

Poetic confluences: poetry, education and care in psychosocial care devices in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Confluências poéticas: poesia, formação e cuidado em dispositivos de atenção psicossocial do Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brasil. (resumo: p. 13)

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The study aims to narrate the experience of the confluence of poetry, training and care in psychosocial care facilities in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Based on the concepts of Ailton Krenak, reflections were constructed on ways of training and caring that are more closely allied to community life. The results were presented in the following narratives: 'Poetry, the healing of the word', which showed how the poetry circle gave back the right of speech to people in psychological distress; 'Palace therapy', which revealed the importance of the collective subject and the (re)occupation of the territory; and 'Poetry as the invention of colorful parachutes' as a care strategy. Poetry served as a strategy for the constitution of collectives, revealing the importance of being, caring and forming, based on the principle of the right to the word and the territory.

Keywords: Mental health. Poetry. Sociocultural territory.

Initial considerations

The present study benefited from Ailton Krenak's idea of 'collective experience' to narrate the confluence of poetry, training and mental health care through the memories and affections experienced by nursing professors, undergraduates and multiprofessional residents in psychosocial care facilities in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

In order to present the concepts that guide this article, it is worth mentioning that the experience that this study deals with is that which, according to Bondía¹, "passes us by" and that which "happens to us". In this way, the writing that goes back to experiences is born out of everyday life, memories and the marks on bodies, not just as private stories, but as collective experiences, of collective subjects².

Collective experience, in Ailton Krenak's view, is the exercise of the friction of our body with human life (or not), not as a metaphor, but as a way of circulating in the world in community and, therefore, apart from the idea of individualism as capitalist production³.

In this sense, narrating these collective experiences through the memories of teachers and mental health residents is a way of making sense of and naming what we have seen, experienced and felt in the field of psychosocial care in Rio de Janeiro. In this research, the poetry meeting was recognized as a way of living the collective experience of producing people's knowledge and know-how by sharing life together in the territory.

It might be said that the period preceding the experience had a significant impact on the common life of mental health service users, since the Covid-19 pandemic meant that collective activities were interrupted for almost two years due to the determination of social distancing⁴. This emptying of the collective sphere and of the sociocultural dimension, in an antagonistic way, updated in the lives of users the isolation previously experienced at the time of the manicomial logic that preceded the Brazilian Psychiatric Reform (RPB in the Portuguese acronym), instituted by Law No. 10.216, of April 6, 2001^{5,6}.

It is also important to note that since 2015, the foundations of the RPB have been suffering setbacks with the return to the asylums of incarcerating people, removing them from the possibility of circulating in the world⁷ and converging in the exercise of life on the border, as Quilombola master Antônio Bispo dos Santos⁸ states. The study starts from the premise that the experience narrated by the teacher and residents is also a questioning of the colonality of (medicalizing) psychiatric knowledge in the field of Brazilian mental health, and is therefore a counter-colonial strategy in training and care⁹.

Therefore, the effects of the pandemic, coupled with the weakening of the principles of Psychiatric Reform and a certain individualization of suffering based on the colonization of knowledge by traditional psychiatry, have hit the collective and territorial sphere of care in the Psychosocial Care Network head-on, since they have reduced the experiences of social inclusion seen as the collective cement of mental health care.



With this, we reiterate the importance of the return of collective activities as an invention of colorful parachutes in the face of this “collapsing sky”³ in the field of mental health, bringing harm to those who suffer, which includes not only users, but also teachers, service workers, students, family members, communities, etc.

Taking into account Ailton Krenak’s teaching, this study seeks to present the strategy of building poetry circles as a (re)existence and return of the right to the word and to the city.

For those reasons, the study aims to narrate the experience of the confluence of poetry, training and care in psychosocial care facilities in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

The experience

The experience reported hereby was lived in the post-pandemic period of Covid-19 by a professor, psychology residents, undergraduate nursing students from the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), users of the Psychosocial Care Center II (CAPS UERJ in the Portuguese acronym) and residents of Therapeutic Residences, from July 2022 to March 2023.

CAPS UERJ was created in 2009 and has a university structure, as it is a multidisciplinary service of the University and is part of the municipality’s mental health network, and is therefore a solid training space for mental health⁴. It has four Therapeutic Residences (TRs).

Upon the end of social isolation and the return of activities at CAPS UERJ, concerns about the resumption of collective spaces that were suspended during the pandemic were present. Before the pandemic, the social spaces were occupied with the following activities: symbolization workshops, cooking, journaling and jewelry making. During the pandemic, these activities were suspended until mid-2022, due to social isolation, and video calls and more restricted and individual assistance were offered, especially in crisis situations.

With the end of social isolation, there was concern about the return of collective activities and the (re)occupation of the territory, including the environment, culture, city spaces and their different forms of organization.

Taking this into account, with the return of social spaces, the CAPS UERJ team and TR workers, together with the teacher and residents, discussed at a team meeting the need to listen to the interests of the people who use the service. To this end, three rounds of conversations were held in the living spaces to understand which activities made sense at the time and were of interest to them. Poetry emerged among many proposals.

Poetry began as a cultural activity on Friday afternoons at CAPS UERJ and once a month in the city’s territorial spaces, such as squares, gardens, colleges, museums and so on. It has been facilitated in alternation between the nursing lecturer in the mental health area at UERJ’s nursing faculty and the psychology residents working at CAPS UERJ.



It's important to note that the activity was not intended to be therapeutic in the clinical sense, but rather to be a cultural pathway and a space for socializing. However, it is undeniable that the experience has unfolded into a space for care and training, since the actors who also make up the collective are linked to UERJ and CAPS, either as technicians or as users of the service. We chose to use the term "user" to refer to people who use the psychosocial care service, as defined at the 17th National Meeting of Entities of Users and Families of the Anti-Asylum Struggle in 1993.

An average of 30 people took part in each meeting, including five undergraduate nursing students, two multi-professional residents, two CAPS UERJ technicians, a teacher and around 20 users. All the meetings were recorded by the students who took part in the circles in a book intended for the collective's memories and the poetry resulting from these spaces was digitized and stored on a drive.

The activity was open and independent of mental, physical, linguistic or intellectual condition and was not restricted to institutional actors, i.e. CAPS UERJ users or residents of the TRs.

It is important to note that there was no closed methodology, but rather principles that we did not dispense with, namely: every speech is important, everybody can poetize, every encounter is an event and affections are free to circulate. When we talk about events, we mean "anything that has just happened or is about to happen simultaneously"⁹. That's why we always go into the meeting 'lightly prepared', in other words, we don't go with rigid, unchangeable scripts¹⁰.

Furthermore, inspired by Krenak³, the activity followed the affirmation of the collective as the constitution of a common power, a power that has been stolen from us since colonization by the pursuit of individualism and the emptying of community life⁸.

The idea of collective experience that this study is betting on is one that affirms the possibility of conceiving the constitution of the person as a collective subject who shares, who has solidary and plural relationships and who recognizes themselves in these relationships as part of it.

Over time, based on the collective experience, the organic communion between people and the users' own demand for the activity, the poetry circles became a workshop at CAPS UERJ and became part of the Singular Therapeutic Projects (STP).

The confluence of poetry, training and care emerged as the motto and driving force behind the production of knowledge and as a way of occupying the city and co-producing good living with users, as proposed by the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The results are as follows: 1- Poetry, the healing of the word, in which, based on the perception of the teacher and the residents, it was possible to present how poetry was able to build emancipatory experiences for people in psychological distress; 2- Palace therapy, which revealed the importance of the collective subject and the (re) occupation of the territory and 3- Poetry as the invention of colorful parachutes, in which it was possible to see how poetry is a creative and lively strategy for care, the expansion of subjectivities and the struggle for quality health, going against the backdrop of the setbacks that mental health has been experiencing.



Poetry, the healing of the word

It was a rainy Friday in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Lives were coming and going at CAPS UERJ. In this flux, there was always the same question: is there going to be poetry? Voices, music, workshops, health workers, nursing students, psychology students, medical students, residents, teachers, general service assistants, security guards, kitchen staff in a traffic that follows the unprecedented steps of life. And at CAPS UERJ this unprecedented always comes! It comes in the form of laughter, screams, delirium, tight hugs, dancing, crying and even flying chairs.

But at some point, during the day, something interrupts this traffic and noise, establishing another kind of unexpected first. It's poetry time! All that commotion falls silent. The circle, which usually takes place in the gardens of the Piquet Carneiro Polyclinic (PPC), had to change course due to the rain and was held at CAPS UERJ itself. A table with a colored cloth, poetry, pens and papers were laid out on it in an attempt to 'uniform' the accustomed place.

In this circle were two medical students from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), five nursing students from UERJ, ten CAPS UERJ users and a nursing lecturer, who facilitated the meeting. Before it even started, two, three, four poems had already been written by the participants. In fact, the beginning starts here. There's a lot of work, preparation, games, choosing words and inventing others. Just a lot of words. When the facilitator tries to start the meeting, she soon has her words interrupted (great!). "Can I read my poetry?" And so the circle begins. No start at all.

The poem was read and it was about rain and sun. About the cycles of life. It said that after the rain and the storm, the sun always comes out. Ah, it never fails! The person who wrote and read the poem was homeless at the time and understood it well, because he felt the experience of this cycle of nature in his body. This poem really moved the participants, who immediately asked to speak and were given the floor, as is their right.

The group started to pick up words and began to speak the words born of life experiences, affections and marks. There were words born from birdsong, from street life, words without pronunciation, words born from music. Disorganized, accelerated, slow, complaining, scientific, poetic, indignant words. Suffered words.

Little by little, the words created in poetry gave way to profound reflections on life. About death. About the meaning of existence. Suffering appeared due to the absence of family, the violence experienced, the lack of employment.

When it was thought that the circle would turn into a sea of lamentations and suffering (and it would be fine if it did!) a participant took the floor and said: "Guys, it's to talk about good things, about happiness. I've lived on the street. I've lost people, but it's over now. We have to live. Life is a cycle! We are born, we grow up and we die. Hasn't anything good happened in your lives?" So he starts to say that he was dating. Then the facilitator of the circle, in a rush of joy, said: "Oh, good! So you're in love!" He healed the word again and said: "Not loving, I'm seriously on to it." The wheel that had been turning in the circuit of sadness then began to compose the word in laughter. That poem about the cycle of nature made a real reforestation



of thought and emotions, we can say that it healed the suffering words, giving another contour to that suffering.

The experience recounted here touches on the word healing. Talking about healing in the field of mental health is a paradox, since the field of psychiatry has spent a lifetime trying to find a cure for madness and has so far failed to do so. Therefore, in order to understand the word cure that we are dealing with here, it is first necessary to decolonize and demedicalize the word cure.

Thus, we have the following reflections: why is the word so important in the context of mental health? Why does it lack healing? How did poetry produce healing in this experience?

The idea of healing usually comes from a medical perspective, and is therefore imprisoned in the biological sphere. But in poetry we experienced the healing of the word as an enchantment of the spheres of knowledge, as politics and poetics that escape the shielding of knowledge schemes, as a subalternized grammar of everyone, anyone, including the so-called mad. The word as an erasure, as an arrow that comes out of the mouth, as a path taken by the being. A word born out of the suffering of being who you are. Word as noise and as the radical expression of being alive^{7,11}.

However, these words have been stolen, controlled and invalidated. According to Michel Foucault¹² in his work 'The Order of Discourse', since the high Middle Ages the power of speech of these people has been annulled and cannot circulate like that of others. Speech that has no importance and must be rejected as soon as it is uttered. But with the birth of psychiatry, it was through the use of words that people's madness was recognized⁶. This nosological classification, through discourse, was for a long time sustained as a science and therefore authorized to stigmatize in a double movement of interdicting and classifying by what and how one speaks.

In this sense, even in the context of the RPB and care in freedom, the word needs healing because it has been and continues to be denied and silenced to people who experience psychological suffering. In this way, we heal the word in this experience when we restore the power to name, to poeticize the world, when we collectively confront the apparatuses of knowledge that say which word is useful or not, who is authorized to say them or not.

Anchored in Krenak's³ idea of collective experience, we believe that psychological suffering is a social event and not a particular one, which arises and stems from the society in which we live. For this reason, we invested in collective spaces as a counter-colonizing strategy⁸ in relation to traditional psychiatry, bringing the bio-interactive knowledge of teachers, nursing students, mental health residents, CAPS workers and service users to the center of the debate.

In this way, the poetry circles recounted here not only legitimize, but also take care of, invent and play with words, not considering them only as part of individual authorship, but as a collective and socially constructed confluence according to the context of presence and intensity of the relationship established there, with what appears in act and in event. Poetry is woven into everyday inventions, into the flows of the unseen and unexpected that always come to Psychosocial Care Centers.



Palace therapy

The circle we are going to tell you about here was much desired by CAPS UERJ users, TR residents and other poetry participants. There was an agreement with the collective that, once a month, the circle would be itinerant and would occupy the city's spaces, above all to include and circulate the residents of the TR around the city. Among the various venues, we came up with the idea of going to the Catete Palace, located in the south of Rio de Janeiro. The South zone corresponds to the region where the poshest neighborhoods are located (according to colonial and capitalist logic) in the municipality and even in the country. Yes, we would occupy the South zone!

It was a sunny Friday. An exuberant and poetic day. First thing in the morning, I was anxious about the meeting. Is this the day we're going to Palace Therapy, asked a user. The time soon arrived. That collective, which was already consolidated by encounters and affection, would experience a day full of intensities and surprises in the territory.

"Let's get into the van!" A party. There were five residents (psychology, nursing and social work), a psychology student, five nursing students, a nursing teacher and ten CAPS UERJ users.

The journey to the gardens of the Palácio do Catete (Museum of the Republic) was marked by requests for music: from 'unwind, hit, play sideways', Banda Eva to Charlie Brown, Madonna and A-ha. From the windows of the van you could see the city. Curious looks were directed at the tourist attractions, the favela, the "sambadrome" and the Maracanã stadium. One of the participants showed us where he lived and where he sold his candies and peanuts, while another pointed to the stadium, as he had always been very attached to his team and football¹³.

As soon as we entered the venue, the poetry participants quickly dispersed. We lost control (and good thing, we need to lose control more often!). Everyone went around the garden in their own way, some heading for the snack bar and toilets, others entering the museum. We were amazed by the gardens, the animals and the photographs of nature on display. Giant trees, crystal-clear lakes, families walking around seemingly happily. That was the scene. They wanted photos of that encounter.

But the looks on the faces of those who were there asked us who these very different people were or "what were they doing there?". One look that caught our attention was that of a man who was well dressed and wearing a vest, looking like a biologist or a field researcher. He looked at us like he wanted to ask us something and asked: "Where are you from?". After we told him we were from UERJ and were with the users in a poetry circle, he said: "I'll meet you later to take part in the poetry". We had no idea who he was. Only later did we find out that he was the director of the Catete Palace.



Finally, we managed to gather the people in a large circle. We placed a large, colorful, round cloth on the lawn. As soon as we finished rolling out the cloth, people threw themselves onto it. Some sat down, others lay down. We were very comfortable in front of that beautiful lake where the animals surrounded us. Then there was the colored cloth, the papers and the pens again. The idea was for everyone to freely write a poem and then share it with the group, with their community.

Based on this proposal, we could see users writing and sharing their stories and poetry, students who were able to share the greatness of being there, the territory having to rub up against those presences, as well as the teacher affected by the experience of training people for the field of Mental Health, in a sensitive and radically alive atmosphere. All of this was integrating and enriching the life experience of each subject, while at the same time building a collective subject.

As we were closing the circle, we were surprised by the arrival of the director of the Catete Palace. He arrived declaiming a beautiful poem and then performed an intervention poem with us, a poem that brought us into contact with our own bodies and, under applause, received all the affection of that collective.

So, it wasn't just a stroll, but the establishment and guarantee of the right to appear in the city itself, enabling a greater relationship with the actors, that is, from the snack bar vendor to the museum director¹³. Occupying the city and its spaces was a way of emptying the asylum logic of existence. Paladino and Amarante¹⁴ (p. 7) elaborate on "an ideal city that helps us confront the asylum paradigm and strengthen the BPR process: the open city, the one that includes difference".

On the other hand, putting oneself in sight of the city, producing an activity that could be carried out within walls, brings new meanings to users, students, professionals and the city itself. The possibility of networking was then made possible. This can be seen in the presence of the museum's director, who not only took part as a spectator, but was also present and built something¹³. This shows how the network is an "open mesh, with holes or spaces for the creation of possibilities"¹⁵ (p. 101). This highlights the very framework of the city as a place for clinical experience and the formulation of living networks. With this in mind, one point we could highlight with regard to the territory is how it affects or is affected by the subject and this friction between people and the landscape and nature through biointeraction¹⁶.

Related to the field of training, experience is an epistemology that has been expanding as poetics, in other words, it has been a field for producing knowledge. The students learned more in the experience than any aseptic and disinterested reading of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), some psychiatric treatise or the like. All this learning goes against the grain of the dissolution of collectives and belonging to the territory that has been established by the colonial and capitalist perspective that says who can and cannot circulate in certain spaces of the city².



In the community/collective experience, the idea of a person becomes strongly constituted in/by interaction with other equals. We believe that this relationship of meeting and interacting with other equals in the territory is fundamental for mental health and for the constitution of the collective subject, for an inclusive city. A healthy territory is one that rubs up against the differences of its inhabitants. According to Krenak², the collective subject is when each one is each one, it is a constellation of beings who inhabit the world of lives, of beings who live and experience permanent insecurity and violence.

The function of poetry in this experience was more like a possibility of experimentation and enjoyment of life, of widening the possibilities of inhabiting the territories of the city together with the community to which they belong, a place where exchanges are established, where affections and sufferings are shared. In this sense, the territory is part, principle and totality of the subjective dimension of the people who inhabit it.

Poetry as the invention of colorful parachutes

It was the end of the year and the poetry circle went ahead as usual in the PPC gardens. The preparation of the place with colored cloths, pens and paper; poetry created spontaneously; the beginning without a beginning... Little by little, people were arriving, settling down, each in their own way. There were people talking loudly, emitting only sounds without words, there were people agitated, slowed down, repetitive, quiet.

Thus, the poetry followed the flow, beginning with the use of the word reinvention and overcoming, which someone brought up spontaneously. At one point during the meeting, a participant shared her pain over the loss of her partner. Shortly after this, a participant who arrived at CAPS UERJ a few months ago precisely because of the difficulty of accepting the loss of her mother, sits down next to the person who shared her suffering and hugs her in a gesture of 'I know what you're going through'. Everyone was very moved by what the participant was saying. Unexpectedly, another participant wrote a poem of consolation, right there, on the spot, and then stood up and recited it to her. A tight hug ensues. A tight hug from someone who has also experienced loss. Everyone applauds. At the end of the circle, another participant, who finds it difficult to put his feelings into words, used his own way and resources to speak in a way that showed that he had also experienced the loss of loved ones. He offered her his own presence as a way of relieving her suffering. They left CAPS UERJ hand in hand.

The experience recounted tells of the invention of ways of caring and healing through the lived, experienced word. This creation in act, of resources for caring for those who suffer, we call here the invention of colored parachutes, in analogy to what Ailton Krenak writes in his book 'Ideas for postponing the end of the world'⁷.



With this formulation, the author makes it possible to establish a passage that goes from the terrible to the creation of creative outlets for the suffering that is already in place, without which it is not possible to escape or divert. In the case of the experiment, it was possible to see in the speeches that death had come. There's nothing more to do. It would be the 'end of worlds' for those people.

Faced with this sky that collapses over people's heads, and which often paralyzes and closes off the possibilities of getting out of mourning, Krenak points us to the possibility of creating colorful parachutes. Even in the face of the certainty that the sky is going to collapse, it is necessary to alleviate this fall by proposing resistance through imagination. Here, we propose resistance through poetry, which, in this case, functions as a certain gap that allows us to open up to mutual and collective care.

The author asks in his work:

From what place are parachutes projected? From the place where visions and dreams are possible. Another place that we can inhabit beyond this hard earth: the place of the dream⁷. (p. 32)

Thus, poetry has been this colorful parachute in which participants have been able to connect with the world they share. It's not a parallel world, but people who also experience the same sufferings and embrace, understand and heal each other. With all the lightness, no handbooks or protocols, without medication and without diagnoses, lives are expanding their subjectivities and broadening their existences, despite and with their sufferings. In this way, we continue the fight for quality healthcare, going against the backward steps that mental health has been experiencing.

Final considerations

The encounters in the territory mediated by poetry were the main result of this experience. Meetings that are born from/in everyday life, from people's memories and life experiences, not just as individual stories, but as collective experiences, in a true construction of what Ailton Krenak calls the collective subject.

From the experience, we learned that poetry heals the word, not from the biomedical and psychiatric perspective, but from the freedom to speak what you feel and what you think without being labeled in a certain diagnosis for what you say. Another learning was the importance of enabling the construction of the collective subject and (re)occupying the territory. A healthy territory is one that rubs up against differences, against the suffering of its inhabitants, and also when people also have access to and the possibility of rubbing up against this territory, which is not hostile to their presence. Finally, the creation of colorful parachutes in the field of mental health was a learning experience for building detour from the effects of the setbacks that this field has experienced, strengthening collectives and the Brazilian Psychiatric Reform itself.



Authors' contribution

All authors actively participated in all stages of preparing the manuscript.

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Conflict of interest

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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O estudo tem como objetivo narrar a experiência de confluência entre poesia, formação e cuidado em dispositivos de atenção psicossocial do Rio de Janeiro, Brasil. A partir dos conceitos de Ailton Krenak, foram construídas reflexões sobre modos de formar e cuidar mais aliados à vida comunitária. Os resultados foram apresentados pelas seguintes narrativas: “Poesia, a cura da palavra”, que apresentou como a roda de poesia devolveu o direito do discurso às pessoas em sofrimento psíquico; “Terapia de palácio” revelou a importância do sujeito coletivo e a (re) ocupação do território; e “Poesia como invenção de paraquedas coloridos” funcionou como estratégia de cuidado. A poesia serviu como estratégia de constituição de coletivos, revelando a importância de se estar, cuidar e de formar, tendo como princípio o direito à palavra e ao território.

Palavras-chave: Saúde mental. Poesia. Território sociocultural.

El objetivo del estudio es narrar la experiencia de confluencia entre poesía, formación y cuidado en dispositivos de atención psicossocial de Río de Janeiro, Brasil. A partir de los conceptos de Ailton Krenak se construyeron reflexiones sobre modos de formar y cuidar más aliados para la vida comunitaria. Los resultados fueron presentados por las siguientes narrativas: ‘Poesía, la cura de la palabra’ que presentó cómo la rueda de poesía devolvió el derecho del discurso a las personas en sufrimiento psíquico; ‘Terapia de palacio’, reveló la importancia del sujeto colectivo y la (re) ocupación del territorio; y ‘Poesía como invención de paracaídas de colores’ como estrategia de cuidado. La poesía sirvió como estrategia de constitución de colectivos, revelando la importancia de estar, cuidar y formar, teniendo como principio el derecho a la palabra y al territorio.

Palabras clave: Salud mental. Poesía. Territorio sociocultural.