

Lack of meaning in the testimony of proper name

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Abstract: This study discusses the proper name in its relation with testimonial literature or trauma narrative. The literature is used here to develop some considerations on nomination in Lacan's theory, more specifically the testimony of notorious Nazi descendants. Since the names given by their parents link them to the barbarism of Shoah, several narratives have been developed on this theme which interests psychoanalysis. However, the testimony did not end at this point, as we observe proper name and testimony are connected by a certain relationship with language that also has lack of meaning.

Keywords: testimony, proper name, psychoanalysis.

“What’s in a name? That is what we ask ourselves in childhood when we write the name that we are told is ours” (Joyce, 1922, p. 201). The question made by Joyce through Stephen Dedalus in *Ulysses* is reminiscent of Juliet’s question in William Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*: “What’s in a name?” (1597/2003, p. 107). Juliet, unaware that Romeo is listening to her, proposes that he should refuse his last name, Montague, and that she would refuse her last name Capulet, since only his name is your enemy (Shakespeare, 1597/2003). Names are not only an issue in fiction, but also in psychoanalysts’ offices and testimonial narrative names are used as an element to which subjects are linked and a point from which they have something to convey; as if there were any knowledge or a mystery in the name that affects them.

Thus, this study aims to analyze the given name in its relation to trauma narrative. What in testimonial narrative can make a name thinkable? At first, we can evoke the presence of a name in testimonies, such as that of Louis Althusser (1992), for example. However, the testimony does not end at this point, as we observe that proper name and testimony are connected by a certain relationship with the language that also has lack of meaning.

The naming utterance

The incidence of a name on the individual was analyzed by Lacan, who warns that the name is never indifferent and that “all sorts of things can lie behind this kind of dissimulation or effacing that would be in the name, concerning the relation that it may bring into play with another subject”¹ (Lacan, 1961-1962/2003, p. 83, our translation). When addressing the positioning of some experts regarding proper name, such as Gardiner, Russell,

and Kripke, Lacan extracted elements to develop his own concept. The author works on the notion that a name acts as a “signifier . . . in the pure state” (Lacan, 1961-1962/2003, p. 95), and “whose statement equals its significance” (Lacan, 1966/1998, p. 833). That is, from a name, according to Lacan, it is not possible to extract a meaning. The naming utterance “is of the order of the letter” (Lacan, 1961-1962/2003, p. 90) and, therefore, what is at stake in the name itself is not its meaning and that no message is expected from it.

On the other hand, Lacan states: “saying that a name . . . has no signification is something really wrong” (Lacan, 1964-1965/2006, p. 65). Then, we have a name as a signifier that does not have a meaning, but which is associated with a number of significations that allow the subject to recognize himself throughout his history. How can anything be meaningless and at the same time be the object of significations? This apparent contradiction is an element that is also addressed in testimonies. Psychoanalysis is interested precisely in how each subject considers themselves to be designated in their own being (Mandil, 2003). For this reason, despite being a meaningless signifier, the name may insist itself as an element that guides the subject’s history and that cause the subject to wonder what is in their name.

One example is found in the narratives of Nazi descendants, available in the literature and in documentaries, which clearly state the name as an important point in their histories. Nazi descendants, also called “the second generation”, deal with guilt and shame, or a duty to compensate for acts in the past that were not of their doing, because the names given by their parents link them to the barbarism of Shoah – a Hebrew term meaning devastation or catastrophe, and which removes the remote connotation of sacrifice present in the word ‘holocaust’ (Agamben, 2008). Klaus Von Schirach, son of Hitler Youth Commander Baldur von Schirach, says that twelve ‘ridiculous’ years were enough for certain names to never be forgotten, among them, his own (Lebert & Lebert, 2004). Rainer Höss, grandson of Rudolf Höss, the first

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1 Original text (in French): “Que toutes sortes de choses peuvent se cacher derrière cette sorte de dissimulation ou d’effacement qu’il y aurait du nom, concernant les relations qu’il a à mettre en jeu avec tel autre sujet.”

commander of Auschwitz, asked several times: “What’s going on with the name? But there was no answer” (Ze’evi, 2011). In these cases, the names they were given seem to support the relation of the subjects with the others and with what they think they are or could be. Here, the name and testimony converge and indicate the sign of a trauma.

Like Rainer Höss’ question, there is still something in the relation of these subjects to the names given by their parents that needs to be witnessed. Miller (2001) states that a name is “a *capitoné* point, not between a signifier and a meaning, but between Symbolic and Real”² (p. 99, our translation). It also happens with the testimony, which, from the discursive chain, seeks to present the real of trauma. And to this extent, the narratives of Nazis descendants can be taken as a testimony of the border with the language the impossible to say.

The testimony content

We live in the age of testimonies, according to Felman (2000), referring to the 20th century, known as the century of catastrophes. The “testimony is the literary mode . . . par excellence of our times” (p. 18); in this context, providing a testimony would be one way to respond to tragedies. A testimony joins literature and trauma, and has become an object of interest in anthropological, literary, journalistic and documentary studies (Duba, 2010). Despite the great dissemination, which started in the 1970s, there is no consensus among theoreticians that defines what is conventionally called testimony narrative or narrative of trauma, also known as narrative of the unspeakable.

Seligmann-Silva (2007) states that this is not a literary genre, but a face of literature that questions its relationship and its commitment to the real. And he is not alone with this understanding (Oliveira, 2008). Although the term “testimony narrative” is not considered wrong, some authors prefer the expression “testimony content” for being more all-embracing (Oliveira, 2008; Seligmann-Silva, 2009).

Two terms are commonly used in literary theory to speak of testimony: *Zugnig* (testimony in German) and *Testimonio* (testimony in Spanish) - the testimony form that is closer to the Brazilian reality, referring to the survivors of totalitarian regimes in Latin America. They show distinctive lines of the notion of testimony, considering that

in Germany psychoanalysis and memory theory and history have played a central role for some time, in Latin America *testimonio* is seen from the religious tradition of confession, hagiography, biblical and Christian testimony in its sense of presenting ‘exemplary’ lives and the tradition of chronicles and reportage. (Seligmann-Silva, 2002, p. 122)

Although designed in a different way, testimony is presented as a memory category, a form of reading catastrophes according to the culture itself (Seligmann-Silva, 2008). Testimony is still portrayed as something that confronts humanity with its worst part and shows the ethical position of transmitting the unspeakable to integrate the excess of real involved in trauma (Koltai, 2016). In this sense, we can elevate testimony to think of the political space, it is the “politics of memory”. Adorno (2000) has already warned of the risk of having a new Auschwitz as we try to delete the past from our memory. Therefore, testimony is an ethical and contingent choice, fundamental both for those who make use of it and for the societies in which it is inserted (Duba, 2010).

For this reason, testimony is not a simple discussion that aims to inform one fact, nor should it be confused with an autobiography. It is a need to speak that attempts to involve a point of experience that resists signification and to which the narrator inevitably returns (Agamben, 2008; Macêdo, 2010). Testimonies usually present an attempt to produce signification from a gap between the narrative and the event, where conveying it always involves gaps (Duba, 2010).

Then, how is it possible to give a word to those who do not find exact or precise elements in language to convey their own experience? Agamben (2008) argues that the act of witnessing requires that the meaningless sound of language itself testify for something which has no language. At this point a similarity between the testimony and proper name is observed: both embrace sound materiality. It is expressed in one’s name in its non-translation between the different languages, showing sound materiality and an irreducibility that resists meaning. Regarding non-translation, Lacan (1961-1962/2003) says, resides the private ownership of a proper name and, therefore, transliteration is not a random fact. The conclusion is that, as “a letter can present confusion between its name and the sound that can be represented, the meaning that the subject attributes to his own name can also be confused with the letters that comprise it” (Silva & Santiago, 2010, p. 7).

A testimony is only possible through remnants, oblivions, and discontinuities and through what can only be alluded to and bordered (Duba, 2010). This point that resists and crosses the testimonial narrative is called trauma. After all, it is the urgency of the trauma that forces a subject to speak up and make such an intimate experience public. Trauma is a Greek word that means ‘wound,’ and metonymically started to indicate the causes of a wound (Caldas, 2015).

Despite insufficiencies of language in the face of a trauma, the value of testimony is not in the confirmation of the facts, but in its commitment to the truth. A witness’ authority comes precisely from speaking out of an inability to say, because “a testimony does not guarantee the factual truth of the statement that is preserved in the archive, but its non-archivability . . . ; or rather its necessary subtraction . . . both in relation to memory and forgetfulness” (Agamben, 2008, p. 157). At this point, the suspicion or denial of the testimony can

² Original text (in French): “Le nom propre, c’est un point de capiton, non pas entre signifiant et signifié, mais entre symbolique et réel.”

be as traumatic as the experience that preceded it. For this reason, evidence is not asked of a witness and about them we suspend our distrust.

Because it is a human fact that uses signifiers, the testimony lies about the real and shows the truth under which literature rests: fiction is destiny (Caldas, 2010). That is, the boundary between historical truth and fiction vanishes, because historical truth presents itself only through the distortions and misunderstandings that are characteristic of the discursive chain (Chaves, 2015). Neither language nor memory can communicate everything. This perspective is of particular interest when we consider the act of witnessing and the narrative of patients, since both present contradictions, lapses and oblivions. This way, we can conclude that “fiction is the destiny that can convey an *savoir faire* with the real” (Caldas, 2011, p. 7). Then, from the encounter with the real we produce signifiers to, incessantly and insufficiently try to cover and transmit it. That is probably what happens with proper name. Since it is a pure signifier that holds no meaning, the subject creates some fiction from it, producing meanings that can be used as support for identifications which are an attempt to suture the structural gap. This is what Lacan (1964-1965/2006) shows when considering that the name itself fills “another gap . . . , it is produced to fill the gaps, seal them, close them and to give them a false appearance of suture” (p. 74).

Embracing a testimony means inscribing it in culture, giving it a place in the Other. It means welcoming the effort to include the unexpected trauma in the subject’s history and then enable, through words, the subject to build something more tolerable about the emptiness of trauma. Analysts can testify very well to that. At this point, although it is common to find texts that consider testimony as a representation, or an attempt to portray the catastrophe, Cabral (2005) refers to a point that seems more precise: the testimony is not intended to represent but to show, present an experience. Here a parallel can be drawn with proper name, whose function is not to condense characteristics of a subject – although it can be used as support for significations –, but rather designate it. One’s name, as a rigid designator, is the signifier that can designate the subject anywhere in the world, regardless of the language spoken, and here we speak again of non-translatability and the letter (Rosa, 2015).

The narrative of testimony content, initially linked to the accounts of survivors of Shoah and other wars, was broadened to include events such as Homer’s *Iliad* and Euclides da Cunha’s *Os sertões*, where “the work of (an attempt of) introjection of the traumatic scene is practically confused with the history of art and literature” (Seligmann-Silva, 2008, p. 70). For this reason, we understand that the notion of testimony includes “each and every ‘talk of oneself’ that involves conveying an experience of the strictly singular” (Caldas, 2011, p. 3).

As testimony and trauma have a connection, would the broad concept of testimony be accompanied by an extension of the notion of trauma? Lacan agrees with that, as it enriches the notion of trauma by disconnecting it from a catastrophic event. When creating neologism *troumatisme*, a result of joining *trou*

(hole in French) and traumatism, Lacan (1973) sets a relation between the hole in the symbolic and the trauma. Language, to be more precise, is presented here as the cause of the trauma (Caldas, 2015). Trauma, therefore, would be the hole in the symbolic, which concerns the field of the real, and which, because it presents itself as excess, demands and marks the testimony. Therefore if there is any possible relation between psychoanalysis and narrative of testimonial content, it is due to the importance given by both in building knowledge from the experience with the real, with the void, the hole.

Although trauma is not inserted in the tragedy, it is necessary to recognize that some cultural environments can favor the mobilization of excess of *jouissance* (Caldas, 2015). Freud (1940/2014) said that “the Self is determined, above all, by direct experience; therefore, by accidental and present facts” (p. 21). It means, as Adorno (2000) reports, that we should run away from a subjectivist approach because we are in the culture and are affected by it. Reports of Nazi descendants show how each subject in his or her uniqueness received the mark of history through the names they inherited from their parents.

Agamben (2008), regarding Auschwitz and using the Messianic concept of the rest of Israel which will be saved by God, ponders that witnesses are neither the dead nor the survivors, but what remains of them. Perhaps the testimony shows exactly what remains and what can be achieved or suffered from it, that is, the testimony reveals the treatment that can be given to the traumatic remains by giving them a place. From these testimonies we also understand the name as a signifier that received the mark of the trauma.

Fractured history and *tumben Toren*

It is necessary to understand the context where the testimonies are inserted. The social and cultural conditions of Germany after World War I enabled Hitler’s rise and the construction of Auschwitz (Adorno, 2000), just as the cultural conditions after World War II provided the narratives that we will address. Although they are singular stories, they are connected by a historical contingency.

First, it should be noted that, far from being a distant and European event, Shoah concerns us because it concerns the humanity (Duba, 2010). Remembrance is part of the Jewish culture and several memorials are built to preserve it; the issue here is remembering to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past (Wollschlaeger, 2010). Yad Vashem is Israel’s official memorial for Shoah martyrs and heroes, and documents and preserves “the memory and history of each of the six million victims and [shares] the Holocaust scene with future generations” (Sobre Yad Vashem, 2008). Germany, on the other hand, was marked by the culture of post-war silence, because those who participated in the Third Reich did not want to talk about this part of German history (Bar-On, 1989; Sichrovsky, 1988). This is not an accident.

The victims of Shoah endured what they should not, but they could bear it, and so the survivors could testify. Agamben (2008) argues that the perpetrators, just like the

victims, had to endure what they should not or did not want to, but they did not dare to do otherwise – this difference becomes fundamental in the way the Germans behaved during this period of horrors. The author reproduces a statement constantly used by the perpetrators: they could not do it in a different way, “they owed, and that is enough” (Agamben, 2008, p. 83), and so their integrity was kept. This behavior can be illustrated with Himmler’s speech from 1943 in which he says:

Most of you must know what 100 corpses mean, or 500, or 1,000 corpses. The fact that we endured the situation and, at the same time, despite some exception due to human weakness, continued as honest men, made us even harder. It is a page of glory in our history that was never written and will never be. (Agamben, 2008, p. 84)

Befehlsnotstand is “the state of constriction resulting from an order” (Agamben, 2008, p. 102), which was used in Eichmann’s trial in Jerusalem (Arendt, 1963/1999) and in the defenses of the perpetrators at Nuremberg (Bar-On, 1989; Posner, 1991). The appeal to *Befehlsnotstand* did not intend to convince the judges to release the executioners, “but to present the situation in more acceptable terms of a tragic conflict” (Agamben, 2008, p. 103). Curiously, in medieval German literature there is the figure of the *tumben Toren*, an absurdly naive and foolish character who engages in something beyond his own will and reasons, but which, in the end, due to external pressures, gets involved in situations he cannot get out of (Bar-On, 1989). This figure represents the innocent-guilt tragedy that the executioners embodied in their use of *Befehlsnotstand* very well.

The elaboration of the past, says Adorno (2000), “is essentially such an inflection towards the subject” (p. 48). It means that elaborating the past requires an implication of the subject in his own history. For this reason, perhaps, it has been so difficult for the perpetrators to narrate their own experiences and leave the position of identification of *tumben Toren*. Then, what remained for the next generations was to collect the crumbs left along the way or to simply ignore them. The contradictory position of their parents, of having remained honest and correct, even after directly or indirectly participating in executions, can be verified in the testimony of their descendants. In fact, several Nazis returned to their quiet, mundane life after the end of the war, without being perplexed by what they had done; after all, it was no more than duty (Posner, 1991). And it was not any duty, it was a duty demanded by the nation and its *Führer*. Perpetrators hide behind an obligation to the German nation or impenetrable silence. Primo Levi (2004) shows in *The Drowned and the Saved* the content of an account that one of his German friends heard from a war widow:

What are all these lawsuits for now? What could they do, our poor soldiers, if they received those orders? When my husband came from Poland on

leave, he told me: “We did nothing else besides shooting the Jews: always shooting Jews. My arm ached because of so much shooting.” But what could he do if they had given him those orders? (Levi, 2004, pp. 166-167)

Bar-On (1989) observes that, despite the violent murders of Jews, including women and children, few soldiers requested to transfer from the execution units. Few perpetrators spoke openly with their children about what they did or saw, and even in those cases, guilt seems to be fortuitous. Some people from the second generation were only aware of the horror of Shoah when *Night and Fog*, a 1955 documentary by French director Alain Resnais, was broadcast on TV. This documentary of about 31 minutes showcases historical records from concentration camps. Watching the horror practiced by the Nazis in images and photos from that period and the apathy and silence of their parents had an effect on many people from the second generation.

The trauma of Shoah affects subsequent generations with experiences that will be decisive and that will shape their destiny (Macêdo, 2014). In a letter received by Levi (2004) we can see that, for the third generation of Germans, the “problem of the Third Reich is still open, it is still as irritating and typically German as for all those who lived before them” (p. 161). In this perspective, the statement by Hans Frank, the Butcher of Poland, that “a thousand years will pass and they will not take the Germans’ blame” (Sichrovsky, 1988, p. 175) does not seem to be so wrong, at least not for the descendants of the perpetrators. According to Posner (1991),

The children of those who served the Third Reich have had to deal with their dark legacy to a much greater extent than the rest of the German nation. Those who broke from their fathers’ politics and crimes are often troubled by shame and guilt. (p. 216)

Hannah Arendt (1999), just like Primo Levi (2004), considers that only in a metaphorical sense it is possible to say that somebody can feel guilty for something that they did not do, and so that guilt is felt by their father or the people that performed those acts. She adds that “morally speaking, it is not less wrong to feel guilty without having done something specific than to feel free of guilt after having actually done something” (Arendt, 1999, pp. 321-322). Freud (1913/1969a), on the other hand, observes that feeling guilty for a specific action can persist for generations, even if they are not aware of the fact from which this feeling originated and even if the feelings of parents is repressed. He says that

no generation can hide from successive generations any of its most important mental processes; psychoanalysis has shown that everyone has, in their unconscious mental activity, an apparatus which enables to . . . undo the deformations that others imposed on the expression of their own

feelings. This unconscious understanding . . . may have enabled subsequent generations to receive their inheritance of emotion. (Freud, 1913/1969a, p. 188)

As these cases exemplify very well, this transmission does not occur through things clearly said, it is just the opposite, the transmission produces its effects due to distorted and lacunar communication. It happens the same with proper name, whose transmission of marks does not depend on the significance and meaning that we can attribute to it, but it concerns a possible and contingent signification.

Assuming a position that refuses to deny the barbarism committed by the Nazis, especially through the Final Solution, is something that moves several of the testimonies, but of course there another side. Some people from the second generation defend their parents and seek justification for their actions. A division is recurrent here, after all nobody prepared them to stop being children of the heroes of the nation to become children of criminals overnight. But regardless of the position of the children of notorious Nazis regarding their parents, “the more famous the family name, the greater the public pressure” (Posner, 1991, p. 217). The guilt and responsibility they assume are linked with the name of these subjects.

Strange as it may sound, Sichrovsky (1988) argues that if the children of notorious Nazis “see themselves as victims of their Nazi parents, they are not altogether unrealistic” (p. 14). Likewise, Posner (1991) states that talking to children of notorious Nazis was a strong reminder that many victims were made of Hitler’s crimes. After all, Levi (2004) says that “an inhuman regime diffuses and extends its inhumanity in all directions” (p. 97). As such, the second generation testifies, each in their own uniqueness, of the implications of having a name associated with one of the most terrible events of humanity, the position of subject, and the solution they have found considering the guilt and considering the shame that they carry.

Despite the challenge of giving a voice to Nazi descendants, some writers proposed to perform such work. This embarrassment may be contrasted with the complexity of putting them in a position that is different from the perpetrators by identification with their fathers and forefathers alike; as if it were not possible to recognize a crossing of the *jouissance* of the Other in them, with a resulting testimony. It is curious that most writers who were interested in collecting narratives from the second generation of Nazi Germans are descendants of Jews’.

In order to obtain testimonies from the second generation, the names of many of them had to be hidden, because they wish to hide their origin. Some irony can be seen in this. The Jewish people, when sent to concentration camps, had their names stolen by the Nazis and turned into numbers, and in the end many were killed; many Nazi descendants, in turn, abandoned the names they received from their parents so that they could live.

Then, the name indicates a place of the subject in the field of the Other that guarantees the symbolic paternity, not

just the biological order (Siqueira, 2013). Freud (1939/1969b) tells us that paternity cannot “be established by the proof of the senses, and that for this reason the child should use his father’s name and be his heir” (p. 140). Then, bearing a name comes with a price to pay.

Bearing a name

The truth to be assimilated from history and from who the parents were sets a relationship of the second generation with the names they received. The name ties the presence of the Other in the history of these subjects. Lacan (1966/1998) questions “who is then this other one who I am more attached to than myself, since in the most consensual part of my identity with myself, is it the one who shakes me?” (p. 528). In these cases, it seems that the answer comes from the Other Nazi, this innocent-guilty Other who gives guilt and shame in one’s place.

Sibylle has in her name one of the great signifiers of Nazism. Her last name has not been revealed, she is known as the daughter of an SS officer. The SS, or Schutzstaffel, was an organization whose purpose was to ensure compliance with Nazi policies through actions that included intimidation, domestic terror, and the death machine (Bar-On, 1989). Her father, she reports, minimized everything and felt no guilt for anything. She was born in the post-war period, in 1946, and she claims that the choice of her name Sibylle crowned the cynicism of her parents. Her last name begins with S, so that her initials are SS. Regarding her name, she says it is a joke, “ice cold and unfeeling, making me go through life with that burden. I didn’t think it very amusing. And when I said so, all they could say was that I had no sense of humor” (Sichrovsky, 1988, p. 92). Although they knew what the SS had done during the war, they decided to mark their daughter with these letters. Her greatest fear is to keep the tradition of her parents; so she does not have or plan to have children (Sichrovsky, 1988).

Gudrun Himmler is the daughter of Heinrich Himmler – one of the most powerful men in Nazi Germany. For security reasons, when Heinrich was arrested, Gudrun and her mother were asked to change their last name and start using Schmidt instead. Gudrun refused and she said she would use her family name, because she wanted to be like her father. As a result, when she reached adulthood, she was often refused when applying for a job. After all, she was a Himmler and, as an allied officer told her, “one who bears Himmler as a last name is capable of doing anything” (Lebert & Lebert, 2004, p. 132). Her last name, Himmler, linked her to her father, and that was something particularly special for her. The interview given to Norbert Lebert in 1959 is the only one she has ever given. Bar-On (1989), Posner (1991), and Lebert and Lebert (2004) requested an interview with Gudrun, but she refused to talk about the past. The three authors have recorded that there are indications that Gudrun has not abandoned her father’s Nazi ideals and is involved in neo-Nazi activities.

Katrin Himmler, Heinrich Himmler’s grandniece, assumed a completely different position from Gudrun’s. In

the documentary, *Hitler's Children* (Ze'evi, 2011), Katrin speaks about the weight of the name that links her with the Final Solution. Her relationship with the family was very good until she decided to investigate the family's past. In her book *The Himmler Brothers* (Himmler, 2008), she exposes what the family wanted to hide, that not only Heinrich was involved with Nazism, but also that his two brothers were, that therefore includes her grandfather. She was rejected by her relatives because of such exposure. Katrin Himmler (Ze'evi, 2011) claims that she has done her best to link Himmler with something positive, but a sense of guilt has always been present.

Rainer Höss, grandson of Rudolf Höss, SS officer and Auschwitz commander for two years, preferred to cut all connections with his father. In the *Hitler's Children* documentary (Ze'evi, 2011), he visits Auschwitz, the camp commanded by his grandfather and where his father grew up, for the first time. The house where his grandfather and father lived was near the concentration camp, the gate, Rainer says, is always across from him. In Auschwitz, Rainer is in the company of Eldad, from the third generation of survivors, who says: "He told me that for years he was prevented, especially when he was a schoolboy, from participating in visits to Auschwitz because of his name" (Ze'evi, 2011). The visit to the camp was not easy, he was afraid that people would think he looked like his grandfather and that they would recognize him. He adds: "It may be incomprehensible to people who doesn't have that name or who have no connection with a camp like that" (Ze'evi, 2011).

Gerda lives under a pseudonym. She does not reveal her father's name, but says that he was very important in her life and committed suicide in 1945. Once her name was recognized she heard from a person: "you shouldn't even be alive today. They should have killed you too!" (Bar-On, 1989, p. 123). Regarding the reasons for having changed her name, Gerda says that it would have been impossible to study if she had not changed it, and she says that she did not get married because of this.

Thomas Heydrich is the nephew of Reinhard Heydrich, head of the Gestapo. He spoke about what Heydrich represents. His father killed himself in 1944 due to the possibility of being arrested for helping Jews escape from Germany to Denmark with fake passports. Although he was the first Nazi in the family, his son said he was innocent and when he found out what was happening to the Jews, he was against the Final Solution. Despite what his father did, what was left of Heydrich to Thomas refers to the actions of his uncle Reinhard. Since his adolescence he knew the importance of the name Heydrich and used to present himself as the elder Heydrich, he was 'the' Heydrich. He felt special when sharing that name. Everything changed after the end of the war. His family was warned to be careful because "No one will ask what you did personally. Your name is Heydrich – that's enough" (Bar-On, 1989, p. 148). That was not the only time his name appeared as something he could feel embarrassed about. He was challenged

several times for being a Heydrich; people said they were a little horrified by his name. After a while he started to realize that his favorite authors were Jews, such as Heine, Tucholsky, and Walter Mehring, and he noticed the things he was doing were opposite to actions with Nazi values. Thomas is an actor and plays Jewish poets. He did not have children so that they would not receive the name Heydrich.

Bettina Goering, grandniece of Hermann Goering, leader of the Nazi Party, took a radical measure. She and her brother decided to undergo a sterilization process "so that there are no more Goerings" (Ze'evi, 2011). It is curious to note that such intervention is performed with their bodies. This body used to be the target of Nazi policy, considering that the 1933 legislation and its 1935 amendment aimed to strengthen the German 'race' and protect the hereditary health of the German people against the dangers of the biological characteristics of other 'races' (Macêdo, 2014). Bettina tells about the breakup, at 13 years of age, with the family: "I had a big fight with my dad about the Goering thing. Which ended in a physical fight and he hit me with his signature Goering ring, which was a very, very big ring and I erupted and I beat him up" (Connop, 2007). The name presents itself in a hit, which causes Bettina to assume a position that was completely opposite to her family's ideals: she became a hippie and a communist. Bettina says that, even though distant, she had to digest what her parents and grandparents did, because they did not want it or could not do it.

Bernd Wollschlaeger, son of an officer decorated by Hitler with the Iron Cross, seeking to understand what Shoah was and the truth about his father's role, started a journey. During the process, he converted to Judaism and moved to Israel, which, according to him, awakened a true sense of belonging to a group and to a belief. To take the blame and the shame off of his shoulders, Bernd shares his story in a book titled *A German Life* (Wollschlaeger, 2010). Despite all his efforts to separate himself from the past of his family by converting to Judaism, he chose a baptismal name that refers to that legacy of his father: Dov, the Bear (Wollschlaeger, 2010).

The effects of naming occur in the absence of the subject, and about this, he can elaborate little. Regarding this issue, we decided to present only what they could speak about their names. These cases have something traumatic and, for that reason, their narratives, made from remnants, were portrayed as testimonies.

If we consider that what is truly proper in a name is what each one does with the name he or she receives, these accounts testify an attempt to deal with a certain reference, the Other Nazi. And in those cases, in the shadow of the name, we find the innocent-guilty. The *tumben Toren* seems to show a gray area in which the innocent and the guilty collide. It forces the second generation to work and produce a meaning, either to shelter the guilty or to welcome the innocent, or to confirm that these two positions coexist.

Testimony and proper name

Back to the initial question: what in testimonial narrative can make a name thinkable? In addition to the testimonies presented that address the naming issue, we have the materiality of something that resists representation and, without giving up language, proposes to face what is impossible to say. Language here does not have its use reduced to formal concepts or to a mere narrative, but it favors the transmission of a meaningless point. And for this reason, to consider the place of testimony and naming, we consider the notion of letter.

Using the notion of letter, we think that we have found a possible similarity between testimony and proper name. The letter is what joins *jouissance* and knowledge (Lacan, 1971/2009). It is not, therefore, a clear boundary between the speakable and the unspeakable, but of an articulation of distinct elements, which preserve the gap and

the discontinuity (Mandil, 2003). That is what the testimony is made of, the letter here is essential to understand the possible transmission the real of trauma that lies between the speakable and the unspeakable *jouissance*. Whereas the name as a letter is a distinctive trace, an absolute difference mark that, through significations, gives a suture-like appearance to the structural gap. In this sense, the proper name itself also targets the real.

Then, we can say the letter is the concept that allows a connection between the symbolic and what stands out from it (Mandil, 2003). The close distance between the concept of letter and the concept of naming allows Lacan to inscribe some insensate *jouissance* to the name that resists the work of interpretation. Such resistance “reiterates the dimension of repetition, of continuous search for the best inscription, of incessant excavation without a final term” (Mandil, 2003, p. 51). After all, its materiality makes no sense whatsoever, to which a proper name can testify.

O sem sentido no testemunho do nome próprio

Resumo: Este artigo aborda o nome próprio em sua relação com a literatura de teor testemunhal ou literatura do trauma. Valemo-nos dessa literatura para desenvolver algumas reflexões sobre a nomeação em Lacan, mais especificamente do testemunho de descendentes de nazistas notórios. Porquanto os nomes legados por seus pais os ligam às barbáries da Shoah, várias narrativas circundam esse tema tão caro à psicanálise. O préstimo do testemunho, entretanto, não se encerrou nesse ponto, pois observamos que o nome próprio e o testemunho se conectam a partir de certa relação com a linguagem que não deixa de incluir o sem sentido.

Palavras-chave: testemunho, nome próprio, psicanálise.

Le non-sens dans le témoignage du nom propre

Résumé : L'article aborde le nom propre dans sa relation avec la littérature testimoniale ou la littérature du trauma. Nous avons utilisé cette littérature pour développer quelques réflexions sur la nomination, à partir du travail de Lacan. Plus spécifiquement, dans cet article, nous recourons au témoignage de nazis notoires ; car les noms légués par leurs pères les relient aux barbaries de la Shoah, divers récits entourent ce thème si pertinent pour la psychanalyse. L'utilité du témoignage, cependant, ne s'est pas terminée à ce stade, parce que nous avons observé que le nom et le témoignage se connectent à partir d'un certain rapport à la langue qui ne manque pas d'inclure le non-sens.

Mots-clés : témoignage, nom propre, psychanalyse.

El sinsentido en el testimonio del nombre propio

Resumen: El presente artículo analiza el nombre propio en relación con la literatura de testimonio o la literatura del trauma. Nos valemos de esta literatura para desarrollar algunas reflexiones sobre la nominación en Lacan. Más concretamente recurrimos al testimonio de descendientes de nazis notorios; porque los nombres heredados de sus padres los conectan a las atrocidades de la Shoah, Varias narrativas rodean este tema tan caro al psicoanálisis. La utilidad del testimonio, sin embargo, no terminó en este punto, porque hemos observado que el nombre propio y el testimonio están conectados desde una cierta relación con el lenguaje que no deja de incluir el sinsentido.

Palabras clave: testimonio, nombre propio, psicoanálisis.

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