destroying it. If they succeed, the rivers will disappear underground, the soil will crumble, the trees will shrivel up, and the stones will crack in the heat. The dried-up earth will become empty and silent. The xapiri spirits who come down from the mountains to play on their mirrors in the forest will escape far away. Their shaman fathers will no longer be able to call them and make them dance to protect us. They will be powerless to repel the epidemic fumes which devour us. They will no longer be able to hold back the evil beings who will turn the forest to chaos. We will die one after the other, the white people as well as us. All the shamans will finally perish. Then, if none of them survive to hold it up, the sky will fall.” David Kopenawa, *The falling sky*, Transl. Nicholas Elliott and Alison Dundy, Harvard University Press, 2013, Kindle Edition.

posed on me by myself, so I'm not afraid of the criticism that will come from outside, but of the ghosts that accompany me.

**03:04** She told me that the house, located on the lands south of the Tagus, is big and small, decorated with great taste, and that he, the Portuguese, has been dedicated to renovating it.

**03:12** She wrote: Inside, a modernist air emerges from the pale wood furniture, drawn in straight lines. On the outside, the white walls and windows bordered by an ochre yellow contrasts with the very blue sky of the sunny day on which I write and reminds me of the images of what I assume to be typically Portuguese architecture. As a foreigner, despite having been around these lands for a long time, I still make simple associations and invent traditions in the similarities I recognize and in the gestures people often repeat.

**03:44** She told me that in the garden, where cactuses, ornamental plants of various types, and a single tall tree planted many years ago, a wooden platform is being built. When I arrived, before entering the house, I crossed with a pile of wooden logs waiting by the wall. Good wood, as he described to me, previously used to build railway tracks and bought from a junkyard. Coming from that other south, which is on the continent across the sea, I am unable to imagine any other origin for these logs than my lands, where the violent exploitation of wood has destroyed already so much. Or maybe they came from other lands in the south, at another latitude. Jacarandas, Araucarias, Azobés, those ancient trees that were cut down without mercy and, without delay, were sent elsewhere.<sup>41</sup>

**41.** In 2019, Jair Bolsonaro attempted to change the legislation to authorize the exportation of wood 'in natura' from native species of the amazon region. The export of logs would benefit mainly the ones who extract wood illegally, and represented a setback of 50 years in relation to the policies of the country.

**04:41**

**Audio excerpt n°11/12**

"(...) it is the center of an enormous region, where the products of the amazon basin are collected and shipped away. In addition to rubber, tropical woods and jute are exported, as well as less familiar forest products (...)"

"A thousand miles away, to the northeast, lies the largest area of human blight in the Western hemisphere. This is the sound of feudalism, where the Mediterranean oxcart unchanged since the 16<sup>th</sup> century echoes the growling of the half numb human spirit. This is a sugar plantation near to the town of Cabo, the Northeast State of Pernambuco,

where 2% of the people own 50% of the land. Where the 2% own the tools, the vaults, the law, and the peasants in all but the legal sense.”

Fragments of the film *The Rude Awakening*, CRFilms, 1962.

**05:29** She read that, “the regime of the plantation was mainly about cutting down, burning, and routinely razing forests and trees; about replacing the natural vegetation with cotton and sugar cane; about remodelling ancient landscapes; about destroying the existing vegetal formations; and about replacing an ecosystem with an agrosystem.”<sup>42</sup>

**06:02** She told me that, ‘colonial,’ in south Brazil, still exists today as an adjective of quality. There, the critical sense did not extend much. Eggs from the colony, cheese from the colony, wine from the colony, all of these are products made on little farms in the countryside and recognized as synonymous with quality.<sup>43</sup>

**06:22** She wrote: The world is the problem, but the scale varies. There are great ruins of concrete; there are ultra-regulated flows, contained in sharp lines, without weight or matter, but as real as the pain of having history inscribed in the flesh; there are policeman at the borders between things; and there is, in the gesture that announces itself as a category, a mixture of meanings that constrains the possibility of thinking about the world differently, *pensar o mundo outramente*.<sup>44</sup>

**06:51** She told me that we had to go to Belém,<sup>45</sup> that we should sit on a wall with our backs to the river and look at the buildings, the monuments, the museums, the fountains and the streets. She said she wanted to hear me describing Belém, and wanted to know how much of my flesh and my retina would be hurt by the story.

**07:14** From these journeys, we have inherited multiple lootings that accumulate in yellowish and moldy buildings where the windows are never opened, piled and displaced and scattered through rooms and rooms and more rooms and corridors and cellars, where motherland feasts itself, pregnant with excuses that will never be uttered, at the same time in which, over and over and over and over and over and again, it builds statues of evil men, of worthless men. She told me that everything becomes meaningless.

**42.** Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, p. 10

**43.** In south Brazil, it is also common to encounter Colonial Cafes – restaurants that offer a buffet-style meal with a huge variety of delicacies: breads, pies, cakes, sweets, snacks, juices, fruits, coffees and teas, whatever you can imagine. I thought that this was a particularity of my region. But on one of the last days of my trip to Cape Verde, walking in the main street of the city of Santa Maria, Sal Island, I passed by a façade that caught my attention. On a faded red building, on top of two arched windows, there was a sign that reads: “Caffe Coloniale: nuevo stilo italiano,” followed by the copyright symbol. I took a picture, sat on the side of the street, and wrote in my notebook: the fantasies around colonial pleasure seem to endure on both sides of the Ocean.

44. Jota Mombaça e Musa Michele Mattiuzzi, "Carta à leitora preta do fim dos tempos," *A Dívida Impagável*, Ed. Oficina de Imagem Política e Living Commons, 2019 pp. 15-25. Free translation.

45. Belém, in Lisbon, is the place from where the caravels and boats departed in 1500 towards the 'Indies,' leading to the arrival of Cabral in Brazil that same year.

46. Gilberto Freyre, *The Masters and the Slaves*, Transl. Samuel Putnam, University of California Press, 1986 p. XXXII

47. Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, p. 22

**07:44** She wrote: When I think of colonization, I always think of the casa grande, the master's house of the colonial times, slightly elevated from the ground, usually very wide with small squared and framed windows, all on one level. The entrance door, accessed by a small triangular staircase, which can be climbed from the sides, close to the wall of the house. "Casa Grande, completed by the Senzala (slave quarters), represents an entire economic, social and political system: one of production (monoculture); of work (slavery); of transport (the ox cart, the *banguê*, the net, the horse); of religion (family Catholicism, with a chaplain subordinate to the paterfamilies, cult of the dead, etc.); of sexual and family life (polygamous patriarchy); body and house hygiene (the 'tiger,' the banana clump, the river bath, the trough bath, the sitz bath, the foot washing); of politics (compadrisms). It was also a fortress, bank, cemetery, inn, school, holy house of mercy supporting the elderly and widows, gathering orphans. From this absorbing patriarchalism from colonial times, the large house of the Noruega plantation in Pernambuco, full of rooms, bedrooms, corridors, two convent kitchens, a pantry, chapel, doors, seems to me a sincere and complete expression."<sup>46</sup>

**09:01** She read that, "the triumph of modern democracy in the West coincides with the period of its history during which this region of the world was engaged in a twofold movement of internal consolidation and expansion across the seas. The history of modern democracy is, at bottom, a history with two faces, and even two bodies – the solar body, on the one hand, and the nocturnal body, on the other. Democracy, the plantation, and the colonial empire are objectively all part of the same historical matrix. This originary and structuring fact is central to any historical understanding of the violence of the contemporary world order."<sup>47</sup>

**09:45** She told me that migrations no longer take place across the Atlantic, but they almost always follow the wind that blows from the south.

**09:57** She told me that her brother entered the United States swimming. After a long journey through planes and trains and hidden hotels, after not knowing who he was going to meet because coyotes always hide their faces, he entered the United States swimming, and walked through the desert until he met the border police. He spent two years there. He spent three months in prison. One day he arrived at the airport in Rio de Janeiro, without previous warning, only

with the clothes he was wearing/clothes on his back and his passport in hand.

**10:29** She read that today, little interest is shown in making the circle more inclusive. Rather, the idea is to make borders a primitive form of keeping enemies, intruders, and strangers at bay – all those who are not one of us. In a world characterized more than ever by an unequal redistribution of capacities for mobility, and in which the only chance of survival, for many, is to move and to keep on moving, the brutality of borders is now a fundamental given of our time.

**10:51** **Audio excerpt n°13**  
“Crossing the border between F’nideq (Morocco) and Ceuta (Spain). Tarajal border post,” Kenia Espineira. Freesound archive.

**10:57** She told me that borders are no longer sites to be crossed but lines that separate. “Within these more or less miniaturized and militarized spaces, everything is supposed to remain still. Many are those who, encountering them, now meet their ends or, when not simple victims of shipwrecks or electrocution, are deported.”<sup>48</sup>

**11:18** She asked me if I remember reading in a European Treaty: “To protect our way of living”.<sup>49</sup>

**11:27** She read that the routes of hurricanes follow the same paths as the sea currents of slave ships. She wrote: There are parallels that are dangerous, the wind destroys but it never commodifies.

**11:45** She sent me a photograph showing three arched doors cutting the walls painted with the greenish of mold and the passing of time. The door in the center leads to a deep corridor that ends in a window overlooking the sea.

**12:02** She wrote: After this long journey, everything makes me think of past or future violence: night trains, air raids, radioactive shelters, guerrillas in the forest, family albums, small fragments of tragedy enshrined in everyday life.

**12:38** He read that currently, undersea cables are responsible for 99% of transoceanic communications made around the world. With fiber-optics, the cables are able to transmit voice data, images and messages.

**48.** Idem, pp. 3-4

**49.** In *Ad Extra*, the previous project Beatriz and I developed, we have focused on contemporary dynamics of migration and violence embedded in the European border policies. Part of the project included research on the documents and legislation by the EU. The “New Estrategic Agenda 2019-2024,” adopted by the European Council on October 2019, starts as follows: “In recent years, the world has become increasingly unsettled, complex and subject to rapid change. That creates both opportunities and challenges. Over the next five years, the EU can and will strengthen its role in this changing environment. Together, we will be determined and focused, building on our values and the strengths of our model. This is the only effective way to shape the future world, promote the interests of our citizens, businesses and societies, and safeguard our way of life.” Available at <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/>

**12:48** He told me that Brazil announced in April 2018 the construction of an undersea cable of 9,400 kilometers in length that will directly connect the country with Europe. The cable will leave Santos, in Sao Paulo, with a stop in Fortaleza, until it crosses the Atlantic and reaches Sines, in the south of Portugal. Three other stops are planned along the way: on the islands of Cape Verde, in the Canary Islands and Madeira.

**13:13** He told me that, still today, strange and undesirable alliances are made on the Atlantic.

**13:30** He wrote: There is nothing more Atlantic than looking at the immensity, the blue horizon that endlessly stretches into the distance and calls for the afar. Here, on this beach of cold waters and high rocks, where the river meets the sea, I found an old photograph. A series of young men, in uniform, with guns in hand, in front of what seems to be a dense forest. They all look a little weird, hallucinating, as if normality had disappeared. You see this in the movies, but you forget it is there. My father spent ten years in the war, my mother would wake up with his nightmares. He used to sleep with a revolver beside the bed. We lived in the same house, but it was only after his death, when we had to empty the house, that I suddenly found these photographs.

**14:28** He wrote: There are no war heroes. There is no glory in death or in the fear of shooting without knowing what is your target, in the stupid parties of ex-combatants or in the medals growing mold in the back of the closets for fear of being seen. How do you leave war behind if it has taken up residence in your memory?

50. Ondjaki, "Esperar o vento," in *Tração a 4 Poemas e uma Corda*, Bianchi, 2002

In order to have peace, we must walk the silence.<sup>50</sup> I have a box with traces of war on top of my bedroom closet. She asked me to open it. She saw my father's black title. The war is not over, it is just asleep.

**15:12** He read that national liberation, national restitution, decolonization, whatever you call it, is always a violent phenomenon. That decolonization is always a process that proposes to change the order of the world, and as such, is a program of absolute disorder and that can never be otherwise. He read that colonization and decolonization is simply a matter of relative strength.<sup>51</sup>

51. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 35

**15:37**

**Audio excerpt n°14**

Voice 1: After several days of march, we finally came close to the Portuguese base and

camped in the forest, about 2.5 km from the base. The reconnaissance commander Max explained the situation and how the attack was to be carried out.

Voice 2: *Acompanhei os outros camaradas responsáveis, vimos a situação e está ótimo para nós.*

Voice 1: We moved from the camp about 3am. Everything was done with great calm and absolute silence. And as soon as it became light to barely see, the order was given to open fire. Very soon many buildings in the base started burning. There was a big explosion on an ammunition [deposit]. When the attack stopped, a small group of MPLA came out with a jeep.

*Concerning Violence*, film by Goran Olson, 2015

**15:50** He saw in a film that they had spent the night in the woods, that they left the field around 3 am and that everything was silent. As soon as dawn broke, still barely enough light to see, the firing order was given. They shoot for a few minutes, then there was no reaction from the other side. He heard that if there are guerrilla fighters who move like fish in water, they are the fighters of MPLA in Cabinda.

**16:25** He told me he saw a white boy playing golf on a dry landscape, under a cracking sun, and beside him, a black man carrying the clubs.

**16:36** He wrote: I thought, all these people I saw in a picture today are already dead, and that scared me. How to untie the silences, to break the legs of the motherland, how to open this box? How to look at these young, sad faces, lost in the woods?

**17:00** He heard her saying that she decided to enter the woods and take up arms because she saw the result of 500 years of plunder. He heard that they burned the crops, that they dropped napalm bombs from airplanes Fiat G.91 sent by NATO. He said that in 1972, he saw houses and schools burned, hospitals and orphanages and bodies on fire.

**17:28** He told me that by ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, Portugal began a journey towards the extension of its continental shelf. The extension project is a unique opportunity to peacefully con-

quer new maritime territories, over which Portugal will exercise sovereign rights. In a world marked by the scarcity of raw materials and other vital resources, the possibility for States to extend the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles assumes undeniable relevance, given the prospect of access to mineral, energy and biogenic resources. In this context, Portugal seeks to transform strategic potential into national power.

**18:15** He wrote: I often read, not to understand but to imagine. The words floating around, turning the senses into something else. Words describe images and I observe, not to understand, but to imagine. Stories that float and connect disjointed elements. I allow them to follow their own logic, trying not to intervene in their multiple trajectories within this process of active reinvention.

**18:57** “When the extremes are broached, as is the case for us here and now, precisely what does my and the other’s humanity consist in? The Other’s burden having become too overwhelming, would it not be better for my life to stop being linked to its presence, as much as it is to mine? Why must I, despite all opposition, nonetheless look after the other, stand as close as possible to his life if, in return, his only aim is my ruin? If ultimately, humanity exists only through being in and of the world, can we found a relation with others based on the reciprocal recognition of our common vulnerability and finitude?”

**20:45** He read: “Every archive, being always linked to a past and having necessarily dealt with a history of memory, has a sort of slit. It is at once a breaching, an opening and a separation, a fissure and a breaking, a crazing and a disjunction, a crevasse and a rift, or indeed a tear. But the archive is above all a fissile material, its specificity being that, at its source, it is made of cuts. Indeed, no archive exists without its cracks. To penetrate archival material means to revisit traces. But above all it means to dig right into the slope. A risky effort, since in our case, often the point has been to create a memory by obstinately fixing shadows rather than real events, or rather historical events submerged in the force of shadow. Often it has been necessary to outline on preexisting traces our own silhouette, to grasp for ourselves the contours of the shadow, and to try to see ourselves from the shadow, as shadow.”<sup>52</sup>

52. Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, p. 172

“Through all these gestures, we cheerfully straddle time and identities, excise history and place ourselves firmly on both

sides of the mirror. Doing so, we do not seek to efface prior traces. We seek to assail the archive by fastening our multiple silhouettes onto these traces. For, left to itself, the archive does not necessarily produce visibility. What the archive produces is a specular device, a fundamental and reality-generating hallucination. By allowing desire to surface, including the desire for self, but by assigning it to a forbidden enjoyment, do we not remove these images' power of historical signification? Does what was initially destined to deconstruct the thing and create a new term within the order of the archive and therefore of the signifier – not become simple self-contemplation, simple hyperbole of the Self?"<sup>53</sup>

53. *Idem*, p. 175



# Conversations

Conversation with  
**Woie Kriri Sobrinho Patté**

**Túlio** Woie, first of all, thank you very much for your availability and for being open to this conversation. As I mentioned before, I am working on the history of colonialism in Brazil and other territories occupied by European powers on both sides of the Atlantic. Beatriz Cantinho and I, co-author of this project, have been looking at the material documents that remained from that period in order to understand how the dynamics established during colonial times are still in force today. I imagine this might be very clear to you considering the continuous persecution of indigenous communities in Brazil, the denial of their rights, the invasion of their territories for illegal extraction of wood and minerals, among many other things.

When I started working on this project, trying to look specifically at how colonization took place in south Brazil, I found an old film made by Gunther Pluschow through which the Xokleng community is portrayed. The film seems very didactic to me on what happened in our region, especially in the way it omits the violence that was taking place there through the creation of a fictional narrative that came to support the national project of 'whitening' the population, and the erasure of its past. As I was working with this film, it seemed very important to me to listen and open space for you and the Xokleng community to narrate your own story. I don't know what it was like for you, for example, to watch that film, I imagine it must be very violent. In one of the documentaries I watched about the Xokleng,<sup>1</sup> Kojeco Gakrán says that she feels angry about the books that were published about colonization and the history of the Xokleng, that she has torn them up because of the violence that was printed in them. It seems these kind of historical materials only reactivate the extreme violence of that past.

**Woie** Yes, [there is another story] behind the story of whoever is filming, who is telling it as if it were [the story of] some warriors who conquered the place in a peaceful way. For us it was brutal, we lost many relatives,<sup>2</sup> the Xokleng group from Santa Catarina was massacred at that time. It's very sad for us to see these kinds of exhibitions of photos and videos of colonization taking our space, stealing everything that is ours.

**T.** How have these stories been passed on to you? How have these narratives been transmitted from generation to generation? Most of the documents I had access to reflect the narrative that comes from the colonizer's side, there are very few exceptions. In one of them I read, for example, that the 'pacification' process in 1914 is, for the Xok-

1. *Laklaño/Xokleng*, documentary produced by the Audiovisual Workshop of the Indigenous Land of Ibirama, 2014.

2. Indigenous communities in Brazil often refer to each other as 'relatives,' even when they are part of different ethnicities. We decided to keep the same word in the translated text, even if in some cases it might refer to people from different indigenous groups.

leng community, a decision made by you to pacify the whites – the opposite of what is said in the official history. You decided to step back in order to end that cycle of violence. I was curious to know more about it. Can you speak a little about this history and the history of the Xokleng communities?

3. In Brazil, indigenous communities are divided into two big groups or big families: they are the Tupi Group and the Macro-Jê.

4. Tropeiro is the designation given to troop conductors or retainers of mules and horses between production regions and consumer centers in Brazil from the 17th century onwards.

5. “Bugre” is a word that was used by the Portuguese and colonists to refer generically to indigenous groups in Brazil, especially in the south.

**W.** From what the elderly tell us, from generation to generation, we have come to understand that Jê group<sup>3</sup> goes from [the state of] Mato Grosso to Rio Grande do Sul. At a certain point, the government of the state of Santa Catarina began to sell the Xokleng lands to the colonizers. Brazil had already been invaded in 1500 but a large part of it had not yet been colonized. It is the time in which Germans, Italians and others had arrived to colonize Brazil. The Xokleng then started to come further south to escape the violence of the white man, who brought firearms to kill and steal our land in addition to stealing and killing the Xokleng themselves. And so, the Xokleng started to leave Paraná and descended to Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul. They could no longer go [through their old] paths because the routes of the Xokleng were already being discovered by the colonizers. Today they are known as “rota dos tropeiros.”<sup>4</sup> Many highways in Brazil were built on top of the paths of the Xokleng people. For example, in Rio Grande do Sul there is “Rota do Sol” [The route of the sun] which is a path of the Xokleng people. Another one is the BR 101, which leaves Porto Alegre and crosses the coast of Santa Catarina and Paraná, and goes up to the northeast. Another is BR 470. All of these were built on indigenous lands, on indigenous pathways. This territory belonged to the Xokleng people, to the Guaranis, Kaingang, the Charruas and the Xetá people, who are the indigenous groups of the southern region. White people arrived to invade, steal and plunder our lands, our histories. They destroyed everything that was different from white culture. First was the destruction of the indigenous beliefs by saying that the Xokleng people needed to convert [to Christianity] in order to go to heaven. And [they also said that] their language and their way of dressing were not proper and if they continued using them, they would not go to heaven. But the Xokleng people did not accept this because they were a free people and did not want to be arrested or enslaved. Many Xokleng were caught, as they say, ‘in the noose.’ A lot of white people say [sentences like] “my mother was caught in a snare,” “my mother was Bugre,”<sup>5</sup> “my grandmother was Bugre,” and all these horrible things. But the same person that says, “my grandmother is Bugre,” or “my grandmother was caught in the noose,” cannot explain why she was arrested. She was raped in order to give birth to a mestizo child. It's very sad that we have to hear these things.

The people who were captured as servants, as slaves to the whites, [when] they escaped they came back telling us these sad stories. One of the greatest hunters called Brugueiros, who killed many Xokleng, is a white man who was raised by the Xokleng. Sometime later he fled to the whites. He knew all about their paths, their ways of living, the daily life of the Xokleng. He was hired by a farmer to show him the way to the Xokleng and to kill them all. For each pair of ears, he was given an amount of money – so it was a slaughter, a massacre. Martin Brugueiro hired several other men to work with him. The biggest massacre happened in Blumenau where today the German Oktoberfest party takes place. The party takes place over Xokleng territory, over a Xokleng Cemetery, over our blood. This Martin Brugueiro, when he caught the indigenous people, in addition to removing the pair of ears, when he found a pregnant mother, he would open her belly and hold the child up on the tip of the machete and say: one more monkey killed. In 1912, an attempt of pacification was made when Eduardo Lima da Silva made contact with the Xokleng people. In 1914, they brought the Kaingang from Paraná and some from Santa Catarina to help in the conversation because the Kaingang language is close to ours, as it is part of the Jê family. In 1914, on September 22, the pacification of the Xokleng to the white was made. White people don't know anything about their history, they don't know anything about our history, and what white people call pacification today, for us it's not like that. We were always peaceful, whoever invaded us, those invaded our land were not peaceful. It was up to us, it was up to the Xokleng people to appease this terrible white, this rude white, this white that had no idea that he was taking lives of human beings. Today, we are in the process of taking back our territory,<sup>6</sup> taking back our history, and we are called invaders of our own land. Just like that old Xokleng you mentioned, the old woman who tears up the books to not bring back those memories, or even in this interview I'm doing with you, it's like a film of that tragic past. It's sad for us to talk about this but we need to talk so that those who don't know [our history] understand our struggle and our survival. In 1914, we were over 20,000 Xokleng. Today we are no more than 3.000. If today our history and our culture is alive, it is thanks to the old people who thought of pacifying the whites so that we could be alive today telling this story, and [be able to] raise our children. The future generation, which is our children, is not the future but the present that makes our struggle and our history alive.

T. We spoke just now of 1914. At that time, there was already a large part of the Xokleng community that

6. “*Retomada*” in Portuguese means, “to take back” or “taking back.” The word has been used in the last decades to describe the struggle of indigenous peoples in Brazil in retaking their ancestral territories. *Retomada* is, at the same time, the name of a process and a verb. When Woie describes this process and the occupation of the ancestral territory of the Xokleng Konglui, we decided to keep the word in its original Portuguese.

7. “Aldeia” or “aldeamento” refer to the settlements created by the government of Brazil since colonial times for indigenous groups. This was the first step of assimilation that had to do with control over these populations. It was also within these spaces that indigenous people would be ‘evangelized,’ baptized or renamed under Christian names. Today, the word aldeia is synonymous with any indigenous village.

8. The Contestado War was an armed conflict between settlers and landowners, the latter supported by the Brazilian military forces, that lasted from 1912 to 1916. The social unrest was one of the reasons a railway to connect São Paulo (SP) to Santa Maria (RS) was constructed. The agreement between the Brazilian government and the Brazilian Railway Company, the North American company responsible for it, included the right to explore an area of 15km on each side of the railway, legally seizing ownership of the land that it bordered. At the same time, the concession guaranteed that another associated company of the trust, the Southern Brazil Lumber & Colonization, would have the rights to extract lumber and later resell the land to settlers. The process of expropriation and the difficulties to access and acquire legal ownership of land by the locals, connected with precarious labor conditions and religious fanaticism led to the conflict that lasted four years, and it is estimated that between 5.000 and 8.000 people died or disappeared.

was concentrated in Santa Catarina, but originally, as you explained, you, the Kaingang and Guaranis, lived in expanded territories. When you started the retomada, the process of taking back your land in the National Forest (FLONA) of São Francisco de Paula, you returned through a memory, through the memory of a territory that perhaps a hundred years ago had already been expropriated. When did these communities begin to concentrate in Santa Catarina and how did the memory of these former territories remain alive?

**W.** We know our history through the elders, and they tell us everything. They show us through the stars, through the shapes of the landscape of the very earth we inhabit. We know all the places where our parents, our old people lived. Within the Xokleng group there were several other families. Each group was located in a territory. For example, the Xokleng Konglui were located in the highlands of Rio Grande do Sul. So it's like this, it's our territory and we know where we're standing. And when this group was contacted in 1914, other Xokleng were still living in the woods. For example, in Rio Grande do Sul and Paraná, many Xokleng went to Kaingang villages. Why is that? In 1912 and 1914, when the Indian Protection Service [Serviço de proteção ao índio, SPI] was created, under the control of the Ministry of the Interior, this ‘protection’ was actually an excuse to take the indigenous people living in the forests and bring them to villages (*aldeamentos*).<sup>7</sup> They took the indigenous lands and sold them so the Xokleng of Santa Catarina were allocated in the Alto Vale de Santa Catarina, now the Xokleng-Laklaño territory. Others were also taken there, Guaranis, Kaingang, and even – for you to understand – refugees from the Contestado War.<sup>8</sup> Afro-descendants were taken there too. In Rio Grande do Sul the same was done, so many Xokleng were taken to these villages that the SPI created. They created and demarcated these areas in order to be able to sell the lands. In São Francisco de Paula, a traditional indigenous territory of the Xokleng, a massacre occurred and those who survived fled to Santa Catarina. There was an ‘indigenous village’ in São Francisco de Paula. It was taken from us, sold, and today it is colonized by the white people living there now.

**T.** How did the process of retomada at the National Forest of São Francisco de Paula begin?

**W.** This process began in 1974, also under a military government, when a water dam was created inside the Xokleng-Laklaño territory. When this dam was placed inside the indigenous land, the entire area that was on the river-

bank was flooded. All agricultural land was lost. With the construction of this dam many diseases came, and there were also divisions of villages between one side of the river and the other. There was no way to survive. And many old people, like Vei-tcha, Covi, these old people knew about their territory outside Santa Catarina. In 1984, 1986, 1988, with the studies made by CIME and KUMIN, many Xokleng were taken to that area to identify their territory. There are recorded videos of the Xokleng showing their territory, making their reconnaissance in São Francisco de Paula, Canela and Gramado.<sup>9</sup> [In one of these territories there is even a Taipa where the Xokleng sheltered from the rain, and also fled from whites, from the brigueiros. There is also a Xokleng family that lives in Riozinho. [There are] families who have lived there until today, for over a hundred years. In 1994, after a high flood, Vei-tcha went out again in search of that territory. Several times there was an attempt to return with the Xokleng family to San Francisco de Paula. In an attempt in 1996, the settlers, the Germans around there, the Portuguese [and their] descendants who live, they had a confrontation with the Xokleng because they thought that the Xokleng were invading their land, the land of the whites. These are our lands. Mr Vei-tcha sought the Public Prosecutor's Office and since then the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office has been following up, dealing via letters of recognition of the territory so that [they can] return the Xokleng to their homes, their territory. So, [there were] several attempts, documents sent to Funai,<sup>10</sup> to the Federal Public Ministry. The recognition and the anthropological study that Funai is responsible for by law to carry out is what we were waiting for, but it was never successful. There was never any advance. There were also several attempts by Vei-tcha to go to Brasília to ask Funai to do its part as an advocate of the Xokleng people's request, which is the duty of the Federal State and of the Funai. Funai carried out a preliminary study in the National Forest of São Francisco de Paula, they confirmed that it was a traditional Xokleng territory. Even the ICMBio<sup>11</sup> local coordinator recognizes that it is a Xokleng territory. In 2014, Vei-tcha, with the order of the Federal Public Ministry, entered the area of the National Forest and recognized our paths inside it, even the underground houses that are there were recognized. There's a library inside the building of the administration of the National Forest that talks about the Xokleng.

The case was already dropped by Funai and the Federal Public Ministry, and when the current federal government, already in its electoral campaign said that no indigenous land would be demarcated, that not a centimeter of land would be given to indigenous people, we decided that we needed to retake

**9.** Cities in the highlands of Rio Grande do Sul.

**10.** *Fundação Nacional do Índio* [Indian National Foundation].

**11.** Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation (ICMBio) is an autarchy under a special scheme, linked to the Ministry of Environment of the Brazilian Federal Government. ICMBio is responsible for the protection of Brazilian natural heritage and environmental development, and manages the National Forest of São Francisco de Paula where the Xokleng Konglui are fighting to retake their territory.

our territory. Seeing that this was getting lost, on June 2, 2020 we had nowhere else to run, so Meron, Angelica, Kul-lung and I thought for several days and we decided that we needed to retake our territory because with this government, they will never give it to us. Also, our fear was that the National Forest would be privatized. Today it has already been granted to third parties. We decided to go there to be heard, to be listened to, and with that the entire process of the Public Ministry was reactivated. Currently the process is in the Federal Court, waiting for Funai to continue with the anthropological study so that it can confirm, return and demarcate our land. And today we are there, we have there the Retomada Xokleng Konglui.

**T.** You faced and have been facing a lot of resistance from the structure of the National Forest and from ICMBio, but there is also a lot of political resistance, right? I even saw pictures of clashes with the police. You were forced to go out of the National Forest and are now camping outside of it. How has it been for you since you decided to actually start the process of retomada?

**W.** It's easy to tell the story, it's easy to say that that territory belonged to the indigenous people, but it's not easy to let indigenous people back into their territory. This is what happened. The National Forest has a library inside. There they talk about the Xokleng lands, they talk about the history of the Xokleng people who lived there, but the presence of the Xokleng telling their own story, living within their own territory [is not possible]. It is as if they were going to lose [their] home and the home of the local coordinator [of the ICMBio], Idenice. She feels offended as if it was her private property. So, it is a very strong confrontation. On the first day, she already brought five Military Brigade cars full of policemen armed from head to toe to take us out. She even brought the mayor of the city to command the operation with her. And on the next day, the Federal Police appeared with 24 cars with armed men to take us out of the place. But we resisted. The Federal Police arrived with a repossession warrant on December 24, Christmas Eve. And we resisted and stayed until January 1st. But as we had nowhere else to run and the court was in recess and had given the warrant, we had to leave so as not to cause too much damage. Physical damage I mean, because we are already losing in the Federal Court, we already had the invasion of our lands. Today we still have resistance from Idenice who makes several complaints that we invaded the area again, that we are threatening her and her employees. As we are close to a highway,

Idenice even summoned the highway personnel to come and measure the distance from the highway to where we are, just to say that we are putting the lives of the people who pass there at risk. It's constant intimidation, every day the police used to come to say that we were blocking the road and we had to get out of there. The Military Police and the Federal Police too, we have not managed to be at peace to this day. The situation is tense. We can't leave there. When some leave, someone has to stay so the struggle can continue.

**T.** We have been seeing processes of retomada in Brazil for many decades. It is very powerful to see how indigenous communities across the country have mobilized to claim their rights. We know that this resistance has always existed. It was very visible during the Constituent Assembly in 1988, and I feel that in the last two decades there has been a kind of boom of retomadas – which, in my opinion, are some of the most important things that have happened recently in Brazil precisely because these processes directly challenge the history that has been taught to us. They make us look at these places again from your perspective, look at National Forest in São Francisco de Paula and recognize that this is not a natural reserve, as they explain. I know that there are other retomadas happening in the region, in Canela, for example. There was also another one made by the Guaranis near Porto Alegre. How has the exchange among the groups doing the retomadas been? How has this exchange of ideas, practices and knowledge been? Is there a kind of mutual support or a kind of solidarity between the different processes of retomada that are taking place? In June and August 2021, there was the *Marcha pela Vida* [March for Life] and the *Marcha das Mulheres Indígenas* [March of Indigenous Women], where leaders from across the country met in Brasília to demonstrate against the current government policies and to push for a favorable decision of the Supreme Court in the demarcation of territories occupied before the constitution of 1988. We can see that there is a certain collective intelligence, a sharing of knowledge and a support network that is very strong through APIB,<sup>12</sup> ANMIGA<sup>13</sup> and other initiatives.

**W.** So, the first process of retomada of indigenous territory took place in Manguelirinha, with Angelo Kretã, during the military dictatorship. It was the first one in the southern region. Then over time, other ones took place. The current ones, those of today, are a direct response to the federal government. They intend to show the national and international media that there is no policy focused on the in-

**12.** *Articulação nacional dos povos indígenas* [National Association of Indigenous Peoples]

**13.** *Articulação Nacional das Mulheres Indígenas Guerreiras da Ancestralidade* [The National Articulation of Indigenous Women Ancestral Warriors]

digenous peoples and on the demarcation of indigenous lands. In the 1988 Constitution it was determined that after five years all indigenous lands were to be demarcated, which did not happen. No president has been demarcating indigenous lands as they were supposed to. Our retomada, together with the other ones nearby – in Canela there is one by the Guarani and another by the Kaingang – have been doing a dialogue and are creating strategies. But since our struggle does not have much visibility, what is happening is that it is in the hands of justice. The indigenous people are mobilizing, we go to Brasília, each one brings their own strategy and talks about their struggle, and we also forward documents to the Ministry of Justice, to the Chamber of Deputies, we also try to fight the many anti-indigenous laws that are running within Congress. Our fights happen that way. And we, as leaders of the Retomada Xokleng Konglui are looking for all forms of support, both financial support as well as food. All of these things are not being taken care of by the federal government, which is responsible for indigenous health. The justification of Funai and Sesai, the Special Secretariat for Indigenous Health, is that we are not on demarcated areas so it is not their obligation to assist us. When are we going to be assisted, then, if these lands are not demarcated? As for indigenous health, indigenous people are suffering. And to whom are we going to run to? We run to the supporters, to NGOs, those who understand the indigenous cause and who have the sensitivity to understand the indigenous people. These are the ones who have been supporting us, the private initiatives by people for the indigenous cause.

**T.** You talked about the issue of visibility too. Do you think it's important to have visibility? Because we know that, on the one hand, media coverage is non-existent, and when they do cover indigenous struggles, the narrative is very biased. Do you feel that more visibility would help, or do you think that visibility can also work against you and in some way, cause harm?

**W.** Sometimes visibility is very important because the media is already against indigenous people – that's a given. The media always puts indigenous people against white people in saying that indigenous people are invaders. At COP 26, which took place recently, the indigenous leaders spoke showing that Brazil is lying, that it is not taking care of indigenous people and it is not demarcating indigenous lands. So, the visibility I mention is about understanding the truth told by us, we as indigenous people, speaking for ourselves. The visibility I want is for the international media or

international people to come and see that indigenous people are dying in the 21st century. That's what's happening when Bolsonaro says that the Amazon doesn't catch fire because it's humid, and the other lies he tells. It's like the movie that's now on Netflix [*Don't Look Up*, 2021]. There is a denial of the indigenous people's reality, [which is to say] that indigenous people are fine, that they want to progress as if they were white. Our culture and our experience are totally different from that of the non-indigenous. If the non-indigenous live in that way, we also live in our way. Denial is the international community not looking at Brazil so as not to see what is happening, to not see the murders of indigenous leaders. They need to know that these lands are indigenous lands, that they need to be demarcated and returned, even if only in small portions.

**T.** Reparations, when they happen, are always minimal, right? Woie, do you feel that there is a difference in the type of violence that indigenous communities suffered compared to the type of violence they experience today? You spoke of the murder of indigenous leaders and I keep thinking about how history seems to be cyclical. Murders were committed five hundred years ago, were committed a hundred years ago, and are still committed today. Diseases were spread through contaminated clothes given to indigenous people, and nowadays there is a negligence in basic health care, which fulfills the same function that is 'to let die.' How do you perceive this transformation, not only in the relationship with the government but also in the relationship with non-indigenous people?

**W.** Many children and youngsters, for example in Porto Alegre when I'm on the street, many of them ask me: "Are you an indigenous person?" "Oh, an Indian!" because the parents hide the reality from their children. It's like in the movie I just talked about, *Don't Look Up*: don't look at the reality of Brazil so you don't see the indigenous people – so as not to reveal the theft of indigenous lands and their killing. For example, in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, near Porto Alegre, the Havan [department store] is coming out, which is on top of a proven archaeological site, which is an indigenous territory. Several ceramics are there, there is a history there. You create a building on top of it and hide everything, this whole story. That's what's happening. Nothing has changed, it's like a black and white film, a black and white photo that nowadays is in color, but the image is the same. They killed the indigenous leaders with knives, machetes, with fire guns. Today is no different. Today they also kill through a federal

government decree signed by a Bic pen. So nothing changes. The agribusiness products are also all dirty, full of poisons and indigenous blood, because it is necessary to kill the indigenous people who are fighting for their territory [in order to occupy their land]. When a dead leader appears on the side of a road it is necessary to ask: why does only the leadership die? And the justification is always that it was a car accident. Or when there's a stray bullet, it kills exactly the leaders. All of this is happening, what happened a hundred years ago is happening today. You take a black and white photograph and you take a color photograph, it's the same thing. The image, the place, the meaning are all the same thing.

**T.** This image of the black and white and the color photographs is super clear. Now you talked a little bit about agribusiness, and I've already heard Kullung saying that in National Forest, nowadays, there is little native vegetation left, which is taken by exotic species as eucalyptus, pine tree, etc. How do you see the transformation of the ecosystem? What is the difference between what you know existed there and what you have found? How do you see the transformation of the vegetation, the landscape and the surroundings?

**W.** There are few araucarias there. That's what is there now because of the rest, there is nothing left. The araucarias are there because there is a law that protects them, but the rest you see is just monoculture: corn, soybeans, potatoes or sometimes vegetables. Nature itself, which used to be the biome Mata Atlântica, no longer exists. There are kilometers, many hectares of soybean plantations, many kilometers of corn plantations. So where is the Forest? In what is called the São Francisco de Paula National Forest you will see seven kilometers on one side of eucalyptus, another eight km on the other side of Pinus Road, which is the pine tree of North America. We want to go back to our lands to plant again, to tell our stories, preserve our nature, and bring back all this forest that was destroyed. Imbuia, canela, peroba, pitangas, jabuticaba, these are all native trees of that place that no longer exist there. Traditional medicinal plants no longer exist there. So how are we going to call this forest a national forest if there's nothing left there?

**T.** The concept and practices of retomada seems to me to be the most decolonial movement we can make today, which means to recognize these territories based on the history and the memory they have, and not from

the history that we built on top of them. How would you define retomada?

**W.** Retomada is an inheritance. We are taking back our heritage, which is our territory, but also the right to survive as a heritage: being free as a heritage and the heritage of being happy and the heritage of being able to survive. The struggle of the indigenous people is [to assert that] we are not what they say. We are not invading anyone's land; we are fighting to survive. We are retaking our territory, which is indigenous, which is ancestral, which is millenary. Our presence here goes far beyond the invasion of Brazil in 1500. Our history does not begin in 1500, much less after 1988 [when the current Constitution was created]. [People] need to seek more knowledge, seek the story told by the indigenous, they need to turn this page and write another page through indigenous peoples. The knowledge still exists and the indigenous people are here to help. Let's stop watching TV. Let's stop reading what is written in the storybook that doesn't tell the reality. The indigenous people are a people who understand other cultures, they are a people who respect their neighbors, and we would like white people to understand our struggle because we have never been silent since 1500, since the invasion we are here fighting to survive, we are not here to take anything from anyone.

Conversation with  
**Helena Vieira**

**Túlio** Hey Helena, it is a great pleasure for me to have this conversation with you.

I wanted to start with a question that has been troubling me for a while. How can we understand the practices, the discussions, the theories and readings of the world that are being developed today under the ‘umbrella’ of the term decolonial, or the idea of decoloniality, while honoring the history of struggle and the experiences that served as a basis for the elaboration of these concepts?

When we think of decolonization, we cannot disregard that this notion has a profound implication and is, in some way, dependent on the processes of independence in Africa. In a similar way, when we talk about decoloniality, we may not be able to dissociate this concept from a critique of the power dynamics and the legacies of colonialism in Latin America, which is the context from which Aníbal Quijano departed to develop this idea. What are the differences between the ways in which these concepts were applied in the past and the way we are using them today? What kind of ethics, negotiation and care do we need to have in order to honor these histories and, at the same time, be able to migrate with these concepts; to allow them to produce changes in different contexts, territories and spaces?

**Helena** I think the first thing that would be necessary to be able to locate what would be a decolonial thought, or ‘descolonial’<sup>1</sup> thought, would be to pay attention to these words. I think we can use both, but decolonial without the “s” is an Anglophone term as it comes from decoloniality. Speaking decolonial instead of ‘descolonial’ is precisely a way of distinguishing between the processes of liberation, of decolonization in former colonies and the construction of a thought that is rooted in Latin American. I would like to put emphasis on Latin America because there is a difference between post-colonial thought and decolonial thought. It is important to notice that both of them were born on this side of the colonial difference, that is to say that they emerged from within countries and peoples that have lived through processes of colonization. So, for example, America and Africa experienced a colonization process that begins in the 15th century, marked by a specific form of exploration of the territory and the implementation of social dynamics that were dependent on the extermination of the native cultures. In Africa it was a bit different, but the continent underwent the intense violence that was the extraction of people, within what was the slave trade of the 16th century. It is important to notice that slavery is not a new practice in the history of the world, but it is only in the 16th century that it became an economic system on a

1. In Portuguese, the negative prefix is “des,” as opposed to “de,” in English. Nevertheless, as Helena explains, in academic and activist circuits, the word “decolonial” has often been used to mark the relationship with the theoretical field to which the term is related.

global scale. If there was slavery in Africa, if there was slavery in the European societies of the classical period, what didn't exist was slavery as an economic system and as a process of mass extermination. The slave trade corresponds precisely to a large economic system that organized the processes of accumulation of capital within Colbertist Europe, the Europe of mercantilism. India, for example, went through another colonization process that took place in the 16th and 18th centuries, as well as China, and they developed anti-colonial thought that was born within what is conventionally called subaltern studies. Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, Chandra Mohanty developed a critique based on French, English and American philosophers in such a way that some decolonial thinkers from Latin America consider the postcolonial authors from India to have developed a Eurocentric critique of Eurocentrism. This precisely for making use of these authors and for having their work published mostly in English and French. And then, in Latin America what occurred was called the 'decolonial turn,' which was the creation of the modernity-coloniality group, led by Aníbal Quijano, including Enrique Ducell, Ramón Grosfoguel, among others. They began to think about the emergence of developing a way of thinking that is connected with the Latin American lived experience. Their idea was precisely that the notions and knowledge produced in the north, when they cross the Atlantic, were captured by practices of hierarchization of knowledge.

Quijano says that modernity was born in the 15th century, when Europe invents itself as Europe. Europe has not always been Europe. It is in this encounter with this different other, with the Amerindian, with the black of sub-Saharan Africa, that Europeans began to see themselves as Europeans. Until then they were a myriad of peoples. This imaginary political unity takes place in the encounter with these peoples who were taken as primitive. As soon as the Europeans saw themselves as Europeans, they also saw themselves as modern. Modernity is born precisely when 'modern' Europe is born. And in order to consider some people modern, other people needed to be considered primitive. It is through this process – and this is what Quijano will state – that the colonial matrix of power [*colonialidad del poder*] was produced. Where there is modernity, there is coloniality. Coloniality produced hierarchies, a system of hierarchization between peoples, races, continents, thus promoting the process of globalizing modernity.

This globalization will reach its peak between the 17th and the 19th century when an epistemology of modernity will be elaborated on, linked with the rise of Cartesian thought, which establishes the supremacy of reason, and the birth of

French encyclopedism with Diderot. It is also at this moment that the European university starts to adhere to what we think of today as a model of knowledge production through the inclusion of experimental sciences into the university. It is the birth of chemistry, of experimental physics, of Newtonian mechanics. This is the moment in which the university becomes a place that produces knowledge, that does research, that produces science. It becomes an institution that regulates the truth. And this scientific method was expanded to the whole world. One of the characteristics of this specific mode of knowledge is that it becomes the only form of knowledge and will legitimize certain institutions and subjects to produce it. Universities, museums, scientific associations will be born within a colonial apparatus of production and regulation of knowledge. Max Weber, in the 19th century, will call this process the “disenchantment of the world.” He believed that the world had become disenchanted and that mythical and superstitious thinking was expunged by the light of reason. When the decolonial thinkers, like Aníbal Quijano, observe these trajectories, they will say that the modern paradigm of knowledge is Eurocentric. When we enter the 20th century, we will have an international division of knowledge production. The north becomes the place that produces knowledge and the south becomes the place that reproduces, or that applies knowledge.

I can give an example of a friend of a friend who went to study Brazilian politics in Nanterre, France, for his master's degree. I asked him: Why did you go to study in Nanterre if you could study at the University of Brasilia, which even in the international rankings is better placed than Nanterre? Why is that? Because it is France, because there is a glamour that is produced within the colonial imaginary that has to do precisely with the way in which different spheres of life are regulated by coloniality.

Quijano will say that coloniality structures the four basic spheres of our existence: sex, labor, collective authority, and modes of subjectivity and intersubjectivity. In this sense, the effort to build decolonial practices must go through a questioning of the contexts in which knowledge can be produced. Or about what knowledges my eye blinded by the ‘eye of god’ is able to see. It is Enrique Ducek who calls it this way, he says that modernity is like the eye of God, that the method of reason is based on the belief that everything can be seen from a single perspective. For example, if we meet people in Melanesia, when we see a penis and a vagina, we say they are a man or a woman. Why do we say that? Because there is a belief in a biological truth about gender that is established in the body and that can be discovered through observation.

This idea of observation as a sovereign methodology, and the scientific method as an instrument capable of knowing anything, is one of the cognitive needs of the capitalist world system. Quijano says that one of the cognitive needs of capitalism is the transformation of everything into a knowable object. Everything can be known through reason. When you turn all things into objects you need a science that is taxonomic, or in other words, a science capable of categorizing and classifying all things in the world in types, metrics, sizes and forms of exploration. This system of classification is what facilitates the exploration and extraction of the forms of life on the planet. If the objective were not extraction, what kind of classification would have been produced, and therefore, what kind of scientific method would have been produced?

Now we start to arrive at a very interesting question. First of all, how can we look at other places and consider these other places and these experiences as knowledge? How can we look, for example, at the experience of indigenous peoples in Latin America and not consider them only objects of my knowledge, to not transform their experiences into a great fetish? How do we manage to produce knowledge in alternative spaces, spaces other than the university or the museum? How do we go through the museum's colonial archive, as Jota Mombaça proposes, to find what was not worthy of being an archive? It might be interesting to bring in the discussion proposed by Jacques Derrida in the book *Archive Fever*. He asks: What is it which becomes archive? What is worthy to be accumulated as collective memory? Which memories are taken as collective memories? They are the memories of dominant subjects and normative experiences. And if it's not their memories about themselves, it's their memories about the subjugated peoples. This is relevant to me because it is part of what I've been developing in my work as a thinker and activist. For us from Brazil, it is important to try to get closer to the thought produced in Latin American. Brazil has a different history from other Latin American countries. We were the only monarchy among republics, there was not a single monarchy in the Americas other than the Brazilian Empire. We see ourselves, like many of the Argentinians, as European descendants. This creates a distant relationship with Latin America in such a way that decolonial thinking arrives much less here. And the question, for me, is: What ways of life are the subaltern populations here inventing? What are the daily practices that make life possible, for example, for *travestis*<sup>2</sup> during the Brazilian military dictatorship? This last question orients the research I have been developing since 2015, which proposes to revolve/turn upside down the history of the *travestis* of that period. By realizing the limits of historiography, of

2. Travesti is a term used in Brazil that has been historically associated not only with transvestites, but also transgender women. Through the last decade, it has been used as a form of empowerment by trans and queer communities, and to differentiate their lived experience from other experiences around the world. Therefore, we make the decision to maintain it here as is.

the historiographical method at the university, in order to answer this question, I went to work with theater. It's an answer that I will try to formulate, together with a group of people, through fiction. If history is a fiction, why don't we have the right to self-fiction as a historical perspective?

**T.** You brought up such important things through the reading you just made of these trajectories. The hierarchization of knowledge, and the way in which the concepts we have been using to think about our realities are elaborated, have to do precisely with forms of classification and analytical categories that often try to criticize other modes of classification that organize the different dimensions of life. And one of the questions that I have been asking myself is about how we can address these questions on knowledge production and memory without reproducing these systems? How can we, on the one hand, understand the power of these analytical categories, but on the other hand, understand their limitations in order to develop other ways of organizing thought and experience?

I think this is related to what you just mentioned about moving towards fiction in order to look at these untold stories. I remember now, for example, that Maria Lugones talks about intersectionality as a kind of void, a space that cannot be precisely named. What kind of sensibilities do we need to build in order to inhabit these spaces? How can we recognize the limitations of the concepts we have been using and not be seduced by the way in which they seem to capture experience? How can we develop other kinds of sensibility?

**H.** I think the first challenge is to break with this great passion we have for the forms of modernity, for the academic discourse, for the scientific discourse. Not because they're necessarily bad, they're not bad. It is not about throwing the knowledge of the North in the trash, but about breaking with the passion we have for them. Passion is always a relationship between the self and a hyper-simplified image of the other. So, breaking with the passion we have for the West means precisely realizing that these knowledges that present themselves as truth, that they are not the whole truth. It is, for us, to be able to perceive that traditional historiography is as speculative and fictional as the theater. And when we are able to break with this passion, we are able to look at other knowledges with more generosity. The point is not that we need to think other things, other things are being thought and we don't see them. Other things have been thought and we don't even know about them. It's really about excavating the archive. As Yuderkys Spinoza asks: How did

our ancestors, our enslaved ancestors, escape? They ran away dancing. They danced. What knowledge is in there, in these dance practices, that we don't look at? Other thoughts are being thought, other practices are there, other memories are there. I think there is a challenge that is the investigation of memory. If we assume that the challenge is of reinventing things, we will fall into the same colonial euphoria for a new world. This euphoric desire for novelty makes it seem that ideas and thoughts are like the last product releases of the time, that we can queue up and wait for it as if we were to buy an iPhone 13. Ideas demand encounter. They demand encounter as a life experience. We have to ask ourselves: who have I been encountering? How many travestis did I meet for a drink? It's not about changing grammar, it's not another word, it's another way of life. It is about building an ethics of encounter, an ethics of belonging, an ethics of participation. It is the transformative political practices that matter to us, whatever name they have. It's not about thinking of decolonization as an event, but as a process, as a path.

**T.** I'm going back to something that may have already appeared. When you say that decolonization is a practice, a path, that it is not an event – and I agree – I wonder how we can talk about these practices today without ignoring that decolonization was also an event, that it needed to be an event? For the peoples in many places in Africa, who had to wage a war in order to get rid of Imperial exploitation, decolonization has a very different meaning, it was also an event, a moment in time.

**H.** This process that some call decolonization, it never really took place. Not from the perspective of the complete liberation of these peoples. What we have is the end of a specific historical experience that is colonialism. That's why Aníbal Quijano will make a distinction between colonialism and coloniality. Colonialism is a historical experience marked by the domination of the metropolis over the colony, the legal, economic and political control. When this control ceases to be formal, with the process of independence, the colony has freed itself from colonialism but it has not freed itself from colonial rule, because colonial rule is coloniality. They will still be linguistically linked to that people, culturally linked to that people through its gender model, its sexual model, its religious model. The point is that colonization occurs not only through colonialism. Colonialism is one of the facets. Independence and the decolonial project are far beyond that, far beyond this formal process of liberation. If we think about the relationship between the United States and

Mexico, for example, what do we see? There is a relationship of extreme domination. If we think about the relationship, for example, between Brazil and Bolivia, in relation to the exploration of gas, we have a relationship of extreme dependence. In the capitalist world system, the forms of domination that were in force in its initial period, or even before such as servitude, are updated and gain new facets. There are people who think that slavery has been abolished and that capitalism is founded on the exploitation of paid labor. Aníbal Quijano will say different, he will explain slavery was redistributed. You're going to have slavery in East Timor, you're going to have slavery in India, you're going to have slavery in São Paulo in the way Bolivian immigrants are incorporated by the textile industry.

**T.** In the interior of Argentina, on the Patagonian Desert, I remember seeing these modern forms of slavery, with Bolivians confined in areas of exploration and production of bricks. It was one of the things that impressed me the most.

**H.** Yes, in the coal mines of Bolivia it happens as well. We have slave labor, but slave labor is redistributed in a racialized way around the world. In capitalism, all forms of domination coexist, including colonial forms. Decolonizing does not mean undoing what colonization has done to us, because time does not come back. It means inventing other ways of life, which can even mean encountering with other forms that already exist. Ramón Grosfoguel proposes the following question: How do we establish contact with the knowledge that is produced in the North? He developed the notion of subversive complicity, which is to establish a relationship of complicity with the concept, but to subvert it, *transculturalize* it. For example, the NGO Pachamama filed a lawsuit for the Rio Doce<sup>3</sup> to be recognized as a human being allowing Vale to be prosecuted for murder. Now, the notion of humanity typical of modernity is a notion super codified by the idea of species, but a local NGO appropriates it to extend it to the river. When they claim that the river is human, they make subversive use of a Northern concept. This would be to establish a relationship of subversive complicity with an already established knowledge. This is also done by travestis when they go to get a medical evaluation to be able to correct their names in their documents. Now in Brazil you can rectify it directly at the registry office, but before it was necessary to go to court for that – I had to go to court. To do that it was necessary to have an evaluation from a psychiatrist, from a psychologist, and from an endocrinologist. To do the evalua-

**3.** Rio Doce is an important river in southeast Brazil, located in the states of Minas Gerais and Espírito Santo. In 2015 the collapse of a dam of the mining company Vale released highly contaminated water into the river, causing an ecological disaster.

tions we had to tell them things about our life, things they could say that were things that would make you a woman. If we said: "I want to be a university professor, I don't want to get married, I don't want to have children," they would say: then you're not a woman. They would think about femininity through its stereotypes. So, what we did was, in the waiting room we agreed amongst ourselves, the lies we were going to tell them. So, we would say: "I always cooked with my grandmother; my dream is to cook for my husband." And then they would say: "you are a women." This is the strategic use of identity, of gender stereotypes, to bypass the gender regiment itself. These small practices of subversion, these small tricks that we play within the rules are the result of the inventiveness of populations that have always lived in the shadow of death. So maybe it is precisely the encounter with these subjects, with the knowledge of these practices, that can make us betray the knowledge of the university. This idea that we need a big breakthrough is part of Western megalomania, which believes we can only change if there is a big revolution. And that to have a great revolution, you have to have a great hero, a great name, a great icon. Most changes in life are made through anonymous, everyday and discreet practices. It's what some authors call *cimarronaje*, which was a zigzag that the enslaved used to do in order to escape at night. A zigzag that is this ability to walk through gaps without being seen. It is not about a search for visibility, but about a search for opacity.

**T.** I agree, I mentioned rupture because it seems to me extremely important to be attentive with the legacies we built upon, and which required a type of process that is very different from the ones unfolding today. The idea of rupture and the idea of violence, for example, are very central in the writings of Fanon and inform how we will think about decolonial practices later, even if the struggles are not the same. On the other hand, I do agree with what you've said. And trying to expand a bit on that, I would ask then: How do we think about stories of resistance from lines of continuity and not from dynamics of rupture? I was recently in Cape Verde and talking to some people there I realized they narrate themselves as a young country, as a country founded 40 years ago from the date of independence on, but in fact, resistance has existed there since the islands started to be populated.

**H.** And it still exists.

**T.** Exactly. There is a tradition of resistance that also composes the country and that goes far back. So, my

question is: What kind of sensitivity, what kind of knowledge, what kind of practices can we develop in order to undo or to escape from this notion of temporality? How can we understand that colonial domination and colonial resistance are intertwined, they have existed and continue to exist, both since its beginnings?

**H.** In relation to violence, I agree that the memory of resistances that are intertwined in time should not be erased. But in addition to the known resistances, which were registered in the official history, for example, of Brazil, there are other ones. I think we have to have a reverence for the past but try to think about by whom this past was built. It is very common, in Brazil, to think that the black resistance was just the quilombo.<sup>4</sup> It was the quilombo, but we have also stories, for example, of slaves who planted a plant called 'amansa-senhor' to kill their masters. They would go to prison, but being arrested was their biggest form of release. In Brazilian slavery, the slave was a 'thing,' an object. If someone's slave would be hurt by a third person, it would be considered damage to the patrimony. But when an enslaved person would kill their master and go to prison, they become a person. The State does not condemn objects, it only condemns people. So, this is also a form of resistance that is narrated as the story of a criminal. In the case of Rita, one of the slaves that had poisoned their master, if you read the case file you will only see a criminal. You have to develop a sensitivity to see resistance in ways the West didn't envision it. Resistance in weapons and through war are inserted within a well-known tradition of resistance. I think our challenge is to look at what is invisible. It is this invisible resistance that continues to exist nowadays. We have the resistance of a young black person against the police, and somehow it is still the body of the enslaved against the State. In Latin America there is a great compendium of poisons that were cultivated by enslaved peoples to use against their masters. After some time, states began to ban the black populations' access to these chemicals. You see, we have a war on drug consumption that goes from the war on poisons to the war on drugs, which is a war that doesn't present itself as a racial war and demands a very attentive look to be understood in this way. I think we have to think about time outside of its linearity. We have to think of time as a fold. Gilles Deleuze, when discussing time at Bergman, he says that time is a series of folding. Time does not go forward; it is the accumulation. It is just like a leaf that folds in on itself so that what happened in one layer continues to happen on the other one, although in less explicit ways. It keeps happening because time doesn't pass, it accu-

4. Quilombos , in Brazil, were communities formed by people who escaped from slavery from the 16th to 19th century. They are considered one of the main acts of resistance of people of African descent during the colonial period. Since 1988, the Brazilian constitution recognizes the right to collective ownership of the land to the inhabitants of these communities.

mulates. And if we think of the history of resistances as a history of accumulation, we still have an accumulation to excavate. That's why what I think our main challenge is related to memory. Memory is not history. Memory confuses fiction and reality; memory is given by the bond of affections. It is the story of the elderly, the story of those who went through life, who built meanings in life that are not the meanings of the documents. The document only has what is worthy of being documented, it has no memory. To work with memory, with oral history, everyday history, seems to me to be the way for us to access other practices and knowledges. And it is a challenge.

**T.** In this sense, how have you been working with memory? When you talk, for example, about the history of the elderly, the idea of listening comes to my mind, which is something that has been very present in my work. What practices of listening are we able to produce? How do we *incline* ourselves, as Adriana Cavarero proposes, to be able to listen to others? I think this question refers both to invisible practices and to what is visible, to that which we have contact with but requires developing another sensibility, another kind of attention. How do you think about these processes of listening and attention?

**H.** I think that's exactly it, the work of listening. For me, a person that has done profoundly decolonial, or anti-colonial work is Ecléa Bosi. She was a professor at the University of São Paulo and who dedicated herself to the process of listening to the elderly. She has a text called "Suggestions to a young researcher of memory," in which she talks precisely about how to build this subjective condition to listen without transforming these processes of memory into a questioning or an examination, to allow the affective thread of memory to be woven. She will say that, in the end, all memory is a memory of the future because it is elaborated in the present, even if about the past. When we encounter memories that are not our own, what is presented to us are other possibilities of seeing our memory, other imaginations. All processes of listening are, in a way, the elaboration of a memory for the future.

**T.** That's really beautiful. For me, those are indeed keywords, both memory and listening. Helena, how do you want to end our conversation? What would you like to share with us in order to close our talk?

**H.** I would like to return to a question you asked about what affect, or what kind of subjectivity we need

to build in this task of decolonizing knowledges, ways of being, and so on. I think the model of these affections has to do with the child. Modernity invents the child as subject, and it will try to correct this subject all the time until it loses himself. The child is, in a way, the only modern antithesis of modernity. In this sense, the main characteristic of children is that they do not take themselves so seriously, they attend to their desires, they prefer fiction over documentaries. And maybe we have to find that place of simply allowing ourselves to be affected by fiction.

I remembered a story connected with the theatre play *Onde estavam as travestis na ditadura?* [Where were the travestis during the dictatorship?]. The first presentation we did was an open rehearsal. The piece was divided into two parts. First there was an installation where people had contact with the stories of travestis through different games. Then they would enter the theater and would be more like a traditional theater play. In this second part, the starting point would be the story of João Goulart, Jango, who went to China to have sex reassignment surgery and came back a travesti. The whole story began with the military coup of 1964, which took place because the military did not accept having a travesti and transsexual as a president. The story unfolds from there. By the end of the presentation, I went to look at the comments about the play on Twitter, of course. And there was an immense discussion because someone published that “according to researcher Helena Vieira, João Goulart was a travesti, and she has documents and did an extensive research,” and so on. And there were a lot of people upset about it, and people saying that they couldn’t wait to see this in an official publication. So, I printed all that, and I asked the director of the play: “What do I do? This is destroying my academic credibility.” And he laughed and said: “If the idea was to play precisely with the notion of history and fiction, why should you do something?” This line between what is historical and what is proposed as true, it is very fragile. Maybe we have a challenge that is related with memory, but also a challenge of self-fiction. Maybe we have to tell a story that is more pleasant for us, and to make that story the history because what we call history is the fiction of the winners. I think this is one of the greatest decolonial challenges we have.







# Contributors

**Túlio Rosa** is performer, choreographer and independent researcher. He holds a Master degree in Performing Arts and Visual Culture (University of Castilla-La Mancha/Reina Sofia Museum, Madrid 2016), and a Bachelor's degree in Contemporary Dance (Angel Vianna Dance School, Rio de Janeiro, 2011). He was also part of the research program Expanded Theatricalities – Bodies and Democracy, organized by Artea (Matadero Madrid, 2016–17).

In his trajectory, he worked with choreographers such as Luís Garay and Diego Bianchi (Argentina), Ana Borralho and João Galante (Portugal), Giselda Fernandes (Brazil), Janaina Carrer (Brazil/Spain) and Ana Paula Camargo (Mexico). With Marcelo Evelin he collaborated on the performance Suddenly Everywhere is Black with People, presented in more than 17 countries in 3 continents, and on the development of Barricada, presented at the Reina Sofia Museum (Madrid, 2019).

His last projects Ad Extra (2020), Here and Elsewhere (2018) and Experiments for a non submissive body (2015–17) have been presented internationally in spaces as Teatro Solís (Montevideo), Museo del Chopo (Mexico City), Hosek Contemporary (Berlin), Teatro Pradillo, DT Espacio Escénico and Swington Gallery (Madrid), La Poderosa (Barcelona), Mala Voadora (Porto), Teatro Praga (Lisbon), CCMatienzo (Buenos Aires), NPAK (Yerevan), among others.  
tuliorosa.com

**Beatriz Cantinho** is choreographer and researcher. Postdoc fellow at CIAC - Algarve University (Portugal), lecturer at the theatre department of the University of Évora. Beatriz was a postdoc researcher at ARTEA (University of Castilla-La-Mancha/Reina Sofia Museum 2016–17). She holds a PhD in Dance and Aesthetics from ECA, University of Edinburgh and was a Visiting Scholar at New York

University/TISCH (2010/2011), performance and cinema departments.

As a choreographer and researcher, she develops her work mostly in collaboration with other artists and researchers, exploring interdisciplinary composition within performance, visual arts, sound and Digital Arts (C. Spencer Yeah, Ricardo Jacinto, Vangelis Lymporidis, Herwig Turk, Mariza Dima). Her artistic and research work has been presented nationally and internationally at CCB, MNAC, Gulbenkian Foundation, Serralves foundation (Portugal); SARC, DanceBase, Blue Elephant Theatre, Surrey, Chelsea and Cambridge Universities (United Kindom); Festival Transmedial 07, TESLA, Rosa Luxemburg Foundation (Germany); MAK, UNIKUM (Australia); TR: Bilgi University; Matadero (Spain).

**Woie Kriri Sobrinho Patte** is an indigenous leader of the Xokleng Konglui community, in south Brazil. He holds a degree in Intercultural Indigenous Studies by the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC) and is a member of ARPINSUL (Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of South Brazil). Together with Kullung Teie, he has been leading a struggle for the acknowledgment and demarcation of Xokleng ancestral lands located in the National Forest of São Francisco de Paula, in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil.

**Helena Vieira** is a researcher, transfeminist and writer. She studied Public Policy Management at the University of São Paulo (USP). She was a columnist for Revista Fórum (Brazil) and contributed with other media such as Huffpost Brasil, Revista Galileu, Cadernos Globo, Revista Cult and the newspaper Folha de São Paulo. Recently, she co-authored the books História do Movimento LGBT [History of the LGBT Movement] organized by Renan Quinalha and James Green, Explosão Feminista [Feminist Explosion], organized by Heloísa Buarque de Holanda, Tem Saída? Ensaios Críticos sobre o Brasil [There

is an Exit? Critical Essays on Brazil], organized by Rosana Pinheiro Machado and Ninguém solta a mão de ninguém: um manifesto de resistência [Nobody Loosen Nobody's Hand: A Manifesto of Resistance], by Clarabóia publishing house. She was part of the project Ofélia, the Fat Transsexual, awarded by the Focus Foundation in the category Performing Arts, in London. She developed, together with Laboratório de Criação do Porto Iracema das Artes, the dramaturgical research Onde estavam as travestis durante a ditadura? [Where were the travestis during the Dictatorship?].

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# ARQUIVO ATLÂNTICO

## **scripts, notes, letters and conversations**

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