

Psychoanalysis and Aesthetics: Re-signifying psychotic conflicts and creative reciprocity

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Abstract

Inspiration sources that inhabit the universes of Aesthetics and Psychoanalysis are used to construct mental models viewing to approach emotional conflicts linked to psychotic levels. The clinical presentation is made through emotional photograms. Movements of the analytical couple are studied related to the function for re-signifying psychotic blockages and so to restate the analytical dialogue and to promote creative reciprocity, as basis to mental growth.

Key-words: aesthetics, conflicts psychotic, reciprocity creative, identity.

In the morning I darken
During the day I stall
In the evening I dusk
In the night I burn
Towards west death
Against whom I live
Captive to the south
East is my north
Let others tell
Step by step
I die yesterday
I am born tomorrow
I walk wherever there is room:

- My time is when.

"Poética I" - in 'Nova Antologia Poética' - São Paulo - Companhia das Letras: 2005, p. 141. Vinicius de Moraes (1913-1980). [Translated by the author]

This text addresses to contemporary psychoanalysts experienced in clinical practice¹; its most explicit source is the daily clinical practice, from where scenes and clips of analysis and supervision sessions were extracted, in different times; these scenes will be presented as a set of photograms. The term "photogram" is borrowed from the

¹ "The ethos of Psychoanalysis" - p. 34.

British psychoanalyst Wilfred R. Bion (1991, I, p. 646) and shall be used according to the following meaning: "an analogy portrait which registers mental phenomena as if they were seen"²

Therefore, a montage set of four photograms will be presented, and, because the intuitive logic shall be privileged, the photograms will be called emotional photograms. Stemming from each of them I develop a short exercise, from the very aesthetic-psychoanalytic vertex, aiming at the exposure of moments during which aesthetic conflicts within the partnership arise, and at a possible disclosure for us, psychoanalysts, to think over ways of mobilization and enough ventilation for expanding and elaborating the aesthetic reciprocity (Williams, 2005).

The sources of inspiration keep a close link with the search for containers granted with the reverie capability (Sapienza, 1999) and point to ways towards enlivening our psychoanalytically trained intuition storage, with aims at promoting the personalization which faces the risk of de-personalization (Resnik, 2001).³

The book called "The vale of soul making", written by Meg Harris Williams (2005), comprehends a wide range of references and is a valuable source for studying the mental models of the creative self of the human being; chapter eight, "Creativity and counter-transference", and chapter nine, "After-kleinian poetics" are outstanding. The author carries out a subtle gold digger's work with aims at studying the cultural origins embedded within the realms of Poetry, Philosophy, Mythology, Literature, Painting, Sculpture, Music, Theater, Movie, and Dance, by establishing meaningful bridges for the reader interested in investigating and following a refined poetic-psychoanalytical methodology related to the "post-kleinian" model of the mind.

I expose now the emotional photograms related to the presented theme.

Photogram 1: The beautiful princess entangled in an armored space.

How to wake up without suffering?

Restarting without horror?

Sleeping has conveyed me

to that realm where there is no life

and I remain inert without passion

How to repeat, the following day after the following day, the inconclusive tale,

to stand the similarities of the harsh things

of tomorrow with the harsh things of today?

How to protect myself of the wounds

² For the reader interested in further deepening the search of some concepts linked to Bion's Work exposed in this paper, some footnotes will be added with those concepts, to be found in the Dictionary elaborated by Paulo Cesar Sandler (Sandler, 2005).

³ "Schizophrenia, theory of" - p. 659.

which the event tears inside me,
any event which reminds of the Earth and her demented purple?
And more of that sore which I impose myself,
every hour, executioner
of the innocent who I am not?
Nobody answers, life is petrous.

"Acordar, Viver". Poesia Completa. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Aguilar, 2003- p. 1394.
Carlos Drummond de Andrade. [Translation of the author]

The analyst, discarding whatever she realizes from her own psychopathology, decides to tell, during the session, on a moment she deems proper, the following dream she had had with her analyzand: "You were lost and lonely in a cosmic space, isolated and as if armored by an energy field, extremely upset, and without being able to utter any kind of sound nor human voice; this scene has reminded me of a segment of one of the episodes of "Star Wars", of the movie director George Lucas, in which a noble and beautiful princess is blocked and inaccessible, enclosed and captive within a field of forces".

The analyzand, in general self-contained, uncommunicative, and extremely reticent, unveils a facial mask of stiff inexpressiveness and starts verbalizing when she recognizes the states of mind similar to those which resemble cataleptic states, when "waking up and getting out of bed" seem almost impossible. She adds that she suffers from the following life experience: during the session, some of the long silences which occur after a few words of the analyst denote her "spiritual disappearance" away from the analyst's room. Resnik (2001) calls this fact ejection through massive "transportation" of the self and correlates it to a variation of the splitting to the psychotic functioning.

In the clinical experience, one could consider capturing the non-verbal levels of this complex "spiritual" vanishing phenomenology as if there remained at that place merely her "physical body"; the fact is that the emotional contact was re-established, with the exposure of configured visual images "dreamt of" at a distance by the analyst, who used them as an association to the "dream" plus one cultural production, namely, a fragment of a well-known movie plot. A possibility to give form to the experience of an aesthetic conflict between the two individuals is opened inside the analytical room.

The communication of the analyst's "night" dream with this analyzand could be elsewhere destined. The non-communication could somehow outcome otherwise, both for the analyst as well as for the partnership. Among various questions, one arises: which associations will emerge? We could still propose this questioning to the analyst: what inspired her to decide in favor of the communication? Perhaps, should there be an affirmative confirmation with the analyzand, the analyst would be to keep a critical attitude in relation to her own magnetic magical powers, charm, and illusionary faith in the omnipotence of thoughts; she could become "adorable" to the

eyes of the analyzand, and vice-versa, with the possibility of both remaining bewildered by illusions of narcissistic seduction. Refer to the enriching texts of Paul Claude Racamier (1992, 2001), in which certain games of sexual farce, classically called erotic transfer, are described with elegant critical sense.

The psychoanalytical investigation of these two directions may open new questionings for the analytical pair, such as the aristocratic elements, through which the analyzand would want to impose herself as outstanding, and aiming at enchanting and engulfing the analyst, as a "pair of frozen stars captive by success and fame".

If both individuals are struck blind by the deathly pact, there will be again an implosion of the exposed scene, along with the disintegration of the images which trace the aesthetic conflict and the destruction of the aesthetic reciprocity embryos; the risks of insight abortion⁴ in psychoanalysis will be due to the attacks successfully commanded by a gang of destructive narcissistic forces, according to Rosenfeld's refined clinical description (1971). Therefore, studies of correlation with the denial of links shall be opened - minus knowledge, minus love, and minus hate⁵ - where suspension states of real life is installed. These mental states are exposed by Salomon Resnik in Chapter 3, called "An attack of catatonic negativism", from his book "The Delusional Person"- bodily feelings in Psychosis.

Photogram 2: Oedipal complex and analytical identity.

Analyst: In few words, after that session, the analyzand called me and told me that she had decided to travel and cancel the sessions. She also added that she would look for psychiatric treatment in order to be allowed to take lithium.

Bion: There are always plenty of things to do besides psychoanalysis. And, if you do not give the patient drugs, there is no difficulty whatsoever in getting them from someone else. The same thing applies to interpretations, which can be a drug; if she can't get the kind of interpretations that she likes, she can always get them from another analyst.

Your difficulty is to know what you did wrong. But it is also important to know what you did right. Giving the right interpretation can lead to the termination of analysis just the same as giving the wrong one. So, if this patient finds somebody else whom she prefers, she too may discover that she has made a mistake.

It is very difficult to assess the analytic association. It is easy to be misled by wanting to forget our mistakes, but it is equally easy to be mistaken by assuming that we are going to make mistakes. The analytical experience is a disciplined and unpleasant one - neither the analyst nor the analyzand can do what they like. There are masses of seductive alternatives, but the job of psychoanalysis is a tough one. This helps to

⁴ "Reversible perspective", p. 647.

⁵ "The realm of minus", p. 476.

explain why analysts must have rests, must have some kind of life other than the analytical one. It is very unsatisfactory if they make their household lives into a kind of psychoanalysis. It seems to me that analysts often fail to recognize that analysis is a very good thing for analysts, if that is what they want. But, if they want a family, then they don't want a kind of psychoanalytic museum. It is extremely easy for them to start interpreting their words in order to analyze husbands' or wives' remarks. I think that this is a great mistake.

In this chosen part of the supervision, Bion (1987) highlights the existence of the risks inherent to each session, and points out that analysts may "lose " patients, although it represents an unpleasant experience.

The beginning of this analysis goes back to a fact occurred during the analyzand's youth, when, on one day at dawn she entered the sea, opened in an oneiric state, allegedly listening to strange chants of a male voice which wanted to possess her. An attentive boyfriend followed and managed to rescue her, who was already half-drowned of this search for an oceanic fusion, attributed to a ghostly dolphin.

Another rather splintered reconstruction corresponds to the suicide of her stepfather, who, drowned in debts and humiliated by his former partners, explodes his head with a gun shot. Little by little, the analyzand recovers her ability to dream, with attempts to incur into nightmares in which she recovered the images of decomposed corpses along with ragged fishermen's ships, similar to those described by Samuel T. Coleridge (1772-1834) in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (2005). According to this plot, the tale starts with the arrangements being made for a wedding, during which the old sailor tells a young man the difficult turbulence occurred during his rough experiences at sea. The ghost of a hurt albatross haunts the occupants of the ship, who consequently lose the restoring sense of life.

One could consider that as remaining from a "pre-natal" state of mind with catastrophic nature, within the clinical scenario which evolves the patient on the beach and at sea, at the fringe of oceanic fusions, similar to the state of mind of the ship's aimless sailors of Coleridge's poetry, in search for safe harbors to refuge and treat a mental drowning; she suffered alternating hectic melancholy and outstanding maniac triumph, with a highly masochistic background.

Within the cardiac- respiratory model, I think the most profound contact with this frail and precarious state of the "expired" self will require, from the analyst, a deep capacity for voluntarily emptying the own self allied to collaborating with the forces of life capable of restoring the parental figures of the internal world, original sources of inspiration which would enable incursions and the crossing through the Depressive Position. The analyst is treated either as "Satan" - Beautiful Rebel Decaying Angel - or as "Christ the Savior" - Redeemer Messiah -, both tenderly implacable.

However, will this be enough for the analyst to rebuild a bridge that would support a ragged state of mind, uncontrolled, gearless and without piloting in face of the sudden torments between the swinging oscillations Narciss-ism β à Social-ism⁶?

⁶ "Narciss-ism <----> Social-ism", p. 518.

The syntony to cross the well-assembled dams of the analyzand's "autistic cave" will require brave and precise incursions of the pair, which will allow for her "re-birth", in order for it to be able to "dream" again and to exist, abandoning the state of a "dead-carrying-the-alive" - fantastic character of Brazilian folklore called "Bumba-meu-boi", represented by an actor with a mask, whose body is represented by a puppet in the front and whose legs stay in the back, giving the impression that the inanimate carries the animate.

Family secrets lie under suspicion bonds of love and truth, forcing an idyll and the sterilization of the analyst and analyzand couple, along with eliminating the fertility and the appearance of the "Messiah", who would trigger the ending of the idyll; the third individual, or the novelty, would neither be able to be born nor to incarnate and, if accomplished, will be murdered as an innocent victim of "Herodes", on the sly. Will there be protection figures that will perform this function of protecting the baby? The article written by Luis Carlos Junqueira and Antonio Sapienza further elaborates these questions (2004).

Will the capacity of renouncing to the illusionary omnipotence of "absolutist controls and programmed guaranties" of the human existence allow the steady and firm preservation of consciousness of the human tragedy (Davis, 1999), with high spirit and ethical elegance, as well as with the destiny break through and breaking up bitter melancholic prisons and exuberating maniac evasions? The historian and political writer Walter A. Davis brilliantly explores terrorism, fanaticism, and the use of the atomic bomb against the civilian population of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August, 1945.

Will realizing the voluntary above-mentioned renouncement represent a stimulating resource for searching within the everyday life capable of widening the creativity? Which inspiration sources will help us think about, and modulate the gaps between polarities of radicalism and goals such as achieving "successes", and fleeing "failures" and "depression"? Our psychoanalytical regard will have to tune and sharpen complex parameters in order to assess the "mental growth".

A text recently written by Neil Maizels (1996), an Australian psychoanalyst, opens up interesting incursions into what he calls "spiritual position", with proposals which raise critical reflections and questionings related to the deepening and crossing over of the depressive position.

Photogram 3: Imaginary twin and crypt.

Don't I have a point? You who have found life
so bitter after having tasted mine, father;
the opaque infusion of my destiny, and,
while I grew up, you kept tasting it; and,
fascinated by the rancidity taste of my future, you examined my blurred regard,
you, my father, who, even dead, so often
come to blend your anguish into my intimate hope,

and, serene, renounces to the realm of serenity, -
privilege of the dead, only for the little which is my destiny, -
I have not reason ,
thou who lovest me by the shy draught
of love I had for you, and, from which I always
withdrew, for the space in your faces,
while I loved you, transformed into space
of the world, empty of you presence?

"A Quarta Elegia de Duíno" in "Os sonetos de Orfeu; e Elegias de Duíno". Rio de Janeiro: Record, 2002- p.149. Rainer Maria Rilke. [translated by the author]

The end of one analysis comes to a closure; the end is followed by strange premonitions, in which the analyzand fears for his survival and is invaded by the apprehensions of being accused of "murder", in case the analyst dies or suffers from any physical or mental deterioration in the near future. I shall present now two vignettes of this period of analysis.

First vignette :

The interaction between both is taken by anguishes of deathly fatalism. The analyst exposes to the analyzand his "vision" related to the presence of a father's specter, which torments his son, prince Hamlet, demanding that he inspect the queen's behavior and do not let her in peace, for, in complicity with the king's brother, she would have plotted her husband's murder and would have accomplished it.

The analyst is available to dismantle this persecution commanded by humiliations, resentments, and mad and maddening revenges. "The difference with Hamlet lies in the fact that you, my patient, are facing an analyst who, with your help, will disarm this suspense and this macabre tragic plot".

Second vignette :

The analyzand starts to live again, more intensely, a certain degree of terror-with-a-name, when the analyst accepts the task of being able to contain facets, both from the dead father as well as from a brother who had died early in childhood. A very complex ghost transference (Bion, 1991b, p. 615: "ghost", I.40; II.4; II.19) starts to become more clearly outlined; and the analyst now is faced with a mental model of fencing in front of a double mourning inside the family crypt. Almost simultaneously, analyst and analyzand, by means of reminiscences, remember the struggles for the possession of the analyst, a mixture of father-brother ghosts fighting for the "mother's" favoritism and for her possession while "wife and loved-lover".

The dynamic of the same session shifts then towards the analyst, treated now as an absolute owner of the truth of psychoanalysis, and who will expel the analyzand into the exile, with no return.

In both situations described in the above mentioned vignettes, there emanate two models of caesura, evolving catastrophic change as well creative solutions for the

couple within the analytical experience. We are to highlight the fact that there is, within the terrorist autism, a circularity tightening the birth caesura and the death caesura, with the oppressive closure of spatiality and temporality; therefore, the spiral, which allows for the liberation of a breathing and creative experience, is blocked.

The first model refers to the pre-natal world, with perspectives of a new life outside the uterus of the mother, along with fantasies of the splitting from the mother's watery continent, which regressively could attract and transform him/her into a mummified fetus inside the family tomb.

The second model of caesura gains meaning when the delirious "illusion" bursts forth during which the analyst could dress up with absolutist identity vests, like the Lord of the mysteries and knowledge of psychoanalysis, as the Father of the primitive horde of Totem and Taboo (Freud, 1913/1955), castrating, persecuting, and punishing the analyzand definitively, depriving him from legitimizing himself, in case he desires, either in the present or in the future, to perform the functions and to become a psychoanalyst. Psychoanalysis is mistaken sometimes with the total uterine Great Mother, suffocating and voracious exterminator of creative virility, and sometimes with the Gorilla, Father of the primitive horde!

Reflecting over the reading of the analytical interaction of both plots, one may insinuate a possibility of elaborating a deeply rooted narcissistic complex, grounded on the relationship model of imaginary twin (Bion, 1967/2004). This entanglement entertains endless mourning, with strong persecutory feelings which maintain imprisoned the personality, taken by addition, penitence, strong inhibition, blind rebellion, and fetishistic paradoxical submission phenomena in front of the Great Mother and/or the Master Father.

The mourning labor shall reach the de-racination (Davis, 1999) of this traumatic core, so as to allow for freedom to arise and for the vitally cordial detachments to occur, with due and harmonic spatiality and temporality updating for both individuals linked in the described situation.

It is my opinion that the text "The imaginary twin" (Bion, 1967/2004), which served Bion in 1950 to become a member of the British Psychoanalytical Society, leads us to establish precious evocative co-relations with the psycho-dynamic formatting exposed in this intricate emotional photogram.

Along comments made about his article, in the final text of Second Thoughts, Bion (1967/2004) highlights the characteristic of the working-through nature of his clinical experience since 1950, and at this point, as a text writer, proposes another approach to the reading of his writings prior to the clear understanding of renewed psychoanalytical conceptions and of new observation vertices. In his comments (Bion, 1967/2004, p. 122) he further emphasizes that:

"The experience of the patient's communication, as well as the psychoanalyst's interpretation, is ineffable and essential, and this quality plays a vital role in any

interpretation granted to the psychotic patient, whose reaction depends more on the quality of the interpretation than on its verbal significance".

Photogram 4: Aesthetic reciprocity and Gordian Knot

Ferdinand: "There be some sports are painful, and their labor
Delight in them sets off: some kinds of baseness
Are nobly undergone; and most poor matters
point to rich ends. This my mean task
would be as heavy to me as odious, but
the mistress which I serve quickens what's dead
and makes my labors pleasures".

[Act III. Prime Scene - p. 102]

Prospero : ".The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which is inherit, shall dissolve,
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on; and our little life
is rounded with a sleep".

[Act IV. Prime Scene - p. 150]

Prospero: ".As you from crimes would pardoned be,
Let your indulgence set me free"
[Epilogue - p. 194]

"The Tempest" - Garzanti [1984] - William Shakespeare

The last photogram, although extremely synthetic, will serve as a farewell between the writer and the reader.

The analyst proposes the following "construction" (Freud, 1937/1964) to the analyzing, using the literary model described by Guimarães Rosa in "Grande Sertão: Veredas":

"There is a pattern in your attitude towards me, in which you move, like Tatarana, the character as the head of the gang. You might mistake me for the old companion in arms and disguised into a cowboy of the northeastern Brazil, a "jagunço", named Diadorim. I keep hoping, though, that differently from the end of the novel, you may find out that I am a woman, still before my death!"

This brief formulation expresses undoubtedly a fine sensitivity and precise language of realization (Bion, 1970) used by the analyst, endowed with compassion⁷, love for life, and consideration for the truth.

An intense conflict of aesthetic nature is established in the partnership.

There is a deep silence in the room - "My heart remained full with moving things".

Taken by the fear from being charged with love investments in which gratitude and guilt are potentialized, the analyzand, like Riobaldo, answers: "I cheer for this metamorphosis to be able to liberate us both from the residues of faith vows made until our deaths".

The analyst answers: "I think you and I are about to reach a liberation of radical servitude"! More concisely, a situation was established which allowed an expansion accountable for conciliating a moment of aesthetic reciprocity - "Master is not the one who always teaches, but the one who suddenly learns".

The aesthetic reciprocity route tunes the humanity instruments of the couple and allows us to establish a difference between the Aesthetics of indissoluble commitments and the Ethics of the Absolutist Truth⁸.

Certain human encounters favor the coming closer of the admiration category by Inspiration Sources, which poetically attain the degree of Muses of a Pantheon, as described by Meg Harris Williams (Williams, 2005). The time for critical thoroughness teaches us still to realize that the Pantheon may also encompass a Pandemonium, equally useful to dismantle illusionary beliefs of omnipotence and omniscience as drugs and poisons, nourishment for idolatries, bewilderment of eternal ecstasies, and for idyllic imprisonment!

Along the analytical practice we come across facts of this microscopy of affections and, when the links of love characterized by love for life and consideration for the truths prevail, we trespass a threshold in which will occur the opening of clearings to expose the beauty of the human encounter and our subliminal fears. The presented dialogue demonstrate the undoing of a misunderstanding within the counter-transference, like a Gordian knot, of fascinating sublimation, restricted by wrong heroism and blaming with guilt for sacrifices for her own femininity, when the analyst consented in functioning at the extreme of passion with vigorous enthusiasm; at this moment, with the collaboration of the analyzand, the analyst was able to discharge the mask of a virago, requesting credits for alleged compensations.

João Guimarães Rosa (1908-67) feared to die in case he took his chair as a member of the Brazilian Literary Academy and, for this reason, he postponed his legitimized positioning at the Academy for four years; when he decided to take position of his due chair, the paradox of his bold omen came true and he died of a sudden heart attack. - "Living is indeed very dangerous!"

⁷ "Compassion", p. 60.

⁸ "Absolute Truth", p. 21.

I shall borrow the final verses to the lyrics of a song composed by Antonio Carlos Jobim and Vinicius de Moraes, called "Se todos fossem iguais a você", which pinpoint to the qualities of human beings who help us think over our miseries and renovate ourselves, even in sensorial or physical absences, through a continuous search for new meanings:

"There would be truth,
Truth that nobody sees,
If in the world everyone were like you".

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Notes

[1]"The ethos of Psychoanalysis" - p. 34.

[2]For the reader interested in further deepening the search of some concepts linked to Bion's Work exposed in this paper, some footnotes will be added with those concepts, to be found in the Dictionary elaborated by Paulo Cesar Sandler (Sandler, 2005).

[3]"Schizophrenia, theory of" - p. 659.

[4]"Reversible perspective", p. 647.

[5]"The realm of minus", p. 476.

[6]"Narciss-ism <----> Social-ism", p. 518.

[7]"Compassion", p. 60.

[8]"Absolute Truth", p. 21.

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