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Social mobility and cultural complexes: an essay on the class transfugue

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Abstract

This essay investigates the experience of the class transfuge (expression that denotes an individual who achieves social mobility through education) examining the psychological and social tensions involved. From a Jungian perspective, it discusses the role of cultural complexes and their influence on subjectivity, affecting emotions, behaviors, and perceptions of belonging. The text also connects these issues to Bourdieu's sociology, highlighting concepts such as *habitus* and structural inequalities, and reflects on clinical, political, and educational implications for understanding trajectories of social mobility in the Brazilian context. ■

Keywords: class transfuge, cultural complexes, social mobility, first-generation university student, analytical psychology.

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Ascensão social e complexos culturais: um ensaio sobre o trânsfuga de classe

Resumo

O presente ensaio investiga a experiência do trânsfuga de classe (expressão utilizada para designar um indivíduo que ascende socialmente por meio da educação) analisando as tensões psíquicas e sociais envolvidas. A partir da perspectiva da psicologia analítica, discute-se a atuação de complexos culturais e a influência deles na subjetividade, afetando emoções, comportamentos e percepções de pertencimento. O texto articula essas questões à sociologia de Bourdieu, destacando conceitos como *habitus* e desigualdades estruturais. Reflete também sobre trajetórias de mobilidade social no contexto brasileiro, considerando as implicações clínicas, políticas e educacionais. ■

Palavras-chave: trânsfuga de classe, complexos culturais, ascensão social, primeira geração universitária; psicologia analítica.

Ascenso social y complejos culturales: un ensayo sobre el desertor de clase

Resumen

Este ensayo investiga la experiencia del desertor de clase (expresión que designa a un individuo que asciende socialmente mediante la educación) analizando las tensiones psíquicas y sociales involucradas. Desde la perspectiva junguiana, se discute la actuación de los complejos culturales y su influencia en la subjetividad, afectando emociones, comportamientos y percepciones de pertenencia. El texto también articula estas cuestiones con la sociología de Bourdieu, destacando conceptos como *habitus* y desigualdades estructurales, y reflexiona sobre implicaciones clínicas, políticas y educativas en la comprensión de las trayectorias de movilidad social en el contexto brasileño. ■

Palabras clave: desertor de clase, complejos culturales, ascenso social, primera generación universitaria, psicología analítica.

Introduction

The term class defector (or *transfuge de classe*), coined and disseminated by Pierre Bourdieu starting in the 1970s, refers to an individual who undergoes a trajectory of upward social mobility, moving from a working-class background to more privileged strata (BOURDIEU, 2008). Although the concept has established sociological roots, it has regained prominence in contemporary debate through literature. Writers such as the precursor Annie Ernaux and, more recently, Édouard Louis give voice to this displacement–a phenomenon that finds resonance in the contemporary Brazilian scene in the works of authors like Tati Bernardi.

This mobility, often driven by the educational system, describes the movement of a social body attempting to ascend, almost always moving from the margins toward the center, from economic deprivation to a position of prestige (Bourdieu, 2008). However, such ascent does not occur without friction. It is precisely the "other side" of these success stories — the losses, the breaks, the silences — that the concept of the class defector seeks to illuminate. The trajectory of the defector is simultaneously a narrative of achievement and a battlefield, waged between worlds that rarely communicate on equal terms.

Along this path, the individual is seized by a sense of non-belonging that operates in two directions: the difficulty of adapting to the new class environment and, simultaneously, the painful rupture with the identity of origin. This dual friction

— the strangeness at the top and the distancing from the base — constitutes the core of the conflict. Education, although presented as the engine of this change, is also the stage upon which symbolic violence is enacted, a central concept in Bourdieu's theory (2008). By valuing and rewarding certain forms of cultural and social capital, which are naturally more accessible to dominant classes, the educational system erects subtle but powerful barriers for those who lack them, perpetuating distinction and exclusion (Bourdieu, 2011).

It is within this theoretical context that the concept of the class defector intertwines with Bourdieu's theory of capitals. A subject's social position is determined by the combination and volume of different forms of capital — economic (money, assets), cultural (education, degrees, references), and social (networks and connections), among others. The defector, by traversing between classes, seeks to convert one type of capital (often cultural, obtained through education) into others, such as economic and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 2008). Their experience of social ascent thus serves as living proof that the unequal distribution of these capitals not only structures classes but also produces profound psychic effects, shaping subjective experiences and conflicts emerging from social displacement.

Another important concept in Bourdieu is *habitus*, which refers to a system of durable and transferable dispositions shaped by life experiences and socialization. It is a set of schemes of perception, thought, and action that often unconsciously guides how individuals position themselves, feel, and interpret the social world. *Habitus* thus expresses the internalization of the objective structures of society (such as social class, educational level, family background, and cultural capital), converting them into ways of being, preferences, and behaviors that appear natural but are, in fact, the result of an incorporated social history. In this sense, *habitus* acts as a bridge between the individual and the collective, between biography and structure, revealing how life conditions shape subjectivities and delimit horizons of possibility (Bourdieu, 2011).

Although sociology and literature have already extensively explored this theme, it is relevant to examine it from the perspective of analytical psychology, particularly in light of the concept of cultural complexes. This work focuses on the Brazilian context and the subjective implications experienced by those who are the first in their families to access higher education — individuals who, for the most part, reached university through affirmative action policies.

First-Generation University Students

As expected in a country marked by social inequality resulting from violent colonization, the history of Brazilian education has been deeply shaped by stark disparities in access. In recent decades, there has been a significant reduction in illiteracy rates — for example, in 2010, 9.6% of people aged 15 or older were unable to read or write, whereas in 2022, this figure fell to 7.0% for the same group (IBGE, 2022). Yet for many centuries, education was a privilege reserved for wealthy families. Consequently, higher education was scarcely within the realm of possibility for poor individuals.

The arrival of first-generation university students in families marked by social vulnerability can occur through different pathways. Among these, the effort of many young people who work (and continue to work) to fund their studies stands out. The emergence of universities and colleges with more affordable tuition and flexible schedules expanded opportunities for entering higher education, even though, for many of these students, access came with an exhausting routine, divided between work and academic demands.

Another route of access is through affirmative action policies aimed at democratizing higher education. The emergence of laws promoting affirmative action for university access in Brazil did not occur abruptly or in isolation but represents the culmination of a long and complex struggle for recognition and historical reparation. For decades, the country sustained the myth of "racial democracy" — an alluring but fallacious narrative — that, under

the veil of harmony, disguised persistent social and racial inequalities inherited from the colonial and slavery past.

Within Brazilian public universities, especially federal institutions, this structure of privilege operated with remarkable effectiveness. Although state-funded, universities were for a long time predominantly attended by students from more affluent classes — families with access to private schools, consolidated cultural capital, and established networks of influence. For much of the non-white population and graduates of public schools, access to higher education existed only formally; in practice, it was denied or severely hindered. In this context, the ideology of "meritocracy" functioned as a mechanism of symbolic exclusion, tacitly validating the economic and cultural capital already accumulated by elites and marginalizing those without the same resources.

It was within this gap between promise and reality that the debate on compensatory policies gained momentum. The Brazilian Black movement, at least since the 1980s, highlighted the urgency of structured state intervention: figures such as Abdias do Nascimento proposed reserved university and public service placements as part of a project for full citizenship (Andrade, 2017).

In the 2000s, the international agenda also played a catalytic role. The World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerances (held in Durban in 2001) projected the issue of structural racism in Brazil onto the global stage, demanding concrete state actions to confront the legacy of slavery (UN, 2011). This international movement contributed to consolidating the debate on affirmative action with racial and socioeconomic criteria as a public state policy.

Before federal institutionalization, pioneering experiences in Brazilian universities functioned as "laboratories" of inclusion. State and federal institutions across different regions began adopting social and racial quotas, experimenting with varied criteria. Although results varied according to context, it became clear that the presence of quota students did not imply a decline in educational quality; on the contrary, when accompanied by retention policies, these initiatives demonstrated academic performance comparable to or surpassing that of non-quota peers (Lima, 2010).

The definitive consolidation of affirmative action in federal public higher education occurred with the enactment of Law Nº. 12,711 of August 29, 2012, the so-called "Quota Law." The legislation stipulated that at least 50% of university and federal institute spots *per* course and shift must be reserved for students who completed high school entirely in public schools. Of this total, half (about 25% of all spots) is reserved for candidates with a family income *per capita* of up to 1.5 minimum wages. Additionally, the law established ethnic-racial criteria. In 2016, it was expanded to include people with disabilities. Thus, formal equality under the law was complemented by material equality, recognizing that offering the same treatment to all is insufficient; specific measures are necessary to correct historically produced inequalities.

To complete this panorama, it is necessary to mention programs operating in the private higher education sector. The University for All Program (Programa Universidade para Todos — ProUni), established by Law Nº. 11,096/2005, grants full or partial scholarships in private higher education institutions to low-income students who have completed the National High School Exam (ENEM) and meet defined socioeconomic criteria. ProUni significantly expanded access to private higher education for historically excluded or underrepresented groups, constituting an affirmative action policy based on income and school origin (Brasil, 2025).

Meanwhile, the Student Financing Fund (FIES), originating from the educational credit program CREDUC in 1975 and reformed by Law Nº. 10,260/2001, aims to provide student financing for undergraduate courses in private institutions with positive evaluation in the national education system. Over the past t en years, the program has benefited over one million students and allocated more than BRL 119 billion in resources (Brasil, 2025).

Returning, then, to the thread of social mobility and the figure of the individual moving between

classes — the class defector — it is possible to recognize that inclusion policies represent concrete forms of access but do not, by themselves, guarantee full symbolic integration into this new space. The individual who overcomes barriers imposed by public schooling, racial origin, or low income enters university (public or private) and gradually converts cultural capital into symbolic or economic capital. However, this movement is not without friction. The sense of non-belonging, the tension between the new environment and the identity of origin, and the symbolic violence embedded in selection and adaptation mechanisms reveal that the marks of exclusion continue to operate subtly. Thus, although such programs are essential for enabling access, they do not erase the historical weight of inequality, nor the vulnerability accompanying these trajectories in the process of displacement.

Cultural complexes and social inequality in Brazil

The concept of the complex emerges in the work of C. G. Jung to designate a relatively autonomous psychic nucleus – a cluster of affects, images, and attitudes organized around an emotionally charged content that behaves like a "small organism" within the psyche (Jung, 2013, p. 56, §93). Complexes originate from personal experiences marked by strong affective intensity, yet they can also acquire a collective dimension when their content is socially shared. In this broader configuration, they manifest as cultural complexes, functioning as psychic vectors of historical memory, collective morality, and the unresolved conflicts of a community.

Another contribution from Jung that is particularly relevant to the development of this essay appears in his Seminars on Analytical Psychology (1925/2014, pp. 142–143), where he presents — albeit briefly — a conception that could be described as a "geology of personality." In this context, Jung proposes a diagram illustrating the multiple layers that compose the psyche, ranging from the influences of the family nucleus to those deriving from clans, nations, and larger human groups. By formulating this stratified image, Jung (1925/2014, pp. 142–143) recognizes that the psychic constitution of the individual is permeated by collective and historical forces, such that subjectivity is formed through constant interaction with the cultural and ancestral spheres of belonging.

Building upon and expanding this conception, Joseph Henderson and other post-Jungian authors have identified a stratum of the unconscious saturated with cultural contents — narratives, historical wounds, rites, and myths — whose impact extends beyond discourse and inscribes itself in the psychic experience of individuals. From this perspective, contemporary thinkers such as Thomas Singer and Samuel Kimbles have developed the notion of the cultural complex as an interpretive key for understanding conflicts between groups, persistent prejudices, and the repetition of historical patterns — such as racial humiliation, collective resentments, and national myths. These authors suggest that culture can quite literally "inhabit" the psyche, activating automatic emotional responses that are reenacted across generations (Kimbles, 2003; Silva & Serbena, 2021).

What, then, are the fundamental characteristics of a cultural complex? In practical and clinical terms, certain recurring traits can be identified: (1) Historical origin — a link to traumatic or significant events in the history of a group; (2) Intense affectivity — emotions of high energetic charge, such as shame, anger, or wounded pride, which emerge in response to certain *stimuli*; (3) Intergenerational transmission — narratives, rituals, and family or collective memories that keep the complex in motion; (4) Automaticity — emotional reactions that precede conscious reflection; and (5) Symbolic content — images and myths that shape the complex's modes of expression and operation (Kimbles, 2003; Silva & Serbena, 2021).

These characteristics help explain why political debates, social tensions, and institutional decisions often evoke resistances that escape rational logic, revealing the unconscious and archaic dimension that underlies collective life.

A pertinent example is the racial complex, which constitutes the affective-symbolic core that organizes structural racism and the trauma of slavery in the

Brazilian collective psyche (Parise & Scandiucci, 2022). This complex operates compulsively, establishing hierarchies and narratives that naturalize inequality and symbolic violence against non-white bodies. Its manifestation imposes upon Black individuals the demand for a double performance of excellence to disprove stereotypes (Brewster, 2025), while simultaneously permeating the unconscious of white individuals through the narcissistic pact of whiteness, which ensures the invisibility of their privileges and their normative place in society (Parise & Scandiucci, 2022).

In this theoretical landscape, the very experience of the class transfuge — marked by a system of historical, affective, symbolic, and behavioral dispositions — can be understood as a cultural complex. Although class structure and the legacy of colonialism are common foundations of Brazilian society as a whole, this article focuses specifically on the experience of those who emerge from the base of the social pyramid through formal education, for whom entry into higher education is not a predetermined outcome, but rather a rupture with a family history of exclusion. The intense affectivity is evident in the guilt of "having succeeded" and the paralyzing fear of "losing everything," while intergenerational transmission manifests in a contradiction: the voices of past generations convey the reaffirmation of structural inferiority while simultaneously carrying the weight of dreams and sacrifices. This duality, instead of inspiring lightness, converts the hope of ascent into an affective burden that the transfuge feels compelled to carry. Finally, the symbolic content and the automatism are revealed in the feeling of being an impostor and the incessant need for overachievement to justify their privilege, operating as an automatic response that precedes conscious reflection.

The power of this naming lies in its articulation with the Bourdieusian concept of *habitus*. The transfuge's trajectory is the lived shock between a *habitus* of origin (internalized from conditions of scarcity and vulnerability) and the new *habitus* of the environment of destination (marked by the consolidated cultural capital of the elites) (Bourdieu, 2011). By converting educational capital into symbolic capital, the individual performs a psychic movement of differentiation that is, nevertheless, constantly tensioned by this *habitus* shock. The class transfuge cultural complex would thus be the affective-symbolic core that emerges from this friction, shaping subjectivity through a feeling of non-belonging in two directions: strangeness at the top and painful detachment from the base.

It is imperative, however, to maintain methodological caution. The phenomenon of the class defector (*trânsfuga de classe*), as a category of sociological and literary analysis, is relatively recent, as is the context of inclusion policies in Brazil. Thus, another possible construction would be: the *trânsfuga*'s experience can also be read as an intersectional territory where multiple cultural complexes and traumas coexist and are reactivated, according to the context of each subject.

We can cite, for example, the racial complex (described above), in addition to the cultural inferiority complex, which can manifest in different configurations, such as the "stray dog complex" described by Byington (2013) through the collective feeling of cultural inferiority toward hegemonic nations, rooted in the history of colonization and Brazilian dependency. This dynamic deepens and regionalizes, manifesting itself also at the geographical and social level, where the psyche of marginalized or peripheral regions internalizes the *stigma* and devaluation imposed by the centers of power. Similarly, the heteropatriarchal complex (Pessoa, 2021) acts as the affective-symbolic core that sustains male domination and heterosexual supremacy, imposing symbolic violence and the burden of guilt on women and persons not corresponding to heterocisnormativity who seek autonomy and space in environments of power.

Social ascent, in this sense, acts as a potent trigger, bringing to the individual's consciousness wounds and affects that were previously latent or diluted in the routine of their class of origin.

In both clinical and social analysis, working with cultural complexes requires a shift in focus — from the isolated individual to the symbolic networks that permeate families, institutions, and collective

narratives. This work involves: (a) naming the images and stories that evoke reactions rooted in earlier experiences; (b) contextualizing individual symptoms in light of a collective history, acknowledging the presence of the past within subjectivity; (c) creating spaces of symbolization in which historical pain may be elaborated rather than simply repeated; and (d) articulating psychic listening with institutional actions of repair and support — such as permanence policies, curricular revisions, and the recognition of marginalized forms of knowledge.

Contemporary jungian clinical practice

To shed light on cultural complexes does not mean, in any way, to universalize experiences or to reduce singular trajectories to a collective pattern. It is essential to recognize that not all individuals who experience social mobility through education — especially those who are the first in their families to attend university — will necessarily manifest the effects of cultural complexes related to class or psychic strategies of adaptation. Each story carries its own mediations, modes of symbolization, and ways of dealing with social displacement.

The motivation to investigate and write about this theme arose from clinical experience itself, as the author began to notice the recurrence of patients traversed by similar conflicts. Although psychotherapy does not usually appear as a habitual practice in their families of origin, many of these individuals, upon achieving a certain degree of economic stability, seek analysis as an attempt to work through a discomfort that material success can no longer silence. It is as if, once survival is secured, there emerges an impulse — or an urgency — to give meaning to the path taken and to the scars left by the arduous movement of ascent.

Upon crossing the threshold of the university or a new professional environment, the class transfuge may carry the silent mark of a "lack of pedigree." What is missing is the symbolic and relational capital that is inherited: that tacit knowledge of how to move through spaces, the right vocabulary, the unspoken codes that open invisible doors. This absence translates into different levels of access — not only to knowledge but also to networks of influence and belonging. What for some is familiar terrain, for the transfuge is foreign territory. Thus, the feeling of always being one step behind takes hold, often accompanied by guilt for failing to meet the expectations of those left behind.

For many, this trajectory also bears an intergenerational weight: they are the sole bet, the promise that the effort of an entire lineage will be worthwhile. Such hope, born of love and necessity, can easily become a burden. Achievement, when it comes, may not bring lightness but rather the fear of disappointing others — the sense that any misstep could cause everything to collapse. Frequently, this guilt disguises itself as hyperproductivity, relentless self-demand, and the constant need to justify, at every step, the newly acquired privilege.

In the new social environment, the gaps are not only symbolic but also concrete. The absence of repertoires in areas such as financial planning or career management — common in families of modest origin — deepens the sense of instability. An unrelenting self-demand arises, accompanied by a paralyzing fear of "losing everything" and returning to scarcity. Body and mind begin to operate in a continuous state of alert, and performance becomes a form of psychic survival. It is therefore unsurprising that this constant tension opens the way to anxiety, depression, and burnout.

To make matters worse, there is the burden of forced self-sufficiency — a trait learned early, when depending on others meant risk and autonomy was a condition of safety. What once served as a protective resource becomes a prison: the transfuge not only struggles to ask for help but often has no one to turn to. In the new social world, a genuine support network is lacking; in the old one, identification is no longer possible. The result is a feeling of double rootlessness — the solitude of one who has come far, yet no longer knows exactly where they stand.

Within this context, psychotherapy emerges as a space of rescue and legitimation of one's own story — a place where one can look at the wounds of ascension without the veil of shame or idealization. The

analytic process allows the subject to recognize the psychic cost of their journey, working through parental complexes and internalized patterns that keep them bound to the logic of debt and desert. It is, in many cases, a work of differentiation: to understand that honoring one's origins does not mean remaining tied to them, and that achievement need not be endlessly proven. More than an individual relief, it is a symbolic reconciliation between past and present, opening a space for desire to manifest authentically — for knowing, at last, what one truly wants, and not merely what one must attain.

Alongside this, the encounter with peers who share similar experiences proves essential. To be among those who understand — without explanation — the ambivalences of the journey (pride and guilt, achievement and estrangement) offers a kind of belonging impossible to find at either extreme: neither in the place of origin nor in the place of destination. Such collective spaces of recognition act as a counterpoint to the solitude of ascension, allowing the construction of a less fragmented identity.

Yet this movement toward integration is constantly strained by contemporary dynamics. Social media, by amplifying exposure and comparison, intensifies the feeling of inadequacy. Confronted with edited narratives of success and belonging, the transfuge relives the fear of being exposed as an impostor — someone who arrived, but does not belong. Thus, between the showcase of achievement and the silence of invisible losses, psychotherapy once again becomes an ethical refuge: a place where one may inhabit their own contradictions without turning them into spectacle.

When observed through the lens of Analytical Psychology, these experiences reveal more than individual conflicts: they point to the presence of cultural complexes — affective and symbolic *nuclei* shared by a group, rooted in collective history and experience. In the case of class transfuges, these complexes manifest in the tensions between merit and guilt, belonging and rejection, effort and exhaustion — affects inherited from a collectivity that has learned to associate personal worth with constant overcoming.

The guilt of "having made it," the fear of "going back," and the feeling of being an impostor are not merely isolated psychological reactions but living expressions of a collective unconscious shaped by structural inequalities. In many cases, the subject carries within not only their own story but also the voices of generations who dreamed, failed, and sacrificed so that they might be there. The conflict, therefore, is not only intrapsychic but also historical and cultural.

Given this, psychotherapeutic work requires from the analyst a listening attuned to these layers. It is crucial to recognize that the patient's suffering cannot be reduced to personality traits or adaptive difficulties; it is traversed by cultural complexes that shape how one feels, desires, and relates to the world. The analyst must take care not to reproduce, in their clinical stance, the same meritocratic logic or ideal of autonomy that so deeply wounds these subjects. Instead, the analytic process can offer a space for the legitimization and elaboration of such wounds, allowing the patient to acknowledge the value of their journey without being imprisoned by the demand for endless self-overcoming.

Even when success is achieved, ascension generates a particular kind of loneliness — perhaps the most painful one: that of being misunderstood by one's own familial foundation. For parents whose lives have been defined by immediate survival and manual labor, the investment in intellectual pursuits — university, study time, dedication to abstract ideas — is an entirely new and often alien world. The absence of shared cultural codes prevents the family from understanding the magnitude of their child's journey or even the practical value of their new occupation, generating a deep affective disconnection. The transfuge then finds themselves without a true home — floating between an origin that no longer recognizes them and a destination that has not yet fully accepted them.

One of the most subtle and insidious forms of discrimination lies precisely in the way the transfuge is "celebrated" by privileged peers. Comments labeling them as a "fighter," a "success story," or an "inspiration" act as a double-edged sword:

while acknowledging achievement, they also exoticize origin and definitively mark class difference. In the clinical setting, this phenomenon reappears as complaints from patients who feel turned into their colleagues' "poor pet." Such distinctions, rather than fostering full integration, impose upon the transfuge the performative obligation to remain eternally grateful — to carry the burden of representation, reinforcing the notion that their success is a heroic exception rather than the rightful outcome of universal opportunity.

Psychotherapy thus becomes a symbolic territory where the transfuge may finally rest from the duty to prove themselves. By integrating their origins and their achievements, the subject begins to differentiate from the parental and cultural complexes that once drove them, and can finally ask themselves — freely — what they truly desire, beyond what has been expected of them.

However, it is important to highlight the need for attention to the dynamics of transference and countertransference that may arise in the clinical setting when issues of class are at play. Patients who undergo significant social displacement may project onto the analyst expectations, feelings of inadequacy, or resentments connected to experiences of exclusion and mobility. The therapist, in turn — consciously or not — may respond to these projections with emotions, judgments, or identifications influenced by their own social positioning. Recognizing and reflecting upon these dynamics thus becomes a central element of clinical practice, allowing the psychic work to unfold ethically and with sensitivity to the social and subjective tensions that traverse the patient's history.

Final considerations

Although access to higher education has undeniably expanded in recent decades — the result of public policies, incentive programs, and broader cultural transformations — it is essential to recognize that formal democratization does not eliminate the concrete obstacles that still restrict the entry and permanence of many students. Social inequality, structural racism, ableism, gender inequality, and income concentration continue to produce symbolic and material barriers that shape the possibilities of educational trajectories. Thus, while the expansion of seats and institutions is necessary, it is not sufficient: it is crucial to consider the real living conditions of individuals, their family histories, and the psychic and social effects of a system that still operates under profound asymmetries.

The phenomenon of the class transfuge, understood either as a specific cultural complex or as a territory of intersection where multiple cultural complexes and traumas coexist and are reactivated, reveals a dense and ambivalent path, marked not only by the success of social mobility but by a permanent battlefield, internal and external. Along this path emerge tensions related to inherited cultural capital, the pain of isolation, and the relentless demands of self-criticism and the risk of psychic illness. Such experiences become even more complex when intersected by race, gender, and regional background, which intensify subjective fractures in a structurally unequal country. What might appear, at first glance, as a personal triumph, reveals itself, in practice, as a succession of griefs and adaptations: from the discomfort of being misunderstood by one's own family to the weariness of occupying the symbolic position of ' poor pet ' in the new social environment.

In this context, the existence and consolidation of affirmative action programs — from which the author herself was a direct beneficiary — go beyond serving as mere mechanisms of statistical correction. They act as instruments of symbolic transformation, challenging the cultural complexes that sustain exclusion and introducing into the university space a diversity of *habitus* capable of displacing its invisible hierarchies. Yet access to higher education represents only the beginning of a broader crossing, one that demands new forms of psychic and social elaboration.

It is at this point that psychotherapy acquires a fundamental role: it becomes a space of psychic containment and experimentation, where the transfuge can make sense of their own story and

integrate the fractures produced by social ascent. In the face of class loneliness, symbolic exclusion, and the weight of family and social expectations, the analytic work offers fertile ground for naming wounds, elaborating complexes, and distinguishing duty from desire. More than merely enduring the struggle, it is about understanding and transforming it, so that the individual may finally move from the ideal of "winning" to the possibility of belonging — to build a trajectory that is, in truth, their own. In this process, one also recognizes that non-belonging, so often experienced as failure or lack, can become a legitimate space of existence: a symbolic territory of one's own, where identity remakes itself in movement and the crossing gains meaning. ■

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