



RESEARCH ARTICLE

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RESONANCE OF THE LANGUAGE OF THE FEELING OF ROUSSEAU IN THE AFRICAN LITERATURE OF MIA COUTO

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ABSTRACT

Language sometimes enters the field of what cannot be measured, or achieved by the way of reason, language, codes, because a form of language manifests itself erupts, surpassing the perspective of a grammatical system. Mia Couto in *What if Obama were African?* Specifically in the tale *Languages that we do not know we know*, seems to be attentive, as Rousseau, in the language that risks escaping conventions. The aim of this work is to analyze the possible approximation of the idea of language of the feeling developed by the Genevan philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in the literary writing of Mozambican author Mia Couto, as well as to take a look at the discussion on the difference in languages presented by the philosopher. To achieve the intention proposed here, we will make use of a bibliographic review, in order to achieve a fruitful development of the analysis in question. In this sense, it is necessary to investigate the work *Essay on the origin of Rousseau's languages*, the short story of the writer Mia Couto, already mentioned, as well as other texts that collaborate for the basis of the proposal presented. We consider that there are strong indications of the language of Rousseauian feeling, in the literary work of African origin, since both signal to a path that escapes from a language strictly linked to rules, achieving, therefore, what does not necessarily need to go through the bias of the saying, and which finds strong resonance in what is not said, because it seems to dispense with any requirement for this.

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INTRODUCTION

Despite the indefiniteness of his writing, *The Essay on the origin of the languages* of the philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, presents in its constitution, among other issues, the problem of language that drives away the feeling between man and his peers, in favor of a systematized language, against the background of reason, so widespread in the century of lights. In dealing with language, Jean-Jacques presents man in his state of nature, and in society, hypothetically tracing how this process of evolution unfolds, which

results in the social institution and freedom, or in his absence, as we can observe, in the idea developed by the philosopher in the *Discourse on the origin and foundations of inequality between men*, in his Second Part: "The true founder of civil society, he was the first who, having surrounded a land, remembered to say this is mine and found people simple enough to believe it" (ROUSSEAU, 1983, p. 259). The strength of the discourse that gives rise to society, and consequently to its unfolding, in Rousseau, seems to pass through the scope of language, because, in the *Essay on the origin of languages*, the Genebrino considers: "being the word the first social institution, only natural causes owe its form" (ROUSSEAU, 1983, p. 159). Now,

the historical method used by the genebrino, will lead to the format that language has arrived in its most evolved form, for so it becomes necessary to depart in its origin, or in the natural causes, as provided for in the citation mentioned above, although, it seems the Rousseauian interest is linked "the differentiation of languages that gives interest and content to the research of their origin" (BASTIDE and MACHADO, 1983, p. 152). For this article, the two aspects mentioned above: natural causes, or making use of Rousseau's concept, natural language, and differentiation of languages, since the intention circumscribes in analyzing the resonance of the language of feeling, as well as the difference of languages, in the tale of Mia Couto. In order to achieve the objective proposed here, we will divide the text into three topics: in the first we will deal with the idea of natural language in Rousseau's thought, in the second we will discuss the difference of languages, in the third we will analyze the possible resonance of the two ideas developed, in the tale Languages we do not know we knew, in mia couto's African literature. Finally, we will present the final considerations, with the possible reflections raised from the suggested analysis.

The Natural Language in Rousseauian Philosophy: For an understanding of natural language in Rousseau, it is necessary to emphasize the influence that Condillac had exerted on the theme in the philosopher's thought, although, it seems, the Genebrino tries to seek at the root, the origin of languages. In book VII of Confessions, Jean-Jacques (2011, p. 47) reports on this relationship:

I had also connected with the abbot of Condillac, who, like me, was nothing then in literature, but who was marked to become what he is today. I was the first, perhaps, who knew his abilities and timed them for what they were worth. He also seemed to like my company, and when, locked in my room on Jean Saint-Denis street, I worked on my act of Hesiod, he would sometimes come to dinner with me, just the two of us on picnic. He then worked on an 'Essay On the Origin of Man's Knowledge' which is his first work."

According to Becker (2011, p. 54) the impasse between Rousseau and Condillac refers to the assumption of the latter developed in his Essay, about the existence of "a kind of society already established among the inventors of the first language". This idea is manifested by the Genebrino in the Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Between Men:

Allow me to examine for a moment the difficulties relating to the origin of languages. I could be content to quote or repeat here the research of Mr. Father of Condillac on this subject, all of which fully confirm my opinion and perhaps have suggested to me the first idea. But according to the way in which this philosopher solves the difficulties, which he presents himself on the origin of the established signs, showing by supposedly what I put as a problem – namely: a kind of society already established among the inventors of the language – I believe, returning to his reflections, i must join them to expose the same difficulties to the light more convenient to my subject (ROUSSEAU, 1983, p. 246 – 247).

According to Starobinski (2011, p. 410): For Rousseau, man is not naturally sociable, or at least not since the origin. He became sociable by virtue of his perfectibility. However, Rousseau considers perfectibility as an inactia, as a gift of nature.

In the state of nature, man conjecture by the genebrino communicates through the senses, and his feelings and thoughts can be recognized by his fellow man, the philosopher establishes as being two means by which, one could act on the senses:

[...] movement and voice. The action of the movement can be immediate, in touch, or mediata, in the gesture. The first, finding its limit in the length of the arm, cannot transmit the distance, but the other reaches as far as the visual radius. Therefore, only the sight and the ear remain as passive organs of language among

scattered men. Although they are the language of gesture and voice equally natural, the first, however, seems easier and depends less on conventions, because a greater number of objects impresses our eyes before than our ears, and the figures present greater variety than sounds, also showing more expressive and saying more in less time (ROUSSEAU, 1983, p. 159 – 160).

Rousseau (1983, p. 163) shows that "one can therefore believe that needs dictate the first gestures and that passions have plucked the first voices". For Jean-Jacques these two means that are responsible for the way of communicating man in his state of nature, results in the philosopher's idea, that the gesture would be responsible for the needs, so at this stage we have the natural man, making use of his natural language, and the passions enunciated by the voice, already prefigure the language considered as conventional. The natural language seems to be within this mentioned formulation, and its "concern" is nothing more than the conservation of the senses, of feeling, as Rousseau points out when dealing with the way the origin of languages were being reflected by other authors:

They present to us the languages of early men as languages of geometers and we find that they are poets' languages. That's the way it should be. It didn't start thinking, but feeling. It is intended that men invented the word to express their needs; such an opinion seems untenable to me. The natural effect of the first needs was to separate men and not bring them closer together. [...] It follows, by evidence, that the origin of languages is not due to the first needs of men; it would be absurd that the cause that apart them would result in the means that unites them. [...] It is not hunger or seed, but love, hatred, piety, anger, that have ripped their first voices out. The fruits do not run away from our hands, it is possible to nourish themselves with them without speaking; the prey that one wants to eat is silently caught; but to thrill a young heart, to repel an unjust aggressor, nature imposes, signs, cries and cries. These are the oldest invented words, this is why the first languages were sung and passionate before they were simple and methodical.

The transformations in language as a function of the painting drawn by the philosopher, situates, even if, in a conjectural way the natural language:

The simple sounds come out naturally of the throat, remaining the mouth, naturally, more or less open. [...] I do not doubt that regardless of vocabulary and syntax, the first language, if it still existed, had not retained original characters that would distinguish it from all the other [...] it would be sung instead of speaking (ROUSSEAU, 1983, p. 166).

The above-mentioned idea is founded on the Discourse on the origin and foundations of inequality between men:

The first language of man, the most universal language, the most energetic and the only one that was needed before needing to persuade assembled men, is the cry of nature. As this cry was uttered by a kind of instinct on the most pressing occasions, to beg for help in the great dangerous or relief in violent pain, it was not of much use in the common course of life, where more moderate feelings are reinable (ROUSSEAU, 1983, p. 248).

We have, therefore, that synthetic form, the outline of natural language in Rousseau's thought, providing us with room for understanding the difference between languages, and their possible unfolding.

The difference between languages and their nuances

When one wants to study men, one must look around, but in order to study man, it is important that the view reaches further; it is necessary to start by observing the differences, to discover the properties (ROUSSEAU, 1983, p. 174).

This idea formulated by Rousseau in the Essay on the origin of languages reminds us of the First Part of the Discourse on the origin and foundations of inequality among men, when the genebrino formulates man in his natural state, he would have full capacity to overcome the weather, giving room for what will later develop as an evolutionary theory, as can be identified in the following statement:

Accustomed, since childhood, to the intemperate atmosphere and rigor of the seasons, experienced in fatigue and forced to defend, naked and without weapons, life and offspring against the other ferocious beasts or to escape them running, men acquire a robust and almost unalterable temperament; the children, bringing to the world the excellent constitution of their parents and fortifying it by the same activities that produced it, thus acquire all the vigor that the human species is capable of. Nature does with them precisely as the law of Sparta with the children of the citizens.; it makes strong and robust those who are well constituted and leads all others to perish, and in this case different from our societies, where the State, making children onerous to parents, kills them indistinctly before their birth (ROUSSEAU, 1983, p. 238).

Developed in the Essay on the origin of languages, the climate would be for Jean-Jacques, the one responsible for the differentiation between languages "The main cause that distinguishes them is local, results from the climates in which they were born and the way in which they are formed" (ROUSSEAU, 1983, p. 174). The philosopher will weave a whole guiding thread that will conform this thought, since, in need of subsistence, each people will need to meet taking into account the particularities of their places. We will make use of three examples formulated by the philosopher that corroborates this idea, in view of the significant number he presents in the work. Important to point out, that it is the man in his state of evolution:

Whether, therefore, seeking the origin of the arts, or observing the first customs, we will see that everything is connected, in its principle, to the means of attending to subsistence and, with regard to those who bring together men, who are determined by the climate and nature of the soil. It is therefore also due to the same causes that one must explain the diversity of languages and the opposition of their characters (ROUSSEAU, 1983, p. 178). The mild climates, the abundant and fertile territories were the first to populate and the last ones where nations were formed because in them men could more easily pass without each other and also because the needs, which determined the birth of society, were felt there later (ibid). The changes of the seasons represent another cause, more general and more permanent, which should produce the same effect in the climates exposed to such variation. Forced to supply themselves for the winter, the inhabitants are in the contingency of helping each other, coerced to establish a kind of convention among themselves (ROUSSEAU, 1983, p. 180).

For Rousseau (1983, p. 174), the examples mentioned above seem to come across, exactly on the difference of languages, and on the prejudice that the philosopher considers to be realized by his contemporaries: "The great defect of Europeans is to always philosophize about the origins of things based on what goes on around them". We perceive, therefore, in the Genevan a paradigm shift, predicted in the century of lights, as Bastide and Machado considers in a note (1983, p. 174):

With this remarkable revulsion at European ethnocentrism, we have deceitfully depart from the orientation unanimously accepted by the authors of the eighteenth century, for whom a concept of man deduced from certain general anistic principles was valid. Rousseau wants to seek, beyond the "natural order" and in the very life of men as there are in the whole world, the human order, that is, the knowledge of man in his own reality.

Such differences in languages are thoroughly described by the genebrino, taking into account the transformations suffered by man,

due to the climate of their specific sites, and how these languages end up becoming:

Such, are in my opinion, the most general physical causes of difference characteristics of primitive languages. Those in the south had to be alive, sound, accentuated, eloquent and often obscure due to energy. The northern deaf, rude, articulate, stark, monotonous and clear, rather than the forces of words than to a good construction. Modern languages, hundreds of times mixed and reformed, still retain some of these differences: French, English and German are the particular language of men who help themselves, who reason in cold blood, or of choleric people who fight, but the ministers of the gods announcing the sacred ministries, the wise giving laws to the people, the chiefs dragging the crowd, must speak Arabic or Persian. [...] To appreciate the actions of men, it is necessary to take into account all their relationships, something that we never teach ourselves to do: when we put ourselves in the place of others, we do it as we already are, modified, and not as they should be, and when we think to judge them based on reason, we can only compare their prejudices with ours (ROUSSEAU, 1983, p. 185 - 186).

After this synthetic approach to natural language in The Thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and how the difference in languages is followed, from the gradual need of man in his place, we will seek in the next topic to analyze the possible resonance of the language of Rousseau's feeling in Mia Couto's literature, in the tale Languages we do not know we knew, as well as the discussion of ethnocentric character that the tale presents. In addition, we close the topic with a quote from the Genevan philosopher provided in the Second Preface to the work The New Heloise, which is part of this discussion:

A. I could... No, I see the rodeos of your curiosity. Why do you decide not to be like this? Do you know how different men differ from each other? How are the characters opposed? As customs, prejudices vary according to times, places, ages? Who deeds to mark the precise limits in nature and say: this is how far man can go and not beyond? (ROUSSEAU, 1994, p. 7).

The language of rousseauian feeling and the african literature of mia Couto: Diversities: At the beginning of his Confessions, the philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, attributes meaning of high relevance to the feeling, attribute seems to have taken up in some of his works, becoming a counterpoint in a context that Reason is in vogue. Now, in the autobiographical text, the philosopher begins by saying he wants to show his fellow men "a man in all his truth of nature" (ROUSSEAU, 2011, p. 5). This idea seems to be in line with the predicted thinking of the Discourse on the origin and foundations of inequality among men, when Jean-Jacques (1983, p. 244 states): "Understanding and feeling will be your first state". According to Bastide and Machado (1983, p. XIV)) on the life and work of the Genebrino, the themes of Rousseau's writings are composed of structural elements, and one of these elements is the interiority untosed by feeling. For Jean-Jacques reason, while the faculty of intellect would lead man out of himself, the feeling that this "infinitely more sublime faculty" would be "the true way to penetration into the essence of interiority" (ibid). As this path happens through language, it is what we propose to verify, in order to find resonance in mia couto's literary writing, about languages that go beyond the systematic meaning of language, as well as to analyze the impasse, it seems that it is based on Eurocentrism, in carrying out the proposal made by the genebrino: to cast a look beyond the horizon.

The Genevaphilosopher presents the unfolding of the progression of human nature, and demarcations the language of convention as one that focuses on the differentiation between man and other animals: "the language of convention belongs only to man, and this is the reason why man progresses, whether for good or for evil, and because animals cannot do it" (ROUSSEAU, 1983, p. 163). This language seems to differentiate from that predicted in man in his natural state, when it is still in its least evolved format, as we can observe in the following statement: "One can therefore believe that needs dictate the

first gestures and that passions have plucked the first voices" (ibid). Therefore, from this emerges the idea of genebrino, about feeling before reasoning. Although language seems, in Rousseau, to be a distinctive trait between men and animals, the possibility of communication goes beyond the frontier of the saying (by the word), and lies, the possibility of communicating by movement (gesture), and by the mute signs (signs). From the Rousseauist perspective, the need for communication goes through an evolutionary process, it is what is perceived in the work *The Essay on the origin of languages*, and also, in the idea of man provided in the work *The Discourse on the origin and the foundation of inequality between men*. While in the first work the problem seems to be based on the word it communicates, in the second it focuses on the social evolution of man, who does not shy away from language, on the contrary, has an intimate relationship. Starobinski (2011, p. 409) says of these works:

Complementary texts, sometimes slightly dissonant, but which propose to the reader the same story under a double version: the *Discourse on Inequality* inserts a history of language within a history of society; conversely, the *Essay on the origin of languages* introduces a history of society within a history of language. It is necessary to point out that this path made by the philosopher, evidences that in its origin man would not be endowed with language, in the sense of the word. The Genebrino defends the hypothesis that there was no conventional language as we know it, so in the history of language within the evolution of man, Jean-Jacques presents a language that pre-creates codes, rules, grammar, a natural language. According to Starobinski (2011, p. 411):

Rousseau invites us to seek short of the human kingdom of the word. Of course, it gives us to read a "speech", but it is to make a voice prior to every speech [...] By definition, the voice of nature must speak before every word. Tacit and imperious, this voice dictates to us the spontaneous movements of self-love and piety, "principles prior to reason. The need to communicate with the like can be satisfied both by movement (gesture) and by voice (word), but sound communication is not necessarily imposed. There are powerfully eloquent mute signs (symbols disconnected from words). "This is how you speak to the eyes much better than the ears, at least when it comes to expressing simple feelings. Therefore, one can imagine that "if we always knew so-only physical needs well we could never have spoken.

The crucial point that we intend to dwell on in relation to the process of language evolution in Jean-Jacques' philosophical thought, and in the Tale of Mia Couto, refers to the voice preceding every discourse, the voice of nature, and the nuances to which the differences in languages are referred to. We conducted a succinct analysis of natural language in Rousseau, and now we intend to glimpse resonant aspects in Mia Couto's Work *What if Obama were African?* And other essays interventions, specifically in the tale *Languages that we don't know we knew*. It is a work with 17 short stories, this one about language, the second tale. Mia Couto presents it through an Intervention at the Waltic International Literature Conference in Stockholm. At the beginning, the author informs that it is a tale that he had never published. The story revolves around a terminally ill woman, who asks her husband "to tell her a story to appease the unbearable pain. As soon as he starts narrating, she makes him stop:

No, not like that. I want you to speak to me in an unknown language. -Unknown? " he asks. - A language that doesn't exist. That I need so much not to understand anything! The husband wonders: how can one know how to speak a language that does not exist? You start by babbling a few strange words and you feel ridiculous as if you've given evidence of the inability to be human. Gradually, however, he is gaining more at ease in this language without a rule. And he doesn't know if he talks, if he sings, he prays. When he stops, he sees that the woman is asleep, and lives on his face the quietest smile. Later, she confesses to him: those murmurs brought him memories of before he had a memory. And they gave him the comfort of that same sleep that

connects us to what was before we were alive (COUTO, 2011, p. 11).

Mia Couto, understands this language with being "the language of chaos", it seems that in Rousseau is the voice of nature, the one who is not "focused" on rules, but in the feeling that brings it to the fore, about this chaos, considers the Mozambican author (2011, p. 12):

I believe that all of us, poets and fictionists, never fail to pursue this seminal chaos. We all aspire to return to this condition in which we were so out of a language that all languages were ours. Put another way, we are all impossible dream translators. In fact, dreams speak to us what no word can say. Our goal, as dream producers, is to access that other language that is not fallible, that blind language in which all things can have all the names.

On the occasion the Mozambican author weaves the criticism of how language has been used to exalt and annul certain peoples, by the force of a Eurocentric discourse, as a rule the peoples of the African continent, in view of power, profit:

In a congress that celebrates the value of the word, the theme of my speech is how today's dominant criteria devalue word and thought in the name of easy and immediate profit. Today's word is increasingly one that has stripped itself of the poetic dimension and carries no utopia over a different world. What made the human species survive was not just intelligence, but our ability to produce diversity. This diversity is being denied these days by a system that chooses only for reasons of profit and ease of success. Africans are once again the "others", the ones who sell little and those who buy even less. African authors who do not write in English (and especially those who write in Portuguese) live on the outskirts of the periphery, where the word must fight not to be silence (COUTO, 2011, p. 13).

In the presentation of the essay on the origin of languages, entitled *As The force of the voice and the violence of things*, Prado Jr. (2008, p. 12) seems to be the above-mentioned discussion by stating: "The force that provokes reflection on language is, in fact, the scandal of an intrinsic danger to the use of signs". On the respective idea, Sae (2010, p. 7) questions:

Bento Prado Jr. argues in the sense of showing that there is, in Rousseau, a rhetorical conception of language, and that the originality of the *Essay* consists in having denounced, before many other philosophers, the internal bond between language and violence.

This seems to be an idea already coined by Jean-Jacques (1983, p. 263), when he considers that in social evolution, and therefore in the development of language, man ends up degenerating, while he seems to forget the differences in language due to his socialized state:

Each one began to look at others and to wish to be looked at himself, thus passing public esteem to have a price. He who sang or danced best, the most beautiful, the strongest, the most cunning or the most eloquent, became the most considered, and this was the first step for both inequality and addiction; from these first preferences were born, on the one hand, vanity and contempt, and on the other, shame and envy. The fermentation determined by these new germs ultimately produced funest compounds to happiness and innocence.

The Mozambican author seems to be rescuing the language of Rousseauian sentiment, reminding us that in addition to the systematization of codes and their functional character, language, according to Starobinski (2011, p. 411) dealing with the "discourse" that Rousseau gives us to read: "it removes the too many doubts, too cultivated from those who would want the natural law to be as the reason constituted. [...] I'm sure he gives us a speech, but it's to bring up a voice before every speech." Voice announced in the African literature of Mia Couto (2011, p. 13- 14):

Languages are meant to communicate. But they don't just "serve." They transcend this functional dimension. Sometimes languages make you be. Others, as in the case of the man who fell asleep in his wife's story, they make us stop being.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

As in other themes of Rousseauian philosophy, it is not a simple investment to weave an analysis of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's thought, in this sense, the problem of language does not escape the rule. Therefore, it was in a very synthetic way that we presented some of the concepts of genebrino with regard to the language of feeling, as well as the differences in languages, in view of finding possible resonances in the African literature of the Mozambican writer Mia Couto. The small cut-off analyzed on natural language, from Rousseau's thought, raises the understanding that in the state of nature, when man is not yet endowed with the language of conventions, managed by the senses, the possibility of true feelings, which spring from their essence has full chance of fruition. Since, not yet in its evolutionary form, invaded by the desire to resemble or compete with others. Thus, the voice of natural language is intimately nature. According to Starobinski (2011, p. 411): "Man's dangerous privilege is to have in his own nature the source of the powers by which he will be ominated by his nature and nature."

In the evolutionary process of man, we perceive that in the hypothetical form developed by Rousseau, the climate and place of each man, opens the way for the problem of ethnocentrism, and the philosopher performs this analysis by the bias of language, bringing to light a reflection that contradicts his contemporaries and the ideas centered on reason disseminated in the centuries of lights. It is necessary to point out that this tour performed by the genebrino evokes from the differences of languages the relevance of thinking about diversity from an perspective that goes beyond the understanding rooted as true. In the tale Languages we don't know we knew, Mia Couto seems to go down the path mentioned above. As in Rousseau, the African author deals with the language that runs away from conventions, weaving a whole web of revision of the functionality of that language. Moreover, it takes advantage of the opportunity to make harsh criticisms about the violence committed against its people, by the power of discourse. Jean-Jacques' philosophy finds evident resonance in Mia Couto's short story, the language of feeling violated by a civilized and boundingLy Eurocentric language, seems to strengthen the silence of the African peripheries as evidenced by the African author, it seems that no longer the silence of rousseau's primitive man, but the silence of a so-called civilized language.

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