A MIXE RESPONSE.
THE CONTRIBUTION OF YÁSNAYA AGUILAR GIL TO THE DEBATE ON THE CRISIS OF NARRATION

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Abstract – In 2020 in Mexico and in 2023 in Spain the linguist and activist for the rights of indigenous peoples and Mixe nation, Yásnaya Aguilar Gil published a peculiar collection of essays on linguistic diversity in Mexico. The volume titled *Ää: Manifiestos sobre la diversidad lingüística* shows all the strategies that made it possible for the Mixe people to find a path to survival, avoiding the risk of becoming merely a folkloric cultural treasure in Mexico instead of remaining a living, creative and active people. These essays are interrupted by brief quotes from Aguilar Gil's social profiles, mainly Twitter (X) and Facebook, where she criticizes the Mexican linguistic policies, or she leaves a testimony of her daily life as a bilingual person in a Federal Republic that constantly suppresses plurality and difference. The purpose of my essay is to explore how the strategies that Yásnaya Aguilar Gil can help answer urgent questions: How to overcome the "crisis of narration" (Han 2024)? How to survive as singularities the process that tends to blur any difference to reach the ideal "homogeneous group", or *Geschlecht* in the Derridean lexicon (Derrida 2020)? What role do the state and the nation play in this complex dialogue between the indigenous resistance and a *criollo* state that, as Rita Segato claims, has a masculine DNA (Segato 2018)?

Keywords: Mexican Linguistic Policies; Mixe Language and People; Indigenous rights; bilingualism; monolingualism.

1. Introduction. Linguistic Diversity and the Mexican State

> …resistimos a todos los esfuerzos del gobierno para extinguir nuestras lenguas realizados a lo largo de la historia de México como país.
> (Aguilar Gil 2022)

In the territory now belonging to the United States of Mexico, in its official designation, which is the focus of this essay, and in the other republics of Latin America, the linguistic issue has often become a matter that extends beyond the simple right to express oneself and speak in one's "own" language. Isogloss zones themselves have become potential borders for identifying indigenous nations, and, as Gloria Anzaldúa writes (Anzaldúa 2015, p. 48), these borders are mobile and walk alongside speakers, traversing the very borderlands.

In some cases, isogloss zones have been crossed by state borders, as is the case between Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and Belize, where we find Maya communities divided by these State's borders. Similarly, preventing the use of a language, even by simply making its use difficult outside the context established by the government, hinders the dynamic and fluid nature of the "border" lines that individuate the isoglosses.

In the introductory section of the essay, I will focus on some possible interpretative keys to the work of Aguilar Gil, which I have found in texts not directly related to her works, to provide an initial theoretical framework. The goal is to demonstrate how Yásnaya E. Aguilar Gil's work does not merely claim the existence of an "identity" or an indigenous alternative. It also creates native

space that does not necessarily represent an alternative for those who inhabit it, because, as Aguilar Gil argues: "'indígena' es una categoría política, no una categoría cultural ni una categoría racial (aunque ciertamente ha sido racializada). Indígenas son las naciones sin Estado" (Aguilar Gil 2022, p. 20)[1].

For this reason, the presentation and discussion of Aguilar Gil's works will be preceded by an initial section that highlights the context in which they are situated and to which they respond. Another aim of the introductory section is to present the post-colonial situation of Latin American States, particularly Mexico, and to question the idea that they are truly *post*-colonial contexts. Drawing on the writings of Rita L. Segato, what we often encounter is a State that has fully absorbed the colonial process within its ruling class, the *criollo* class.

In the first section, I will thus address the issue of the colonial legacy of the predominantly *criollo* ruling caste/ class. I will then delve into the relationship between language, discourse, narration, and State storytelling, establishing a connection between the concept of storytelling/storyselling proposed by philosopher Byung-Chul Han in *The Crisis of Narration* (2024) and the masculine configuration of the State's DNA as outlined by Rita L. Segato.

The second part of the essay opens with a dialogue between *The Monolingualism of the Other* by Jacques Derrida (1998) and a selection of passages from Aguilar Gil's *Ää: Manifiestos sobre la diversidad lingüística* (2023) and *Un nosotrxs sin Estado* (2022), which will serve as the foundation for analyzing the particular survival strategies of the Mixe people The focus will then shift to the issue of narration and a potential strategy for overcoming the crisis of narration discussed by Byung-Chul Han. Both the first and the second parts will consistently feature not only the works of Segato, Han, and Derrida, but also those of Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui and Gloria Anzaldúa.

2. Colonial Legacies and the Criollo Nation-State

In the dialectic between the State and indigenous nations, there are situations and conditions that are specific to and inalienable from the historical and geographical context of Mexico. As Octavio Paz wrote in the famous essay *Sor Juana*, post-colonial and independent Mexican society lives under the illusion of representing a continuity with the Aztec or Maya past, as if the *criollo* class, from independence onward, were the direct heirs of the empires that preceded the Spanish conquest of the Americas.

By the mid-1980s, then, thanks in part to Paz's essay – which he explicitly dedicate to the greatest Mexican baroque poet Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and (not so) implicitly, uses to analyze Mexican society from the 18th to the 20th century – the narrative of Mexico's history as a nation is rewritten, and, in part, revolutionized.

The perspective of the text focuses on criticizing an official history that aligns the idea of the "Mexican" State with the Aztec empire, thus transforming the colonial experience of New Spain into a period of interregnum: "New Spain was an interregnum, a historical parenthesis, a vacuum in which nothing of importance occurred" (Paz 1988, p. 11). It also critiques a second version of the country's history, which views Mexican history as the story of the gestation of its independence, achieved in the 19th century.

Paz writes that, in common usage, we have been accustomed to hearing expressions that he summarizes in a striking sentence: "this is why we say that Mexico *recovered* her (sic.) independence in 1821" (Paz 1988, p. 11). These are the opening statements of a long essay that, over more than five hundred pages, demonstrates that something significant did, in fact, happen during this "interregnum". Moreover, it also shows that the dividing line between the before and after marked by the Conquest was unable to erase the fact that the history of Mexico is similar to its territory – that is, in the words of Paz (Paz 1988, p. 12), "marked by divisions and interruptions", both when

[1] "Indigenous" is a political category, not a cultural category nor a racial category (although it has certainly been racialized). Indigenous are nations without a State.

discussing the history of the Conquest and colonial society, and when addressing the history of pre-Hispanic and independent Mexico.

There is, in other words, a characteristic that unites these three phases of Mexican history (pre-Hispanic, colonial, and post-colonial): the fact that there have always been divisions, interruptions, sudden changes, obstacles, and unexpected and unpredictable events.

To delve into these recesses that intersect both the policies of Mexican governments and the relations between the State and indigenous nations and communities, it is necessary to adopt a *dual perspective*. One must pay attention not only to the lexicon and political terminology but also to the processes of reclamation and restitution and the creation of neologisms by indigenous communities and nations to engage in dialogue with State public entities.

This dual perspective serves to provide metalinguistic attention that carefully observes the resistance of indigenous peoples from the inside out – that is, by examining what is claimed and requested from the Mexican government – but also from the outside in, in order to understand at what point the language of the State impose an institutional policy that contrasts with (and produces) the resistance of indigenous communities.

In a certain sense, the decisions made regarding the language policy of the Mexican State, which in many cases are imposed on indigenous communities, are not always passively accepted. In some cases, as exemplified by the Mixe nation, they are circumvented, rethought, and then reintroduced along the lines of a different political context. Alongside this response from indigenous communities, there are also theoretical, political, and practical proposals that aim to counteract the process of annihilating the condition of plurality that characterizes Mexico's territory.

This dialogue between the State and indigenous nations, although not always welcomed, changes, thus, also changes the dynamics that concern linguistic studies. It brings to light open issues such as the teaching of indigenous languages, bilingualism and linguistic plurality, the language of literature and its actual dissemination, historical linguistics and the history of languages, ultimately leading to a concrete, systematic, and comprehensive linguistic proposal capable of rewriting the official narrative that the Mexican state uses to present itself.

This proposal, which can be found in the essays by Aguilar Gil, involves a series of linguistic operations that address pragmatic aspects such as translation, writing, and the circulation of texts in indigenous languages. The term "indigenous" itself is one of the terms that, as we will see throughout this text, gradually unravels semantically and is reconstituted, breaking free from the meaning that colonial history assigned to it. It reconnects with its own etymological history and opens up new horizons of meaning that once seemed unimaginable.

In this context, where on one hand the Mexican State offers only a well-defined space for living the multilingual dimension on its territory, while on the other, the response from indigenous communities and communalities remains in constant effervescence, it is evident that the field of confrontation is almost always characterized by linguistic issues. For example: in which language one can communicate and in which spaces of public life, in which language one can write and publish, and on what topics, in which language education in provided, in which language mass media communicate, in which language scientific communication occurs, and how many opportunities exist to actually expand language learning.

All these issues are directly linked by the process of *castilianization* carried out during the colonial era. *Castilianization* is a peculiar form of conquest that closely aligns with the definition of epistemic violence discussed by Gayatri Spivak in her "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (Spivak 1988, p. 76). It involves the replacement and continuous marginalization of any alternative to colonial culture. In this sense, the old *criollo* caste then transformed into the caste that held power, being originally *Castilian*.

The project of the colony – to preserve heritage by avoiding contamination with the *indio* and to gradually make the *indio* a *mestizo* by invading their space and pushing them to the margins of the colonized space does not end, as we will see, with the conclusion of the colonial phase, but continues in the hands of the *criollo* class.

This connection between the process of colonization and its impact on the ability to access public expression in one's "own" language makes it clear that much of the freedom of indigenous nations is primarily based on the autonomy of representation that arises from the possibility of narrating and speaking. In this mechanism, resistance to oppression, but also to depression (Han 2018, p. 16), relies on a linguistic awareness within the community, while at the same time responding to the oppressor by utilizing every tool offered by the vast field of broad-spectrum linguistic studies, including semiotics and the philosophy of language.

However, to fully understand the connection between political resistance that transforms into speech, or rather into speaking as act of resistance, it is necessary to reconsider, from a linguistic perspective, the key turning points in the history of these resistances and how they have been analyzed within fields adjacent to linguistics that have often drawn from linguistic terminology.

Before moving on to analyze in detail the type of policy advocated by Yásnaya E. Aguilar Gil in response to the policies implemented by the Mexican governments, it is necessary to adopt the first part of the *dual perspective* I mentioned at the beginning. This involves focusing on the configuration of the independent (*criollo*) State, not by following a chronological path, but by observing this configuration through the works of three major authors who have deeply analyzed the formation of the *criollo* State: Aníbal Quijano, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, and Rita Segato.

To understand the object of Aguilar Gil's critique and what the main concern of the indigenous nations is, it is necessary to begin by stripping away any colonial traces from both the method and the perspective we use in identifying the difference, or differences, between the *criollo* caste and the indigenous world. This first step is explained in detail by Rita Segato in the introduction to the essays collected in *La Nación y sus Otros* (2007), when she writes that the entire book revolves around two major themes, and the second theme is precisely the one that puts forward a proposal:

> la lucha de los movimientos sociales inspirados en el proyecto de una "política de la identidad" no alcanzará la radicalidad del pluralismo que pretende afirmar a menos que los grupos insurgentes partan de una conciencia clara de la profundidad de su "diferencia", es decir, de la propuesta de mundo alternativa que guía su insurgencia. Diferencia que aquí entiendo y defino no con referencia a contenidos substantivos en términos de "costumbres" supuestamente tradicionales, cristalizadas, inmóviles e impasibles frente al devenir histórico, sino como diferencia de meta y perspectiva por parte de una comunidad o un pueblo[2]. (Segato 2007, p. 18)

This quote from Segato's text serves to de-essentialize the idea of an indigenous alternative, in order to then approach the works by Aguilar Gil lightened of the weight carried by those who approach her texts knowing that they do not share any condition with her (i.e., not being indigenous, racialized, or belonging to a political minority). It challenges the assumption that such a "condition" is necessary to fully understand the texts, as if it were essential to establish an indispensable, essential link between the writer and the reader based on their "origins".

This idea of the world of indigenous nations as impenetrable, which, in particular, does not see impenetrability as a defense strategy but only as a form of exclusion, undermines the very alternative that would represent the recognition of different systems of justice, ways of organizing history and its writing, different organizations of temporality, and different historical projects coexisting on the same territory. These go against the ideas of appropriation, inalienable inheritance by right, or the notion of simple private ownership as value – concepts that, in contrast, form the pillars of the Western Capitalism.

[2] [I]t insists, over and over again, on one point: the struggle of social movements inspired by the project of an "identity politics" will not achieve the radicality of the pluralism it seeks to affirm unless insurgent groups start from a clear awareness of the depth of their "difference", that is, of the alternative worldview that guides their insurgency. Difference that here I understand and define not with reference to substantive contents in terms of supposedly traditional customs, crystallized, immobile, and impervious to historical change, but as a difference of goal and perspective on the part of a community or a people.

In this, it will be the sharing of language that provides Aguilar Gil with one of her most powerful arguments when she reveals and criticizes the projects of the Mexican government, advanced to attack multilingualism through "preservation" policies, that in reality aim to confine indigenous nations. In another context, the Aymara one, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui presents the issue of a state that must interface with a plural landscape and, in doing so, reveals its fully colonial heritage: "Pues el colonialismo no reproduce una heterogeneidad informe y caleidoscópica de las diferencias: estructura jerarquías, crea instituciones de normalización-totalización e incuba formas de pedagogías que se implantan en los cuerpos y el en sentido común cotidiano con fuerza represiva" (Rivera Cusicanqui 2018, p. 36)[3].

And yet, this time from the perspective of Andean literature, Cornejo-Polar also emphasizes that the romantic idea of identity, subject, and history isn't enough to delineate the dynamic and complex profile of the subject in the colonial landscape. There is not just one history, or one *temporality*. It's not even possible to draw a solid line between the relationship of two singularities always considered as opposite: the voice, connected to orality and the world of tradition or culture, and writing, connected instead to the supposedly unequivocal stability of history (Cornejo-Polar 2003, p. 80).

Rita Segato also discusses these pedagogies implanted in bodies to enable the normalization of colonial violence. Specifically, Segato speaks of a pedagogy of cruelty that habituates us to transform what is alive into objects (Segato 2018). Segato's analysis digs deeper into the workings of this mechanism, which also involves the decision-making of the State. According to Segato, the State would have a masculine DNA (ivi, p. 68), and behind this adjective, *masculine*, lies what she calls a "high-intensity patriarchy", a lethal patriarchy of colonial origin that was absent from community dynamics, even when these dynamics exhibited traits that could be traced back to a patriarchal organization.

Although there is overlap and agreement between what Rivera Cusicanqui and Segato write about around the same time, it is important to note that the type of violence on which Rivera Cusicanqui focuses is precisely the kind of invasion that has imperceptibly persisted into the present day and marginalized indigenous communities by excluding them from the debate. This occurs, for example, when Rivera Cusicanqui explains that there was no abstract concept for "work" in the Aymara language, and how this absence made not only expression difficult but also complicated the translation of the Bible. A compromise was the found by expanding the semantic space of the term *irnaqaña* (to handle), yet, Rivera Cusicanqui writes:

> Hasta ahora la gente mayor que vive en un mundo lingüístico menos contaminado le parece rara la palabra genérica *irnaqaña*, porque solo hablan de *llamayuña*, *sataña*, etc., es decir, cosechar papa, sembrar enterrando, sembrar por esquejes, entre otras, y esto sólo en cuanto a la agricultura. Todas las formas imaginables de trabajo tienen una palabra específica para nombrarlas, pero no creo que antes de la invasión colonial existiera la noción abstracta de trabajo[4]. (Rivera Cusicanqui 2018, pp. 44-45)

The process is therefore always a process of invasion that inevitably touches the linguistic space, both as an analysis of historical processes that denounce the invasion and as a censorship of expression and voice by indigenous peoples. The fact that there was no abstract notion of *work* did not lead to a dialogue to understand the reason for always specifying the type of activity. Instead, it

[3] Colonialism does not reproduce an undifferentiated and kaleidoscopic heterogeneity of differences: it structures hierarchies, creates institutions of normalization-totalization, and incubates forms of pedagogy that implant themselves in bodies and in everyday common sense with repressive force.

[4] Until now, elders who live in a less linguistically contaminated world find the generic word *irnaqaña* strange, because they only speak of *llamayuña*, *sataña*, etc., that is, harvesting potatoes, planting by burying, planting by cuttings, among others, and this only in terms of agriculture. All imaginable forms of work have a specific word to name them, but I don't think that before the colonial invasion there existed the abstract notion of work.

was "compensated" with the search for a compromise, as if it were a lack, a defect, of the language and, consequently, of the Aymara world.

3. Rita Segato's "Masculine DNA" of the State

When Rita Segato analyzes the role of the State and its "masculine DNA", she does not do so only from a decolonial perspective, or simply to highlight the radical exclusion of women from the formation, functions, and activities of the State. Rather, she also sheds light on the existence of an underlying set of issues that, once again, announce themselves as linguistic. Aguilar Gil underlines this in a text titled *Un nosotrxs sin estado* (2022), and more indirectly, this constitution of the State as a space devoid of narration is also emphasized by Byung-Chul Han when he establishes a relationship between the ability of narration to create a community: "*Living is narrating*" and further "Narratives create community" (Han 2024, p. 58). This contrasts with what is not a narration but something Han calls storyselling, to indicate the transformation of information into a commodity.

The State can be compared to this process of storytelling/storyselling because it informs, focusing on the facticity of words. In contrast, the community, composed of "careful listeners" – in this case, the indigenous community, the *aldea*, or the *village* – constantly seeks to recover, through narration, a political constitution that does not have the characteristics of the colonial and capitalist State.

In short, for Rita Segato, the State with a "masculine DNA" is the State of politics, while the relationships and the organization of indigenous communities and nations are based on what is political. This difference appears in various works, such as *La nación y sus otros* (2007), *The Critique of Coloniality* (2022), and *Contra-pedagogías de la crueldad* (2018). It is a difference that the grammar of the Spanish language makes almost untranslatable, unless through a paraphrase: *la política* refers to the decisions and dynamics involving or concerning State institutions, the strategies adopted by governments and political parties, but also the dynamics involving para-state and paramilitary structures; *lo politico*, on the other hand, refers to relations that do not necessarily adhere to the framework of Western politics, and do not necessarily establish themselves between different hierarchical positions: "In the world of the village, although it is endowed with more prestige, the political sphere is not universal but rather, like the domestic sphere, a space of partiality. Both spaces are, again, understood to be ontologically complete" (Segato 2022, p. 67).

Aguilar Gil's short story, "Letter to a Young Mixe Historian" (Aguilar Gil 2022, pp. 7-16) responds precisely to this point, that is, the intersection between history, State storytelling, and the narration within the village.

The impact of masculine DNA on the survival of indigenous nations is direct. As a fruit (or root) of the historical project of capital, the State is the equivalent of the Subject that is embodied, as Segato writes, in the white subject of the Global North (Segato 2022, p. 209). However, in the case of Latin American States, according to Segato, something even more complex occurs: the marginalization of the Other in relation to the white subject does not only involves a racialization process based on skin color, but also on the localization of the subject. In the case of the white subject from the Global South, this subject is relegated to the margin of the hierarchical order established by the colonial process: "it is not only black and indigenous people who suffer the prejudice of racial discrimination" (Segato 2022, p. 210).

Clarifying this aspect does not in any way serve to "justify" the highly racist, discriminatory, and genocidal behavior of many Latin American governments, including current ones, towards indigenous communities. Rather, it serves to emphasize the fact that colonialism is an ongoing process, and this is expressed both through and especially in the linguistic politics adopted by Latin American States towards indigenous communities.

Power is, as Segato writes, *conquistual*, and is therefore not established or fixed, nor visible in its structures (Segato 2018, p. 84). Instead, it can be clearly imagined as being primarily Eurocentric, as Segato also comments while discussing Quijano's definition of the *coloniality of*

power: “This racialization itself originated with what Quijano so lucidly called the framework of the coloniality of power, which he also describes as Eurocentric colonial modernity.” (Segato 2022, p. 210).

The Eurocentric trait of the coloniality of power, of the acquisitive nature of power, which tolerates no otherness born outside its hierarchies, also converges into a specificity that directly concerns the aforementioned linguistic policies and the Eurocentric aspiration of the old *criollo* caste. The primary goal of States such as the Mexican one, is in fact to preserve its monolingualism.

4. The Violence of Monolingualism

Within the mechanisms that activate aspects of the political sphere lies the idea of constructing a monolingual State. The history of the *castilianization* of the Hispano-American continent finds its origins precisely in the project of the Conquest and colonialism. At this point, it is interesting to compare two colonial scenarios that share a common point: their relationship with the political history of France.

Although Octavio Paz argues in his *Sor Juana* that the colonial experience of the Spanish Empire is not comparable to that of other empires (Paz 1988, p. 22), when it comes to the construction and protection of the State’s monolingualism, France and Spain indeed find themselves sharing a common conjunctural space.

The pragmatic outcomes will certainly differ, but the starting point is the same: at each State is assigned an inseparable linguistic unity. Going back to the year 1702, when the Spanish crown passed from the Habsburg royal family to the (French) Bourbon royal family, the idea that the unity of the State must be confirmed by linguistic unity served as the foundation for the linguistic politics adopted in the colonies by both the Spanish kingdom and the (post-revolutionary) French State.

Quoting from a text by Aguilar Gil, “¿Nunca más un México sin nosotrxs?” (Aguilar Gil 2022, p. 19):

> En 1998 hablantes de las otras lenguas que se hablan en territorio francés, como el bretón, el catalán y el aragonés, pidieron al Estado francés el reconocimiento de sus lenguas en la Constitución. Esta propuesta chocó con una férrea oposición; la Academia Francesa, por ejemplo, que rara vez se pronuncia públicamente, declaró que ‘las lenguas regionales atentan contra la identidad nacional’. Estas palabras me parecen una aceptación tácita de la ideología que sostiene a los Estados: la mera existencia de lenguas y naciones distintas a la que han creado los Estados atenta contra el proyecto del Estado mismo[5].

In other words, it is as if that other defective subject, created by the Subject One that Segato often refers to (Segato 2018, p. 45), is seen in this context translated and transformed into the official language of the State, which then interfaces with defective subjects, othered subjects, feminized and reduced to “dialects”. But “regional languages” have an ontological fullness, a self-sufficiency, which challenges the defective formation of the other subject and at the same time highlights its irreducibility to a “dialect”.

The reference to France is no coincidence: on the one hand, the Frech Academy was historically the basis for the establishment of the Real Academia Española in the 18th century; on the other hand, France is one of the European countries that has forcibly tried to maintain its territory as strictly monolingual. From the Bourbon experience, which had already made the Spanish language one of the unifying forces of the state through the *Decretos Nueva Planta*, French colonial violence

[5] In 1998, people who speak other languages on French territory, such as Breton, Catalan, or Aragonese, asked the French State to recognize their languages in the Constitution. This proposal faced strong opposition; the French Academy, for instance, which seldom speaks publicly, stated that “regional languages put national identity at risk”. These words seem to me a tacit acceptance of the ideology that support the States: the mere existence of languages and nations different from the one that creates the States put at risk the very project of the State.

also reached the North African colonies. For this reason, it seems particularly interesting to compare what Jacques Derrida and Aguilar Gil write regarding monolingualism. In particular, the question that Aguilar Gil poses about living in a multicultural nation or in a plurinational State, "¿Una nación pluricultural o un Estado plurinacional?" (Aguilar Gil 2022, p. 31), touches on the issue of "national identity" and intersects with the question of language.

The situation in Algeria during the French colonization and then during the war that marked the second half of the 20th century created a fracture that Derrida sees both as a scar in that hyphen separating the words Franco-Maghrebian, and as a *status*, not just a State: "They live in a certain 'state' as far as language and culture are concerned: they have a certain status" (Derrida 1998, p. 10). The difference Derrida identifies between State and *status* aligns with what Aguilar Gil writes about the word *mestizo*. With a slight difference from what Derrida means by *status* outside the State (but within the sense of the word state), *mestizo* is presented as the ideal status by the Mexican State because it would take the presence of other statuses that would represent and demonstrate the presence of multiple nations and nationalities on Mexican soil, which today converge under the label *indio* or *indígena*.

In my interpretation, I see a greater closeness between Aguilar Gil's critique of the term *mestizo* and Derrida's analysis of the hyphen, compared to the proximity between other hyphenated terms present in Aguilar Gil's work, such as *pre-hispánico*. The reason lies in a passage that opens Derrida's text and continues the previous quote:

> According to a circular law with which philosophy is familiar, we will affirm then that the one who is most, most purely, or most rigorously, most essentially, Franco-Maghrebian would allow us to decipher what it is to be Franco-Maghrebian in general. We will decipher the essence of the Franco-Maghrebian from the paradigmatic example of the 'most Franco-Maghrebian,' the Franco-Maghrebian par excellence. Still, assuming there were some historical unity of a France and a Maghreb, which is far from being certain, the 'and' will never have been given, only promised or claimed. (Derrida 1998, p. 11)

The unity of France and the Maghreb would thus have been promised or invoked, yet there is no paradigmatic example of something that is generally the Franco-Maghrebian *par excellence*, just as the unity of *criollo* and *indio* in the *mestizo* was "promised" and "claimed", a unity that was never achieved, thus making the *mestizo* an indecipherable essence. Similarly to the hyphen that should be enough to unite the French half with the Maghrebian half, the *mestizo* should represent the meeting between the pre-colonial society and the *criollo* society, or rather, in Derrida's words, the *trait d'union* should be enough to cover and silence the violence of the clash with the colonial universe of the conquest:

> The silence of that hyphen does not pacify or appease anything, not a single torment, not a single torture. It will never silence their memory. It could even worsen the terror, the lesions, and the wounds. A hyphen is never enough to conceal protests, cries of anger or suffering, the noise of weapons, airplanes, and bombs. (Derrida 1998, p. 11)

As for the aspects directly linked to the monolingualism imposed by France, Derrida does not succumb to the easy use of the term colonialism, because every culture would reveal a colonial soul at the moment when it "institutes itself through the unilateral imposition of some 'politics' of language" (Derrida 1992, p. 39). And yet, through it would be better to say *and therefore*, the "monolingualism of the other" seems to be a violent process and characteristic of colonialism:

> The monolingualism imposed by the other operates by relying upon that foundation, here, through a sovereignty whose essence is always colonial, which tends, repressively and irrepressibly, to reduce language to the One, that is, to the hegemony of the homogeneous. This can be verified everywhere, everywhere this homo-hegemony remains at work in the culture, effacing the folds

> and flattening the text. To achieve that, colonial power does not need, in its heart of hearts, to organize any spectacular initiatives: religious missions, philanthropic or humanitarian good works, conquest of markets, military expeditions, or genocides. (Derrida 1998, p. 40)

On this sense of monolingualism as imposed by the state, Aguilar Gil writes most of the texts that address strategies of defense against the idea of a homogeneous State that imposes its "pedagogical device", to use Derrida's terminology, and discourages any educational initiative that transforms the process of *mestizaje* into something truly open to plurality. Just as the hyphen, *mestizaje* also seeks to silence the differences from the Same.

Both Aguilar Gil and Derrida converge on a point that undermines a simple reduction of "monolingualism" to merely speaking one language by imposition: language, or rather its ability to be spread without being reduced, to be disseminated beyond the boundaries of the territory rigidly assigned to it, allows us to think of monolingualism as something that is also donated to the Other, not only violently imposed by the Other. This is the other meaning of the famous quote from Derrida's texts: "I only have one language; it is not *mine*" (Derrida 1998, p. 1, emphasis added), which I have tried to emphasize at various points in this text by putting the word "own" in quotation marks in the phrase "one's own language".

Aguilar Gil exemplifies this in *Ää: Manifiestos sobre la diversidad lingüística* (Aguilar Gil 2023, p. 78) when she argues that the spread of indigenous languages through teaching them as "foreign" languages (and it is now clearly paradoxical to think of native and indigenous languages as "foreign") would allow for their survival. Teaching the language reveals how it represents a value entirely opposed to the capitalist idea of a "commodity" which can only be invested, spent, and dispersed. Languages escape accumulation and do not generate additional value if preserved or invested as cultural capital or patrimony. In generating the idea that the Other is always and only the "native", and that this is the alter*native*, one fails to recognize that the Other imposing monolingualism, homogeneity, is the State. In Derrida's words, the risk is very high, and it consists of a question he poses in *The Monolingualism of the Other*:

> But what if, while being attentive to the most rigorous distinctions and respecting the respect of the respectable, we cannot and must not lose sight of this obscure common power, this colonial impulse which will have begun by insinuating itself into, overrunning without delay, what they call, by an expression worn enough to give up the ghost, 'the relationship to the other'! or 'openness to the other'! (Derrida 1998, p. 40).

For this reason, "the monolingualism of the other" also indicates the possibility that "the other" is both the oppressive State, which refuses to establish any relationship, and the Other to whom one yields by always speaking "one language" – but that "one language" which does not belong to the speaker. Behind Aguilar Gil's effort to establish and promote the teaching of indigenous languages there is precisely this: distancing from the capitalist principle of accumulation and demonstrating how languages do not have to and cannot be necessarily spoken only on their native soil. This would be the project of the Mexican State, reducing these languages to a local, almost folkloric phenomenon, to be observed in a sort of ecological reserve.

From the critique of the idea of a monolingual and indivisible State that prevents the survival of other nations that do not necessarily need a State, Aguilar Gil also critiques the terms mentioned earlier in the introduction and throughout this essay: *indio*, *indigenous*, and *pre-Hispanic*. *Un Nosotrxs sin Estado* actually opens with a chapter dedicated to the word *indio* showing how the term is not, in its essence bound to "los integrantes de un conjunto de pueblos que habitan el continente americano a la llegada de los colonizadores europeos" (Aguilar Gil 2022, p. 11)[6].

The group of peoples inhabiting the American continent has sought to survive through numerous strategies of resistance. In an essay dedicated to Aníbal Quijano, "El tiempo en la obra de

[6] The members of a group of peoples who inhabit the American continent at the arrival of the European colonizers.

Aníbal Quijano" (Segato 2024, p. 203) found in *Escenas de un pensamiento incómodo*, Rita Segato discusses a concept inherent in Quijano's work, the "return of the future" (Quijano 2024, p. 186). To explain this concept, in her text, Segato uses the example of the communities that went into hiding during the colonial era until they were declared extinct.

These communities, such as the Huarpes in Argentina, came out of secrecy with a declaration, a statement. Segato writes that one day they came out saying that they were not farmers or shepherds, they were the Huarpes (Segato 2024, p. 208). A statement, a phrase, a linguistic process of forming a structure that immediately creates a fracture in history. The Huarpes moved skillfully in a territory "marked by divisions and interruptions" (Paz 1988, p. 12) which must be rewritten: the past must be rethought starting from an event that comes from the present.

This creates a deep fracture also in the historical project of the colonial State, which understands the process of *mestizaje* not as an encounter between two cultures but as the erasure of other historical projects that must merge into a single culture, generically identified as "indigenous" versus a culture generically identified as non-indigenous. This alone should make us reflect on the fact that if a culture is not indigenous, then where does it come from? And why? But even more, it should make us think about something more dangerous, which lies in the attempt to homogenize the space of the State by finding a single and unique identity valid for the entire territory.

The risk of pursuing this homo-hegemonic policy is that it conceives both nationality and the nation-state as *Geschlecht*, in the sense of the word that Derrida identifies in Fichte and Heidegger's writings, which he analyzes in four essays written around the mid-1980s. *Geschlecht*, as the subtitle of the third essay suggests, *Geschlecht III. Sex, Race, Nation, Humanity*, published posthumously in 2018 and in English in 2020, is a term that, while seeking to identify a homogeneous space, is itself semantically plural: sex, race, nation, and humanity would all be valid translations of the German word *Geschlecht*. However, "our" *Geschlecht* as it is understood, i.e., as *Deutschheit*, would represent a problem; it would no longer be a term capable of expressing homogeneity, but would be "struck" by the fall of an impression, a *Schlag*, which would make it particular.

> This is what happens with the terms "indigenous" and "indio" according to Aguilar Gil:
> En un mundo sin Estados, la categoría 'indígena' deja de tener sentido. Somos indígenas en la medida en que pertenecemos a pueblos que no crearon Estados. En una conversación sobre el tema, alguien preguntaba si entonces lo que queremos es dejar de ser indígenas. Idealmente sí. Idealmente podríamos dejas de ser indígenas, no para convertirnos en mestizos sino para ser solo mixes, mapuches, samis o raramuris (sic.)[7]. (Aguilar Gil 2022, p. 45)

If, therefore, the terms "indigenous" and "indio" are today a political category, only due to a "lamentable historical accident" (ivi, p. 14), they risk, like other terms, being transformed into nationalism, into identity, and into *Geschlecht* because *Geschlecht*

> is, then, not determined by birth, native soil, or race; it has nothing natural or even linguistic about it, at least not in the usual sense of this term […]. The sole analytic and unimpeachable determination of *Geschlecht* in this context is the "we," the belonging to the "we" to whom we are speaking at this moment, at the moment that Fichte addresses himself to this supposed but still to be constituted community, a community that, strictly speaking, is neither political, nor racial, nor linguistic, but that can receive his allocution, his address, or his apostrophe (*Rede an …*), and can think with him, can say "we" in any language and from any birthplace whatever[8].

[7] In a world without States, the category "indigenous" loses its meaning. We are indigenous insofar as we belong to peoples that did not create States. In a conversation on the topic, someone asked if what we want is to stop being indigenous. Ideally, yes. Ideally, we could stop being indigenous, not to become mestizos, but to be only mixes, Mapuches, Samis, or Rarámuris.

[8] I use here the translation modified by Rodrigo Therezo of this passage from *Psyche. Invention of the other. Volume II*, so I quote from the preface to *Geschlecht III. Sex, Race, Nation, Humanity*, 2020, p. XXIII.

In the same way, consequentially and mirror-like, when it is no longer of any use to define oneself as "indigenous", everyone, in every position and place, will realize that, as Aguilar Gil writes:

> la palabra 'indígena' proviene del latín y se utilizaba para designar la adcripción a un lugar de nacimiento: de indi- (de allí) y gen- (nacido) su significado etimológico sería 'nacido allí' u 'originario'. […] Indígena designaba entonces a toda persona 'nacida allí'; la naturaleza deíctica del 'allí' permitía que 'indígena' adquiera significado según el lugar al que se hiciera referencia"[9]. (ivi, p. 13)

The deictic value of the "we" in the quotation from Derrida's text and the term "indigenous" in Aguilar Gil's quotation highlight exactly how deixis does not reduce the risk of homogenizing a space; rather, it increases it. This is what Aguilar Gil calls the false equivalence between the nation-state, which generates categories such as "Mexican culture", "cuando los mexicanos […] hablan lenguas agrupadas en doce familias lingüísticas radicalmente distintas entre sí y pertenecen a más de 68 naciones con diferencias culturales muy marcadas" (ivi, p. 17)[10].

This generalization based on a deictic term generates results that run counter to the resistance of the various peoples currently defined as indigenous, and these dynamics are as subtle and insidious as they are common, even within the indigenous movement itself. In criticizing expressions like "indigenous cosmovision" or "indigenous music" which often appear in academic studies and, according to Aguilar Gil, imply that all peoples who do not conform and not form States are, in the end, peoples with the same worldview, the same music, or the same dance, she highlights a critical point. In reality, as has been repeatedly emphasized, under the term "indigenous" are grouped together various cultures, different historical projects, histories, and cultural histories.

5. Narrative as a form of resistance

In 2023, the Mexican government published the latest reform of the *Ley General de Derechos Lingüísticos*, which has been regularly updated for over twenty years to ensure that every Mexican citizen can speak their language in both public and private contexts. However, there is an unresolved issue that Aguilar Gil addresses in her contributions: speaking is a political act, an act of resistance, because, as we glimpsed from the previously cited text of Derrida and the difference between political and politics offered by Segato, there is no linguistic operation that is not also an operation that touches the political realm, that is the realm of relationship.

We must now move towards a final analysis of this "politics of relation" that circulates through dialogue between speakers and linguistic politics. The text previously cited by Byung-Chul Han, *The Crisis of Narration* (2024), frequently returns to this point: narration belongs to and creates communities, while information, from this perspective, is sterile and devoid of theoretical impulses. On this point as well, Aguilar Gil intervenes with great precision and sensibility.

If on one hand, Aguilar Gil actively promotes the dissemination of literature written by indigenous authors or in indigenous languages, at the same time, she advocates for translation projects in indigenous languages for major digital channels of access to information, such as the translation of some web browsers (Aguilar Gil 2023, p. 152). Moreover, she herself writes narrative. In light of what has been written so far, the relationship between narrative writing and indigenous resistance should begin to be evident. However, to conclude this brief excursus within the activities and works

[9] The word 'indigenous' comes from Latin and was used to designate the affiliation to a place of birth: from indi- (from there) and gen- (born), its etymological meaning would be 'born there' or 'native'. […] 'Indigenous' then designated any person 'born there'; the deictic nature of 'there' allowed 'indigenous' to acquire meaning depending on the place being referred to.

[10] "When Mexicans […] speak languages grouped into twelve radically different language families and belong to more than 68 nations with very marked cultural differences".

of Aguilar Gil as a voice of indigenous resistance and also as an example of a solid political project designer, it is necessary to analyze one of her stories: "Letter to a young Mixe historian".

The story was published in two versions: in Spanish and in English, and it was written for a project carried out by several organizations, including the Hay Festival and the British Museum. The goal of the project was to have a group of Latin American writers create stories based on the British Museum's collection of objects from or related to the American continent. The central issue of "Volver a contar", as stated in the title of the Spanish version of the collection, was precisely to rewrite the history of objects belonging to a museum and condemned to remain imprisoned in a merely informational "exhibition", so as to become concrete, unproductive, and fossilized.

Aguilar Gil's story brings one of these objects back to life, to the point where the reader begins to hope that this, like another *return of the future*, is indeed the story of a small clay pot, a *yäjktstu'ujts* belonging to a Mixe community. The elements that make this narrative such, even in the eyes of Byung-Chul Han, are several, but above all, there is a lack of transparency, a lack of final satisfaction, which allows the listener to hear the story without acquiring the ultimate, sterile, information, without gathering data, or finding themselves consuming another storytelling: "A narrative contains the power of a new beginning. Every action that changes the world presupposes a narrative" (Han 2024, p. 68).

Aguilar Gil's text is a letter, and as such, it exponentially contains the confrontation with a "you" that is never absorbed into the narrative. Moreover, the artifact returns in a post-apocalyptic context where only the highlands of the American continents have been preserved, and thus the Mixe nation. This element disrupts the flow of history, pushing it forward to 2173, and allows for the creation of a *narrative fantasy* that dissolves the hardness of the resistance but also enables to narrate and overcome through narrating one of the greatest fears that darken our century – namely, the catastrophic consequences of global warming.

Actually, behind the dissolution of Western culture, there is much more than the reworking of a looming fear; there is the relationship with a past that the society of the protagonists of the story would like to forget: "We know that, generally speaking, contemporary societies that survived the climate catastrophes caused by the period known as the Capitalist Night don't care much about the past – rather, we long to forget it" (Aguilar Gil 2022, p. 8).

Despite this, the two protagonists, depicted at different stages of life, work both as historians, and Mejy, the author of the letter, must answer to a complex question: "Why study history after climate apocalypse?" (ivi, p. 16). The question does not find an answer in the text of the letter; it must be constructed, like an archeological search, among the words of the text, and this increases the lack of transparency that Han hopes to find in narrative: "There is no such thing as a transparent narrative. Every narrative needs secrets and enchantment. Only our dreams of blindness would save us from the hell of transparency, would return to us the capacity to narrate (Han 2024, p. 41).

Closing the circle, Aguilar Gil constructs a complete narrative within the space of a very short story about the resistance of the Mixe nation:

> In the middle of that great darkness, small lights were resisting, safeguarding other ways of being human; unfortunately, many of them did not survive the great climate collapse that ensued. Others, like the Mixe community, were able to reform and to continue making the yäjktstu'ujts that, throughout those centuries of madness, were turned into museum objects. Remembering and talking about the societies that resisted late capitalism and colonialism has been the driving force behind my work in recent years. (Aguilar Gil 2022, pp. 14-15)

What Mejy finds surprising, and with her, her community, is that the object preserved in a large museum was nothing more than a small pot used to cook a type of beans; it was a common, everyday object, and that particular *yäjktstu'ujts* had never even been completed and thus never used. What story did it tell in a museum like the British Museum? What had attracted capitalist society so much that it preserved a simple clay pot as something of inestimable value? Aguilar Gil has her Mejy respond that perhaps it had been the fact that it was unique, handmade and not mass-produced (Aguilar Gil 2023, p. 13)

Now this unique, unrepeatable clay pot can tell its story and "Stories create social cohesion" (Han 2024, p. 62).

6. Conclusions

In searching for a summative answer to the question of what type of resistance Yásnaya E. Aguilar Gil advances, we might say that it seeks to overcome the idea that indigenous peoples and nations are merely fossils of a past that must not and cannot change; it disavows the notion of a collection of traditions disconnected from any sense of future, without any valid historical project that is truly *alter*native to the oppressive status quo. This challenges not only the idea of the State but of the entire colonial system.

The first part of the essay focused on the more historical and anthropological issues to debunk the myth of a homogeneous essence underlying the indigenous community, whatever it may be, and to debunk the notion that the acceptance of the otherness, the "openness to otherness", is always and intrinsically free from a colonial mindset. Both Derrida (1998) and Han (2018) warn us about this. The second part of the essay, on the other hand, offers a reflection on the works by Aguilar Gil, from her essays to her narrative, aiming to keep a strong connection with the political, instead of natural, dimension of language, and with the ability of narration to create community.

Recovering a resistance project against Western, Colonial, and Capitalist society that starts with the defense of language, of languages, and that does not stop at their preservation or use, but aims to multiply their speakers, demonstrates that behind this project there is no conflictual principle of clash between different worlds, but rather one of mutual penetration and contamination.

Aguilar Gil invites us to a constant search for that point along the borders that allows us to cross the line and extend, intersect, and weave narrative paths that are nothing but the fruit of a political relationship. On July 13, 2012, from her Twitter account, Yásnaya E. Aguilar Gil posted a brief message that still, for me, captures all of this in just a few words: "Los pueblos indígenas no solo somos raíces, somos brotes nuevos también" (Aguilar Gil 2023, p. 92).

Bionote: Valeria Stabile earned her PhD in Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures and in Gender Studies at the University of Bologna and Utrecht University, with a dissertation on the work of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. Among her publications are the monograph *Pues no soy mujer. The Upheaval of Singularity in Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz* (Il Melangolo, 2022) and the essay "La disidencia sexo-genérica del cuerpo abstracto. Análisis de un poema de Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz" (*Confluenze*, Vol. XIV, no. 2, 2022), which received the first honorable mention of the Sylvia Molloy Award from the Latin American Studies Association in 2023. In 2024, she won the prize "Angela Ferrara" for the best doctoral dissertation in Gender Studies awarded by the University of Basilicata. She translated into Italian Rita L. Segato's *Contropedagogie della crudeltà* (Manifestolibri, 2024).

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