

REFLECTIONS ON MIGRATIONS

Escola Lacaniana de Psicanálise-RJ

INTRODUCTION

In the 20th century, in *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, Michel Foucault (1978) makes reference to the “ship of the fools¹” associating it to what Erasmus of Rotterdam had indicated as the living presence of evil among men.

It is from this critical viewpoint on men's intolerance towards men, the conception of normal and pathological based on their preconceptions, that we can find in Michel Foucault's *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (1978) first important indication for which leads us to call the search for different types of freedom as “forced uprooting”.

One of the most tragic consequences of these disruptions is the deletion of the mother tongue and traditions in future generations. It is therefore necessary to ask what happens to the subjectivity of those who have broken deep bonds with the Father/Homeland, both by choice and by imposition.

Psychoanalysis appropriates the term “mother tongue” subverting what is usually understood by this expression. But “mother tongue” is every subject's

¹ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Das-Narrenschiff>

language of exile; whether he/she is in his/her home territory or on other “borders”.

What was interdicted in speech falls under the action of repression (forgetting) and at the same time what appears in the stumbling blocks of speech are unconscious formations returning “in memory” of what cannot be remembered. However, what is not remembered can be heard in the play of signifiers in the intonation and musicality of the mother tongue, in the language of exile.

When speaking a foreign language, the unconscious signifiers that would express the original desire are erased. Perhaps for this reason, and in an attempt to maintain the bond with the mother tongue, it is frequent to learn a new language while preserving the musicality of the original language, which always makes native speakers feel strange when listening to an immigrant expressing him/herself in the language he/she has adopted.

The subject's vocation is to be a migrant, that is, to be always on the move from one place to another.

MIGRATION IN BRAZIL

Particularly in the history of migrations in Brazil, it is necessary to take into account, in addition to European and Asian immigrations demanded by the Brazilian State, those forced since the period of Discovery to the present day, passing through the three centuries of a regime based on slavery of large contingents of indigenous people and Africans.

What are the subjective consequences in facing a new wave of immigration and emigration in our territory? What are the immediate consequences of not transmitting the language and culture of origin for those who migrate from one place to another?

The undocumented and unpaid labor force was the basis of Brazil's economic growth and the weight of inequality caused by this practice is still alive in people's memory.

The end of the 19th century is perhaps the most illuminating historical moment of immigration for the understanding that work and immigration are and, have always been, interdependent.

For many, the “civilizing arms” in Brazil and other countries in the Americas excluded the coolies and privileged the white European immigrant, which underlined the non-inclusion of the huge contingent of blacks and mestizos as “free workers”.

Coolie is a term historically used to designate manual laborer from Asia, especially China and India, during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Nowadays, in English speaking countries, the term is considered a pejorative and racist nickname for people of Asian origin.

In Brazil, to “de-Africanize the nation” and “improve agriculture” another type of worker was needed, better prepared for the demands of a society that intended to have a European atmosphere. Such prejudice against the African population did nothing but repeat what had happened to the indigenous population, since times of discovery. The most tragic feature for these two important components of our people was the loss of their original languages.

It is true that a few African languages remain alive here. In territories of our Amazon more than a hundred indigenous languages survive. These are indigenous who resist and diligently preserve them for the new generations. However, there is no way to deny the sovereignty of the dominant language which is an anthropophagic Portuguese. It is made from the incorporation of

many words originating from these cultures. Such cultures are as rich as devalued in the “Brazilian” originated from this wonderful mixture.

At the beautiful tribute, “Camões”, the portuguese poet João Baptista da Silva Leitão de Almeida Garret makes us listen to the forgotten voices of the outcasts. They leave without knowing if they will return. They are the unfortunate without homeland, those who forgot their own language to integrate into a new culture by acquiring a new language. They will bear the mark of this loss forever. The beginning of Garret's poem may point out the pain quite right: “Saudade²! Bitter taste of unhappy people, delicious puncture of bitter thorn” (ALMEIDA GARRET, 1963).

The issue of Amazonian languages, especially the “General Language”, raises interesting discussions about the concept of mother tongue, most of all in Psychoanalysis. In 1720, Portuguese politics had opted for the General Language of the Amazon and the General Language of São Paulo, originated from Tupinambá, to facilitate daily work, especially in the Amazon region. At this point, the King of Portugal in 1722 demanded that the Carmelites, missionaries and Franciscans learn the “language of work”, which Jesuits had already done extensively.

It took some time, almost one and a half century, for the Portuguese language to be definitively adopted by the majority of colony members.

The Amazon province was the last region of the country to have a population with Portuguese as their mother tongue and this was not due to violence but to the international division of labor in rubber production. This fact caused migration of more or less 500,000 people from the Northeast (at the time considered “northernists”) enabled in Portuguese to read and write. They

² Feeling of missing something or someone.

went there between 1872 and 1910, with the intention of finding work and the right to a small piece of land where they could settle down.

The issue of mother tongue – which has been important and even fundamental for the integration of the Amazon region with the rest of the Brazilian State – and the fact that not even the Portuguese who came from Portugal were really enabled in writing, can be illustrated by the experience of English naturalist and explorer Henry Bates.

While navigating the lower Amazon in 1849, whose vessel housed a mixed crew of Tapuio and Portuguese men, Bates cites the case of a young man from Trás-os-Montes. This guy was illiterate, while several Indians there were well enabled in General Language and Portuguese. This young man tells that at the age of 10 he left his village, Póvoa de Varzim, in the north of Portugal and went to Pará. He stayed there for nine years, already having complete command of the General Language. However, one day he found several well-preserved books in a basket. He says: “When I turned 12, I was ashamed for not knowing how to read” (BESSA FREIRE, 2004, p.221). And it was upon learning Garret's poem “Camões” that the illiterate Portuguese young man was able, trying to decode what was written there, “to put an end to his shame”.

This young man, Francisco Gomes de Amorim (1827-1891), started to organize collective reading sessions for tapuios, blacks, mulattos and other illiterate people. He took European stories to those who would not have access to them, except by a good storyteller. Therefore, as he had gone through illiteracy, he became the first Portuguese writer to make the Amazon his granary of instruction. He also spread, from far away Alenquer, in the lower Amazon, all the richness and integrative importance of literature.

VICISSITUDES OF A NEW IMMIGRATION WAVE

Under the title “Why War?”, we find the correspondence between Freud and Einstein, published in 1933 (Brazilian Standard Edition, Vol XXII). This publication is already in the period of great tension in Europe, a few years before the beginning of the Second World War.

In one of the letters, Einstein asks Freud if it would be possible to avoid wars. He was referring to conflict among nations, religious and racial intolerance; the uncontrolled action of the Death Drive, with no possibility of symbolic mediation.

Einstein had attested to the failure of science, intellectuality, and finally, a legal and supranational ideal.

Freud responded by saying that violence has always been present in the relationship among men: first by the imposition of brute force, then by weapons and finally, through laws established in a collectivity which impose the power to decide on the individual on his/her destiny. The disproportionate power and *jouissance* in subjugating always prevailed over vocation for peace, intended in the civilizing process.

Yuval Noah Harari, in his book “21 Lessons for the 21st Century”, 2018, states that “although globalization has reduced differences among cultures across the planet, it has at the same time made it much easier to meet strangers and their oddities. It is through sublimatory paths that many immigrants seek to create contours for the violence suffered. But what to do when a path is blocked? How to overcome horror and desolation?

At Mafrak Desert, between Syria and Jordan, in a refugee temporary camp, eighty thousand people are trying to survive a war, that was initiated at the Arab Spring, which began with protests against the Bashar al-Assad regime and adopted a religious nature.

Interdictions mobilize the desire to know. As an immigrant subject, the way and place of settlement where he retains traits that, even though being strange, make the immigrant subject evoke something familiar.

Leaving the land of origin always produces uprooting effects with traces that return on descendants, sometimes in a profoundly enigmatic way.

There are situations that cover the voluntary displacement. It is in these situations that immigrant drama is placed, as these individuals flee from the most diverse unbearable situations. They are often unable to speak about the reason that mobilized them towards other territories, especially if the cause was a situation of horror, war, family incompatibility, etc. Immigrants want to forget the pain they had suffered.

Forgetfulness brings consequences and the silenced marks return in subsequent generations, causing numerous symptoms.

The hypothesis of many melancholic states, psychosis and limit situations can be raised, originating directly or indirectly from these forced displacements. Language, traditions, friends are abandoned, in short, everything that took decades and generations to be built is left behind.

If someone cannot be safe, it is necessary to leave, as survival drives the subjects, even without knowing the risks.

The need to guarantee a future for self and family leads man to face “seas never sailed before”.

When speaking to another about the own suffering, the deadly silence is broken. The possibility of some acceptance is created. Addressing the reason for the pain of existing by speech is also give voice to the unconscious speech. It is to create a way of separation between the subject and the object

of their anguish, even if in the return of what was left speechless, it is not possible to find any representation for whatever remained shut up. Exiled from his land, the subject only has his/her speech as a memory and his/her language as his/her homeland.

“[...] memory, in order for it to work well, needs incessant training: if remembrances are not evoked continuously by conversations with friends, they disappear. The exileds, gathered in colonies of compatriots, tell each other the same stories to exhaustion, which become unforgettable [...] Therefore, nostalgia does not intensify the activity of memory, it does not stimulate remembrances, it is enough to itself, to its own emotion, so totally absorbed in its own suffering.” (KUNDERA, 2015, p.26)

Those who leave their homeland carry the question "what if I stayed?" in their luggage. When living at another country, along with the difficulties in learning the new language to integrate into the current culture, there is a feeling of guilt disguised as nostalgia.

A demanding superego imposes on foreigners the obligation of excellence in any choice, whether at work or in the family. For immigration to be valid, it is essential to remake the name in the country of adoption. Only success can secretly validate the exile and at the same time redeem the subject of what he has lost. Isn't this the point of repetition in the entire history of mankind immigration?

The country that receives these citizens from all over, offering their labor force, culture and, above all, their descendants should have a reminder. The country needs to remember that this is the human vocation: to immigrate to live, sow other fields and reap new fruits.

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