

Out of place: the “overly human” state of Edward Said

Rafaela Brandão Alves^{a*} 
 Cláudio Roberto Vieira Braga^b 
 Daniela Scheinkman Chatelard^a 

^a University of Brasilia, Institute of Psychology, Graduate Program in Clinical Psychology and Culture Brasília, DF, Brazil

^b University of Brasilia, Department of Literary Theory and Literatures, Graduate Program in Literature, Brasília, DF, Brazil

Abstract: This article discusses the experience of exile as the reproduction of a structuring state of the human being, the original helplessness. To work on the issue of exile we have to resort to Edward Said, through his theoretical production and his autobiographical work *Out of place: a memoir*, as well as the contributions of Maria José de Queiroz on the evils of absence. Next, we cover the notion of original helplessness from the psychoanalytic propositions of Sigmund Freud. Finally, we articulate exile and helplessness with the dialectical movement, proposed by Octávio Paz, between solitude and creation, to think of writing as a possible outlet for the state of helplessness that is upgraded to the subject's life.

Keywords: loneliness, exile, helplessness, anguish, Edward Said.

Introduction

*Solitude, that dread goddess and mater saeva
 cupidinum, encircles and besets him, ever more
 threatening, more violent, more heart breaking—
 but who to-day knows what solitude is?*
 (Nietzsche, 1878)

This article investigates the theme of exile from Edward Said's perspective, bringing it closer to the notion of original helplessness in Sigmund Freud. The autobiographical text of Said (1999), *Out of place: a memoir*, is brought into discussion in order to relate, through his testimony, exile and the human condition of helplessness thought from psychoanalysis. In fact, this work puts into question whether the experience of exile reproduces the constituent helplessness of the human nature. In order to try to answer such a question, firstly it approaches Said's notion of exile, problematizing the distinctions between real exile and metaphorical exile. The notion of helplessness for psychoanalysis will be then discussed and, finally, these experiences will be related to what Octavio Paz (1950/2014) states about solitude in the book *The labyrinth of solitude*.

Therefore, in order to investigate the experience of exile, the proposal is to enable dialogue between two fields of knowledge, psychoanalysis and literature. Words and feelings used by theorists who study exile draw attention, especially those who experienced such

a condition, and wrote about it. Edward Said stands out for articulating, with his style, the painful experience of being far away from home with theory, or better saying, he has produced knowledge that to date is a source of reference for thinking about the condition of exile. For this reason, some terms he used such as solitude, abandonment, nostalgia, isolation, and absence lead to think of the resemblance between this description and what psychoanalysis calls original helplessness.

This experience was theorized by Freud (1895/1996, 1927/1996, 1930/1996) from his practice, and it is present throughout his work, as in the initial text *Project for a scientific psychology*, dated 1895; in *Future of an illusion*, dated 1927, and *Civilization and its discontents*, written in 1930. This experience is configured as the human condition of the subject, which means that, from birth, human beings are in a state of dependence on the other, in which it is imperative that someone feeds, cares and desires them for their survival. The human baby (Lacan, 1956-1957 / 1995) is different from all others in the animal kingdom; human beings do not have the genetic information that instinctively directs them to walk, eat and hunt, and need the intervention from the other. Humans therefore carry a radically premature condition that makes them completely and invariably subdued to others.

In this sense, if the primary condition of absolute dependence on the other leads humans to the need for his presence, on the other hand, it also leads them to helplessness in the case of his absence. Thus, the subject may, in experiencing the absence of

* Corresponding address: brandaoalvespsi@gmail.com



the other, his fellow creature and familiar, undergo the experience of original helplessness again – for example, when we lose a loved one, when we find ourselves alone or lost in our homes, or when we experience loneliness in its hardest form: exile from our home.

For what reason is exile considered the hardest reproduction of the experience of helplessness? It is because in exile the subject is submitted to the unavoidable imperative of not being able to return home. This is what distinguishes, for example, the exile from the one who studies abroad, since the exchange student is there by choice, he/she has a return date and, above all, permission to do so; on the other hand, the exile is compulsorily sent to another country or makes this choice, but in a forced way between life and death. It is what is currently witnessed regarding the refugee issue, in which people are obliged to leave their homelands, victims of state abandonment, international conflicts in their territories and bad living conditions, when they have necessarily to choose between life and death.

Thus, by considering it a group phenomenon, it is possible to find similarity between contemporary migrations and rural and religious exodus occurred centuries ago, such as diasporas. Nevertheless, the migration of peoples, such as the Syrians and Lebanese, is an example of the forced destiny imposed on such people who have to abandon the most familiar in search for survival. There are also political exiles, such as Mario Benedetti, Eduardo Galeano, Luis Carlos Prestes and Paulo Freire, but they are exiles of a global oppression policy.

Several modes of displacement are therefore studied by exile theory,¹ such as exiles, expatriates, diasporas, migrants, refugees, political refugees, and each one carries a particularity. Some schema can be created depending on the variable analyzed, that is, space and time, number of people, objective, and ethnicity; however, it is not the objective of this study to detail each of them, but to find what unites them, despite the differences. Therefore, either compulsory or voluntary, expropriation of what is familiar to the subject leads him to the first experience related to the lack and the strange.

In order to investigate the resemblance between exile and original helplessness, the start point will be the recollections of Said (1999) and his description of the years of exile from his homeland, as illustration and example of how this painful experience can be beautifully represented by literary writing. The use of literary creation as a strategy for elaborating solitude in exile is also worked by Said (2003, 2006) and will be the subject of this article, since psychoanalysis and the author consider the state of suffering not the

finishing point of the individual, but a means of trying new possibilities.

According to Said (2003), in “Reflections on Exile”, the “out of place” state is an experience possible to every subject. We can find our history, our image, our thoughts, our politics, and our government strange without leaving our homeland. But we can also live in this state of outsiders while actually on foreign soil, without the warmth of our mother tongue. However, what psychoanalysis comes to show is that, contrary to expectations, this experience is not merely a conscious choice, but the effect of an anguishing rapture wherever the individual is.

Thus, it is natural to think that being “out of place” is an overly-human condition. This paper refers to the text of Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, Too Human*, written in 1878, precisely because in this work the philosopher addresses the free spirit, the one who questions moral and absolute truths. And in order to be that spirit, it is necessary to have above all courage and curiosity to face the physical and ideological solitude of being against the current thinking. According to Nietzsche (1878/2014):

An involuntary onward impulse rules them with the mastery of command; a will, a wish are developed to go forward, anywhere, at any price; a strong, dangerous curiosity regarding an undiscovered world flames and flashes in all their being. “Better to die than live *here*” — so sounds the tempting voice: and this “here,” this “at home” constitutes all they have hitherto loved. A sudden dread and distrust of that which they loved, a flash of contempt for that which is called their “duty,” a mutinous, wilful, volcanic-like longing for a far away journey, strange scenes and people, annihilation, petrification, a hatred surmounting love, perhaps a sacrilegious impulse and look backwards . . . (Nietzsche, 1878/ 2014, p. 104)

Putting oneself in the place of the foreigner, the nonconformist, the critic and the intellectual, as proposed by Said (2003), is to be a free spirit that, despite the price of leaving home and conformism, has in exchange the freedom to know different ways that will not be traversed by the one who takes root in “home.” The term “home” can represent family, home, homeland and, in a metaphorical sense, the crystallized ideas that prevent the individuals from looking beyond the walls of their status quo. The following topic will discuss exile as a real and metaphorical experience, based on the text *Os males da ausência ou a literatura de exílio* [The evils of absence or the exile literature] by Maria José de Queiroz (1998).

The pathos of absence

Man has become culturally accustomed to feeling home, community, nation or homeland as safe spaces,

¹ This overview is meticulously made by Samantha Viz Quadrat (2001) in the book *Caminhos cruzados: história e memória dos exílios latino-americanos no século XX* [Crossed paths: history and memory of Latin American exiles in the twentieth century.]

so that being outside that realm is the same as being unprotected and defenseless. Being banished from his city was one of the most tragic punishments a man could receive, for besides being barred from returning home, he would live thinking of the lost home wherever he was. For the feeling of rootlessness experienced by such people, Queiroz (1998) proposes the expression "evils of exile," which would be a field within the evils of absence, the largest expression of this isolation.

The term exile comes from the Latin *exilium*, derived from *exsilire* – *ex-salire* or to leap out. It was historically configured as a punishment for any offense committed, and therefore a sanction that could affect any citizen. According to Queiroz (1998), exile can be either imposed or voluntary. As an act of obedience to external agents, sovereign or superior interests, as well as an act of conscience, as an intimate and irrefutable choice. This most intimate way of living in exile can even be experienced through introspection.

Queiroz (1998) extracted from the experience of some young people what she would call 'evils of absence.' The author noted that as they left their homes to study, they were struck by a desolate sadness and, when returning home, they had their condition suddenly improved. According to the author, characteristic traces of this depression state would be obsession with return, nostalgic depression and, especially, the fact that it was enough to tighten ties with these young people and hear them to talk about their home memories for the suffering symptoms to disappear. Another important element refers to language, as it also becomes a metaphor for the native land, extrapolating what was once only an automatic means of communication: "Only those who are deprived of its use, in the intimacy of everyday life, know how to estimate its lack" (Queiroz, 1998, p. 57).

For Queiroz (1998), the most distressing for those who leave their homes, voluntarily or coercively, is the fear of return, because the land left will never be the same, just as the man who left can no longer return as the same. There is therefore a mismatch between what was and what will be, an irrevocable loss is established and there is nothing that can be done but talk about it.

According to Said (2003), exile stimulates us to think about, but experiencing it is great suffering. His work can then be read as an effect of the coercion suffered in his exile experience. He was born in Jerusalem, grew up in Egypt and Lebanon, and as a young man moved to the United States and no longer returned to his homeland, just to visit it. Said (2003) expresses with poetic words the loss of what was left behind with exile:

It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted. And while it is true that literature and history contain heroic, romantic, glorious, even

triumphant episodes in an exile's life, these are no more than efforts meant to overcome the crippling sorrow of estrangement. The achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind for ever. (Said, 2003, p. 46)

There is therefore a separation that cannot be reconstituted. Due to this, Said (2003) is concerned with the incorporation by the literature of this condition of terminal loss as an enriching theme, trivializing the suffering of those who experience what the reader just reads, "to think of the exile informing this literature as beneficially humanistic is to banalize its mutilations, the losses it inflicts on those who suffer them, the muteness with which it responds to any attempt to understand it as 'good for us'" (p. 47).

This Saidian prerogative can be interpreted as a consequence of the isolation experienced by the one who experiences exile, since, if there he is part of a whole, excluded from a nation, that same nation or group cannot access what he has experienced when deprived of the other. We find here something that is important to psychoanalysis, the particularity of the subject. Even though the possibility of sharing with the other is recognized, there is a limit to this, there is something that the identification process cannot cover and that will be unique to the subject. In the words of Said (2003): "Clutching difference like a weapon to be used with stiffened will, the exile jealously insists on his or her right to refuse to belong" (p. 55).

The same meaning can be seen when Said (2003) approaches the impossibility of finding the same language to deal with exile and nationalism, since there is an insurmountable gap separating both, notably the same gap that causes the pathos of exile and the evils of absence. For him, the exile will always be a displaced person who resents those who feel belonging to something: "I envied my sisters at Cairo's English School, the comfort of being together and at home, the solidity, as I imagined it, of well-furnished certainty, all of which were going to be denied me except during brief returns for the summer" (Said, 1999, p. 188).

However, in the author's positioning, a resistance can be noted: he chooses to remain a foreigner, finding in it a way of guaranteeing his own identity, of writing his difference. In other words, since exile is a condition imposed on the subject, he can make this state of marginality an exercise of freedom and of construction of a thought detached from mass. Therefore:

While perhaps speaking of the pleasures of exile seems to be peculiar, there are some positive things to be said on a few of its conditions. Seeing "the entire world as a foreign land" makes possible originality of vision. Most people are aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this

plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions [...]. (Said, 2003, p. 59)

Thinking about this marginal action that has no compromises with order and with the maintenance of imposed ideologies, and on the contrary aims to shake the conventional and move the state of things, we think of the intellectual figure proposed by Said (2006) in the Reith Lectures. According to him, "One task of the intellectual is the effort to break down the stereotypes and reductive categories that are so limiting to human thought and communication" (Said, 2006, p. 10). That is, this intellectual can be an exile in his own homeland, and there is no need to cross borders for him to free himself from the truths built by his culture.

It is a position that invariably leads to isolation and rejection of the community in which he lives. It reflects the inner state of the intellectual who has never felt at home, always in conflict with his environment, always in disagreement with reality. It is exile that did not actually occur, but which is similar to the exile's condition of never adapting; it is metaphysical or metaphorical exile:

Exile for the intellectual in this metaphysical sense is restlessness, movement, constantly being unsettled, and unsettling others. You cannot go back to some earlier and perhaps more stable condition of being at home; and, alas, you can never fully arrive, be at one with your new home or situation. (Said, 2006, p. 61)

A shift in the understanding of exile and exiled can be observed. It is possible to see possibility of an irrevocable, painful and liberating condition arising from an irrevocable and painful condition. So the exiled can, in the face of this hopeless condition, sign his identity, his political position; in short, he can produce elaborations in the face of so many experiences of loss. As Said (2006) points out, exile is not a total cut with the place of origin, for there is no erasure of the memory of what was left behind; on the contrary, the exiled must tolerate the memory that he is an exiled and is far from where he would like to be.

Elaborating a state of suffering does not mean to erase or forget its cause, but to recognize that cause and give it new contours, new directions and meanings. This experience of elaborating absence, loss, and solitude can occur in many ways, and writing is one of them. The text of Said (1999), *Out of place: a memoir*, is a fine testimony to this arduous process of elaboration, and it will be addressed in the next topic.

Out of place

Said (1999) begins his autobiographical text with the words "Out of place is a record of an essentially lost or forgotten world" (p. 11), and with them brings the reader the nostalgic tone contained in their lyrics. He, newly diagnosed with a rare cancer, is stimulated by the

revelation of his future death to record his memoirs, to redeem the time that has passed even if it is forgotten and/or lost. Death is the surest destiny of all men, we know it is defined from the beginning, but, even so, we are unable to apprehend it completely. Freud (1923/2007), in the text "The Ego and the Id," states that death is always negative in the psyche: it is an event that, as much as it is spoken, is impossible to be represented, precisely because, when experienced, it is too late.

On the other hand, the impossibility of representing death does not mean that we cannot try to do so. The testimony of Said (1999) is an example of this attempt, as it can be seen in the following passage: "My memory proved crucial to my being able to function at all during periods of debilitating sickness, treatment, and anxiety" (Said, 1999, p. 6). It is noted that, for him, recollecting the lived moments was as a necessity, an urgency to reduce the temporal distance between the present and the past.

He finds himself writing a letter to his deceased mother, as the desire to meet her again disregarded the fact of her death. Writing, therefore, holds this power of creating other realities, rescuing images, bringing to the present a lost presence; it is a way of investing in a time other than just that which was lived. Thus, according to the author, the book of memoirs became his refuge for the acute moments of suffering due to the disease and nearness to death: "I was therefore rarely in a hurry to get a section done, though I had a precise idea of what I planned to put in it. Curiously, the writing of this memoir and the phases of my illness share exactly the same time" (Said, 1999, p. 166).

In his memoirs, it is possible to glimpse life in motion. Said was always moving or traveling. Therefore, mobility, a striking feature of his way of life, is both painful and desired. In his travels, however short-distance, he carries with him a disproportionate amount of objects or clothes, because he secretly fears not to return: "What I've since discovered is that despite this fear I fabricate occasions for departure, thus giving rise to the fear voluntarily (Said, 1999, p. 167). Fear thus does not paralyze him and he keeps moving, but the threat of not being able to return is certainly a remnant of another departure without return.

Something about the invisibility of the departed, his being missing and perhaps missed, in addition to the intense, repetitious, and predictable sense of banishment that takes you away from all that you know and can take comfort in, makes you feel the need to leave because of some prior but self-created logic, and a sense of rapture. In all cases, though, the great fear is that departure is the state of being abandoned, even though it is you who leave. (Said, 1999, pp. 167-68)

The experience of departing, of leaving what is known towards something completely unknown and

strange is, first of all, an experience of abandonment. Interestingly, this conception shifts the place of the agent of action, the one who departs, to the place of object, the one that suffers the departure. The state of abandonment follows no factual logic, but follows the subject’s experience of feeling abandoned by the other, the one who let him go. This feeling is reported by him when he says that each return to the United States meant a new separation, as if it were the first: “Each year the late-summer return to the United States opened old wounds afresh and made me reexperience my separation from her as if for the first time—incurably sad, desperately backward-looking, disappointed and unhappy in the present (Said, 1999, p. 168). Said felt “out of place,” wanted to be close to his mother, entwined by his love and not unwillingly separated from her.

Curiously, after 37 years living away from his mother, family and home, he still feels far from home, and his current residence remains provisional. Through these words, more than simply seeing, it is possible to feel the relevance of the family home to a subject. Home, as previously said, is figurative of safety, stability, and especially, belonging. In this sense, the rescued recollections are a re-elaboration of the traumatic experience of departure and the separation he experienced: “Then, nothing. Why, I remember asking myself in the silence, had I been sent so far away to this dreadful, godforsaken place?” (Said, 1999, p. 175).

He wanted to go home, his time zone was still in tune with the lost city, he missed the food, was uncomfortable with the weather and his mother’s absence, since her absence meant abandonment and solitude: “Sometimes I would pull out one of my massive suitcases from under the bed, leaf through the albums or letters and begin gently to cry [...]” (Said, 1999, p. 180). However, even against his will, the American rhythm, routine, time zone and English language were filling his daily life, slowly eroding his recollections of Cairo. Even his name was Americanized to “Ed” Said.

Said finds intellectual activity as a way out of suffering, using reading and writing as an escape from exclusion and non-belonging. But he knew that whatever he did, he would remain an outsider. As a foreigner, he created a new perception of the intellectual: the importance of his marginal status. Finally, the figure of the intellectual proposed by Said (1993/2006) is far from being merely a theoretical creation, but rather the result of his experience.

Given what has been discussed so far, it is possible to conclude that the experience of exile, the factual experience, greatly overflows the possibilities of representation by the subject. He must build other ways that will help him to signify the trauma of separation and solitude. They are therefore overwhelming feelings that disconcert and disorient those who feel them. Together with the notion of metaphorical exile (Said, 2006) and inner exile (Queiroz, 1998), it is possible to infer the

existence of a type of exile that is beyond and beneath that factually lived. Exile goes back to the early life of the subject, and it is in the structuring experience of original helplessness.

Overly human

One of Freud’s great contributions is the presence of the infant in man. This means that the first experiences are lasting and permanent and will therefore have effects against the conscious will of the subject. The way he relates to the other, unconscious productions, forgetfulness, lapses, dreams and symptoms represent the way his psyche has defended itself and defends itself from an irrevocable condition: the radical lack of the object of the drive, which in other words can be understood as the fundamental radical lack of the psyche. This lack is what puts us in dependence on the other and that ultimately points to the helplessness of the human being.

Unlike animals, which have an instinctual inscription that directs them to hunting and reproduction, the human is devoid of this knowledge. A priori, the individual does not possess it and is not able to survive without help of the other. This means that when we come to the world, we depend on someone who feeds us, packs us, and, especially, wants us. Therefore, caregivers need to do more than simply offering babies the satisfaction of vital needs, such as hunger and thirst. The baby must be the object of desire, that is, it is necessary to expect something from him and he should suppose something. It is, therefore, in the dialectic of the other’s desire that the subject’s desire can come, first by alienating himself in an attempt to unveil what this other expects from him and, in a second moment, separating himself by constructing a response to the enigma of this desire (Lacan, 1964/2008).

This enigma will certainly never be solved, since man’s desire is never completely satisfied. There is always something that keeps him moving, looking for something more and different from what was found. But the *infans* does not know it and should not know it, because in the condition of helplessness, both biologically and psychically, he offers himself to the other as an object of desire, of investment, seeking his way of survival. Freud (1895/1996) addressed this inaugural condition in one of his early texts, “Project for a scientific psychology”:

At early stages the human organism is incapable of achieving this specific action. It is brought about by extraneous help, when the attention of an experienced person has been drawn to the child’s condition by a discharge taking place along the path of internal change [e.g., by the child’s screaming]. This path of discharge thus acquires an extremely important secondary function - viz., of bringing about an understanding with other people; and the original helplessness of human beings is thus the primal source of all moral motives. (p. 370)

Specific action is any attempt in the external environment that brings some satisfaction, such as putting the finger in the mouth. In the early days, the baby is capable of nothing; he has no knowledge and control over his body, hence the need for the other to promote this action for him. But in order for the other – the one with the role of the caregiver – to give help expected by the baby, he should somehow communicate his state of urgency. For this, he screams and cries:

We see, then, an established dynamic unfold between the cry of the infant, who experiences helplessness on the one hand, and on the other hand, the response of the other already introduced into the symbolic world, as the word bearer. The other answers, while situated within the language, what configures, in this dynamic, which is specifically human, that is, the exercise of symbolic exchange. (Torres Neto, 2011, pp. 62-63)

If help is initially a matter of survival for the *infans*, it acquires another function: to bond with the other and promote entry into language. Certainly, there is no a temporal disposition here, where first the satisfaction of necessity occurs and then the entrance into language; they are concomitant movements, since the demand to the other already implies something beyond the object of necessity (Lacan, 1957-1958/1999). This is what Freud refers to in the passage above, when he mentions moral motives, because, according to him, we give in to our impulses for depending on each other and, therefore, we are guided by civilizing morality (Freud, 1927/1996). Thus, the original helplessness is in the foundations of a civilization at the same time it accompanies all the development of the subject, constituting itself as an ever-present threat, threat of loss of the other and of solitude. As a consequence, the subject seeks figures that represent protection and safety:

As we already know, the terrifying impression of helplessness in childhood aroused the need for protection — for protection through love — which was provided by the father; and the recognition that this helplessness lasts throughout life made it necessary to cling to the existence of a father, but this time a more powerful one. (Freud, 1927/1996, p. 39)

In the text “The Future of an Illusion” (Freud, 1927/1996), from which the previous quote was taken, the psychoanalyst investigates the origins of religion, so the most powerful father to which he refers is God. From this, it is possible to see another instance that is also heavily invested by culture as a protector, in the case of the nation, the state. That is, state and homeland are symbolic representations that offer man the imaginari-

ness of a family and a protective father. They are cultural constructions internalized by the subjects and expressed in a particular way in each psyche.

The moments of loss and separation experienced by the subject denounce their structuring helplessness and are accompanied by an overwhelming feeling: anguish. That is, helplessness marks a radical lack, signaled by anguish as a warning for defending himself against it, as well as supporting it: “the state of helplessness becomes the prototype of the traumatic situation” (Torres Neto, 2011, pp. 68-69). In other words, in situations where we lose the object of desire, as in exile, we re-experience the traumatic helplessness, which is the ultimate representation of the lack of guarantees of our existence.

Interestingly, when Freud (1855/1996) tells us about the original helplessness, he also tells us about the complex of a fellow creature, *Nebenmensch*. Thus, while the subject encounters the lack that structures him, the partial experience of satisfaction with the object, he does not encounter the absolute void. That is, this complex of memory traces thought by the psychoanalyst is simultaneously presence and absence, familiarity and strangeness. The very notion of *das Unheimlich* (1919/2019), which he discussed years later, is indebted to this first dual experience of absence/presence and familiar/strange, and the term he uses to say of the first strange/familiar is *Fremde*. Lacan (1959-1960/1991) reinforces this distinction between *Fremde* and *Unheimlich*, since this is already an unfolding of *Fremde*, that is, re-updating and elaboration over the former.

In the same sense, when we say that the experience of exile updates the experience of helplessness, we are saying that the feeling of loss, anguish, confusion, abandonment, and solitude comes when experiencing the alien, therefore doubly strange and familiar. The strange is non-belonging to the new culture and the familiar, to the nostalgia that accompanies the subject in exile and even leads him to revive traces of the similar in the new culture, or drives him to try to revive it by means of memory, by writing. As Denise Rollemberg (1999) tells us in *Exílio: entre raízes e radares* [Exile: between roots and radars], daily exile is an experience of strangeness and rootlessness, but also of discovering new possibilities and reunions.

Two inevitable events in a man’s life radically mark his overly human condition of helplessness: birth and death. The trauma of birth is the first and forever model of separation, of cutting with the other. Death is not different from birth; it is also a sign of a fatal mismatch. In this interval, countless repetitions of separation tell the subject of their insufficiency and inconsistency: “The anguish that every finite being feels in the face of death and nothingness defines the essential condition of human existence” (Rocha, 1999, p. 340).

It is in the painful experience of finitude and lack of guarantees that man has access to his innermost being, his radical uniqueness. Thus, entirely alone and helpless, man is immediately confronted with the feeling of helplessness, the lack of resources in the face of this state of pure anguish. But this tragic scene does not need to stop there; helplessness also opens paths for otherness when the subject raises an outcry to the other (Rocha, 1999). Lacan (1969-1970/1992) also addresses this powerlessness in view of the only truth to which we have access, castration, that is, the constituent lack that makes us originally and structurally unparalleled, saying in the seminar *The reverse of psychoanalysis*: "I do not want to set them too arduous a test. And when I allude to their impotence, which is therefore my own, it means that at that level we are all brothers, and we have to sort ourselves out as best we can" (Lacan, 1969-1970/1992, p. 173).

This tie to the other can also be expressed in writing. Letters and words that strive to represent a separation, a loss never forgotten. Thus, the book of memoirs of Said (1999) is his singular attempt to rescue the past and, together with it, the lost homeland: "All of us, in our own way, are always looking for utopias in the hope that they will bring us back to Paradise lost" (Ceccarelli, 2009, p. 35). In the words of Said (1999):

I've thought in fact that this book in some fundamental way is all about sleeplessness, all about the silence of wakefulness, and, in my case, the need for conscious recollection and articulation that have been a substitute for sleep. (p. 166)

Finally, *Paradise Lost* of Said (1999) is a complex set of reminiscences that include his mother's embrace, Cairo's food, companionship of his father, his lost homeland, and Jerusalem, all elements of this self-constituting particularity. However, it is still illusory the belief that nation, country, mother or father can save us from the anguish of separation that, as we have seen, is inherent in man. Solitude is his condition of existence, no matter how much it is surrounded by a family or a nation.

The labyrinth of solitude

Octávio Paz (1950/2014) tells us, in the book *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, that "To live is to be separated from what we were in order to approach what we are going to be in the mysterious future. Solitude is the profoundest fact of the human condition" (p. 189), thus poetically translating the elaborations undertaken so far. Solitude is man's ultimate condition: he is the only being who feels alone, the only one whose existence is realized in another: "Man is nostalgia and a search for communion. Therefore, when he is aware of himself

he is aware of his lack of another, that is, of his solitude" (Paz, 1950/2014, p. 189). According to him, we are condemned to live alone and, concomitantly, to go through solitude to reconnect with each other. Solitude is, therefore, an encounter with oneself and the concomitant desire to meet one another:

Popular language reflects this dualism by identifying solitude with suffering. The pangs of love are pangs of solitude. Communion and solitude are opposite and complementary. . . . Solitude is both a sentence and an expiation [sic]. It is a punishment, but it is also a promise that our exile will end. All human life is pervaded by this dialectic. (Paz, 2014, pp. 189-190)

Man's life takes place in dialectical movements: rupture and union, separation and reconciliation, life and death, solitude and communion. Said shows us this movement both in the writing of his memoirs and in his theoretical-political production. He provokes life and bears the nearness of death with his recollections and with the figure of the intellectual. It is in solitude that he finds communion with the collective, addressing and publishing his memories and reflections:

Death and birth are solitary experiences. We are borne alone and we die alone. Nothing is as serious as this first plunge into the solitude that is to be born, except this second fall into the unknown which is to die. The experience of death soon becomes consciousness of dying. (Paz, 1950/2014, p. 190)

If it is not possible for the subject to escape from the experience of solitude, separation, and absence of those who he loves, if the feeling of safety is yet another illusion built for his own comfort, then consciousness of that solitude is a direction given to a state that could be paralyzing. Indeed, transforming the threat of death into recognition of death is similar to the process Said experienced in his writing years, for recognizing his status as exiled without denying or deceiving him, he built himself as one of the great intellectuals of our time.

Such intellectuality is obviously presented in the Saidian sense, since, as a stranger to himself and his own culture, he was able to perceive the ideological strings that oppress a population without its acknowledgment. Or, as the free spirit of Nietzsche (1878/2014), the wanderer who discovered in mobility the freedom of looking and of thinking, and by wandering experienced the joy of transience. Mobility is, therefore, the movement between anguish and comfort, between solitude and communion, and finally, between inertia and creation, as we could understand from Said.

Fora do lugar: o estado “demasiadamente humano” de Edward Said

Resumo: Este artigo discute a experiência de exílio como a reprodução de um estado estruturante do ser humano, o desamparo originário. Para trabalharmos a temática do exílio recorreremos a Edward Said e sua produção teórica e de sua obra autobiográfica *Fora do lugar: memórias* (1999), e às contribuições de Maria José de Queiroz sobre os males da ausência. Em seguida, abarcamos a noção de desamparo originário a partir das proposições psicanalíticas de Sigmund Freud. Por último, articulamos exílio e desamparo com o movimento dialético, proposto por Octávio Paz, entre solidão e criação, para pensarmos a escrita como uma saída possível ao estado de desamparo que se atualiza na vida do sujeito.

Palavras-chave: solidão, exílio, desamparo, angústia, Edward Said.

Pas à sa place: l'état «trop humain» d'Edward Said

Résumé: Le présent article propose de discuter de l'expérience de l'exil comme la reproduction d'un état structurant de l'être humain, l'impuissance originelle. Pour travailler sur le thème de l'exil nous avons recours à Edward Said, à travers sa production théorique et son travail autobiographique *Out of place: memories*, et à ainsi que les contributions de Maria José de Queiroz sur les maux de l'absence. Ensuite, nous couvrons la notion d'impuissance originelle des propositions psychanalytiques de Sigmund Freud. Enfin, nous articulons l'exil et l'impuissance avec le mouvement dialectique proposé par Octávio Paz, entre la solitude et la création, pour considérer l'écriture comme un exutoire de l'état d'impuissance qui est mis à jour dans la vie du sujet vécu à plusieurs reprises par le sujet.

Mots-clés: solitude, l'exil, impuissance, l'angoisse, Edward Said.

Fuera del lugar: el estado “demasiado humano” de Edward Said

Resumen: El presente artículo se propone discutir la experiencia de exilio como la reproducción de un estado estructurante del ser humano, el desamparo originario. Para trabajar la temática del exilio recurrimos a Edward Said, mediante su producción teórica y su obra autobiográfica *Fuera del lugar: memorias*, así como a las contribuciones de María José de Queiroz sobre los males de la ausencia. A continuación, planteamos la noción de desamparo originario a partir de las proposiciones psicoanalíticas de Sigmund Freud. Por último, articulamos exilio y desamparo con el movimiento dialéctico, propuesto por Octavio Paz, entre soledad y creación para pensar la escritura como una posible salida para el estado de desamparo el cual se actualiza en la vida del sujeto vivido repetidamente por el sujeto.

Palabras clave: soledad, exilio, desamparo, angustia, Edward Said.

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