

Children Who Experience Death

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ABSTRACT

The debate that this article proposes begins with the question about who are the children who live death, today and in Brazil, and aim to reach a discussion on how this experience takes place under the diversity of childhoods, to consider the meanings of mourning and some of its implications in the macro and micro politics of care.

Keywords: Child, childhoods, death, mourning, covid-19

Crianças que vivem a morte

RESUMO

O debate que esse artigo propõe se inicia com a pergunta sobre quem são as crianças que vivem a morte, hoje e no Brasil, e tem o objetivo de alcançar a discussão sobre o modo como essa experiência se realiza sob a diversidade das infâncias, para considerar as acepções sobre o luto e algumas de suas implicações na macropolítica e na micropolítica do cuidado.

Palavras-chave: Criança, infâncias, morte, luto, covid-19.

Niños que viven la muerte

RESUMEN

El debate que propone este artículo parte de la pregunta sobre quiénes son los niños que viven la muerte hoy y en Brasil, y apunta a llegar a una discusión sobre cómo se desarrolla esta experiencia bajo la diversidad de las infancias, para considerar los significados del duelo y algunas de sus implicaciones en la macro y la micropolítica del cuidado.

Palabras-clave: niños, infancias, muerte, duelo, covid-19.

Children live death when they are the ones who die, children live death when they are the ones who lose people. Children live death when they are... the children. The idea of discussing the terms in which children's relationship with death takes place, however, needs to be preceded by another question: who are 'the children'?

This question is not intended, in any way, to affirm that there would be any child who is not related to death, but, on the contrary, it measures, through the perspective of the diversity of childhood experience, the unavoidable articulation between who the children are, under which determinants they are conditioned, and how they experience the relationship with death.

The propositions of Brazil nowadays, considering the culture and socio-political factors that weave them, confirm the ethical impossibility of considering that the

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childhood experience is unique and practiced in the same way in any and all contexts. It is absolutely essential to consider that the diversity and variety of human experience is decided by the articulation of multiple factors, and if cultural differences are unavoidable in childhood experience, this is related to the fact that social differences are also present within the same culture.

In order to be able to extract the consequences of the discursive determination of childhood, it is necessary to follow the anthropological research (Fonseca and Cardarello, 1999; Cohn, 2013) that proposed the term *childhood* to cover the socio-historical variants and the political contextualization of children's experience in their diversity.

Clarice Cohn (2013, p.241) highlights that anthropology understands that "children act in response, and aware, to the way in which their childhood is thought". This response, however, is not one of submission, but, as she thoroughly formulates, "children act from this place, whether to occupy it, expand it, or deny it... It is from there that they act, or it is against it that they act".

In a convergent direction, psychoanalysis with a Lacanian orientation considers that there is no subject who determines him or herself in the absence of the culture in which they live or outside the social bond (Soler, 2018, p.26). As one of the principles of ordering its understanding of the subject, Psychoanalysis supports the idea that families, by organizing themselves with their children, assign them a symbolic place, determined by the terms of that singular encounter, to which the children will respond with the same variation pointed out by anthropological research: affirming, refusing and, necessarily, transforming.

If the theory and research of anthropology and psychoanalysis understand that children respond to the place we reserve for them in the culture and within the families that receive them, the relationship of each childhood experience and each child with dying and with death also must be considered in the articulation of these multiple factors, which, in turn, decide the conditions for establishing mourning as a practice of care for life(1).

The children who die

Among the children who die, there are children who are victimized by the inexorable nature of illness, by the fragility of life. The French psychoanalyst Ginette Raimbault (1979) worked with these children at the Hôpital des Enfants Malades, in Paris, and gathered, in the book 'The child and death - sick children speak of death', reports, testimonies and reflections on what children sick people speak in the face of death. In the cultural context of what is now called the West, she found many ways for children to say death:

Raymond, 9 years old: "when you die, you are nothing. We don't live anymore, it's nothing more. I do not like this. When we die, there is nothing left but a cross" (p.20). Lise, aged 13, says: "The teacher wants me to take the tests, but I have no plans for the future" (p.22). Ettiene, at the age of 14, understood that: "Death is sad (...) it is sad for those who stay (...) As for me, I don't really know what paradise is because I don't see it" (p.23). "The tomb is a room in the cemetery. They died. It's everything" (p.26), says Marcel, aged 6, about the death of his twin brothers. Octave, aged 12, said, "If I died, so what? I would sleep forever" (p.29). Janette is 11 years old, and she says bluntly: "They don't tell me anything, but I know. I have a tumor. People die... there are children who die, I will die too" (p.19). Monique, 15, can say, "What is life for me? It may be beautiful, but if they take me, I won't even know" (p.33). And Jean, also 15 years old, formulated: "What's terrible about death is that you don't know you're dead" (p.34).

There is no subject of death, says Raimbault (1979, p.38). In her words: “‘Becoming dead’ continues to be distressing because we suppose we are witnessing our own disappearance as a Subject. There is no subject of death. But there is, effectively, a subject of pain, of agony, of passage, a mutilated subject without self-control”.

Considering that the ways of experiencing illness, suffering and pain also suffer the impacts of their articulation with social discourse and are politically determined, listening to the text that is assembled between the testimonies of hospitalized children allows us to understand that children can speak, from themselves, about death. “Children have no need for philosophical concepts to approach death, to see it, to think about it, or to imagine it, accept it or refuse it” (Raimbault, 1979, p.19). Following these testimonies also allows us to bet on the effects that the provision of conditions for children to speak can have on what they experience. In this sense, there is a clear need for spaces for listening to be constituted, as we will discuss later.

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Among the children who die, we also know that there are those who are not among those who lose their lives due to bodily illness, but who are victims of sudden and unpredictable accidents, or even victims of the most varied forms of violence, often predictable. Among the children who die, there are children who are murdered by the state, which does not protect them, as the policy of extermination does not effectively spare children.

This is the death policy that allows children to continue to be killed, and some children to be chosen to die. Gisele Ribeiro Martins (2020), a researcher in Rio de Janeiro, in her doctoral thesis, presents the following scenes to situate the extension and density of the problem:

- “•January/2017: Davison da Silva, 15 years old – on his way to the bakery, shot dead.
- February/2017: Fernanda Adriana Caparica Pinheiro, 7 years old – on the slab of a friend's house, in Parque União, shot in the shoulder. She was rescued but did not survive her injuries.
- March/2018: Jeremias Moraes, 13 years old – killed in a shooting in [favela] Nova Holanda..
- June/2018: Marcos Vinícius da Silva, 14 years old – on his way to the CIEP Operário Vicente Mariano, around 8 am, shot in the belly during an operation by the Civil Police and the Army. The autopsy concluded that the bullet entered the boy's back and exited through his abdomen. Marcos Vinícius was taken, in serious condition, to the Getúlio Vargas Hospital, in Penha, where he underwent surgery to remove his spleen. He would undergo a new operation two days later, but he did not survive and died on the same day” (Ribeiro Martins, 2020, p.113).

The criteria of necropolitics, established in the attribution of different values to human life, choosing between those that are worth and those that are worthless, takes on a figure in the scene that marked the last meeting of Marcos Vinícius with his mother. Shot and lying on the ground, the boy said: “Mother, I know who shot me, I saw who shot me. It was the armored one, mother. Didn't he see me in my school clothes? ”(2)

Ribeiro Martins (2020, p.113) understands that “In addition to these, several other cases of adolescents occurred during police operations, but the possible involvement of

the mentioned youths with armed groups contributes to the almost inexistent visibility of these deaths”

In the same direction as the arguments of Ribeiro Martins (2020), Laíza Sardinha (2021), a psychologist from Rio de Janeiro, relies on a critical reading of the Child and Adolescent Dossier (2018), from the Public Security Institute of the State of Rio de Janeiro (3), and discusses, in the text presented for the qualifying exam of her master's dissertation, the problematic conception that the *favela* experience assumes in discussions about violence and childhood. Sardinha (2021) supports the hypothesis of nationalization and spatialization of lethal violence against children, corroborating the idea that children who are victims of violence are not just any and do not live anywhere. Children victims of lethal violence are mostly black and live in peripheral areas.

“As you can see, the violent lethality rate for black children and adolescents in the state is 45.3 victims per 100,000 black inhabitants aged 0 to 17 years, that is, almost nine times higher than the rate among children and adolescents. whites (5.1 victims). The rate for brown children and adolescents is 17.9 per 100,000 inhabitants, which is three times more than for whites.” (Sardine, 2021, p.10)”

These impressive data show that we live in a country where there are children who are *killable* because our submission to the markers of race and class does not allow all children to be an absolute priority, as our citizen constitution maintains, in its article 227(4). Many of our children, in an experience as factual as it is counterintuitive, are themselves *homo sacer*.

Agamben (2014) took the concept of *homo sacer* from Roman law, not only to say that *homo sacer* is the killable one, but also to demonstrate that whoever kills them can kill them and remain unimputable.

Carla Rodrigues (2021), in her book 'The mourning between the clinic and politics', recalls that Foucault, before Agamben (2014) and Mbembe (2018), was dedicated to understanding this categorization of life between those that are worth, the ones that weigh, the ones that matter and the ones that don't matter, don't even matter and don't weigh.

Foucault (1976/1999, p.306) had formulated biopower as the logic of State violence: “the murderous function of the State can only be ensured as long as the State functions in the mode of biopower, through racism”. Such logic, in turn, is expressed in the aphoristic construction: “make die, let live”. As 'making die' is based on the racist logic of the State, and 'letting live' is based on a kind of abandonment to precariousness (Rodrigues, 2021, p.86), without offering support (public policies) for certain lives to exist, we understand what is situated as necropolitics under the deliberate negligence of the State, and which is at the base of the construction of the vulnerability of people and groups of people. It is as formulated by the director and founder of Redes da Maré, Eliana Sousa Silva, in an interview for the magazine Dilemas (2021, p.4): “Vulnerability is a consequence of neglect. We end up classifying people as if it were something inherent to them, but the vulnerability of these people is not in their desire, it is not only in their governability”.

Carla Rodrigues (2021) follows her research and articulates the thinking of Achille Mbembe (2018) with Judith Butler's formulations on grief. The author understood mourning as a central theme in Butler's work, and proposed that her idea of “the right to mourn” (BUTLER, 2015) follows the determinants of Mbembe's necropolitics. The *bereaved*, those who have the right to mourn, would be the same ones who have the right to life, thus transforming the *killable* into less human, or non-human. They are, as Giorgio

Agamben (2014) named, *homo sacer*, a category that does not exclude childhood in the diversity of its possibility, but that chooses, from specific markers (such as race, class and bodynormativity), some experiences between childhoods to lack of protection and negligence. For them, neither article 227 nor the citizen's constitution.

The work of Ribeiro Martins (2020), in which I found data on the recent murders of children in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, discusses in depth the extent of violence that the hierarchical attribution of value to people's lives can produce. The researcher notes that the children of Favela da Maré (the territory that housed her field research) have low access to health, education and social assistance services (which would guarantee them access to fundamental rights). One of the biggest obstacles to guaranteeing this access, according to Ribeiro Martins (2020), are the conceptions rooted in the social imaginary about the danger of favela territories, which overlap with the rights of children and young people and, with the argument of worker protection, remove professionals or equipment from the territory, ultimately leaving children unprotected.

In order to circumvent this immense political and social problem, it is quite common to say, with some consternation, that children in a situation of vulnerability - this vulnerability that is built by state negligence - are children who “*have no childhood*”. It is a perverse discursive twist, which has very immediate effects on the experience of and with the child, and which, therefore, needs to be faced.

The narcissistic ideal of idyllic childhood goes hand in hand with the romantic imaginary of the protected, pure, cared for and obligatorily loved child; but what we find is that this ideal serves more to save adults, in their particular relationship with childhood, than to provide protection and care for *all* children. Then we fail, individually or collectively, we try to erase the fact, building the understanding that that child who was left unprotected and without access to rights had “*their childhood stolen*”. This happens because, among other reasons, it allows the idealization of childhood, as a romanticized category, to remain intact. It is as if we were saying that that child “*had no childhood*”(5) in order to maintain the conception of childhood as an idyllic and naturally constituted time, and, also, to circumscribe the problem in an isolated case, a particular carelessness, and, with this, free us from facing its real collective and social dimension.

Children who die like this, *murdered*, experience and impose, on their still-living peers, a certain type of relationship with death. These contemporaries, as Radmila Zygouris (1995, p.17) named when talking about children exposed to the same political and historical conjuncture, “*children whose parents [their reference adults] had the same fear, the same war*”. They are the children who played with cousins Rebecca and Emily(6) in front of the house, the ones who went with Marcos Vinícius to school, the ones who were with Ághata(7) in the transport van, the ones who listened to their mother so they never left without documents, so as not to run if they see the police... These children who are murdered make their condition of *homo sacer*, and this imposes the condition that all these children, who inhabit these territories, live death in their deepest daily experience. These are children who live without a village, who live in the deliberate absence of social protection. They are children who are subjectively woven in this way: they grow up receiving the established message that their life is worthless, and, as a consequence, that their death does not matter either.

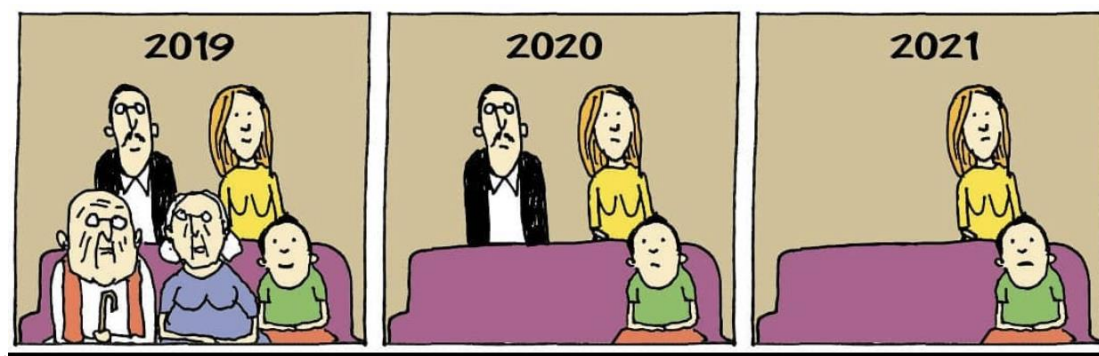
Necropolitics, we need to do this math, affects the numerical majority of Brazilian children. The country is telling most Brazilian children that their lives don't matter. They live under the condition of waste, pointed out by the scoundrel as having a life that is worth nothing, or almost nothing. They are the children who experience death in the fraying of the social pact, and who, we cannot forget, have their subjectivation decided from the perspective of this mode of bond and in this context.

As the children who lose their dear ones

Among children who experience death, there are also those children who lose important people in the context of accidents or illness. Considering that illnesses and the available forms of care for different populations are also politically determined, there are children who live with the death of their main caregivers in a terrible articulation between these two conditions - social determinism and illness -, such as the one that takes place in the Brazil of Covid-19, governed under the principles of a policy of death.

For reasons like this, it is urgent to understand that the rights of the child are transversal to any and all care policies. Caring for the child is not expressed exclusively by the maintenance of his/her life. Taking care of the child implies the necessary territorial articulation of care, as it is useless to ensure that the child is safe if their parents, their mothers, their caregivers are also not(8).

It is as the brilliant André Dahmer says with his drawing (and 'much better than 1000 words'), in this strip published on his instagram profile on 05/27/2021:



Orphans and dead children in Brazil during COVID-19

On October 8, 2021, we counted more than 600,000 deaths in Brazil in the context of Covid-19. The inversion between these terms, 'Brazil' and 'Covid-19', is purposeful, and aims to highlight that there are important differences between causes and responsibilities in the management of a pandemic that opened up in the biggest socio-sanitary crisis in the history of the country.

600,000 deaths mean at least 600,000 sons and daughters, thousands of grandchildren, and among these, many children who experience the death of their mothers, fathers, grandparents, their caregivers and reference adults, their friends, their loved ones. Sherr and Goldman (2021), in the Lancet journal, a multicenter study that included Brazil. The authors refer to a "hidden pandemic", which is explicit among Covid-19 orphans: the research estimated that between March 2020 and April 2021, globally, 1,134,000 children lived through the death of their main caregivers. In the same period, in Brazil, at least 130,363 children (up to 17 years old) were orphaned.

Between March 2020 and September 2021, the registry offices in Brazil recorded that, among Covid-19 orphans, there are more than 12,000 children up to 6 years of age (9). Among these, 25.6% had not yet completed one year of age when they lost their father and/or mother. It is worth remembering that, as the issuance of CPF directly on birth certificates only occurs from 2015 onwards, this account does not include children over 6 years of age. Another extremely relevant point for the count of orphan children is that, as the research crosses the CPF of the parents that is noted in the birth records with the

death certificates by Covid-19, it does not consider the many Brazilian children who have lost their reference caregivers, but who are not the adults who signed their civil registry.

These impressive numbers force us to question the idea, which is circulating among many, that children are the population least affected by Covid-19. And, along with that, it is necessary to remember that the socio-sanitary crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, in Brazil, also killed children. According to data released by the Ministry of Health(10), by July 2021, Brazil had already lost 1,200 children to Covid-19. The impact of this event can be seen in the statements of the mothers, collected on the *Estadão Notícias* podcast, recorded on 06/7/2021(11), when Brazil won the macabre title of being the second country with the most deaths of children by Covid-19. 19(10).

The facts that these numbers reveal oblige us to question our practices and possibilities of care in the public and private contexts, and, also, must precipitate understandings that responsibly articulate these levels of care. We have the task of understanding how it will be possible to deal with so many deaths: how each of the people who are children, today, can and will be able to deal with so much death? I am referring to the death of their caregivers, and also to the death that surrounds their own life, the fear of death. How are we going to build common spaces for this?

In the context that crosses us, that of Brazil in free fall and in the deepest socio-sanitary crisis in our history, when considering the impacts of “dying in series” on the lives of children, we must even take from the shadows what we never should have remained outside the focus of a society that claims to be fair: the experience of children in the *homo sacer* condition. In order to try to articulate some care, in this genocidal Brazil, it will still be necessary to face this order, seek and invent new or other words and gestures about death and mourning, a task from which we have deviated, under the thrust of the neoliberal management of suffering.

Possible words between children and adults

Chimamanda Adiche (2021, p.14), in her 'Notes on grief', refers to the relationship between grief and words in a very beautiful way: “Grief is a cruel form of learning. You learn how much grief has to do with words, with defeating words and searching for words.” The book bears witness to her grief over her father, and ends when the author realizes that she is referring to her father in the past. She writes: “One of the notable components of grief is the creation of a doubt. No, I'm not imagining things. Yes, my father was really wonderful” (p.109). After writing that sentence, Chimamanda starts another chapter in the book: “I am writing about my father in the past, and I cannot believe that I am writing about my father in the past.” (p.110). End of the book.

When she was on the Roda Viva program (14), Chimamanda (2021b) said that after 9 months of her father's death, she also lost her mother. On this occasion, she says that in the context of COVID and in the face of so many deaths, the pain of the death of her father and mother brought her a sense of connection with the world, she felt close to everyone who also lost their loved ones. The writer named this feeling as compassion.

In compassion, [compaixão], [com = with], points to the idea, dear to our days, that suffering links, connects people with one another, sets up networks. We know, however, that for this to happen, in order to build a narrative, it is necessary to speak, to speak with.

On the opposite side of this realization that it is necessary to talk about death, there are imaginary constructions that, sooner or later, in a loud voice or in a low voice, ask if it is really necessary to talk about death and the dead with children, and ask, still hopeful, how it could be possible to spare them from suffering. The idea, practiced many and many

times, is absolutely present in the social imaginary, that children do not need to hear about death, that it would be possible for us to make an agreement with the inexorable and maintain these terms of life: the child and death, always, and infinitely separated, like two ends of an experience that would not meet.

The socio-sanitary crisis that took hold in Brazil as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic adds to this condition of the child of never being separated from the experience of dying, and restricts the alternatives for any kind of imaginary deviation or concealing path in life relationship with death. The excess of the event, reproduced by impact and repetition, as in war, imposes the condition that we can learn from the history of humanity and add words to death as a necessary measure to make its place in our bonds.

If it is true that so-called adults are often able to maintain child and death as separate terms and in distinct departments of their imaginary experience, the same doesn't happen with children. Children, whether their reference adults allow it, favor it, deal with it or not... children live in death.

In the book 'The Last Witnesses', Ukrainian writer Svetlana Aleksievitch (2018) gathered testimonies from World War II survivors, and she did so by listening to adults who had their childhood experience crossed by the war.

The whole book is made up of the words of the survivors; they are "the last witnesses". Few children tell of conversations with adults about what was happening, about the fear, about the time, about the death that happened every day, about the death that happened many times a day. There are many testimonies, and what is heard most in each testimony is a doing: running, hiding, crying. To run, to run a lot, to fear, to tremble and to tremble. There is escape and silence. There isn't much talk.

Zina was 8 years old when her parents died and she was taken to an orphanage: "Educators tried not to say the word 'mother' in front of us. They told us stories and chose the little books that didn't have that word. If, all of a sudden, someone said "mother", then a cry began. An inconsolable cry." (p.26)

The last testimony in this book is the testimony of a girl who was 12 years old when the war broke out, when her father went to the Front with the Russian army, when she hid with her sister, brother and mother in the forest. She was 12 when she got on the train, when she saw her teenage sister's hair turn white with despair. She was 13 when her brother died. She was 12 or 13 years old when a woman, who was standing next to her in the car of a train taking them to some other shelter, was killed by the bombing. The blood of that woman who, despite being dead, was standing up and not falling down because there was no space, ran down the girl's body, soaking her. Her mother, looking at the bloodied girl, thought her daughter was dead.

When the father returned from the war and spoke about an event he had witnessed, the girl fainted and, from then on, nothing more was said about the war in that house. After the death of her parents, she and her sister realized that they were the last ones: "On that line... on that limit... we are the last witnesses. Our time is running out. We must speak... Our words will be the last..." (p.314)

Radmila Zygouris (1995, p.15), in her book 'Ah! The beautiful lessons', tells a conversation of a little Ukrainian girl with her grandmother. In the course of World War II, her parents had disappeared, and the girl would ask her grandmother about death. The grandmother's response is very impressive: "Think of your mother and tell yourself that you will never see her again, never, never, never again, until these words are empty of meaning, until you feel the emptiness and the vertigo in yourself, and then you will realize that you cannot imagine death and you will understand a little what it is." Radmila says that's what happened to the little girl: she thought hard about never-never-never again, and felt dizzy.

The terms of this nomination, I understand, are presented with and in the effort to circumvent the real, and effort is not just any word here. Effort is what allows the extremely difficult work of each subject to treat what does not cease not to be written, towards what, if not to write, ceases... (Lacan, 1977, lesson of February 8). The effort to contour the Real, that is to say, is not made to deviate from the Real, but to face it. Facing in the sense of giving treatment, of doing with it: grief is an act.

In 'Surviving the Child and Death', Zigourys (1995) questions exactly the lack of words from adults to children who experience death. Or, perhaps it is more accurate to say, the author interrogates the lack of words about death for children who live. Today, in 2021, this lack of words is not only getting worse, but is also articulated in an imaginary inflation of the experience - which affects the understanding of what we refer to as the signifiers 'child' and 'childhood': children lack vertigo and the guiding words, there is a lot of small talk.

Children, we know, hear about death even if adults don't talk to them about it. And, if the child does not understand very well these overheard conversations, Radmila (1995, p.16) considers that they understood well the fear of adults. She further says that even if adults don't talk directly to children, children do talk to each other about death. The testimonies collected by Svetlana even teach that children who have not found words with adults can be adults looking for words.

Amos Óz, in 'The Mount of Bad Advice' (1976), goes back to his childhood in Jerusalem, and writes three stories about boys. He talks about the daily life of boys surrounded by adults, and tells of the lives of children between the years 1946 and 1947, when the British mandate in Palestine came to an end, the years between the defeat of the Nazis and the war of independence for Israel. In this book, full of autobiographical references, children's games are war games. Play is the experience itself.

Uri, one of the boys, is about 10 years old and explains how he did it: "I took advantage of the moment [when the adults stopped between them] to sneak away from the table and go back to my battlefield, to the bedbugs and packs cigarettes [were the material supports of their games]. Some marked positions of Nazi divisions and others the Hasmonean battalions that ambushed the first ones on the way up to Beit Horon, few against many. Through the window, I could see the maneuvering yard between the walls of the Scheneller base." (1976, 116)

Uri, like Amos Óz, is a child expatriated by the war, who arrives in the territory of another war. Óz looks for words and Uri jokes, and that's how he lives war, death, and his life.

More than 15 years ago, I received in my office a little boy whose mother had very recently died. He was 5 years old. Right on the first date, he set up a house game and gave me the doll that was the mother to designate my place in the scene. I put the doll on the bed and the boy quickly indicated that I move the doll to interact with him. I, trying not to rush into stereotypes, asked what I was supposed to do. The boy replied indignantly: "Aren't you a mother? So you know: do what a mother does!" In view of this, and considering the information that woman had spent most of the boy's life in bed, I asked another question: 'And you, how do you know what a mother does? A dry and clear answer: 'I play'.

Between the clinic, the formulations of Zygoris and the writing of Amos Óz, children play death. The thought about death that is expressed in play, which we follow here, can be disturbed, but it is not necessarily interrupted by the absence of adults. This absence, we know, can be expressed in the lack of words addressed to the child about the event, but also in its excess, in an effort to cover the void and lack of too much supply.

Why do adults shun death in front of children? Why do we treat it as an 'accident', as if dying is really preventable? Radmila (1997, p.17) understands that this difficulty for adults follows the same logic as those who do not talk about politics with children because they want to ignore the existence of what is outside the family in raising children. And she also says that adults prefer [as if it were really a matter of choice...] that children play 'mother and daughter' and not play war, because this makes a make-believe that helps the adult to believe that children would not be directly affected by the war (p.18). As if the foreigner were thus really separate, or *separable* from the familiar.

Ginette Raimbault (1979, p.37) considers that adults, as they do regarding the child's relationship with sexuality, are unaware of the child's information about death. In the preface to the book, the doctor Pierre Royer says that the interpretation that adults offer to children about death is doctrinal: "the light projected by them always seemed to me to be deforming: an interpretation that was too doctrinal, a tenderness loaded with romanticism, an attempt too evident to apologizing" (p.15).

What the so-called adults do, when they address children to talk about death, and in a childish attempt to separate their child from death and the affections that surround him, is an overly imaginary offer. "Too many words, weak impulse of life", says the verse full of wisdom by Caetano Veloso (1983).

But this inflation of the imaginary pole as an attempt to account for the real has important effects. By superimposing itself, as a cover-up, on other records of the same experience, and in order to spare everyone (everyone, and not especially the children) from some suffering, it deviates exactly from what is marked in the vertigo that the little Ukrainian girl felt when she talked to her grandmother, and received from her precise words, words that helped her to embroider the encounter with the reality of her parents' death, and which, we understand, were decisive for her to go on with life, and without her parents.

So that we can build and offer listening spaces for children in public and private environments, it is also worth considering that, on the child's side, what does not become a word in the encounter with the other, the things about which he still does not speak, this that is not shareable, it does not happen because the child does not understand death.

Sometimes, not a few times, children are silent to bear the pain of their adults, of those who stayed with them, of those who lost loved ones along with them (as is the case of parents who lost children, who are their siblings, or even grandparents, who lost their children, who are their parents). In the unfolding of this text, we also hear another silence that can be imposed on children: the one that silences them with their pain to keep alive, in the adults of that time, an idyllic childhood that does not exist outside the imagination. The childhood to which we dedicate our too many words instead of yours.

In any case, and in all these cases, we know that it is not because of an intellectual inability that a mother and father are not considered to be forever. "To be able to accept the death of the other", formulates Ginette Raimbault (1979, p.169), "is to accept a never-more of looking, of voice, of tenderness, of the bases of exchanges with the other, an absence of future in the common imaginary project, the full stop in the score of one of the instruments of our phantom symphony".

The 'never-more' dimension perhaps makes the biggest difference in what comes into play in grief for children. As we learned with the little Ukrainian girl, children can indeed understand this dimension of time, but as the subjective feeling of time relies on the passage of time itself to articulate, the experience of the 'never-more' can still be clouded for children, it can take on a certain lability, even if they are able to immediately feel the absence of their loved ones.

It is understood, therefore, that the subjective duration of grief for children can be longer than it is for adults, and this - the understanding of the temporality proper to grief - needs to be radically considered both for the formulation of care policies, as for the interpretation that we will make of the process, so as not to pathologize the experience, and then, to resist the child's grieving process.

Mournings for Freud, mournings in Freud

In her beautiful lessons, Radmila Zygouris (1995, p.23) suggests that “Freud established the limits of normal and pathological mourning that he did not have to do”. He would have dealt with this theme in ‘Mourning and Melancholy’ (1917), which is a text written before having gone through the most important mourning of his life. This idea is in line with the reports of people who, after experiencing more violent and significant bereavements, feel something on the order of unease when they revisit, from their own bereavement, the position they would have assumed in the face of the bereavement of others.

Chimamanda (2021, p.38) clearly says: “Today I am ashamed of the words I have already said to bereaved friends”. Noemi Jaffe (2021, p.18), in 'Lili, a novel of mourning', also situates the unease in the face of what for others was the best consolation they could offer. Losing her 93-year-old mother, for her, did not fit in the sentence she heard repeatedly: “I'm glad you were able to enjoy it for so long and now you have many stories and memories to keep”. To explain herself, Noemi said that: “A lot of age should diminish, or at least lessen the pain, it's true. There is reason for that. The death of an old person is less shocking than that of a new person. But I refuse this relief, any kind of relief” (p.18).

The refusal of relief on the part of those who are grieving and which is expressed in the discomfort produced by lines and clichés of enthusiasm, in the direction of “life goes on” or “now you will have the good memories of what they lived together to enjoy”, points out for a very problematic point of the Freudian metapsychological article on mourning, and which, in the course of his research, and perhaps by imposition of contingency, would be revised.

In 1910, Freud already asked himself about the metapsychology of mourning in “Contributions to a Discussion on Suicide”. This work was presented at the close of a psychoanalysis congress in Vienna. Those present were interested in understanding how it would be possible for humans to articulate themselves in what Freud called “subjugating the life drive” (1910, p.218), but, on that occasion, Freud warns them that they might not have achieved this answer because they did not yet have the means to address it. His bet, and this is what interests the present discussion, was that this “disillusioned libido”, or even the possibility of the ego renouncing its self-preservation, would be connected with the affective processes that are present in melancholia, but, as he puts it bluntly, the libido's pathways to this were not yet known, and that, therefore, it would be important to keep the question open to motivate research: “We have not even arrived at a psychoanalytic understanding of the affect of mourning. Let us suspend our judgment until experience has solved the problem” (1910, p.218)

It was in Mourning and Melancholy (1917) that Freud presented the metapsychological hypothesis he was pursuing: he understood that the pathological measure of mourning, melancholy, would take place in the impossibility of the subject replacing the lost object in his libidinal economy. The normal conclusion of mourning, on the contrary, would be the possibility of replacing the lost object within a certain time limit, which, by letting itself be lost, would give rise to a new object in the libidinal economy of the mourner.

The years that followed, however, reopened the question: at that time, and as he confided to Jones, Freud worried about his mother's longevity. Fearing that he would die before she did, either because he was sick or brooding over Fliess's calculations on the theory of periods that dated his death, he came to wish that his mother died before him, so that she, the mother, would not have to survive his death, because surviving the death of a child had already been a task for his mother, who lost a boy as a baby.

And what is someone who loses a child? This name, says Zygoris (1995, p.95), is "the missing word". "The death of the child, for the parents, left no traces on the language. Language, memory of our actions" (p.99).

In 1920, Freud would unfortunately experience the pain he wished to avoid for his mother. His daughter Sofia, pregnant with her third child, was a victim of the Spanish flu epidemic. Sofia was the mother of the grandson who, years before, played with the spool to make the grandfather listen, in the Fort-dá of his play, the necessary alternation between the presence and absence of the reference caregiver for the child's psychic constitution. 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', a key text in Freud's work, was published in the same year that Sofia died. Having finished writing the article before his daughter's death, Freud marked there, between the "fort" and the "da" that lull the object's fall, the grandson's effort to overcome the fear of his mother's disappearance, or his own disappearance: a first mark that the child can make of the difference between being there or not being there.

Freudian formulations on the metapsychology of grief were reformulated from the perspective of the experience of loss, emptiness and lack. After Sofia's death in 1923, Freud revisited, in a technical publication, the idea of replacing one object with another as the normal fate of mourning. In 'The Ego and the Id' he already considers the subject transformed by his losses, which allows us to think that death transforms the living. Still later, in 1929, a year before his mother's death, Freud wrote to his friend Ludwig Binswanger, with whom he corresponded for many years. In this specific letter, and to embrace the friend who had lost a child, Freud presents his new propositions about grief. First he talks about time: "I work as hard as I can and I'm grateful for what I have. But the loss of a child seems like a serious injury. What's known as grief is likely to last a long time", and then crossed by the elaboration present in The Ego and the Id, reconsiders his problematic idea of substitution:

"We know that the acute sadness we feel after such a loss will run its course and remain inconsolable, and we will never find a replacement.

Regardless of what takes its place, even if it fills it completely, it will still be something different. And that's how it should be. It's the only way to perpetuate a love we don't want to abandon."

(Translation kindly performed by Paulo Schiller, at the request of the author))

Freud's review of Freud's understanding of the normality and pathology dimension of grief has clear clinical implications, but also relevant policy implications. In both fields, I understand that these implications and their consequences are expressed in the articulation between the temporality of mourning and the idea of replacing the investment object as a mark of the supposed conclusion of the process.

Macro and micropolitics of mourning in the child's experience

Long after the Freudian review, we currently find it between psychological manuals, medical approach guidelines and common sense that takes place on social

networks, an idea that 'healthy' mournings would also be linear, and, as already pointed out, They would have its beginning in the loss of the beloved object and its conclusion in replacing the investment that was made in the investment in another object, within an estimated period of time, for which they grant, on average, one year. Such a perspective creates important difficulties for the subject, because, as Carla Rodrigues (2021, p.15) clearly formulated, grief is not chronological, it is logical, and in this sense, it is very difficult to estimate its duration and generalize a period for its duration. "Grief is an act of memory" (p. 16), it is not a progressive game, it does not advance through phases; it goes back and forth, it embroiders, it's waves.

Furthermore, the problem that we found, and that the clinic demonstrates, is that the hypothesis of the inexorable transformation of the subject from his losses is incompatible with the perspective of replacement: mourning does not end with replacement. Even if the subject engages with a new object of investment, this new one does not put itself in the place of what is lost, nor does the lost object need to be replaced so that the investments of the libido can elect other objects. In other words: investing in the new is not necessarily replacing the lost. What becomes essential for mourning, as a process, to advance, is to give place to the lost, and the lack is then a place. Ginette Raimbault (1979, p.180) summarizes this understanding by saying that: "The death of the other is always a wound that leaves deep scars. If, on the one hand, it is the end of a life, it does not represent, for the living, the end of relations with that life. Progressive grief comes to modify it, to transform it". This transformation, we can conclude, includes loss and emptiness, and it is the work that grief takes.

The demand that circulates in the social discourse that mourning obeys a certain expiration date is not naive, and like everything that surrounds the human experience, it is politically determined. The most obvious consequence is that, by imposing a precise time on mourning, it puts the question of the normal/pathological criterion back into play and creates a condition for the pathologization of the experience that does not fit into the arbitrary determination of this pre-fixed time. This is what the indigenous thinker Mirindju (2021) said in a live by the *Despatologiza collective*: "in a productivist society, the temporal definition of mourning is a cause of pathologies".

Erica Burman (2019), an English researcher, draws attention to the consequences of this movement and states that, when we focus the problems of our social functioning on each of the people, we individualize problems that are relative to the time, which fulfills the function of avoiding the potential political criticism that can be made of the functioning of the time. Christian Dunker (2015) advances in understanding the consequences of this avoidance and understands that the current diagnosis, by eliminating the critical potential that symptoms can have on our bonding modes, hinders or prevents its (necessary) transformation.

Each time has a specific way of managing suffering, and, of course, neoliberalism has its own: it individualizes, making each one the ultimate and only responsible for their performance, for their achievement, for their failures, as well as for their failures and also for their suffering. In the same blow, it promotes the disarticulation of any and all events from their social construction and political implications. Regarding the theme presented here, we follow Carla Rodrigues (2021, p.73), who proposes the idea that the observation of the temporality of mourning would be a decisive element to formulate the political criticism of our time, mainly because, "the political work of mourning has a dimension of criticism of individualism".

A The approach to mourning as an ethical-political category, obviously, does not disregard the characteristic dimension of mourning being a subjective experience, but, it must be noted, it places other elements in the debate. These elements, in turn, propose an

articulation between the clinical and political fields in other (or new) terms, which are of interest to the discussion that we intend to undertake here.

As we have seen, the demand that mourning be progressive, linear and concluded in a pre-fixed time, greatly complicates the bereaved person's life: it pushes him, precipitously, to 'continue with life despite the loss' (because the wheel cannot stop turning)(15), and appeals to their hasty engagement in a supposed normality that, while violating the right to sadness, also violates the right to memory of those who died. The hypothesis that Rodrigues presents is that this series of violations is the result of the valuation of life under necropolitical criteria, which establish, among the living, the class that Butler called "*bereaved*", marking, with this name, that those who have the right to mourning are the same who have the right to life: "The condition of being *bereaved* is not something that occurs only when death happens, but, on the contrary, being *bereaved* is the condition for a life to be cared for from birth, it is the condition for a life to be recognized as life." (Rodrigues, 2021, p.87).

In order to face this discursive obstacle and its effects on common life and on the life of each one, Judith Butler (2008, p.13) proposes the debate from the perspective of the right to mourn, "because a specific life cannot be considered injured or lost if not first considered alive"; and Carla Rodrigues (2021, p.17) limits the discussion to the Brazilian context: "The normalization of death remains as a daily trait of indifference and the historical condition of colonial violence in the Brazilian style", bringing these arguments closer to those presented under the *killable* category from the proposition of the concept of *homo sacer* made by Giorgio Agamben.

It is in this sense that mourning, as a right to be guaranteed, places new terms in the defense of the right to life and it is also along this path that one must consider the subjective effects of such indifference towards the dead on children who have lost their loved ones, or who watch their contemporaries being gradually murdered. It is impossible not to consider the effects that the discursive framework of this segregating message assumes on the constitution of the subjective position of those who receive it, before the Other. What is a worthless life allowed to in the social bond?

I understand that this is why Carla Rodrigues proposes that the right to public mourning, in its ethical-political sense, works towards the necessary suspension of the distinction between humans and non-humans (2021 p.87), and which meets political criticism that you want to produce. "Finding paths to an egalitarian society", she says, "goes through a public policy of mourning and memory" (p.14). This is where, I understand, the clinical and political dimensions of grief intersect, because spending our lives deflecting losses and escaping the grief of our dead sickens people and nations.

Allow me a long quote from Judith Butler in 'Pictures of War: When Life Is Mourable', to restate the question that guides this discussion:

When we read about lives lost, we are often given numbers, but these stories are repeated every day, and the repetition seems endless, hopeless. So, we have to ask what it would take to apprehend the precariousness of the lives lost in war, but also to make this apprehension coincide with an ethical and political opposition to the losses that war entails? (Butler, 2009/2019, p.29)

In Brazil, where we count more than 600,000 dead in the context of the socio-sanitary crisis triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic, mourning and its processes become a public health issue.

At this historical moment, it is very serious to consider that Brazilian children who have lost at least one of their main caregivers have to individually manage their losses, their

pain, consider that they have a problem to solve on their own. Carolina Maria de Jesus (18) said that “when a child goes hungry, it's everyone's problem”. Today, we can say that bereaved children are also everyone's problem because, in the end, children are everyone's problem.

Radmila Zygouris (1995, p.45), in 'Surviving the Child and Death', also addressing war contexts, says that the processes of horizontal identification are crucial for coping with grief, and Ginette Raimbault (1979, p.173)) understands that the possible generalizations about death eliminate loneliness. This is also what Chimamanda spoke about when naming her sense of connection with others bereaved in the global context of Covid-19, as mentioned above, as compassion.

It is worth considering, however, that if there is something at stake that does not need to be solitary in mourning, this does not compete with its absolutely unique condition of effectiveness. Even words borrowed from collective narrativities need to be subjectivated in order to open up to the possibility of symbolic naming of the real.

Children, obviously, are not exempt from the absolutely singular care that mourning demands to constitute in the symbolic the object lost in the real, but 'singular' never meant 'lonely', and the idea of singularity also holds important differences from the individualistic experience: if mourning is really a matter for each one, which must be dealt with in their own terms, a work that one does not do in place of the other, we also know that mourning is something that is done with others.

The question returns with the question of how: how, under the death policy imposed by the State, conditions will be created to say to each bereaved child that their mourning is worth it because *their life* matters? That she has the right to mourn and that that dear person she lost weighs, matters and is worth?

In order for us to maintain that all life matters, and that we will not remain divided between the supposedly human and the non-human, mourning must take place in the social bond. It is the call that Carla Rodrigues (2021, p.14) makes, right at the beginning of her book, commenting on the collective rituals that surrounded the murder of Marielle Franco: “it is necessary to think about the unequal distribution of public mourning, one more, perhaps the sharpest inequality in Brazilian society”.

When considering that suffering has the ability to promote bonds, as the various studies by LATESFIP/USP (2018) state, we must also say that grief has the ability to form a social bond. And we are in need of that, of making a bow. “The function of mourning in Butler's philosophy”, says Rodrigues, to confirm this idea, “is to constitute a social bond based on the experience of loss” (2021, p.73)

From the point of view of actions, I understand that it is already well said that children not only can, but need to talk about their dead, about their losses, about what is needed. It is our responsibility, the responsibility of a world that intends to be an adult, to create conditions and space for this.

It is necessary that we are all involved in the demand to the State for public policies that support and organize territorialized care actions, and that, even in the face of care initiatives supported by organized civil society, because of all the arguments presented so far, it is necessary not to retreat in the face of this demand for care from the State.

Bereavement care practices, whether situated in the macro or micro politics of relationships, are necessarily supported by networks, care networks. That African proverb, which we so often repeat in the course of social isolation, “it takes a village to take care of a child”, reveals its double incidence when one can understand that village, in terms of public policies, means a social protection network. In this sense, care with bereavement, with regard to childhood and each child, needs to be intersectorally ordered,

articulating Health (from the perspective of assistance, and also of health promotion), Education and Social Assistance.

I insist on this point, appealing, once again, to its inseparably clinical and political effects. I remind you, as already argued at the beginning of this text, that the absence of public policies is a deliberate way of the State to be present in certain spaces of the cities, which we refer to as negligence. The effect of neglect, in turn, is felt in the modes of subjectivation that are articulated in each territory. That's why, in order to consider the care of bereavement in childhood, we need to understand which child we are talking about, each time.

Children experience death in many ways and in these encounters we can all describe them. But each time, and in each place, they do not experience death in the same way. Our job is to listen to all these ways, to think about their conditions, to consider their perspective.

I believe that this text could end here, launching us, reader and author, into the possibility of envisioning the future as an ethical measure of childhood care. After all, before the child is our future, as demanded by the narcissism of the time, it is, in the present, the subject of its history and takes part in the actuality of social discourse. However, in the course of this writing, I made a dream that interpreted me: “I would hold a hand with a boy of about 9 years old, we were crossing the street. I understood what was going to happen, but I didn't believe it would happen, and at the same time I knew I couldn't help it: hand in hand, the child was run over by a car with round headlights, and I survived. She would fall, I would stand.” I woke up scared, and I remembered a line by Lacan: ‘we wake up from nightmares to continue dreaming’.

Along with the intimate associative course that surrounds this dream, there is what is caused in the time in which one lives with others, there is what belongs to several, there is a time. That's why I chose to put that dream here. Well, if we are going to wake up from nightmares to continue dreaming, may we, awake, consider that children are living death (*I couldn't help it*) and it is urgent to create a place, offer them resources (*I would stand up*). May we listen to what they know about death, what they build about dying, may they talk about it so that they can follow some course. May we, from the opening to the real where mourning starts, produce, with them, an impulse of life. This is where we need to collectively engage, this is our ethical measure.

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Notas

- (1) The relationship between mourning (the right to mourn) and care for life will be discussed below, based on the work of Carla Rodrigues (2021).
- (2) https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2018/06/22/politica/1529618951_552574.html
- (3) http://arquivos.proderj.rj.gov.br/isp_imagens/uploads/InfograficoDossieDC A2018.pdf
- (4) https://normas.leg.br/?urn=urn:lex:br:federal:constituicao:1988-10-05;1988#/con1988_07.05.2015/art_227_.asp
- (5) Para agregar elementos à essa discussão, sugiro: Katz, Ilana (2021). “Infâncias e Parentalidade: nomeações, funções e funcionamentos”, em Tempo (coleção Parentalidade). Teperman, D & Garrafa, T & Iaconelli, V. (orgs). São Paulo: Autêntica, (pp. 117-134)
- (6) <https://g1.globo.com/rj/rio-de-janeiro/noticia/2020/12/10/emily-e-rebecca-laudos-indicam-que-tiros-atingiram-figado-coracao-e-cabeca.ghtml>
- (7) <https://g1.globo.com/rj/rio-de-janeiro/noticia/2019/09/23/entenda-como-foi-a-morte-da-menina-agatha-no-complexo-do-alemao-zona-norte-do-rio.ghtml>
- (8) There is, for example, no care for children that dispenses with the discussion of public safety. There is none, for those who are children who miss 24 days of school a year (<https://mareonline.com.br/a-politica-da-inseguranca-publica-mata-mais-do-que-protege/>) because there is a police operation at your door, and there

is also none for those who are locked in their walled and pseudo-security condominiums. As Roberta Estrela Dalva says: “if peace is not for everyone, it will not be for anyone”.

- (9) <https://youtu.be/p8zaIOfC9V4>
- (10) <https://transparencia.registrocivil.org.br/inicio>
- (11) https://www.gov.br/saude/pt-br/media/pdf/2021/julho/16/boletim_epidemiologico_covid_71.pdf
- (12) <https://omny.fm/shows/estad-o-not-cias/por-que-morrem-mais-crian-as-no-brasil-por-covid>
- (13) <https://saude.estadao.com.br/noticias/geral,sem-escolas-e-sem-controle-da-pandemia-brasil-e-o-2-pais-que-mais-perdeu-criancas-para-a-covid,70003738573>
- (14) <https://youtu.be/pxe92zWOotE>
- (15) Na In the discussion that follows, the possible criticism would be the subject's relationship with time imposed by the experience of temporality in course in social functioning, which is certainly avoided.
- (16) (16) In this regard, see: Pathologies of the Social- Archeologies of Psychic Suffering
- (17) (17) In this regard, it is worth remembering the Brazilian federal government's campaign “Brazil cannot stop”, at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. <https://www.cnnbrasil.com.br/politica/governo-lanca-campanha-brasil-nao-pode-parar-contra-medidas-de-isolamento/>
- (18) (18) This formulation by the writer was collected in the exhibition ‘Carolina Maria de Jesus: a Brazil for Brazilians’, on display at Instituto Moreira Sales (IMS) in São Paulo, in October 2021.

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