

Luc Beaudoin, *Lost and Found Voices: Four Gay Male Writers in Exile*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022. 264 pp.

This monograph by Luc Beaudoin, Professor of Gender and Women's Studies at the University of Denver, explores how the works of Witold Gombrowicz, Valerii Pereleshin, Abdellah Taïa, and Slava Mogutin find their gay voices in exile and express their queerness in a different political, historical, and personal environment. Beaudoin tackles the concepts of queerness and homosexuality, nationalism and masculinity, homophobia, and homonegativity, in the process intertwining his four subjects' stories with his personal experience as a gay man.

Language is the fifth subject of the book, likewise linking the literary quartet analyzed in the monograph. For French-Canadian Beaudoin, "living in an adopted language" is a part of queer exile experience. However, the voices of his heroes have no national or geographic boundaries, just as he navigates French, Polish, Portuguese, and Russian—languages from which many of the translations in the book are his.

Born in Poland, Gombrowicz (1904–69) arrived in Buenos Aires a few days before the outbreak of World War II and decided to remain there upon realizing that it was impossible for him to return home. Writing in Polish for his fellow immigrants, he never declared his homosexuality openly but expressed his true sexual identity in an intimate diary, *Kronos* (2013), which was not intended for publication. Publicly Gombrowicz repeatedly rejected the identity of a gay man. For him homosexuality resided in the fantastic and the unbelievable, mixed with madness and monstrosity. Beaudoin speculates on what implications this ironic absence of homosexual desire had for Gombrowicz's public narrative. Argentina offered Gombrowicz a distinct chance to explore his queer identity, both in public and private spheres, moving back and forth from concealment to expression. This voice, which initially emerged subtly in his early works, ultimately laid the groundwork for a queer existence that thrived independently. It served as a foundation for a compelling critique of obsolete and harmful ideas surrounding nationalism, which Gombrowicz called "the Land of the Fathers."

Pereleshin (1913–92) left Russia with his mother in 1920 for Harbin, China, where he developed both as a poet and as an individual—extraordinarily, becoming a Russian Orthodox hieromonk. Although he realized that he was homosexual, that awareness did not imply a swift, uncomplicated acceptance of being gay. With their life in China increasingly difficult under communist rule, in early 1953 Pereleshin and his mother moved to Rio de Janeiro, where they would spend the rest of their lives. Unlike Gombrowicz, Pereleshin did not leave a diary; his poems function as such. Beaudoin focuses on two of Pereleshin's poetic cycles, both written in Rio de Janeiro, one in Russian and one in Portuguese. The cycle written in Russian, *Ariel* (1976), honors gay love, though from a removed perspective, remaining largely poetic and inspirational without ever being fully realized. Yet it was through Portuguese that Pereleshin overcame the

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constraints he had felt in the Russian language, for the new language mirrored the liberated and sensual world he had entered. In Portuguese he embraced his identity as an openly gay man. In *In Old Wineskins* (1983) Pereleshin struggles with his understanding of being “left-handed,” the term he used for homosexual, and examines the relationship between the physical and the spiritual in a way that was not achievable within the confines of the Russian heritage he maintained throughout his life in Rio de Janeiro.

The Moroccan Taïa (b. 1973) relocated to Paris, a colonial cultural center, rather than to a cultural periphery. His writings, invariably in French, explore the complexities of the queer immigrant experience even as he remains deeply connected to his Islamic religious identity. While identifying as a queer Muslim, he struggles to feel fully accepted in a secular France that acknowledges his homosexuality under certain circumstances but is less accommodating of his religious belief. Beaudoin examines this dynamic in Taïa's auto-fictional novel, *The Slow Life* (2019), asking if one can truly carve out an individual identity in a society that categorizes people regardless of their uniqueness. According to Taïa, while Paris prevents authentic human connections, Morocco hinders the journey of self-discovery and genuine expression. The pursuit of finding one's voice becomes a continual process of mourning for what has been lost, what is currently slipping away, and what may ultimately be lost in the future.

A contemporary of Taïa, the Siberian Mogutin (b. 1974) is a poet, critic, prose writer, photographer, and former film actor. His case illustrates the sexual complexities of Soviet and modern Russian culture vis-à-vis the West (recall the famous statement, “We don't have sex in the USSR”). In 1994, he made headlines with his failed effort to marry his American boyfriend before successfully securing asylum in the United States the following year. Beaudoin examines how Mogutin's body becomes his voice, since for him the body is the only aspect that can stay authentic amidst constant transformation and never-ending consumerism, reflecting how his working-class background and persistent identity influence his artistic expression.

Beaudoin's monograph manages to integrate queer theory with linguistic and visual analysis by showing how queer authors and artists translate themselves for the heteronormative world in various languages and discourses. He is most effective in examining how the intersection of sexual identity and the experience of exile influences the authors' perspectives and narratives, while situating them within their historical contexts. His detailed literary analyses reveal how the necessity of expressing oneself in a different language is closely linked to cultural adaptation in a new country and society. Writers in exile, Beaudoin observes, are often addressing a void, and that is the reason it is important to explore the conflict between speaking and silence. Ultimately, he concludes, gay men and queer people never cease to come out and develop new meanings for themselves, constantly reshaping their sense of self and their surroundings.

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