

LANGUAGE AND EXILE

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ABSTRACT: The present work is dedicated to the effects of exile on the practice of the language. In order to keep the question about writing open, it adopts the perspective of the question-answer regarding the territory woven through writing. It starts from language as it colonizes speakers to address the effects of language documented in the writing of those going through the experience of exile. It goes back to the meaning of exile intrinsic to the non-existence of the sexual relation and brings together desire and writing.

Keywords: psychoanalysis; exile; language practice; writing.

RESUMO: Língua e exílio. O presente trabalho dedica-se às incidências do exílio sobre a prática da língua. Com o intuito de manter aberta a interrogação sobre a escrita, adota a perspectiva da questão-resposta a propósito do território que se tece pela via da escrita. Parte da língua enquanto ela coloniza os falantes para abordar os efeitos de linguagem documentados na escrita daqueles que atravessam a experiência do exílio. Remonta à acepção de exílio intrínseca à inexistência da relação sexual e procede à aproximação entre desejo e escrita.

Palavras-chave: psicanálise; exílio; prática da língua; escrita.

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"Baby... People hate each other as much as ever. They kill again. This for me is the most incomprehensible... And who are they? Us... They are us..." (Aleksiévitch, 2016, p.390).

BORDERS OF THE LANGUAGE

A Brazilian traveler, born in Ceará, arrives at Algiers airport in 2019. For the first time in his life, he does not need to spell his name, as it is understood right away: in that land, Aïnouz is a well-known surname. In the film *Sailor of the Mountains* by Karim Aïnouz (2021), we navigate the filmmaker's story that is woven together by contrasts, memories, and politics. In the travel diary filmed during the director's first trip to his father's city, we follow the way in which Fortaleza and Kabylia, a mountainous region located in the north of Algeria, connect.

Despite being distant, we see the Algerian War approaching Brazil in the 1960s, a dictatorship is announced, and exiles are emerging. After all, something is repeated in history; colonization, colonialism, and segregation are names of the *drive* in the culture. In addition to a discussion about the collective and the form of bond established between humans, what part or place does psychoanalysis have in the current debate about the modes of domination that are exercised over bodies in contemporary times? It is necessary to consider each experience in the singular that it implies, collecting the effects that can be heard one by one.

Decoloniality initially interrogates the colonization of language and its effects on speech. We adopt the question-answer perspective as opposed to the problem-solution pair (Milner, 2003). The question-answers do not aim to close the question, while the second pair articulates a path that is likely to lead to or fail to resolve the problem. The question-answer pair is characterized by relaunching the questioning. It is not by chance that speech demands a response (Lacan, 1953), even if this is silence. A silence that gives place to the subject's word and an enunciation, distinguishing itself from a policy of silencing. The question of decolonial or decoloniality involves answers that are differently equated, depending on the terms chosen. Here, we will focus on three terms influenced by the practice of *lalangue*: exile, language, and its treatment to enjoyment [*jouissance*]. The experience of exile will serve as an axis for us to think about a way of anchoring ourselves in life, writing as a *lalangue* practice, functioning as a homeland, an anchor that forms an edge.

WRITING AS TERRITORY

Here's the thing: I was born in Ukraine but already on the run. My parents stopped in a village that didn't even appear on the map called Tchetchelnik for my birth and came to Brazil. I arrived in Brazil when I was two months old, so calling me a foreigner is nonsense – I'm more Brazilian than Russian, obviously.

– Do you mean people call you foreign because of your accent?

Because of the R, my R... they think it's an accent, but it's not. It's a lisp! Aurora... it's tongue-tied. They could cut it, but they say it's very difficult... (Lispector, 1976/2023).

Chaya Pinkhasivna Lispector was born in Tchetchelnik, Ukraine, on December 10, 1920, a time of civil war and pogroms against the Jewish population. One of the strategies used by the Russian invaders – used to this day, as the recent publication of the interview with the writer points out – was the rape of women, with Mania Lispector, Chaya's mother, being one of the many victims. Arriving in Brazil, the land of the *Pretuguese*, Chaya becomes Clarice.

In 2022, the same region of Ukraine was invaded by Russia, starting a new war with the reissue of a policy that uses war as a means to achieve sovereignty and power exercised over bodies, lives, and deaths (Mbembe, 2018). Colonization, colonialism, and imperialism are ways of exercising a type of domination that aims to erase differences as a result of a project of political power. In Chaya's translation to Clarice, the language in which a name is coined is left behind. And when you lose a language, you lose an understanding of the world (Munduruku, 2019).

In *My homeland is the pretuguese language*, Kalaf Epalanga (2023) pays homage to Lélia Gonzalez and problematizes the colonial legacy of a Portuguese strangely named as the mother tongue since the partition of Africa marked by the Berlin Conference disregards the rich ethnolinguistic diversity of the region, establishing implacable physical borders between brotherly peoples. However, he says that it was from her mother that she learned the first words of this language, which, although imposed, plays a crucial role in the post-independence period in the construction of a possible national identity throughout the painful and long-lasting years of the Angolan civil war. In this case, Epalanga highlights that the colonist's language was taught as a powerful political tool. We will return to this point later.

Despite being born in Ukraine, Lispector describes herself as having been born in Russia, which could be explained by the fact that this specific region was part of the Russian Empire at that time. Jews from Ukraine, like Jews from other regions dominated by pre-revolutionary Russia, generally describe themselves as Russian-Jews, but not as Russian or Ukrainian. So, the question "*Are you Russian?*" was answered more or less like this: "*I was born in Russia but I'm not Russian*". Paradoxes. We, then, begin to understand the place of Yiddish, a language that is spoken at home by most Jews who find themselves living in border regions. Wandering tongue, as researcher J. Guinsburg (2022) calls it in his book about the adventures of this language that, despite not having an official homeland, survives in culture.

Franz Kafka (1912) presents Yiddish to the bourgeois public of Prague, initially unsympathetic to the language, as the youngest European language, which has no grammar, “it is changing, unstable, confusing, full of foreign words incorporated carelessly and out of curiosity”. It thus preserves the vivacity and haste with which the terms were borrowed. Furthermore, it is so close to the German in which it was born that if it were translated into that language, it would be empty. You can only understand Yiddish by “feeling it” and with your heart, he points out, indicating that they enjoy it as best they can (Kafka, 1912). Language of exiles who made deterritorialization their own territory, as Guinsburg (2022) points out.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1975/2003) highlight that Kafka absorbed traces of Yiddish in the creation of his writing, remaining in his own language as a foreigner, deterritorializing the language, becoming nomads, immigrants, and gypsies of their own language; finding in it its own point of underdevelopment, its own patois, its own third world, its own desert (ibid). Language and colonial politics are closely associated.

Epalanga (2023) hits the nail on the head on this point. When he began to live in the northern hemisphere – even though the word foreigner dictated the way he related to the word freedom – it was with the daily and exclusive use of European languages that the author realized how difficult it would be to get rid of “this colonial hangover”. Considering the contradictions of neocolonialism, he brings out the complexity of the problem:

“In transforming literature into my craft, I have made use of Pretuguese and English as a pair of tools in the hands of a mechanic to unscrew cultural screws, accepting without much questioning the label of “Lusophone literature” that is given to me” (p.14). A label that makes him feel between incomplete and ashamed for not contributing to the “construction of a decolonized Angolan literature” (ibid). Far from reaching a solution, at this point, he concludes with Frantz Fanon’s well-known phrase that situates language as a technology of power.

Russian writer Joseph Brodsky left Saint Petersburg in 1972 to live in New York. Without ever returning to his home country, he writes about exile, especially in two speeches that have an important place in his work: both are speeches *about exile* and *from exile* (Brodsky, 1988/2022). Published in the book *About Exile*, Brodsky discusses this condition that could produce a certain type of literature, as we will see. At the beginning of his speech, the writer asks us to stop for a moment to think about those who cannot or could not be present there. He enumerates: “Let’s imagine (...) Turkish *Gastarbeiters* [guest workers] wandering the streets of East Germany, not understanding or envying the reality around them. Or (...) the Vietnamese refugees in boats facing the high seas or already settled somewhere in the Australian interior. Let’s imagine Mexican immigrants crawling through the ravines of Southern California, past the border police, and entering United States territory. Or let’s imagine” ... – the list is long. It was already the case in 1987, let’s imagine in 2023.

Brodsky articulates the experiences of refuge, uprooting, and writing. By pointing out that the commonplace of this century is uprooting and inadequacy (Brodsky, 1988/2022), he indicates that both in the case of the exiled writer and the case of a political refugee, this is someone who would seek to escape “from the worst to the best” (p.13). “The truth is that it is only possible to exile yourself from tyranny in a democracy”; this is because “the old issue of exile is no longer what it used to be. It is no longer leaving civilized Rome and going to uncultured Sarmatia” – exile involves the idea that the worst is being left behind, whatever form it may have presented itself in.

Since Freud, we have admitted that traumatic experiences resonate, even reappearing in repeated dreams despite the anguish they carry, in the desire to produce the anguish that was missing. After all, it is no surprise that Brodsky comes to the conclusion that despite the physical security obtained in the “new society”, the cause of exile does not go away and sometimes ends up constituting the writer’s own career, as it is where he (re)encounters the significance of their existence. Brodsky evokes the false prophet from Dante’s *Inferno*, who has his head always turned backward and tears that flow between his shoulder blades, because even if one has the possibility of traveling, or has, in fact, traveled, one continues to write about this “familiar material from their past”, in a kind of permanent continuation of the work. If consulted in this regard, says Brodsky, “the exiled writer will most likely evoke Ovid’s Rome, Dante’s Florence and – after a brief pause – Joyce’s Dublin. In fact, we have a lineage, and it is much longer than this” (p.20/21). On the path that takes us to Ireland and the people of Dublin, a small stop is discovered on the way:

- The title *Near to the Wild Heart* is taken from Joyce if I’m not mistaken...?

- It’s by Joyce, but I haven’t read Joyce. I saw this phrase that served as an epigraph... (Lispector, 1976/2023).

“He was alone. He was abandoned, happy, near to the wild heart of life” (Lispector, 1944/1998, p.10). This is the phrase from James Joyce that Clarice chooses to open her debut novel. Despite not having read Joyce, a certain similarity between the writings that privilege the sound of the words in the openings of the debut books – *Near to the Wild Heart*, from 1944 – and *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, from 1914, draws attention. Let’s take briefly the first part of each:

“Dad’s machine went tac-tac... tac-tac-tac... The clock awoke in dustless tin-dlen. The silence dragged out zzzzzz. What did the wardrobe say? clothes-clothes-clothes. No, no. Amidst the clock, the machine, and the silence there was a listening ear, big, pink, and dead. The three sounds were linked by daylight and the creaking of the tree’s leaves that rubbed against each other radiantly” (Lispector, 1944/1998, p.13).

Now Joyce:

"Once upon a time and a very good time there was a moocow coming down along the road and this moocow that was coming down along the road met a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo" (Joyce, 1914/2018, p.9).

Joyce's work is full of sound games: "The guards went to and from opening, closing, locking, unlocking the doors. They were men dressed in dark blue and silver; they had silvery whistles, and their keys made a quick music: click, click: click, click" (ibid, p.21).

Joyce's writing draws Lacan's attention for some aspects: it is a work that affects the author's own life, and it is a practice with the letter that, as we will see, circumscribes a border to enjoyment. The issues of language and exile are essential in Joyce, and it is no surprise that he writes a book of stories called *Dubliners* and a play called *Exiles*. *Ulysses*, in fact, takes place in 1904, the year in which Joyce and his wife, Nora, leave Dublin. If the political aspects of Joyce's work used to be disregarded by commentators on the work, Amarante (2009) makes us note that these began to gain prominence from the 1970s onwards, especially in France. The translator and researcher cites the work of Phillipe Sollers in this regard:

"It was naively believed that Joyce had no political concerns because he never said or wrote anything on the subject in a lingua franca. The same old story: art on one side, political opinions on the other, as if there were a place for political opinions – or for anything related to that matter" (Amarante, 2009, emphasis added).

Another interesting point that Amarante highlights is the opinion of the Irishman Seamus Deane, who highlights the intimate relationship between writing and politics in Ireland at that time: "in Ireland, being a writer was, in a very specific sense, a linguistic problem. But it was also a political problem" (ibid). After all, the "Irish question", as Jacques Aubert (2001) calls it, is inseparable from Joyce's work. Because precisely in this case, "more than literature, what is at issue is the language" (Aubert, 2001a, p.85).

Being inhabited by language - an experience of colonization that makes a body human, with marks of affection coined in a so-called mother tongue - differs from the experience of political colonization that forces a language, aiming to tame a supposed savagery to be left behind, as Anzaldúa (2009) points out in *How to tame a wild tongue*.

Joyce brings the tension of the language in the text and plays with the misunderstanding, challenging those who try to read English as we know it. Joycean puns often include homophonic games related to misunderstanding pronunciation, as the Anglo-Irish accent transforms the way of using the English language imposed by the colonizer. In a brief parenthesis regarding the colonization of the country, considering its consequences for its people and their language, it is worth noting that the English language was imposed in Ireland on people who spoke the Gaelic language: this is the Irish language that became the language common in Joyce's time (Aubert, 2001a). As in certain regions, this remained the local language. The forced entry of English from England produces an inevitable transformation of the language, which means that *lalangue*, for Irish people, has "a specific dimension that often includes misapprehension, misunderstanding" (Aubert, 2001b, p.120). It is in this *lalangue* that Joyce stresses English domination, and criticizes the Church while mapping his land, the Dublin that can be reconstituted through his writing. "At the same time as he goes into exile, Joyce works on his origins in the language, the question of filiation, bonds, and love (Tenenbaum, 2022, p.102).

FROM EXILE WRITING TO THE CONDITION OF EXILE FROM THE SEXUAL RELATION

The experience of writing indexes an enjoyment that takes place beyond meaning. In the field of sense, the principle of pleasure is satisfied. However, the program of the pleasure principle contains, by structure, failure since happiness is not realized in its positive aspect of experiences of pleasure nor in its negative version of avoiding displeasure. This program is not destined to prevail in the microcosm nor the macrocosm, as psychoanalysis has explained since Freud.

In turn, the enjoyment [*jouissance*] program is susceptible to dragging life in the deadly direction of violence and segregation, often determinants and resulting from exile. The enjoyment [*jouissance*] program fulfills this vocation by throwing the subject into the malaise intrinsic to culture and, in particular, the culpability that manifests itself in the most tormenting sufferings and stubborn symptoms that, however, do not constitute the only ways of treating the malaise. Within the scope of psychoanalysis in intention, that is, in the experience of analysis itself, the program of desire is located irreducible both to the program of the pleasure principle and the program of enjoyment as instinctual satisfaction beyond the pleasure principle. The program of desire, as Lacan puts it, does not involve the promise of happiness, challenging the homeostasis of life. Therefore, writing appears to be more compatible with the forcing that desire implies, with the overcoming that is required of the one who travels through its circuits.

Language leaves traces in the form of an effect distinct from the effect of meaning. Writing is a trace in which an effect of language can be read (Lacan, 1972-73, p. 109). Faced with a relationship that cannot be written, the speaker is left grappling with their loneliness. This is indeed capable of being inscribed, corresponding precisely to what is written and which is not of the order of expression but of impression.

"It is no coincidence that Lacan writes his signifier as S1. This-one, which speaks of the living being from its beginnings, causes a buzz zum zum, a swarm that resonates. It resonates and echoes, cradling the body" (Tenenbaum, 2022), pointing out that the subject's inscription in the field of the Other imprints affective marks. These marks are not the result of communication, on the contrary, they come from pure nonsense and are the basis for misunderstanding. They rush into

the encounter between lalanguage and the body, through which the symbolic is linked to the real of life, that is, to the pulsional dimension.

Subjected to the bath of language since coming into the world, the subject is spoken by the Other in some language, but the language that they actually come to speak, with all that this involves in terms of enjoyment, is unique. That is why Lacan indicates that a language among others would be established through the totality of misunderstandings that insist on it, through what persists in history (Lacan, 1972). Lalanguage is the name coined by Lacan to designate this alluvium that animates the body from the marks of jouissance instilled in the speaker since being spoken by the Other. In itself, lalanguage as integral of equivocation is dead, depending on affecting the body to come to life and differentiate itself for each one.

Literary writing is distinct from the practice of the letter, although they are not mutually exclusive. As formulated by Lacan, the work with lalanguage points to a work that circumscribes jouissance. If Freud and Lacan focused on literary works over time, the objective was not to interpret the text or the author or their psychobiography. On the contrary, they used texts to highlight a work that resists interpretation, that insists as a letter, a piece of Real. From Schreber's *Memoirs* to Hoffman's fantastic tales, Freud highlights issues that interrogate the psychoanalyst's practice. If, at the foundation of psychoanalysis, the artist is the one who anticipates what the psychoanalyst discovers in the experience of the unconscious, with Lacan, the emphasis falls on what the writer knows independently of what psychoanalysis teaches. The practice of lalanguage encompasses an always unique know-how that lends itself to indexing enjoyment. This escapes the signifier and the image, demanding a treatment that exile writings testify, whether in relation to trauma or the radicalization of the loneliness intrinsic to enjoyment. This is how we can read Duras and Joyce, on a journey that goes from literature to *lituraterre*. In this intertwining between letter and language (Lacan, 1975-76/2007), it is clear that writing refers to an apparatus of jouissance.

Still, according to Lacan, the only thing we can take from Joyce's text is the relationship with jouissance written in the "lalanguage that is English" (Lacan, 1975-76/2007, p.162-3). It is a process that, by disarticulating language by dismantling sound and meaning, points to another use – and this is the *notable value* that Lacan attributes to Joyce's art.

Lacan (1972-73, p. 156) also advances a conception of exile, which refers to sexual relationships. For speakers, sexual enjoyment is marked by a flaw and suffers from an impasse because they are subjected to the language. That impasse concerns not simply the subject in this or that psychic constitution but each and every speaker. The inherent flaw in human sexuality cannot be remedied by meeting sexual partners. There is no complementarity between subject and object, the sexual relationship between partners is not written. When it comes to the speaker, the failure in the dimension of sexual enjoyment reveals itself to be inescapable. Exiled from a place they have never been (Bastos, 2020) since there is no lost communion, the speaker is spoken for inhabiting the field of the Other, in which it is parasitized by language. With words, in some language, a home is built – and with it "a singular arrangement is invented to patch up the impossible of the relationship" (Tenenbaum, 2022).

TO CONCLUDE

Submitting the question to the functioning of the question-answer implies accepting the question as a demand, to access the desire that animates it, something quite different from approaching it as a problem that demands a solution. The issue of exile treated in this way goes through the treatment of enjoyment and opens up the desire to practice lalanguage. For the authors discussed here, writing circumscribes the work with the letter, carried out between languages, from one language to another.

In this direction, the question that matters for the advancement of psychoanalysis is less the content of a text and more the way writing is engendered. It concerns the practice of lalanguage rather than the artistic status of the work. It matters to the psychoanalyst how someone can come to function as a writer, that is, how the articulation between letter and language builds a border on *jouissance*. What we can read from this is the possibility of designing, in a unique way, an anchorage in the world, as documented by the writers whose lives saw the exile inherent to the non-existence of sexual relations doubled by the experience of exile in the sense explored here of migration and exile. In this reading, the text gains another texture that allows Lacan to set a difference between *reading a letter* and *reading*.

In a specific sense of psychoanalysis, the exile results from the impossibility of writing the sexual relationship, which does not exist in the saying and cannot be said. There is a step to be taken from the impossible to the contingent, according to which the real of the sexual relationship ceases to be unwritten; that is, it submits to the regime of the encounter. Love is the quintessential way of passing from the impossible reality – which cannot be confused with the necessary – to the contingency of what ceases to be unwritten. Writing as a language practice aligns with it.

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