

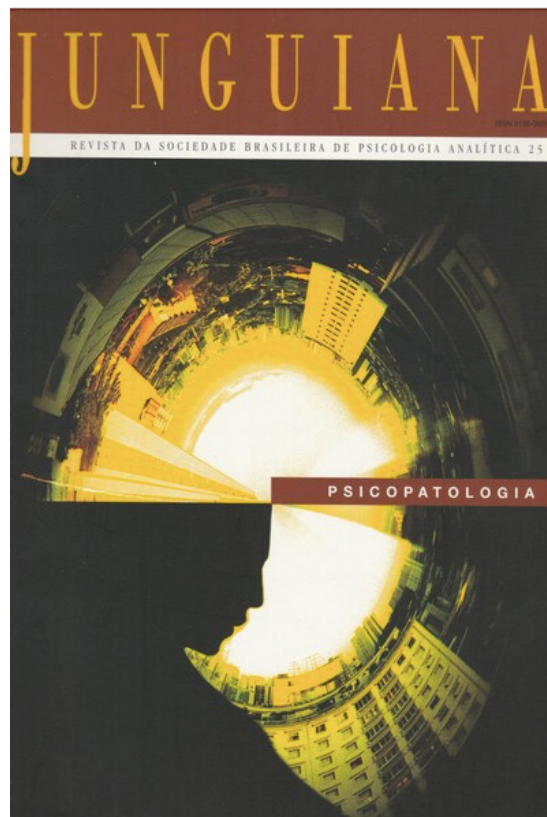
The pathology of art and exclusion¹

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Abstract

This study aims to reflect upon the intricate boundaries that separate pathology from creativity, drawing upon the brilliance of writer Clarice Lispector. It explores the concept of pathology as a phenomenon intertwined with the history of misogyny, seeking its archetypal roots in the myth of creation and the feminine figure of Eve. Additionally, it delves into the connection between this archetypal misogyny and the experience of exclusion that we encounter in various levels of relationships. ■

Keywords
anima,
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The pathology of art and exclusion

The man who reads, who thinks, who waits, who dedicates himself to flânerie, belongs, just like the opium smoker, the dreamer, and the intoxicated, to the gallery of the enlightened. And they are enlightened in a more profane way. Not to mention the most terrible of all drugs – ourselves – that we take when we are alone (BENJAMIN, 1994, p. 33).

The transcendence within me is the living and soft “it” and has the same level of thought as an oyster. I wonder, does the oyster feel anxiety when it’s plucked from its roots? Does it become restless in its eyeless life? I used to squeeze lemon juice over live oysters and watch with horror and fascination as they wriggled around. And I was eating the living “it.” The living ‘it’ is God. I will stop for a moment because I know that God is the world. And what exists. Do I pray to what exists? [...] I don’t like it when they drip lemon into my depths and make me squirm all over myself. Are the facts of life the lemon on the oyster? Does the oyster sleep? What is the first element? (LISPECTOR, 1998a, p.28)

Horrified or fascinated by the spark of diffuse reality presented in this disjointed and disturbed account, we would likely be unable to contain the impulse to ask: after all, who is this woman who daydreams so freely? I dare say that if we questioned her identity, she might respond by simply saying she is G.H., or the prostitute from Copacabana Avenue, or perhaps the poor Northeastern woman Macabéa. But what if we were to hear this delirium in our consulting rooms? We would be very attentive and careful. We would likely tend to diagnose her as someone in a concerning state. Psychotic, perhaps?

However, we would be relieved if we found out that these multiple identities are only char-

acters from the fictional world of an artist in the process of creation, and that her account is simply the overflow her imaginative world. And if we interpreted her words as a genuine and creative attempt to break free from the constraints of Cartesian and linear literature, we would be even more reassured. Momentarily, only, for we would soon learn that the writer herself was impetuous, restless, unfitting to social expectations, persistent in revealing the concealed aspects within all of us. How, then, to understand her? How to treat her? What if she told us about the accident that deformed her hands, about her antisocial impulses, about the mad responses to impertinent questions? And if she herself were to reveal to us her overwhelming loneliness, her refusal to conform, and her obsessive quest for the essence that defines us? We would perceive clear coincidences between the discourse and the author, and once again, distressed, we would ask ourselves: whose scream is it, after all, that we hear in this short excerpt? Who is the narrator and who is the character? What is biography and what is fiction? We would not know for sure, for we would have delved into the murky terrain of ambiguities, of multiple possibilities, where art and madness intertwine and the boundaries of each become invisible.

Despite this terrible discomfort, we would be in tune with the uncertainties and the discontinuity that characterize our century and define us as human beings, since, once mobilized by *reflexio*, our instinct for reflection, we are constantly being invited to probe into our psyche, multiple and incoherent par excellence. But, just to clarify (and not to relieve) those who have not yet recognized it, the previous quote is from “*Água Viva*”, one of the last books by Clarice Lispector (1998a, p. 28), the woman whom

Paulo Francis referred to as the “insoluble woman” (apud GOTLIB, 1995, p. 53).

When we talk about diagnoses suited to a pathology, we enter the cunning territory of the gods, of the titans who engage in battle, hoping to conquer sovereignty. In the polytheism of diseases, they all claim their own realm. From the perspective of pathology, Clarice could fall into several categories. Her lyrical hysteria, her narcissistic subjectivity or even her psychotic discontinuity could easily lead her to the bonfires of pathologies. But if that were the case, we would lose what characterizes her as one of the most important Brazilian writers: the talent to transform the chaos of psychic experience into creative imagery and to create a landscape where we, as readers, are invited to project the plurality of our souls.

According to psychoanalyst Marco A. Coutinho Jorge, the feminine discourse is the bridge between the first pre-Oedipal moment, when there is not yet the order of the father, and the Oedipal period, which would bring organization and meaning to what is initially only experience. The feminine language aims to bring into the realm of the symbolic those experiences that belong to the realm of the senses, the real, and lived experiences. According to Jorge (2014, p. 76), “Clarice’s text touches the edge of the unintelligible, but does not yield to delusional temptation”. By unraveling itself from logical and rational discourse, her language proves adept at translating the inexpressible experience into words, becoming highly soulful and inherently feminine. This elastic language full of literary juggling expresses a desperate attempt not to lose the “thing”, this essence of which we are constituted, the potential archetype that gives us life, the anima. Here I understand the archetype of the feminine in its broadest sense and, as Jung (2000) subsequently elaborated, as an archetype of life.

Clarice’s women are urged to step out of the narcissistic fantasy of balance and stability imposed by the linear and Christian view of life. By

breaking free from the comfort of a Manichean stance, she confronts the “sweet illusion” that good and evil, beauty and ugliness, madness and normalcy can find a specific place within us, in an asepsis detached from reality. Clarice’s literature brings a new conception of the subject, decentralized from egoic control, open to the symbolic images of the unconscious, to the unpredictability of the soul. Her literature spontaneously traverses the paths of imagination, shamelessly exposing her familiarity with the world of fantasies. The predominantly imagistic narrative thus approaches what we understand as “madness.” Her speech unfolds as a recounting on a couch, without the limitation of the real other, in a brainstorming of disconnected perceptions. Clarice never reviewed her manuscripts and once said that rereading them would be like eating her own vomit.

Mental illness or psychopathology cannot be understood in isolation from the history of the feminine, for women were, at the beginning of the last century, the precursors of psychoanalysis, of the revolutionary conception of the unconscious, the brown eminence in the realm of madness. Even when, in its early days, psychoanalysis courageously gave voice to the desire camouflaged in hysterical symptoms, by naming so many “Clarices” only as hysterical or psychotic, it reenacted centuries of misogyny, an old pattern that predates the Christian era and found a strong resonance in the Inquisition, when thousands of witches (Claricean characters?) were conveniently associated with the debauched figure of the devil’s prostitutes and cruelly burned and sacrificed. As I developed in a previous work, “the Inquisition process with the Church’s condemnations projected onto women their difficulty in including desire in the political-religious interests of the new Catholic institution” (GADOTTI, 2006, p. 69).

The heroic ego, which was supposed to battle against the dragon, this incomprehensible chaos brought about by the instincts of the id, occupied a significant space in the concerns of psychoana-

lytic minds. What was punished as heresy at the beginning of the Christian era, came to be diagnosed by doctors at the beginning of the 20th century as a symptom that should be treated by strengthening the ego and, if possible, with the proper control of the imaginative capacity. Within a monotheistic perspective and an overemphasis on the ego, imagination and the whole range of diverse and incoherent emotions became destructive symptoms, losing their potential for the transformation of the soul.

The soul, as psychic interiority, as it represents a bipolar figure (JUNG, 2000, par. 356) was the real target of this discrimination. "The psyche is far from having unity; on the contrary, it is a bubbling mixture of impulses, blockages, and contradictory affects, and its conflicted state, for many individuals, is so unbearable that they yearn for the salvation advocated by theology" (par. 190).

Therefore, witches and hysterics could be all those women who, in the intensity of the soul world and inability to communicate with the objectivity of the ego, contributed to the misunderstanding of a psychoanalysis that, still identified with the positivism of the time, could not engage in dialogue with those oddities in the form of symptoms. The archetypal feminine as the personification of this misunderstood and consequently frightening imagistic world is repressed for it carries the shadow of destructuring.

The one-sided interpretation of the Christian myth of creation can be understood as one of the most successful campaigns of misogyny that has influenced not only women, but an entire form of internalization of the archetypal feminine and consequently of mismatches in the field of human relationships, since the anima is the archetype of relationships. We experience the echoes of this misogyny not only in personal spheres but primarily in the collective space, in tensions between classes, in divergences between peoples with different predominant archetypal expressions (such as conflicts between fundamentalists and secularists), and,

in short, in any relational context in which exclusion is present.

According to Elaine Pagels (1992), the sexual attitudes and core values of Western culture are associated with the way in which the Christian tradition has held the female figure responsible for the fall of mankind, associating her with evil and highlighting Eve's role as the figure who destabilized and transgressed the order and, therefore, must, at any cost, be expelled from the social and psychic scene. In the Christian tradition, the foundation of the relationship established with the feminine is through the shadow, initially projected onto the image of the witch-woman and later, in the words of psychoanalysis, onto the figure of the hysteric woman. The phobic movement observed from this historical moment onwards re-edits, in different contexts, the terrible human feeling of exclusion. When updated as something that disrupts and is responsible for all human suffering, the anima, as the archetype of relationships, fails to constellate its greatest richness in the collective consciousness: our human capacity to embrace the other within our intimacy, to include diverse polarities no matter how foreign they may seem. The challenge of contemporary times lies precisely in accepting this foreigner within and outside of us, in this moment when globalization drives us towards intimacy, even if it is virtual, with the otherness.

Clarice, a nomad herself, translated, with great sensitivity, this feeling of exclusion of who is an outsider in one's own land, which probably drove her to search, in her work, for this archetypal feminine that includes and incorporates the most diverse antagonisms. Her creativity emerges precisely from this free movement between the most diverse animic polarities, encompassing social, cultural, and aesthetic differences, both on the concrete objective level and on the subjective symbolic level. Beauty and the beast, the lady and the beggar are characters in her work that showcase the pursuit of this inclusion and dynamic interchange of opposites with-

in ourselves. Diving into these infinite possibilities characterizes the ambiguity, diffusion and discontinuity of her writing.

In art, as a transcendent function, ambiguity is the only possibility of communication, as multiple interpretations truly allow us to reach the deepest layers of the collective unconscious, inherently multiple. As far as pathology is concerned, this very ambiguity is villainized: it is judged and condemned by the disruption of the personality, the difficulty of concentration and the “fragility of the ego” in the patient. The task of the heroic ego is precisely to overcome this disorganization that unconscious images, ambivalent by nature, provoke in consciousness and which, in art, wonderfully fulfill their symbolic function.

But we should not fool ourselves, for even Clarice (1998b), in the voice of G.H., recognizes the importance of having a hand to hold us in this deepening that, to the unaware, can be seen as psychotic. This rescuing hand is the best image of this much-needed ego stability. In the aforementioned novel, the protagonist G.H., faced with the imminent moment of ritualistically ingesting the amorphous mass of which a cockroach is made, turns to the reader: “Hold my hand tight, because I feel that I’m going. I’m going once again toward the most divine primary life; I’m going toward a hell of raw life” (Lispector, 1998b, p. 60). And finally, faced with such a tenuous threshold, with such an exciting ambiguity, we ask ourselves: what is, after all, the boundary between madness and creativity? What is the boundary between heresy and the expression of femininity? What is the boundary between pleasure and sin?

The insinuation of a possible answer seems to be present in every newspaper we read, every movie we watch, or music we listen to. Our culture translates this issue. Never has there been a moment of so many uncertainties and indefiniteness, of so many questions and answers. While it offers the freedom, albeit distressing, to reflect and make more intimate and personal choices,

modernity, or rather postmodernity, also throws us into a void of values and definitions. The beginning of the 21st century is marked by a festival of possibilities in the areas of sexuality, health, education, and, as we sadly witness, politics. After all, unfortunately some burden must be paid for this wealth of paths that is offered to us!

But I must admit modern man runs the risk of being deceived by so much diversity and, like Icarus, intoxicated by this supposed freedom, distancing himself from the healthy and necessary balance. The pathology of the century is not the multiplicity and plurality constantly presented to us, but the distortion we create between the symbolic and intrapsychic experience of this plurality and its realization. When we update the various polarities inherent in the very nature of the archetype, we run the risk of, like Icarus, becoming distant from healthy contact with our objective reality, which is primarily ensured through our relationships and bonds. Just as Icarus could not hear the father’s calls, disengaging from this relationship, we also lose the sense of connection when we allow ourselves to experience all the archetypal possibilities that flood our consciousness.

The lack of commitment that we witness daily in the streets, in the media, and even in our offices reminds us of the adolescent euphoria of compulsively indulging in all the experiences that our voracious and complex psyche urges us to explore. The contemporary world is characterized by the wealth of diversity, but also by the pathology of individualism and transience that leaves us in a state of deprivation. The world of abundance is also the world of emptiness, where the ephemeral coexists with multiplicity in a space where the inherent diversity of the soul, characteristic of the feminine, ceases to serve the Self and instead satisfies only the demands of an ego enthralled by its various talents. It is no wonder that modern-day superheroes are not only powerful, but primarily bearers of multiple powers.

We get sick when we lose our “soul”, when we disconnect from this archetypal feminine, whose main characteristic is associated with the function of relationships, of bringing us closer to the other. The plurality of the soul ceases to serve the acceptance of our differences within and outside of our psychic world, helping us to approach the foreigner different from ourselves, to instead bend in favor of a freedom that makes us deny our bonds and ethical commitments. Clarice is Clarice Lispector, the writer, because she probably always knew what was hers and what belonged to the gods, and humbly she always asked for the reader’s hand, without whom a writer cannot exist.

Another brilliant novelist. Rosa Montero emphasizes the importance of words as a possibility of communication, as symbols of that hand that rescues us from madness: “The so-called madmen are the individuals who dwell permanently on the dark side: they cannot fit into reality and lack words to express themselves... The essence of madness is loneliness” (2004, p. 133).

Perhaps we do not realize it, but when we disconnect from our psychic femininity we also disconnect from our relationships, so that the path of individuation ceases to be solitary and becomes one of loneliness. Further on, Montero (2004, p. 138) continues: “Writing is an exogenous skeleton that allows you to continue orthopedically standing, without it you would be a defeated gelatin, a soft mass crushed on the ground.”

Despite being constructed through glimpses into the formless world behind the borders of concrete and objective reality, writers are ethically committed to the word, which may initially seem like a prison, but throughout their life, it is the hand that always rescues them. Indeed, at the beginning of the last century, despite all the efforts of doctors dedicated to the study of the soul, it was still not possible to look at this soul diversity with all the creativity inherent to the archetype, and would consider as bizarre what could be creative, as symptom

what perhaps was the creation, and sick the one who was the creator. Nevertheless, nowadays, we observe an exclusion in reverse, since the uncompromising extolling of pluralities ends up diluting our bonds in mirrors that reflect ourselves and transforming them into objects at the service of a narcissistic and omnipotent fantasy.

We continue to exclude others with all their diversity from the field of our psychic vision, and only see a restricted and impoverished other, which is distorted by our gaze, as a mere extension of our narcissistic vanity, which only serves our interest in living our own complexity. The truly different one ceases to exist. In an anthropophagic attitude, we devour them to serve our own appetite rather than to truly incorporate their qualities into our existence and transform ourselves through this nourishment. The inequalities we witness in the streets, in social and cultural divergences are the unfortunate result of a mindset that, phobic about the diversity it offers, tends to exclude rather than relate.

The dichotomy between good and evil, between madness and creativity forms the archetypal backdrop of this mechanism of exclusion that we reissue in our personal and social relationships. Somehow, the witch, the hysteric woman, and the street beggar are all victims of this same dynamic of exclusion and purging of the feminine. The image of a unitary world, where differences fit, demands that the image between the masculine and the feminine, Logos and Psyche, are somehow constellated in our consciousness, in conjunction, which is only attainable by a change of posture in face of what we call femininity or psychic inwardness.

The possibility of communion of the most diverse psychic polarities in our consciousness brings to mind the image of Sophia, “the friendly spirit of humanity” (JUNG, 1986, para. 613), the feminine aspect of the divine, which loves and fears, for it recognizes and respects difference. Precisely because it represents this relational aspect of compassion within the ar-

chetype, Sophia enables the transformation of the untouched aspects within us. Sofia, whose throne is in Heaven, but also on Earth, is able to dialogue with the divine and human polarities and to validate diversity, by placing, on the stage of inclusion, as performers of equal importance, the prostitute from Copacabana, the

Northeastern Macabéa, Freud's hysteric woman, and the homeless from the city of São Paulo, in a show directed by Eros and whose theme is life itself. ■

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Resumo

A patologia da arte e da exclusão

Este trabalho propõe uma reflexão sobre os tênues limites que separam a patologia da criatividade, utilizando-se, para isso, da genialidade da escritora Clarice Lispector. Coloca a ideia da patologia como fenômeno associado à história da misoginia, buscando suas raízes arquetípicas no mito da criação e na figura feminina de Eva. Desenvolve também a relação entre essa misoginia no plano arquetípico e o sentimento de exclusão que vivenciamos nos mais diferentes níveis de relacionamentos. ■

Palavras-chave: *anima, psicologia analítica, misoginia, feminilidade psíquica, exclusão.*

Resumen

La patología del arte y de la exclusión

Este trabajo propone una reflexión sobre los tenues límites que separan la patología de la creatividad, utilizándose, para ello, del genio de la escritora Clarice Lispector. Coloca la idea de la patología como fenómeno asociado a la historia de la misoginia, buscando sus raíces arquetípicas en el mito de la creación y en la figura femenina de Eva. Desarrolla también la relación entre esa misoginia en el plano arquetípico y el sentimiento de exclusión que experimentamos en los más diferentes niveles de relaciones. ■

Palabras clave: *ánima, psicología analítica, misoginia, feminidad psíquica, exclusión.*

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