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Normativity, gender and psychoanalytical theory. A reflection about the creation of new words.

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“Les mots qui vont surgir savent de nous des choses que nous ignorons d'eux”
[The words that will come out know about us things we do not know about them]
René Char

“At this very moment she’s Reading Virginia Woolf, all of it, book by book. She is fascinated by the idea of a woman like that, endowed with such brilliance, such singularity and such pain; a woman so brilliant and who still filled a pocket with a stone and crossed a river. She is Laura Brown, an American housewife who lives in Los Angeles in the fifties. Like Virginia Woolf and Clarissa Vaughan, Laura is a character from the novel *The Hours*, by Michael Cunningham (1998). And like them, she is a woman inhabited by considerations about the living conditions of the women of her time. While busy with her daily chores, she wonders what her life would be like if she were as brilliant as the writer who moves her. And asks herself, as she pushes her cart through the supermarket’s aisles,

“if the other women aren't all thinking, to some degree or other, the same thing: Here is the brilliant spirit, the woman of sorrows, the woman of transcendent joys, who would rather be elsewhere, who has consented to perform simple and essentially foolish tasks, to examine tomatoes, to sit under a hair dryer, because it is her art and her duty.
(CUNNINGHAM, p. 14)

Laura Brown's life is the quiet life of most Americans in the prosperous suburbs of the United States shortly after World War II. But the calm of life in times of peace is disturbed by a malaise that expresses itself as the desire to be elsewhere.

It is true that the war is over and that the world has survived, as she says. But it

is also true that now "men who have seen horrors beyond their imagination, who have behaved with courage and honor, return to their homes to find the windows full of light," and it is up to women like Laura to care for the homes. That is, in her own words, "to have and raise children. Not only create books or paintings, but a whole world – a world of harmony and order where children are safe (if not happy)"

The obligation to create order and harmony, instead of creating books and paintings, is the central point around which Laura's suffering is organized throughout the book. And it is this suffering that brings her closer to the other characters of *The Hours*.

Each of the women described is inhabited by the following question: to whom is the permission to create outside that order granted? To men? To people who do not suffer from depression? To women who have no children? Or to those who have husbands who are artists? In the unfolding of each one's story this question is reformulated several times and from different points, but each time and for each one of them, it resonates a theme that interpellates both psychoanalysis and other fields that study sexuality, such as the studies of gender. This is the theme of normativity.

Inspired by this literary scene, in the present article we analyze the manner in which the establishment of social norms associated with the differences between sexes evoke discussions between psychoanalysts and gender scholars.

In order to construct a psychoanalytic reflection on normativity, we will think of this notion in a double perspective: on the one hand we will establish how this question is treated in a multidisciplinary interface that summons both feminist theories and psychoanalysis. On the other hand, we will examine how a new reading of the Dora case, established by psychoanalysts, contributes to such a debate within psychoanalytic studies. These two points - the differences in the problematization of the idea of normativity between psychoanalysis and gender studies and the usefulness of re-reading a canonical text for the discussion of this theme - will guide our crossing through the field formed in this encounter between two distinct ways of understanding sexuality.

Man, woman, subject

The reflections of the philosopher Judith Butler on the relations between gender and sexuality serve as an interesting theoretical instrument from which we can think the question of normativity. In *Gender Trouble*, book by which she became internationally

known, Butler poses herself the question of who the "subject of feminism" be: of *whom* (and of *what*) are we talking about when we identify someone as a woman?

Forty years after Simone de Beauvoir's statement that "one is not born a woman, but becomes one" *Gender Trouble* (first published in 1990) suggests a complexification of the elements present in Beauvoir's famous quote. What does it mean not to be born a woman? And by what processes is one (or one becomes) determined by a gender? As stated by Butler,

“Rather than a stable signifier that commands the assent of those whom it purports to describe and represent, *women*, even in the plural, has become a troublesome term, a site of contest, a cause for anxiety (...) If one “is” a woman, that is surely not all one is; the term fails to be exhaustive, not because a pregendered “person” transcends the specific paraphernalia of its gender, but because gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender inter- sects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities. As a result, *it becomes impossible to separate out “gender” from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained.* (BUTLER 1990, p.42).

The passage above serves as an introduction to Butler's argument in favor of what she calls a subversive politics in feminism (the subtitle of his book). As a theoretician inscribed on the third wave of feminism, Butler shifts the focus of political discussion about gender differences. The central theme ceases to be the importance of equal rights between men and women - characteristic of the second wave - to become the very possibility of determining what set of characteristics will serve to define what we understand as gender. "Woman" becomes a problematic term because when we pronounce it - when we call someone a woman - we do it based on a series of assumptions that the author wishes to question.

Butler does not refer only to the insufficiency of categorization based on biological characteristics, that is, the idea that a subject could be defined as a woman based on her genitals, for example. Nor is it limited to trying to establish a sociocultural reading grid that would allow the delineation of typical "women" roles and behaviors.

The central theme of *Gender Trouble* is precisely the need to rethink in "radically new" terms, as the author affirms, the ontological constructions of identity so that we can imagine a politics of representation (such as feminism) on new foundations. Otherwise speaking, Butler's project on *Gender Trouble* is one of creating conditions for the emergence of a feminist policy that does not rely on a "feminine" identity to be effective. Being an advocate against any identity affirmation leading to the creation of categories determined by gender, Judith Butler approached psychoanalysis. Such interest is addressed in a 1993 interview in which Peter Osborne and Lynne Segal question the philosopher about the usefulness of the psychoanalytic theory for her theorizing of the gender category. The question, formulated shortly after the publication of *Bodies that Matter* - her work on the materiality of the body - intended to clarify the author's position on her interest in psychoanalytic texts. Starting from a common opposition made by feminist researchers from the 1970s onwards, between psychoanalysis and feminism, Osborne and Segal attempted to understand whether or not there is compatibility between Freud's and Lacan's thoughts on sexuality and Butler's theory of gender as performativity. To the surprise of many readers (accustomed to the criticism made by feminist theorists to psychoanalysis), Butler states she regards psychoanalysis as "what best enables us to understand how sexed positions are assumed." She also confirms she thinks it is not possible to give an account of how sexuality is formed without psychoanalysis (OSBORNE 1996).

And what does it mean to understand "how sexed positions are assumed"? This is a central issue in Judith Butler's early work, in which the philosopher analyzes the relationships between sexualities and gender. To keep within the limits proposed by this article, we will highlight the use of the Freudian theory to explain how the loss of a love object takes part in the construction of masculine and feminine genders. This theme will lead us to a discussion about the importance of certain psychoanalytic concepts for the development of her considerations on the constitution of a sexed subject. We reiterate, however, that this is a broader issue than what intended to be addressed here. Let us then refer to a work of our co-authorship which deepens this discussion, "*Judith Butler et Monique David-Ménard: d'une autre à l'autre*" (BUTLER, DAVID-MENARD, SANTOS, CREVIER-GOULET, DEBS, POLVEREL, 2015).

In relation to the construction of a male or female subject, we have her book on the psychic life of power in mind (*La vie psychique du pouvoir*, 2002), and the way in which the relation between subjection and the creation of a subject is dealt with. Butler

refers to the works of Hegel, Nietzsche, Althusser, Foucault and Freud to discuss subjection as simultaneously the process by which we submit to a power or a discourse and the process through which we become subject. This means that, in Butler's words, "subjection consists in a fundamental dependence on a discourse that we do not choose, but, paradoxically, initiates and sustains our actions" (2002, p. 22, our translation).

That is: we do not exist as subjects before we are challenged by a discourse that assigns us a place in existence. We are born as subjects not when our biological life begins, but when someone addresses us as a subject - "Hey, you there!", The classic example described by Althusser and cited numerous times by Butler. Nevertheless, and this being something of concern to the author, there is a paradox instilled in this very idea that interpellation creates the subject since, fundamentally, every interpellation is already addressed to a subject. The discourse that inaugurates the subject is not aimed at an emptiness, it refers to something or someone whose origin is presupposed by this one who interpellates. *The Psychic Life of Power* then attempts to reformulate this question, namely: why does a subject respond to a particular interpellation? What causes, in the example given by Althusser, the person to whom the vocative "hey, you there!" is addressed to turn his head and respond?

The way Butler addresses the problem of the origin of the subject is directly linked to her understanding of psychoanalysis as "what best enables us to understand how sexed positions are assumed." This is because, since the first edition of *Gender Trouble*, the philosopher tries to affirm that a subject cannot be thought apart from the perception one has of the sexual category (man, woman) to which he or she would belong. This means that the very notion of a sexed subject would be redundant, since at its point of origin - the moment it becomes perceived as a subject - every person is already sexed, already considered by the one who interpellates him or her as or man or woman. Butler insists on reminding us that no one is born into a world and only then that person has to face a variety of "gender choices" which must be incorporated from that moment on. In truth, gender operates as one of the elements of the set of generalized discursive conditions addressed to every person since before his or her birth ("Are you pregnant? Is it a boy or a girl?") and which will continuously be repeated throughout his or her life.

Psychoanalytic theory then appears as an apparatus which assists Judith Butler in determining which coordinates participate in the mapping of the attribution of a gender to a given subject. In *Gender Trouble*, her interest is addressed to what she describes as

a "melancholic construction of gender" (2005, 148) in Freud's work: the way in which the preservation of the lost love object and the object choice being heterosexual or homosexual relate to one another. The author refers to two points in Freud's theory to understand what she refers to as the melancholia of gender: (i) the idea that in melancholia the lost object is once again installed within the Ego- that is, an investment (or cathexis) is replaced by an identification (FREUD 1923, page 272); and (ii) the idea that this identification to the lost object is perhaps the sole condition in which the Id can abandon its objects (p.273). This means that the identification allows keeping this (lost) object within the Ego - as a shadow that still falls upon it (FREUD 1917, 268).

According to Butler, this process of internalization of the lost love object is paramount to the formation of gender since the abandonment of parental figures as an object of love - a fundamental process for the determination of future object choices - is inaugurated by the incest interdiction. In her work, this direct relationship between object choice and incest as a taboo is criticized for being based on a model in which heterosexuality is the norm and homosexuality deviant (what Butler calls the "prevalence of a heterosexual matrix" in *Gender Trouble*). This issue matters a lot to Butler, once her theoretical project is fundamentally a political one. She is interested in understanding in which ways a normative (or heteronormative) rhetoric present in society shows up in theories. But this critical view does not prevent her from continuing to be interested in the possibility offered by the psychoanalytic theoretical framework of analyzing the unconscious dimension of sexuality, as we shall see in the next section.

Interdisciplinary encounters: what do gender studies provoke in psychoanalysis?

In the section above we refer to the readers' surprise to an interview by Osborne and Segal about Judith Butler's interest in Psychoanalysis because, despite the growing number of papers referring to psychoanalytic theory as a means to analyze issues of sexual life in the last twenty years, the articulation between gender studies and psychoanalysis is still cause for debate. In a recent issue of the French journal *Champ Psy*, psychoanalysts Laurie Laufer and Andréa Linhares posed a question: What do gender studies provoke in psychoanalysis? The notion of gender, defining any work in question as "a critical approach that allows us to think of social relations between the sexes as a relation of power", shares similarities with the psychoanalytic theorization and invites us to think about the essential themes related to (or) sexuality (s) from

another perspective. Gender studies oppose the notion that a subject becomes sexed through discursive formations to Freud's pulsional, infantile (polymorphic and perverse) and unconscious sexuality.

Therefore, we are required to analyze the dissonance between two conceptions of what constitutes a sexed subject - or what "sexuates" a subject. Is it possible to set up a common interdisciplinary ground on issues related to sexuality, when the very definition of the is a different one? Said differently, how can a dialogue be established between Freud's concept of sexuality (in its constitutive relation not only with the sexes but also, and more importantly, with infantile sexuality), and the one put forth by gender studies (specifically in Judith Butler's work, which provides an intrinsic relation with the discursive formations that form and guide sexual differences)?

Historically, this interdisciplinary dialogue has not been successful. As Michel Tort points out in his book about the end of the paternal dogma, we can notice three distinct times of the relations between gender theorists and psychoanalysts (TORT 2005). In the first, researchers (anthropologists, sociologists, philosophers) point out that the Oedipal paths proposed by the orthodox Freudian theory represent "unconscious decals of forms of male domination". Psychoanalysts, however, take one of two positions: either (the ones who criticize) they insist on not acknowledging the reality of the penis envy and the importance of the phallus to the understanding of the unconscious; or else come up with criticisms to the Freudian assumptions based on a psychology of the woman, such as the one proposed by Karen Horney.

In a second moment, from the 1970s onwards, feminist psychoanalysts, who tried to articulate the two discourses, emerged. They see psychoanalysis as a useful tool even if, up to then, it could have served to describe the psychic functioning without taking into account the historical context in which it occurs. This is the case of works such as that of Juliet Mitchell, an English psychoanalyst, author of *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, in 1974, or French author Luce Irigaray.

Finally, with the changes brought about by postmodern epistemological orientations in the late 1980s, a new relationship is established among the different fields of knowledge that work on (and with) sexuality, based on the deconstruction of concepts related to the sexes and sexual life. Changes in the territory of sexuality, such as the separation of sexuality from reproduction, the greater and better occupation of the public space by women, the explosion of the nuclear family model (and consequent rearrangements in parenthood), visibility policies for homosexuality, the new questions

about the body and its materiality raised by transgenders and intersexes, provoke, as Márcia Aran says, "important shifts in the symbolic organizational references of modern society, mainly from the displacement of the borders between man (public) and woman (private), configuring a new territory to think the sexual difference "(ARAN 2009).

In this context, we can say that works like those of Judith Butler establish new critical readings of psychoanalysis. Such readings focus on the unique way it must describe the subjective pathways that make up what we commonly mean by sexual life - as opposed to readings centered on the intention to establish a direct confrontation with a (superficial) reading of the theory, that is, in an analysis which is situated outside the context of general psychoanalytic theories, according to Juliet Mitchell (MITCHELL, 1974: 28). To the question of Laufer and Linhares, (*what do gender studies provoke in psychoanalysis?*) we add a counterpoint: and through which ways does psychoanalysis provoke gender studies? The reference to provocation is not an idle one. To provoke comes from the Latin *provocare*, to call ("vocare") out, to make come. In describing the relationships between gender studies and psychoanalysis in terms of provocations, we note the fact that such relationships are invitations from theorists from both fields *to think outside* the traditional boundaries of their subjects. We understand that, on the one hand, gender studies inspire psychoanalysts to remain attentive to the constant and accelerated expansions of the notion of a legitimate subject or of a legitimate life, according to a reasoning developed by Butler in *Défaire le genre* [Undoing Gender] (2006) - homo-parental families, transgender subjects, polyamorous couples, are some examples of new configurations that challenge psychoanalytic work and that benefit from being thought with a theoretical framework different from the classic references to the founding works of psychoanalysis. Historically relegated to a precarious position, devoid of institutional support which, as Butler describes, guarantees recognition as a life worth living, (ibid., P. 31) such subjects now constitute the new frontiers of civil rights. This allows us to think that they also represent the new frontiers of clinical work.

If on the one hand, gender studies provoke psychoanalysis to expand the reach of what we mean by lives considered legitimate, on the other hand, psychoanalysis reaffirms for researchers of gender the importance of the phantasmatic dimension of sexuality, that is, of its intrinsic relation to infantile (sexual) experiences. The orientation of the discussion about sexuality around the notion of "gender identity" runs the risk of belittling the impact of the polymorphous and perverse activities of children. By taking into account what we understand as the temporal thickness of human

sexuality-in an expression taken from the works of Joel Birman (Birman 2001, p. 19) - psychoanalytic theory deepens the discussion of an identity construction. The reference to the time of infantile sexuality - time forever present in the life of any adult - transforms this conception of construction, since it demands we consider that such work of construction cannot be equated with a volitional action that "chooses" among several possibilities. The construction of identity, like the construction of a symptom, takes place at decisive moments in the life of the subject, and responds to elements of his or her love story that can only be understood *a posteriori*. This aspect of sexual life is better understood by psychoanalytic studies than by any other field. Confronted with the question of the relationship between gender studies and psychoanalysis, Jean Laplanche was categorical:

"feminists as a whole, including radicals ... need [the category] sex to subvert it and "denaturalize" it in *gender*. But to do this it would be necessary to go back to an old sex/gender sequence in the following order: sex preceding gender, nature preceding culture, even if we agree on the idea of "denaturing" nature. *But the risk of this is that we forget the Freudian sexual, the "sexual"* [*sexual*, not *sexuel* in the original text]" (LAPLANCHE 2007, 161, our translation)

For Laplanche, the "sex" that is symbolized by "gender" is not the sex of biology, but the sex of a phantasmatic anatomy, marked by what he calls the "human animal" (Idem). It is for this reason that an interdisciplinary encounter is not possible: gender studies, as well as their predecessors, feminist studies, do not account for the unconscious dimension of human sexuality. According to Laplanche, the different fields of study interested in sexuality are interested either in sex or in gender. Sex ("*sexe*") is described by the author as a "dual category", referring to sexual reproduction and to the human capacity to symbolize from the experience with the *duos* presence/absence and phallic/castrated. Gender ("*genre*") is a plural category, based on the male / female duality, but not restricted to it, since it encompasses "what is not in nature", such as the use of language and the evolution of customs. The psychoanalytic theory is the only one interested in what Laplanche calls "*sexual*": the "unconscious residue of gender repression-symbolization by sex" (p.153).

But this position is not the only one among psychoanalysts and researchers who refer to the psychoanalytic texts in their works. As noted earlier, authors commonly

associated with gender studies, such as Judith Butler, acknowledge the importance and usefulness of this "expanded" (*élargie*) view of sexuality as described by Laplanche. Even though aware of the specificity of the analytic praxis, they do not deprive themselves of trying to understand in what way the thematic aspects of their field (such as the relation between normativity and gender differences, for instance) can be thought of in relation to other practices. According to Butler, it is evident that there are differences between the psychoanalytic work and the work of analyzing the social effects of norms. However, "the normative is suspended, put behind the scenes of the analytic scene, *just to be reintroduced on the scene by the analysand*. The normative script can be reproduced, in all its complexities, within the sessions [...] The norm is always present. We must put it aside, but it is always present and that is what requires practice: put it 'aside', suspend it "(BUTLER, DAVID-MENARD, SANTOS, CREVIER-GOULET, DEBS, POLVEREL, 2015) .

Consistent with her conception of the impossibility of thinking of a subject separate from the discursive formations that constitute it, Butler also does not conceive a speech that can be produced "outside" norms. Although it is the analyst's job to create the conditions to "make the new subjective paths more livable *without making recommendations*", as David-Ménard says in the same text, Butler considers the hypothesis that certain normative conflicts may resonate inside the analyst's office as such. This means that the philosopher considers that matters of gender, race and class can influence the psychoanalysts' ways of listening. This ample question is addressed in the above-mentioned text, and in another work of our authorship (see SANTOS 2013)

Normativity and the Dora Study Case

The work of the Belgian psychoanalysts Philippe Van Haute and Tomas Geyskens offers an original contribution to this debate on the normativity of the psychoanalytic discourse that marks the relationship between psychoanalysis and gender studies. In "A Non-Oedipal psychoanalysis", published by Leuven University Press in 2012, Van Haute and Geyskens argue in favor of a reading of the Dora case that questions the place traditionally attributed to the Oedipus complex in the comments of this analysis.

As we have quoted above, from a very early age the (false) idea that psychoanalysis justifies with subjectivist arguments a transcendental difference between the sexes has alienated social scientists, philosophers, and feminist theorists from

research in psychoanalysis. As early as 1975, Gayle Rubin (cultural anthropologist and author of the classic *The Traffic in Women*) even claimed that psychoanalysis was "almost a feminist theory" ("psychoanalysis is a feminist theory *manquée*", Rubin 2010, 54): it has a system of concepts that enable us to examine in what way cultural meanings are imposed based on anatomical differences, but it is guided by theoretical formulations that allow us to legitimize excluding attitudes. The "almost" feminist then refers to the normative dimension that multiple psychoanalytic discourses historically have been able to assume - we can cite the recent debates about adoption by same-sex couples, or "marriage for all" in France, or the depathologization of transsexuality in Brazil as recent examples of moments of tension within analytical circles and among psychoanalysts and theorists of other disciplines. One way of questioning how normative psychoanalytic theory is has been to establish "reciprocal exegesis" between psychoanalytic texts and critical texts of psychoanalysis, in an exercise that aims to demarcate what can and cannot be done with psychoanalysis, as formulated by the anthropologist Rita Segato. The author points to the importance "of producing and establishing a dialogue, almost a confrontation, between texts from different traditions. And by making one talk to the other, identify what affinities bring them together and which distance them"(SEGATO 2003, p.12). Examples of some interesting works in this sense are the aforementioned articles by Márcia Aran, on the issue of transsexuality and those of Laurie Laufer, on sexual politics. We also think about the dialogues between Monique David-Ménard and Judith Butler on gender and sexualities (DAVID-MENARD, 2009).

However, Van Haute and Geyskens are interested in contributing to this discussion through a different bias. Without focusing on the opposition between the theories structured by the category of gender and the psychoanalytic theories, the authors intend to challenge the question of normativity out of Freud's clinical cases. This means examining the Dora case and the clinic of hysteria from a *pathoanalytic* perspective. The term pathoanalysis, coined by the Belgian psychoanalyst Jacques Schotte, refers to the understanding of the relation between pathological and the healthy states of a subject. In his words: "The different forms of psychiatric morbidity somehow explicitly show us what remains invisible as a structural articulation of different moments of the life called sane in spirit" (SCHOTTE 1990, p.44). It is a perspective guided by Freud's crystal principle, that is, guided by the understanding that all pathology is not opposite, but contiguous, to normality: the Ego is like a crystal thrown

to the ground, which breaks in "fragments" predetermined by specific fault-lines, which, although invisible, were already present in the core structure of the crystal, (Freud, 1932 [1933a]), as Freud states in his lecture on the decomposition of the psychic personality. Consequently, the definition of categories such as hysteria, obsessional neurosis or paranoia are not restricted to the designation of sick subjects placed as opposed to healthy subjects. They indicate clues for understanding the relationship between subjectivity and culture, between personal history and social context. This view, advocated in the text by Van Haute and Geyskens, thus differs from a more structuralist reading of psychoanalysis. It sees hysteria differently from what was proposed by Lacan, for example, in his seminar on the Formations of the Unconscious (1957-1958), when he discusses how hysteria is a primordial structure in the relationship between man and signifier.

What interests Van Haute and Geyskens is to follow a path delimited by the works of Freud. Specifically in relation to Dora, Van Haute and Geyskens indicate how, following the abandonment of the seduction theory, Freud is interested in the importance of a hysterical disposition in the development of his hysterical symptoms. Which means, for the authors, to define if hysteria would be the consequence of a trauma or a disposition. Van Haute and Geyskens call our attention to the two times in the construction of Dora's trauma, which do not introduce sexuality into a child's life (until then "asexual"), update and transform a disposition (sexual and hysterical) already present. Hence, it is not the nature of the trauma that makes Dora sick, but the fact that Dora, *someone with a hysterical disposition*, has a traumatic experience.

This importance given in the work of Van Haute and Geyskens to the concept of *a disposition* is the foundation of their dispute on the importance classically attributed to the Oedipus complex by scholars in the Dora case. The central point to which Van Haute and Geyskens point is that, in explaining hysteria - or any other psychoneurosis - with trauma as its support, we are submitting to a neurotic thinking which, as the authors well describe, relies in a double illusion: the illusion of personal responsibility ("someone somewhere is responsible for me being who I am: my wicked father, my crazy mother, my education excessively or not severe enough, etc.") or the conjectural illusion of past possibilities ("if this had been different, or if I had not made that choice ... who I am today would be different "). Yet, the idea of a disposition removes of such illusions its power. In its place, it puts the understanding of the unpredictable and contingent character of the vicissitudes of the drive. For the authors, the dynamics of

Dora's hysteria in the Freudian text is not explained either by trauma or the Oedipus Complex. It is built on the articulation between four factors: the hysterical disposition, the predisposition to bisexuality, what Freud calls *organic repression* and the power of the sexual drive.

Normativity and Contingency

In emphasizing the importance of the contingency of disposition, as opposed to the determinism of oedipal causality in Dora's hysteria, Van Haute and Geyskens offer an argument for a less normative view of psychoanalysis. According to the authors, (i) the difference between the hysterical Dora and any non-hysterical subject is not in the experience of a sexual trauma (which could have been avoided), but in a libidinal constitution that determines a hysterical disposition; and (ii) this disposition is present, to a greater or lesser extent, in all subjects - and may even be perceived in other subjective constructions as the hysterical symptom. As a consequence, the boundaries between a "normal hysteria" and a pathology become less evident (p.119). According to Van Haute and Geyskens, this idea is fundamental to our understanding of the philosophical importance of psychoanalysis: "The philosophical originality of Freud's work - and of psychoanalysis by extension" - consists in the central role that the crystal principle has, and in *the fundamental reconsideration of the relationship between normality, culture and pathology derived from it* "(p.23).

Put differently: between what makes a subject sick and what makes him a singular being, the relationship is of continuity, not of rupture. And, more importantly, this "making ill" is built by elements whose relation to the symptoms is contingent. That is to say, the articulation of factors that *makes one ill* is not only random, as we might understand in a first conception of the word contingent. It is also delimited by its intrinsic connection with that which allows the subject to transform, and which becomes understandable in transference. Contingent here does not mean the opposite of predetermined, but rather the possibility of transformation proper to the relationships that constitute us, as defined in the recent works of Monique David-Ménard - we think, for example, in his description of contingency as "the way the object register can take shape in transference when it reorganizes the destructive circuits that supported it until then". What, according to the author, means that "transference transforms the destructive of repetition into a creation simultaneously driven and significant."

(DAVID-MENARD 2011, page 78).

This understanding of the notion of contingency approaches Lacan's reading of the place attributable to the *tuchi* in the constitution of trauma. Lacan translates the term *tuchi*, fortune or chance in Greek as "the encounter with the Real" (LACAN 1964, p.64) - an encounter only meant to be an essential *missed encounter*, an event that occurs only once and launches the repetition (in the form of the return of signifiers which insist on trying to assimilate the unassimilable of this primordial experience). The *tuchi* refers to the accidental that participates in the construction of the traumatic event and that can only be understood a posteriori. It is the unpredictable with which each subject responds to the missed encounter with the real. And it is a response that depends on *how* the subject subscribes to language, a radically singular response and one which resists any attempt at universalization.

It is in this sense that the notion of contingency contributes to the claim of less normative visions within the psychoanalytic thought. It allows us to think of the clinic as a space where, through transference, a new transformed (and transforming) relationship is established with the norms. That is to say: clinic as a place where, through working (with) that which is intelligible without being conceived in a deterministic way, new movements within the regime of norms are made possible.

When we refer to such unprecedented movements, we have in mind the idea of *producing the new*, promised by the analytic discourse. This is, after all, the reason for the cure to be: the construction of the singularity that each one has to say. And this singularity is produced through the minimal transformations of what is repeated in analysis. This is what Freud says in his article on the psychoanalytic technique of 1914, "Remembering, repeating and working through," when he describes the importance of transference so that the work of overcoming resistances can take place. According to the Freudian text, it is not enough for the analyst to point out (or name) resistance. The effective analytical intervention involves a time of working through, which allows the analysand to overcome the resistance by the continuity of the analytical work. And the fabrication of the "fragment of actual experience" that the transfer is participates in this time. In Freud's words, "from the repetitive reactions which are exhibited in the transference we are led along the familiar paths to the awakening of the memories, which appear without difficulty, as it were, after the resistance has been overcome." (FREUD 1914, p. 170). That is to say: by the transference - through the experience of the transference -, the analysand traverses in an unprecedented way the paths that are

familiar to him/her.

The construction of this which is unprecedented is capable of redefining, for each subject under analysis, its relationship with the system of norms that constitutes **it**. It is also for that purpose that we undergo analysis. As the English psychoanalyst Adam Phillips describes in a work on the relations between psychoanalysis and poetry, we turn to psychoanalysis for the same reason because we turn to poetry: in search of better words (PHILLIPS 2001). Better words: better suited to say what we have become. And more accurate when they describe what we are still making in the analytic process. "The words that are going to arise know things about us which we ignore about them", says Rene Char in the verse that serves as the epigraph to this article. If we follow Phillips' reasoning, we can say that they also know things about us that we overlook.

Better Words

The exercise of thinking of normativity as a psychoanalytic theme has us face the question of the production of the words.

On the one hand, we have the production of *new words* (or better words, as Phillips puts). As subjects formed by a system of norms that designates - in a more or less efficient way - the way we are recognized by the other subjects, we count on the possibility of finding spaces where such a system can be redefined. The analytic cure, guided by the counterintuitive intent of allowing unforeseen words to occur, is one of these spaces.

On the other hand, we have *the production, by words, of the new*. This is perhaps the question that better allows approximating how psychoanalysis and gender studies examine normativity. Both academic fields start from the principle that we are beings of language, that is, inhabitants of a world in which not only language exists, but a world that is sustained by language - language is what allows us to be, Lacan would say: "The word being [être] has no meaning outside of language" (LACAN 1972). As beings of language, we are subjects whose lives change through words. This fact is a fundamental element of the analytic work - the certainty that it is the speech and language experience that allows the transformation of symptoms.

It is also one of the central points that sustain the discussion about the idea of identity recognition in works about gender. One of the works cited by Butler in her considerations on the construction of gender identities originates from the question: Am

I that name? ["Am I that name?" (See BUTLER 1993). The questioning reflects the capacity of a name (or a word) to evoke multiple meanings and the problem of category representation associated with this polysemy - "woman", what woman? "Identity", what identity? The author then suggests the importance of actions (political and theoretical) that expand the reach of legitimate categories. Or, put another way, actions that expand the possibilities so that more lives are recognized as livable lives. Here we mention a precise example of such amplification, since the present discussion goes beyond the limits of what we can address in the present work. It is precisely the definition of "marriage". The civil code in effect in 1916 in Brazil determined, in its article 233, that the husband was the head of the conjugal society and that he counted on the collaboration of the woman to carry out his role. With the 1988 Federal Constitution, equality between men and women in marriage was ensured by article 266 (paragraph five of which states that the rights and duties of the conjugal society are equally exercised by men and women). In 2002, the introduction of the new civil code eliminates the reference to gender in the definition of marriage. Article 1511 says that marriage establishes full communion of life, based on the equal rights and duties of the spouses. Finally, same-sex marriage became legal in 2011, and in 2013 the National Council of Justice passed a resolution requiring all notary's offices in the country to celebrate same-sex civil marriage. This means that, from a legal point of view, the expansion of the marriage category has made more conjugal lives possible. To the transformation of a word corresponds a transformation in the level of vulnerability to which two people of the same sex living together are exposed. Their conjugal life, which the State now considers legitimate, is less precarious-and, therefore, more livable, in Judith Butler's terms.

In the film adaptation of the novel *The Hours*, directed by Stephen Daldry (2002), Laura Brown's character (played by Julianne Moore) describes to Clarissa Vaughan (interpreted by Meryl Streep) the decision to leave her family. Both meet fifty years after the scene we quoted at the beginning of this article, when the young Mrs. Brown compulsively read Virginia Woolf's books and wished to "be somewhere else." Laura Brown tells Clarissa that one day, after spending the afternoon alone at a hotel reading *Mrs. Dalloway*, and contemplating the idea of committing suicide, she made a decision. "I decided to leave my family after the birth of my second child. And that's what I did. One morning I got up, made breakfast, went to the station, and got on a train. I just left a note. "In the suburbs of Los Angeles in 1951, the possibilities of movement

within the current regime of rules were certainly restricted to women like Laura Brown. In her specific case, the condition for creating a livable life was to leave and never contact her husband or their children again. The excessively rigid demand for order and harmony that characterized her family life did not allow for the emergence of an unpredictable able to reorganize the destructive circuits of object relations, as we said above. Therefore, raising children and creating (in) life seemed like two incompatible things to her. Cunningham's novel does not point out what paths Laura Brown was able to follow in her life away from family obligations. But we know that, from a distance, she followed her abandoned son's literary career. As we finished reading *The Hours*, we asked ourselves: How different would the world need to be for Laura Brown's life to seem (more) possible? We hope that discussions such as the one we propose about normativity and the role of psychoanalysis in reformulating relationships that seem to make life more livable can contribute to this transformation of the world we live in.

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