

Identity, double and active imagination - reading the short story “The Distance” from Cortázar

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Abstract

In this article, I work on the interface between Analytical Psychology and literature, in a dialogue between the short story *The Distance* by the writer Julio Cortázar and the Jungian approach. I begin by presenting a brief synopsis of the short story, weaving relationships and associations with some concepts of Analytical Psychology. Later, making a clip in three axes of analysis: the search for the character's identity, the archetype of the double and active imagination as a Jungian method of working with the unconscious, analogous to what happens with the protagonist of the story. Finally, I draw considerations and approximations between the author Cortázar and Jung, finding affinities in the creative process of both and the symbolic attitude towards life. ■



Keywords

double, active imagination, identity, literature, Cortázar.

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1. Introduction

A bridge, a river below, and the restless woman's search for something that makes sense to her...

The image above, inspired by the short story *The Distance* by the Argentine writer Julio Cortázar, which I work in this article, serves as a motto to initiate it.

I share the experience developed from the reading of this short story in the Centre of Studies “Dreams, literature and Analytical Psychology” (*Núcleo de estudos: “Sonhos, literatura e psicologia analítica”*), at SBPA-SP.

It is a work that I have been developing for some years with groups of psychologists and psychiatrists interested in the subject, in which I search for possible approximations between the two areas, analytical psychology and literature, through reading and discussing short stories. The dream, our everyday fictional production, is the point of intersection between the two areas, and in the work with dream series and short stories, new looks and re-readings for the human restlessness are being weaved.

Simultaneously, I develop in the Centre a subjective space for the participants to experience the reading, in order to improve their own symbolic repertoire. I realize that this subjective space of exchanges and impressions, fertilized by the reading of short stories, besides maintaining the connection with human complexity through literary language, promotes the spontaneous expression of the participants and the practice of their own creativity, which I think is fundamental for the formation of an analyst.

I worked in the Centre with several other short stories by the author Julio Cortázar, who, apart from the literary value of his work, has in his creative production a confessed influence of the dream world. In his writings, the real is insepara-

ble from the imaginary and the daily order is deconstructed, always revealing another order, disconcerting, uncomfortable, mysterious. I chose the short story *The Distance* since it brings the theme of the double, which for a long time has been an object of interest and research to me, and which brings within itself the issues of identity, a theme always relevant to psychotherapists and analysts. Also, for being a short story that brings in its structural form, a literary narrative that favours the immersion of the reader in the theme and in the character, since it is structured, for the most part, like a protagonist's diary. Although it is an important aspect in the work that I develop in the Centre, this more subjective aspect of the reading of the literary work will not be the focus of this article.

Analytical psychology offers unique and valuable resources for the symbolic analysis of the literary work and this article is a contribution to it. Therefore, between the presentation of the short story and the character, in order to contribute to the area, I build bridges and paths between literature and psychology.

2. The short story *The Distance*

The Distance (Lejana) was published in Julio Cortázar's first short story book, *Bestiary (Bestiario)*, in 1951. Cortázar was 37 years old and, only then, did he feel mature to publish a book. This rigor, perhaps, explains the quality of this book, considered by many, to be composed by perfect short stories, classics of the genre on current days. Besides *The Distance*, well-known stories written by the author are part of the volume: *Circe (Circe)*, *Casa Tomada (House Taken Over)*, *Carta para uma senhorita em Paris (Letter to a Young Lady in Paris)*, among others. *The Distance* brings, in the plot and in the form, important aspects to the writer that will be taken

up and revisited in his future work, more specifically, the theme of the double and the play, or playing distractedly, the ludic, as a way to enter other consciousness' realities and apprehension of the world and of oneself, which allows the perception of reality to be unfold.

In *The Distance*, the main character, Alina Reys, is a woman who lives with her mother in Buenos Aires. She writes in her diary reveries, dreams, wordplays and anagrams, subterfuges to escape from insomnia, which takes her to another city, Budapest, and another woman, a beggar, feeling cold who suffers and gets beaten.

Who is Alina Reyes? Young, but not so much, as she registers in her diary – “27 years old still without a fiancé”, lives in celibacy, kind of teenager in her attitudes and her connection with “mother”.

Wandering between concerts and receptions, typical of the local bourgeoisie, in her diary, she presents herself as a creative and humorous woman, she plays piano, but seems to be dissatisfied when describing herself: “Only, among people without meaning”. The short story is written in the first person as a character's diary and the text reveals clues to Alina's dissatisfaction. From Queen to imprisoned Rex – a domesticated and imprisoned animal, which points to the feminine condition of the time and to the ambiguities of this condition. Music, to Alina, may be an evocation element of her deepest feelings and, sleepless nights, moments of connection with the unknown side, or not so unknown, but rejected by consciousness.

Who is the “Other”? A woman, distant, older, poor, who does not have children, feels cold, suffers, and is beaten. Alina, sometimes feels tenderness towards herself, wants to take care and heal herself; others, she hates herself, sees her as an evil, as a usurper with a malignant adherence. Alina wants the “Other” to surrender.

The plot begins as a distraction, an innocent play, especially with the wordplays that she creates distractedly, which allow us not only to know the character, but also her personality's hidden

aspects, far from consciousness, but alive, elusive and in search of expression.

“That's how I spend the hours” - says Alina about her nights, when she repeats verses, searches words, until reaching the palindromes and anagrams.

[...] I want to sleep and I'm a terrible sounding bell, a wave, the chain the dog trails all night against the privet hedges. Now I lay down to sleep... I have to recite verses, or the system of looking for words with a, then with a and e, with five vowels, with four¹ (CORTÁZAR, 1986, p. 36).

It is by using puns through mirror tricks done with the reverse and shift of random words and letters at first, and later on with the letters of her own name that Alina Reyes, Queen, discovers the Other:

Alina Reyes, *es la reina* y... That one is so nice because it opens a path, because it does not close so beautiful, this, because it opens a way, because it does not close. Because the queen and...

No, horrible. Horrible because it opens a path to this one who is not the queen, and whom I hate again at night. To her who is Alina Reyes, but not the queen of the anagram; let her be anything, a Budapest beggar, a beginner at a house of prostitution in Jujuy, a servant in Quetzaltenango, any place that is far away and not the queen. But yes, Alina Reyes and because of that last night it happened again, to feel her and to hate (ibid, p. 36).

Alina's double, her other identity, emerges as a presence felt by her, opposed to her conscious identity – from Queen to beggar, prosti-

¹ NT: Free translation – all quotes from the short story *The Distance* were freely translated by the translator.

tute or maid. The contact with her opposite, in conditions of extreme poverty, licentiousness or social inferiority provokes in her strong feelings of aversion and hatred, making her upset, it is horrible. But the character who emerges in this wordplay, from Alina's reverse, who is the queen, is coming together as a beggar in Budapest, "an idea that recurs just as Budapest always recurs, to believe in the beggar in Budapest, where there will have lots of bridges and percolating snow" (ibid., p. 39). Also, the reveries are defined in images, with bridges and cold that transform themselves in Budapest. And Alina Reyes unfolds herself as a queen in the elegant high society's receptions in Buenos Aires to the beggar in the icy winter of Budapest.

Strange, fantastic, possession, madness? Perhaps a little of all of them, although the split presents itself as an everyday phenomenon, and therefore nothing extraordinary for Alina Reyes, and for the writer as we shall see later.

I understand that the Budapest's beggar is a fantasy that insistently returns bringing hidden aspects of Alina's identity, and because loaded with psychic energy, acquires strength, provoking attraction and curiosity.

It is evident that the Queen is Alina Reyes persona, an appearance, as she shows herself or would like to be or what is expected from her in social life.

The persona, the Queen, is also Alina, or rather, a commitment that her conscious personality has with the society in which she lives but does not express the totality of the character. Other aspects, that are also part of her, are revealed in the slips that the game provides.

The shadow emerges in Alina's consciousness as the archetype of the double, a theme that I intend to highlight in this paper, and to which I will return later. The "other", a gloomy beggarly look-alike, and the intimacy with this other one that appears as the reverse of the queen, produces contradictory feelings in Alina: "Let her suffer, let her freeze; and I'll bear it from here, and I think I'll help her a little bit" (ibid., p. 37).

"At times is tenderness, a sudden and necessary tenderness toward her that is not queen and walks there" (ibid., p. 39).

The reveries with the other, the distant one, become more intense and frequent, invading not only her sleepless nights, but also the daily life of the character, who recognizes herself more 'there' than 'here', feels her "more owner of his misfortune, distant and alone, but the owner." In an absorbing rhythm, the distant begins to occupy Alina's consciousness and the first narrative voice of her diary. Alina is Alina in Buenos Aires, but she is also the other in Budapest.

It's not that she is feeling nothing. I only know that it is like that, that on one side I'm crossing a bridge at the same instant (but I don't know if it is at the same instant) as the boy from the Rivas' accepts the cup of tea from me and puts his best spoiled face (ibid., p. 37).

In the moment that she feels wanted by Luís María, her suitor and future husband, she recognizes an unwanted part of herself, rejected by the family and social environment and also by herself:

Because in the distances they do not love me – her. That's the part they don't like and as it doesn't suit me to be rent to pieces inside and to feel that they are beating me or that the snow is coming in through my shoes when Luis María is dancing with me and his hand on my waist makes the strong odour of orange or of a cut hay raise in me like heat at midday, and they are beaten spank her and it is impossible to fight back, and I have to tell Luis María that I don't feel well, it is the humidity, humidity in all that snow which I do not feel and is coming in through my shoes (ibid., p. 38).

Alina's tale/diary reveals the intensity and ob-
sessional characteristic of the encounter with the

other/double/beggar, and the increasingly indefinite and permeable boundaries between “I” and the unconscious, so that Buenos Aires and Budapest, reality and fantasy, are barely separated...

The encounter becomes possible and requires a place, it is like a call. Alina goes on and attends to this invocation, obsessed and fascinated by this encounter, sending imaginary telegrams, searching the place, creating names, a plaza, a river, a bridge.

The symbols are being constellated in Alina’s consciousness and in her diary: the plaza as a centre, the two banks that communicate by the bridge, and the bridge called the Market Bridge, a place for exchanges and negotiations. Alina imagines a victorious encounter in which the other would surrender. She thinks about the marriage and honeymoon as a way to reach the other and thinks something curious that is not revealed in the diary. Any bad feelings? “I write this far, not wanting to keep reminding myself of what I thought. It will hurt me if I keep reminding it. But it’s true, true; I thought something curious” (Ibid, p. 43).

What didn’t Alina want to write in the diary? What did she imagine, sense and did not tell? Is the encounter happy or unhappy?

I remember that I stopped to look at the river that was like crumbled mayonnaise, pounding against the pillars, infuriated and sounding and whipping. (This I thought.) It was worth standing on the parapet of the bridge and feel in the ears the breaking of the ice below. It was worth stay, a little for the sight, a little from the fear that came from within-or was the homelessness, the violent snowfall, and my fur coat at the hotel (ibid, p. 42).

Alina’s diary is interrupted... the final part of the short story has another narrative voice, an anonymous and omniscient narrator tells that Alina got married and went to Budapest two months before divorcing, and that the encoun-

ter with the another took place at the Market Bridge. We do not know what happened, except what the narrator tells us. The river and the rhythm of the waters, metaphor and symbol of emotions flow and the unconscious life, present themselves unstable, dangerous, sometimes “thundering river of broken ice and barges and some kingfisher,” sometimes “like crumbled mayonnaise beating against the pillars, infuriated and sounding and whipping.” And more, a “torn river,” and from it, the Danube, “a wind from the bottom grows, hard, which holds and strikes”, “shattered striking the abutments” at the moment of their meeting, instantly to the embrace, a moment of total fusion and happiness equal to the “singing river”.

Without foreboding, liberating herself at last. She believed it in one terrible, jubilant, cold leap - she was beside her and also stretched out her hands, refusing to think, and the woman on the bridge hugged her against her chest and the two, stiff and silent, embraced one another on the bridge with the crumbling river hammering against the abutments.

Alina ached: it was the clasp of the pocketbook, the strength of the embrace had run in it between her breasts with a sweet, bearable laceration. She surrounded the slender woman feeling her complete and absolute within her arms, with a springing up of happiness equal to a hymn, to losing a cloud of pigeons, to the river singing. She shut her eyes in the total fusion, declining the sensations from outside, the evening light; suddenly very tired, but sure of her victory, without celebrating it as so much her own and at last... (ibid., pp. 45, 46).

There is an instant of plenitude between Alina and the beggar, who soon dissolves herself, with the exchange of places, the passage from

one side to the other, which can generate a new search movement, new concerns, because the new, although terrible for being pain and suffering, has arrived. And from the moment of encounter, fusion and full happiness, a new separation, and a terrible exchange of places, an exchange of identities, and the total encounter of Alina Reyes with the pain, the cold, the incalculable fatigues, the cry, in a disturbing and fascinating end, that leaves us, readers, suspended in the bridge, in this space, perhaps timeless, of comings and goings, of search and transformation. What happens to Alina is open:

It seemed to her, sweetly, that one of them was crying. It must have been her because she felt her cheeks wet, her cheek ached as if she had been struck. Also, the neck, and then the shoulders, bent by incalculable fatigues. When she opened her eyes (she might scream now) she saw that they had separated. Now, yes, she shouted. She was freezing, because the snow was coming through her pierced shoes, because as walking to the plaza, Alina Reyes was beautiful in her grey dress, her hair a little loose against the wind, without turning her face and walking (ibid, p. 46).

As in many of his short stories, Cortázar finishes this one with an open, circular ending, and then the game of searching can be restarted... In all occasions that I worked with this tale in the groups, this kind of endings motivates heated discussions and favours fantasies related to the continuity of the character's process. Did she go mad? What happened to the marriage that lasted only two months? Who gave up on the marriage and asked for a divorce: her or her husband?... This moment of "suspension" is crucial, and with a great impact, similar to what nightmares cause in dreamers.

In my opinion, the condensed form and the shortness are elements of affinity between the short story and a dream, and the abrupt, open

ending, is the recurring element in the fantastic short story and a nightmare.

The impact of a good fantastic short story and a nightmare tends to provoke an analogous reaction, it continues after reading and after awakening with the particular story coming back, the images continue to intrigue. Consciousness does not support leaving the situation open and tends to seek for a closure that can calm the restlessness, either happier or unhappy, either transforming or conservative... It is a very creative and opportune moment for the work with literary narratives and the subjective interaction of each reader, a moment in which the space between the reader and the work becomes permeable.

This permeability between planes and spaces appears in the daydreams of Alina and "the distant", and also, in the space between fiction and reality, reader and work, dream and reality, especially between the nightmare and the awakened consciousness. What happens or may happen is no longer only in the text, but reverberates in the imagination of the reader, in the conscious elaboration of the dreamer. The theme of the continuity of spaces is resumed in several short stories by Cortázar and masterfully, as the title already announces, in *Continuity of the Parks* (CORTÁZAR, 1974) a very short story in which fiction, reality and literature intertwine and come together in multiple effects. In *The Distance*, the unsaid and perceived by Alina in her diary also does not conclude in the final narrative, and the unspoken and unwritten mystery is an essential part of the short story, the intangible that is beyond the text and beyond consciousness.

3. The archetype of the double and the identity search

It seems that man doesn't accept himself as a unit. Somehow, he feels that he could be, simultaneously, projected into another

er entity that he knows or does not know, but it exists² (BERMEJO, 2002, p.33).

I understand the search for a deeper identity by the protagonist as the main plot of the tale and, the archetype of the double, as the central symbol of the narrative, with Alina Reyes and her distant one, the idea of a split in her personality, the existence of another self, with opposite characteristics, malignant or not. Among wordplays, reveries and dreams, Alina's double appears, providing dialogues among the character, her internal images and her diary, between conscious and unconscious, between persona and shadow.

The archetypal theme of the double appears in several aspects in the short story: in the story of Alina and the other, in quotations that appear in her diary, as the man with the face of "portrait of Dorian Gray"³, in the word game he uses to distract herself in sleepless nights – the anagrams and palindromes are duplications with words and letters, mirrored or reconstructed in another order. The experience of splitting consciousness is present in the playful attitude with fantasies and reveries, which allows and stimulates the free flow of consciousness and open the way between conscious and unconscious, something that Cortázar appreciated in his way of facing life and literature and which, for some critics, is the mark of his work.

Another important duplication is concerning the space, with two cities, Buenos Aires, Alina's city and her "real, objective" life, and Budapest, the fantasy city, where the other lives, a beggar, suffering and cold. Like a set of mirrors, we have in Budapest two cities – Buda and Pest, which were later unified. The meeting of the two, the bridge as a place of convergence and dispersion, with the river separating two sides and the bridge linking the banks and serving as a passage. The act of making a diary also refers to a kind of unfolding, insofar as it invites the dialogue with

herself and a reflection on her own life. Not for nothing is common among teenagers, a time of intense search for their own identity.

In an interview to the Uruguayan journalist Ernesto Gonzales Bermejo (2002), Cortázar himself admits having a certain obsession with the subject, perhaps influenced by the readings of *Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hide* by R. L. Stevenson⁴, of *William Wilson* by E. A. Poe⁵ or by German literature, according to him, "Inhabited by the double"⁶. And, in the same interview he appeals to Jung and to the idea of archetype and collective unconscious to explain the recurrence of the theme of the double in his work:

I do not believe it is a literary influence. When I wrote the short story that you quoted "The Distance" between 1947 and 1950, I am absolutely certain – and in this sense I have a good memory – that the notion of the double was not at all a literary contamination. It was an experience (BERMEJO, 2002, p. 31).

Jung would speak of a kind of archetype. Don't forget that doubles – I do not know explicitly in Jung, but in any case in cosmogonies, in the mythologies of the world – the double, double characters, iconic twins, like Romulus and Remus, Castor and Pollux, the double gods, are a constant of the human spirit as a projection of the unconscious converted into myth, into legend (BERMEJO, 2002, p. 32).

For some time, I have been researching the theme of the double. It is an important point of convergence in the relations between psychology and literature. It is an important subject for

² NT: freely translated by the translator.

³ It is a reference to the character of "The Portrait of Dorian Gray", Oscar Wilde's novel, first published in 1890.

⁴ The strange case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, by Robert Louis Stevenson, first published in 1886.

⁵ William Wilson, Edgar Allan Poe's tale, first published in 1839.

⁶ Term used by Cortázar to briefly mention the recurrent and quite significant presence of the double theme in German literature (BERMEJO, 2002, p.30).

deep psychology, which works with the idea of the unconscious, the more profound “other”, and which was also inspired by the German literature, “inhabited by the double”, as Cortázar says, for the development of his ideas. Jung incorporated the theme of the double, as *doppelgänger*, the sinister brother, to the concept of shadow inspired by the reading of the novel *The Elixirs of the Devil*, by the German author Ernst Theodor Amadeus Wilhelm⁷. For Jung, psyche is nature, vast, full of mysteries, and it is the nature of the psyche to function in pairs of opposites, rejecting any one-sidedness. He considered the existence of opposites as a precondition of psychic life. In his autobiography he describes his personal experience of the double, in adolescence, as personalities #1 and #2, with #2 being the “other in me”, the “inner man.” The alternation, the conflict, and the tension between opposites may indicate, apart from pathology, the awakening of consciousness on its way to individuation; experiences of dissociation and psyche fragmentation often constitute necessary conditions for its development. The psyche inner reality is as real as the outer universe and the Self is, for Jung, both many and one, and can’t be reduced to one of its polarities. The symbol appears as a unifying element, and the enantiodromia, passing to the opposite, is considered inevitable in psychic dynamics, seen as a self-regulating function.

4. Alina, reveries and diary – dialogues with the unconscious and active imagination

As well as moving the letters that make up her name, the protagonist Alina moves to another order than the one of the consciousness. As in a game of mirrors, the distracted play with her name – “*Alina Reyes es la reina y...*”. Alina is the queen and... This and... opens paths to other states of being that are also Alina, and this experience of alterity in herself, that consciousness

rejects or denies, is expressed and personified in her reveries with the other, the distant one.

Dreams, reveries and fantasies are spontaneous productions of the psyche and ways of accessing contents that can be integrated in a process of expanding consciousness, in which the deeper, unconscious identity can emerge, transforming the personality. Jung considered fundamental what he called a confrontation with the unconscious, both in his personal life and in his clinical method, and called this technique of dialogue as active imagination, giving voice and expression to figures of the collective unconscious.

Having spontaneous fantasy as the natural functioning of the psyche, he affirmed that, as the unconscious finds spaces of expression, consciousness loses its leadership, enabling the integration of these contents, a gradual diminution of the dominant influence of the unconscious and “transformation of personality” (JUNG, 1991a). It is a new order in the consciousness, more integrated to the deep unconscious identity, the Self, and its call. This is the goal of analytic work, the path of individuation, as conceptualized by Jung.

Interestingly, when speaking of the dynamics of clinical work with the dissolution of the persona, in one of his initial texts, the analogy used by Jung is the one of the game, a chess game, in which the one who decides is an unconscious player, the Self, the other deep and invisible: “Thus, without noticing it, the conscious personality is pushed about like a figure on a chess-board by an invisible player. It is this player who decides the game of fate, not the conscious mind and its plans” (JUNG, 1991a).

Almost all written in the first person, with the voice of Alina Reyes writing her diary and only in the final paragraph with a third narrative voice, the story / diary reveals the character’s anguish and restlessness, her most intimate experiences, the inner speech and possibilities of dialogue and approximation that she makes with her unconscious images. The unconscious activity of the character intensifies, and the dream

⁷ I talk more about it in the article “C. G. Jung, S. Freud e o estranho E. T. A. Hoffmann” (Revista Junguiana nº 32/1).

images penetrate Alina's consciousness insistently even when she is awake, and she experiences sensorially these images: "Only Budapest remains because there is cold, there they beat me, and they face me. There (I dreamed, it is no more than a dream, but it adheres and insinuates itself to the vigil) [...]" (CORTÁZAR, 1986, p. 39, author's emphasis added).

And Alina, gradually, makes a kind of active imagination, giving continuity and life to the images that emerge from the unconscious, whether in dreams or reveries, relates to them, giving name and place, personifying people and places, and what was a distraction to escape from insomnia gains intensity and psychic reality. Before being interpreted, unconscious images are recognized, experienced, perceived in their emotional and physical load, as they should be in clinical work. It's where she feels cold that Alina knows it's the meeting place. The active contact with unconscious images also produces reflections, questions: who knows what punishes her? It may be: "[...] a man, a furious mother, a loneliness" (p. 40).

5. The search for identity

Go to get me [...] (CORTÁZAR, 1986, p. 40).

Alina thinks, invents, confabulates, dreams, somehow, she knows that this is how she can meet herself. Alina searches for her identity. The bored, insomniac, unsatisfied young woman meets the image of herself as a person who is helpless, mistreated by the cold and snow in her pierced shoes, who suffers. She insists on meeting this other because it makes sense, because she is curious and wants to know where it will end, because she wants to seek and find herself, because she recognizes herself "only among these people without meaning" (CORTÁZAR, *ibid.*, p. 37). Alina wants to go to this meeting "to heal herself" as she writes in her diary, with ambiguous fantasies, sometimes to take care of the

other, sometimes to make her surrender to the enlightened state of consciousness...

Alina follows the images, works with them in her diary, wants to find herself, to heal herself. To heal from what? To heal herself from the celibacy, but one can deduce some other possibilities, naturally non-exclusive: cure herself of suffering, of solitude, of her furious mother, of the state of submission to social and family codes, of the experience of a domesticated animal, of her chained sexuality, of her frigidity. Her reveries and diary are activated by insomnia, in the middle of the night, when intimacy with herself can appear, masks can be withdrawn and the defences of conscious are lowered: "I want to sleep and I'm a terrible sounding bell, a wave, the chain the dog trails all night against the privet hedges" (p. 35).

How can one not think of conflicts related to sexuality arising in Alina's consciousness when, as dancing with her groom, she feels his hand on her waist like a "like heat at midday"? (p. 38). Among some fragments of the diary, the character reveals her internal entanglement, and the enormous tension between its opposites, like the contrast of the heat of Buenos Aires and the snow of Budapest.

At one point in the diary, Alina refuses to write something that she feels, or rather, senses. "Like when I thought of the plaza, the torn river and the noises and afterwards... But I am not writing that, I will never, ever write that" (p. 44). She decides to finish the diary, "for one gets married or keeps a diary, the two things don't go well together" (*ibid.*, p. 44). It shows a hopeful and at the same time challenging attitude towards the perceived dangerous contents and the last notes in her diary are:

And it will be the queen's victory over the malignant relationship, that soundless and unlawful encroachment. If I am really I, she will yield she will joy my radiant *zone*, my lovelier and surer life; I have only to go to her side and lay a hand on her shoulder (CORTÁZAR, 1986, p. 44).

Alina, at this moment, assumes an attitude of domination over the other, who is seen as an evil, usurping adhesion that must surrender to the queen and her “enlightened zone.” The power conflict between the character conscious and unconscious sharpens, symbolized by the violent images of the torn river, shattered striking the abutments, in the moment of the meeting of the two, in a vertiginous narrative.

When facing a conflict of opposites, a resolution of the impasse is expected, that a third way emerges, the birth of a possibility to see the conflict from another angle and a new attitude to get out of this impasse. In clinical practice we can propitiate and favour this third way through a long mediation and negotiation between the conflicting aspects of the psyche, thus avoiding a crisis or rupture. But nothing guarantees a favourable or at least comfortable solution, and, returning to the analogy of the game between conscious and unconscious, Jung said that the unconscious “creates playfully, and destruction is an inevitable part of the game” (JUNG, 2000, par. 286).

Still quoting Jung, when facing conscious/unconscious conflicts the risk exists and becomes more dangerous, not by the unconscious content itself, but mainly by the attitude of the consciousness in contact with the unconscious.

The unconscious is not a demoniacal monster, but a natural entity which, as far as moral sense, aesthetic taste, and intellectual judgment go, is completely neutral. It only becomes dangerous when our conscious attitude to it is hopelessly wrong (JUNG, 2013, par. 329).

6. The creative process – Approaching Cortázar and Jung

I think it is important to highlight some aspects that I consider significant when approaching Jung and Cortázar.

Some characteristics suggest relevant affinities between them, especially in appreciating the symbolic and mythical apprehension of the world that they bring to their productions.

Observing Cortázar’s comments on dreams and the relation of the dream universe to his work, on how he sees the playful as an attitude and disposition to be in the world, we see that in him, man and work are intimately connected, in a continuous flow of life and art. Or in a way that Jung (1991b, par.139) considered as a visionary mode of creation, in which the creative process is alive, and the artist is the mean for realization.

For Cortázar, the ludic becomes a privileged medium not only for human creativity and inventiveness, but also for the possibility of interfering and altering the pre-established order and function of things, something that the writer takes as a constituent aspect of his relationship with the world:

The ludic is not a luxury, something added to the human being, which can be useful to have fun: the ludic is one of the central weapons by which the human being conducts or can conduct himself through life. The ludic, not understood as a card game or football game: understood as a vision in which things no longer have their functions established to often assume quite different functions, invented. The man who inhabits a ludic, playful world is a man placed within a combinatorial world of combinatorial invention, which is continually creating new forms (PREGO, 1991, p. 126).

About his creative process, we can find an impressively lucid author and conscious of his openness to the unconscious processes of creation. Cortázar described his creative experience, which he did not separate from an attitude towards life, in several interviews, but also in essays, articles and lectures, a very rich and certainly well-studied material in literature. He

is a master of short storytelling, and his theories about this genre are as synthetic and genius as his own tales⁸. Such descriptions illustrate in a fascinating way the theory of Jung's creative process, for whom art is born from the collective unconscious, which at various moments is metaphorically defined as a sea or "a river embedded in the bottom of the psyche" (JUNG, 1991b, par. 127), replete with primordial images, the archetypes. The language of the unconscious is mythical and expresses itself through symbols, and the creative process according to Jung (1991b, par. 115) is "a living essence implanted in the soul of man."

When writing short stories, I always feel a bit like a medium; I see phrases born with a certain independence of my decisions, as if they were being dictated by someone. I have no problem signing the novels, but I have a certain shame about signing the short stories. I am not sure that I am the author of them.

I do not know the end of most of my tales. I do not know what's going to happen in them, and I think if I did, that would kill the tales in me. They would be a simple literary construction: principle, middle and end. It would be just about writing them well (BERMEJO, 2002, p. 118).

On the creative function of the psyche Jung recognized and denominated this autonomous element by autonomous creative complex of the psyche and its importance in the creative process:

Every creative man knows that spontaneity is the very essence of creative

thought. Because the unconscious is not just a reactive mirror-reflection, but an independent, productive activity, its realm of experience is a self-contained world (JUNG, 1991a, par. 292).

Cortázar was an interested and curious author in the relations between literature, art, unconscious and society. He wasn't restricted to the influences of surrealism and psychoanalysis. In his critical texts, there is an essay on poetry, *Para uma poética* (CORTÁZAR, 1999) in which he develops his mythopoetical conception of literary creation and considers of fundamental importance in the poetic attitude the idea of "*participation mystique*" by the anthropologist Lévy-Bruhl. The concept of mystical participation, the possibility of seeing himself projected simultaneously on an object or person, also had great attention from Jung, who defined it as:

a peculiar kind of psychological connection with the object wherein the subject is unable to differentiate himself clearly from the object to which he is bound by an immediate relation that can only be described as partial identity. This identity is based upon an a priori one-ness of subject and object "*Participation mystique*", therefore, is a vestigial remainder of this primordial condition (JUNG, 1987, p. 532).

The ideas of Lévy-Bruhl in the field of anthropology and what he considered the worldview of primitive man, soon became controversial and outdated, for containing in itself a prejudiced view of an European against other cultures, which he considered primitive. Prejudices and polemics aside, Lévy-Bruhl observed in these cultures an attitude towards the world in which myth, the irrational (pre-logical) and the participation are inherent conditions to the mentality of these people, called by him, primitive.

⁸ For example, the idea of the short story as a sphere and as a mysterious brother of poetry (in Valise de Cronopio, short story and its surroundings) and the analogy in which the short story is for photography as well as the novel for the cinema (in Obra crítica 2, Alguns aspectos do conto, p. 350).

Jung also had a strong influence from Lévy-Bruhl's ideas, and he regarded such conditions as primordial and holdover from the more archaic layers of the psyche, from collective unconscious. I understand that in these fundamental principles, which involve a way of seeing and being in the world, is the basis of what I consider to be the essential affinities between Cortázar and Jung, for they both found in these concepts more than an intellectual affinity, but also a certain experiential proximity.

In an interview with Bermejo, Cortázar refers to Jungian psychology with a certain sympathy and familiarity: "Psychoanalytic investigations of my short stories have been made both by Freudian and Jungian lines, and both are equally fascinating. More from the Jungian line, which I think fits much more into the universe of literary creation" (BERMEJO, 2002, p. 30). And when commenting on the identification of the reader with his short stories, he says:

I believe that people's interest in the short story has to do not only with the literary pleasure they can provide to them, but with something that touches their own deep experiences. What we said about Jung and the collective unconscious (p. 120).

I also find affinities between the creative process of Cortázar and that of Jung, a vision of man and world without great divisions between the soul world, of the imagination and the real world, a symbolic life in its essence. The dialogues with the unconscious and the active imagination were part of the whole Jung's creative process and the development of his work, which is witnessed in his autobiography *Memoires, Dreams and Reflections* and was confirmed even more with the publication in 2009, of the *Red Book*, a manuscript written between 1914 and 1930, in which, among texts, dreams, visions and paintings, in a work of active imagination, dedication and art, Jung recounts his journey through the very depths.

It seems to me that Cortázar, who reveals himself in some of his interviews published in books or in videos, although living in another time, coming from another context and not naming the same terms, lived similarly his confrontations and games with the world and his creative imagination. And at this point I find an affinity with Jung.

From this very intimate, vivid and lived connection between inner and outer world, one made literature and the other made psychology.

7. Final Considerations

I write by bankruptcy, by displacement; and as I write from an interstice, I am always inviting others to look for their and look for them the garden where the trees have fruits that are, of course, precious stones (CORTÁZAR, 1993, p. 165).

I tried to make here a reading of the short story *The Distance*, based on analytical psychology, prioritizing my gaze on Alina Reyes' harrowing identity search. In this quest, the character persona and shadow communicate through reveries in which images of the archetype of the double appear, images loaded with great emotional intensity and expressed in her diary. I consider this a process very similar to the method of active imagination, developed by Jung, and in this regard, I made connections between the symbolic reading of the short story and theoretical-practical aspects of the clinic.

Literature is certainly a privileged space of imagination, reflection, and revelation of human complexity. But, in such an accelerated time, with so much technical information, what is the importance of the contact with literature in the training of psychotherapists and analysts? I realize that a very rich aspect of my experience in the Centre for Studies "Dreams, literature and psychology" is the opportunity that literature offers to penetrate other worlds, to see with other eyes, to experience and participate in the reflections

that man has before himself, before the “other” and before the society in which he lives. I perceive an increase in the subjectivity of the reader, as if it were an enlargement, an internal space to ascertain one’s own sensitivity and creativity, which is so important in clinical practice.

This is an interesting aspect in working with the short story *The Distance*. Because it is almost everything narrated in the first person, in diary form, it makes the reader to penetrate the mind of Alina Reyes, to be a little Alina Reyes. And this is one of Cortázar’s great qualities as a writer: art, the magic of making his readers so intimate and so accomplices, so involved in the atmosphere of his tales that they are knocked out at the end,

in an effect worthy of nightmares. With his, why not say, “magic literary,” he invites the reader to penetrate another world and contaminates it, reverberating other movements in his own direction. Cortázar invites us to participate: as a lyric poet, he overcomes distances between work and reader, and also transcends barriers between himself and his work.

Finally, the experience of reading a short story as *The Distance* allows an unfolding experience and passage to other human experiences, enlarging and enriching the reader. After all, a thread of psychic affinities links us all. ■

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Resumo

Identidade, duplo e imaginação ativa – leitura do conto Distante de Cortázar

Neste artigo trabalho na interface psicologia analítica e literatura num diálogo entre o conto Distante, do escritor Julio Cortázar, e a abordagem junguiana. Inicio apresentando uma breve sinopse do conto, tecendo relações e associações com alguns conceitos da psicologia analítica, para, posteriormente, fazer o recorte em três eixos de análise: a busca de

identidade da personagem, o arquétipo do duplo e a imaginação ativa como método junguiano de trabalho com o inconsciente, análogo ao que ocorre com a protagonista do conto. Por fim teço considerações e aproximações entre o autor Cortázar e Jung, encontrando afinidades no processo criativo de ambos e na atitude simbólica diante da vida. ■

Palavras-chave: duplo, imaginação ativa, identidade, literatura, Cortázar.

Resumen

Identidad, doble y imaginación activa - lectura del cuento Lejana de Cortázar

En este artículo, trabajo en la interfaz de psicología analítica y literatura en un diálogo entre el cuento Lejana, del escritor Julio Cortázar, y el enfoque Junguiano. Comienzo presentando una breve sinopsis del cuento, tejiendo relaciones y asociaciones con algunos conceptos de psicología analítica, para luego hacer un recorte en tres ejes de análisis: la búsqueda de la identidad

del personaje, el arquetipo del doble y la imaginación activa como método junguiano de trabajo con el inconsciente, análogo a lo que sucede con el protagonista de la historia. Finalmente, entretejo consideraciones y aproximaciones entre el autor Cortázar y Jung, encontrando afinidades en el proceso creativo de ambos y en la actitud simbólica hacia la vida. ■

Palabras clave: doble, imaginación activa, identidad, literatura, Cortázar

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