

Anima and animus – friendship and individuation

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Abstract

This article addresses the bond of friendship between a man and a woman as a booster of individuation of both. Through a symbolic reading of the correspondence between the Brazilian writers Clarice Lispector and Fernando Sabino the author dives on the individuation booster by such a friendship, which lasted for more than thirty years. Reflections are made about the archetypes of anima and animus. ■



Keywords
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Introduction

This article proposes to reflect on how the friendship between a man and a woman can work as a deepening of individuation. By delving into the correspondence between Brazilian writers Clarice Lispector and Fernando Sabino, the author unveils the threads that weave the bond of a friendship that lasted for more than thirty years, and was recorded through letters.

Reading such correspondence is intriguing and moving, we feel like witnesses of this deep relationship and reciprocal exchange. After citing several letters that illustrate the relationship between the writers, there is a discussion of Jungian themes such as *coiunctio*, hierogamy, individuation, anima–animus relationships.

Finally, conclusions are drawn on how friendship can also be a way of individuation. Corresponding with a great friend is a way of soul making.

Friendship and individuation

For some time I have been reflecting on the different qualities and types of friendship that unite a man and a woman. The specificities of relationships are as many as there are friends. Without intending to generalize, here's a snippet to share.

I see friendship as a form of love. It summons us to individuation as it challenges us to find our own way of relating. Friendship gives us feedback on how we function at our best and at our worst, as is often the case in intimate relationships. The friend brings me back to who I am, in addition to, at the same time, inviting me to be someone other than myself.

According to Plato (2010), friendship is a reciprocal predisposition that makes two beings jealous of each other's happiness.

When we reflect on the friendship between a man and a woman, it is a relationship with some particularities. In most cultures, friends tend to be expected to be primarily of the same sex, and Brazilian culture is no different on this point. There is some strangeness about a pair of friends of the opposite sex, which inspires curiosity and suspicion. "Are they lovers?" is often speculated. Common sense says that pure friendship between a man and a woman does not exist.

In literature, cinema and pop culture there are many examples of male friends: Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, the three musketeers, Sherlock Holmes and Watson, Laurel and Hardy, the Three Stooges, Batman and Robin. We also have many examples of romantic partners, as well as opposite-sex siblings in culture and mythology, but examples of opposite-sex friends are difficult to remember.

In Ancient Greece it was considered that true friendship could only develop between equals, particularly between free men. Friendship between a citizen (a free man) and a slave was considered impossible, as well as between a man and a woman.

There are friendships that are erotic, in which sexuality plays a prominent role, whether it is lived concretely or not, whether it is reciprocated or not. There are friends who are love affairs, just as there are love affairs between friends. And also devotional friendships, in which admiration and even a certain formality are part of the scenario. And I'm going to challenge common sense by saying that there are also friendships between men and women that, although being between unequals, that are lived in fraternity. Here, love is lived in a social domain in which loyalty

and companionship predominate. There is a communion of thoughts and reflections, with complicity and the experience of a great love that is not romantic. This love can accompany friends for decades and throughout their lives, passing by marital relations without disturbing them, although often there may be jealousy on the part of these friends' partners.

When there is trust and maturity in the relationship, it is sometimes possible to find space for understanding and integration of each of the relationships with discrimination and creativity, partnership and loyalty between lovers and friends.

The object of my reflection is the friendship cultivated between a heterosexual man and woman – especially a friendship that goes through decades and long transformations in the lives of each of the friends, and that develops on the ground of companionship. Other profiles could be made, but I emphasize the specificity chosen for the delimitation of the theme.

Such a friendship can be a strong impetus for the individuation of those involved, due to the fact that a friend often harbors the projection of either the anima or the animus of the other, and at other times it is evident that he is dealing with a diverse and independent being, who surprises him or her, in spite of projective expectations. This is a qualitatively different path than that taken in a romantic relationship between a man and a woman, as the bond takes place outside a marital and/or sexual context. When compared to a romantic relationship, pure friendship between a heterosexual man and woman presents a course with different specificities, different obstacles, different roots and different fruits, about which little reflection is given.

For those who live the experience of having a great friend of the opposite sex, there is a rich opportunity to experience love from a perspective of soul transcendence. The anima, animus

and conjunctio archetypes are constellated in a different way to what is experienced in conjugality and sexuality.

Correspondence Clarice Lispector – Fernando Sabino

A few years ago I was delighted to read the correspondence between two great friends: Fernando Sabino and Clarice Lispector, a book published in 2001. Great writers who delved deeply into the dramas and wonders experienced by the human soul, the authors have given us masterful works such as “*O Encontro Marcado*”, “*O Menino no Espelho*”, “*A Paixão Segundo G.H.*” and “*Laços de Família*”.

They met in 1944, when Clarice was 23 years old and Fernando, 20. Their friendship lasted until death separated them, in this case Clarice's death in 1977. Therefore, the relationship lasted more than thirty years. Luckily for us, part of this relationship was recorded in letters, as both lived outside Brazil for long periods of time. Thus, it is possible to have the opportunity to participate as an observer in this relationship of kindness, cooperation, goodwill and mutual admiration.

According to Fernando, when they were young the writers had an almost daily interaction in meetings at a bakery in Rio de Janeiro or at the house of one of the two, where they had long conversations that lasted for hours, discussing literature, worldview, ideology and politics, in addition to submit their work to each other for appreciation, criticism and comment. In Fernando's words:

together we reformulated our values and discovered the world, drunk with youth. It was more than a passion for literature, or for one another, unspoken, that united two young people ‘close to the wild heart of life’: what transpires in our letters is a kind of secret pact between the two of us, solidary in the face of the enigma what the

future had in store for our destiny as writers (SABINO, LISPECTOR, 2001, p. 8).

In the case of Fernando and Clarice, the love experienced was neither romantic nor sexual, but fraternal. They vibrated with each other's success, made suggestions, and the letters were very witty, endowed with a sense of humor and an impressive mastery of words.

In addition to the funny moments, there were dramatic ones. Clarice describes her deep existential anguish, professional insecurity, apathy, shyness, creative block, which made her experience great difficulties. Fernando repeatedly supports her, turns to her with respect and compassion, loyalty, solidarity, understanding. In these letters, perhaps the most beautiful thing is to see how Fernando has an unshakable faith in Clarice's ability to get back on her feet, a very great respect for her, seeing dignity in her suffering.

I selected some excerpts from the correspondence, and I invite the readers to taste them imbued with a poetic listening.

I begin with words from Clarice to Fernando, in an excerpt taken from a letter written on August 5th, 1946. The author was living in Switzerland with her husband, the diplomat Maury Gurgel Valente, and sent the letter to New York, where Fernando lived in occasion. The excerpt goes like this:

Fernando, [...] I received a letter [...] [with] your article "*O Sentimento e a Palavra*". I read it again and I was so happy... It was a letter from you again, and a conversation. I was excited, it doesn't matter that in a little while it will be over and that I'll go to the seamstress with a dead soul... What matters is that I stayed as I am now, well into spring. Suddenly it seemed to me that I should keep working, that everything is bad, but that's how it is, that things are unknown until they burst into

an acquaintance [...], and that from time to time we can receive this gift, which is a friendly word from a friend, and I suppose that if there is compensation – and I don't see why it should be greater – this is already great and more than is deserved (SABINO, LISPECTOR, 2001, p. 51).

Clarice explains how much the words of a friend, even if distant, are capable of bringing spring. He talks about the "free gift that is a friendly word from a friend", a poetic image that alludes to the gift that is friendship.

Fernando, who followed Clarice's suffering a few letters later, wrote to her from New York, on September 17, 1946, after reading a short story written by the author:

Clarice, [...] I really liked your story: admirably well written, nothing is lacking or surplus. [...] From it I can perceive something much more important than the very importance of the short story: that you are writing well, calmly, in a safe style, without haste. Perhaps because now you are not suffering much, but suffering well: it is a very important difference, which Mário [de Andrade] always called my attention to. We suffer a lot: what is needed is to suffer well, with discernment, with class, with the serenity of someone who is already initiated into suffering (SABINO, LISPECTOR, 2001, p. 60).

Another excerpt from Fernando's letter, this one written on July 27th, 1947, from New York, brings the dimension of gratitude in relation to sharing life as a whole:

For now I need you to write to me, I need you to send me news, for you to say that you weren't angry because of my silence and tell me a lot about it. So that I finally know if you're still living, because living is

free, please, no one asked for permission to be born or paid entry into the world, and since we don't have anyone to thank for so much kindness, we thank each other. Thank you very much, Clarice (SABINO, LISPECTOR, 2001, p. 90).

It is interesting to see how the letters show a certain shyness when talking about issues of conjugality – certainly, they also convey a certain spirit of the times, but they demonstrate the zeal and delicacy of the lived and well-circumscribed roles. Fernando was married to Helena Sabino. Clarice was married to Maury. In addition to the friendship between Fernando and Clarice, with many professional issues in common, Helena and Maury also participated in the relationship. The four maintained a relationship of affection and friendship, meeting when possible; and expressions of appreciation are frequent in the letters, whether between Fernando and Maury or Clarice and Helena. Correspondents ask about the other's spouse, kisses and hugs are sent, best wishes. However, a letter written by Fernando on June 12, 1953 follows from Rio de Janeiro and at one point says the following:

I'm going to sell the house and move out of here. What you may have heard about me is true: I've been living alone for two months and I intend to continue. Starting over – only I'm not seventeen anymore, which turns out to be a mere literary realization (SABINO, LISPECTOR, 2001, p. 95).

Fernando continues, in the same letter, talking about multiple subjects in a similar tone to the previous letters, without going into the feelings and conflicts that possibly motivated the couple's separation. Comments on factual matters, makes stylistic and literary comments. Congratulates Clarice on the birth of her second child; comments on a political and journalistic

dispute between Carlos Lacerda and Samuel Wainer; amends three more generic matters. At the end of the letter he writes just like this: "When I move I'll send you my new address. Helena and the kids are living with her parents – in case I was too understatement or too tight-lipped when I told her we split up" (SABINO, LISPECTOR, 2001, p. 97).

In the following letter, there is no mention or comment from Clarice about her friend's separation. We can either assume that they talked over the phone or, perhaps more likely, that discussing details of each other's marital relationships was not a current practice between these two friends.

In September 1954 Clarice writes from Washington, embarrassed at having turned down Fernando's offer to pick her up at the airport on the occasion of her arrival on a brief visit to Rio de Janeiro. Clarice felt that she had incurred a lack of courtesy, which could have made her friend angry. She interprets it this way because, afterwards, Fernando was supposed to call her on a certain day during her stay in Rio, which he did not do. Returning to Washington, where she now lived, Clarice writes:

it embarrasses me that I'm always arriving and leaving, which forces friends to move around me, a movement that sometimes doesn't even fit right into their lives. [...] Maury always says that I tend to have personal reactions to things that are impersonal. It seems to be true. It seems that I would be able to sincerely ask someone not to pick up my fallen glove on the floor so as not to bother that someone, without understanding what a nuisance it is not to pick it up (SABINO, LISPECTOR, 2001, p. 118-119).

In the letter, while revealing her feelings, Clarice describes her fantasies as "silly complications". Fernando responds as follows:

Clarice, your ‘complications’ are not silly but useless. It’s true that you don’t have to worry at all, I didn’t go to the airport because you didn’t want to and then it was over, I didn’t call because something must have happened at the time that I don’t remember, and then you weren’t there. But it was worth the mismatch because he forced a letter so good that it looked like a letter from Mário de Andrade, and that is a compliment. [...] I need your encouragement – that of someone who, not seeing things up close, has perspective. [...] Embrace Maury for me and always believe in Fernando’s friendship (SABINO, LISPECTOR, 2001, p. 120-121).

Fernando observes that a friend is able to gain perspective on the life of the other. The truth is that, not seeing things so closely, the friend doesn’t see them from afar either. Far enough to be able to see, close enough to be able to tell.

Another letter from Clarice, also written in 1954, has a playful tone:

Hello Fernando, I’m writing to you but I don’t have anything to say either. I think that’s how, little by little, honest old people end up not saying anything. But the funny thing is that having nothing to say, it makes you want to say it. [...] If you reply to this letter with another one where you also don’t know what to say, it will seem like that game that you’ve certainly played one day: the game of “let’s see who blinks first”, who can last longer with eyes wide open (SABINO, LISPECTOR, 2001, p. 122).

In the presence of a great friend, even without anything to say, a subject is invented. Proximity brings the experience of significant silence.

The writers vibrate with each other’s texts, they participate in their literary journeys. In a letter dated March 30th, 1955, regarding a group of

short stories by Clarice that would later be part of the book “*Laços de Família*”, Fernando writes:

There remains the consolation of thinking that if I were capable, like you, of saying the unspeakable, I would have certain things to say that you will still say. And I just keep waiting. [...] you wrote eight short stories like no one even remotely managed to do in Brazil. You are writing like no one else - you are saying like no one else has dared say. I’m sorry for the excess of enthusiasm that is not in your way, but it’s not possible to leave it for less (SABINO, LISPECTOR, 2001, p. 125).

The friend says what we could – but wouldn’t – say. Clarice and Fernando inspire each other, admire each other. In this admiration, the friends look at each other and at themselves. The friend is the mirror that reflects me back, and also the one who, by not offering me a mirror image or symmetrical image, but a different one, maps my contours and differences, reveals me.

On January 8th, 1957, Clarice wrote a letter that I find moving. Impacted by the beauty of the book “*O Encontro Marcado*”, written by Fernando and whose manuscript she had just read, Clarice says:

Fernando, your book amazed me. I started reading your cutting sentences [...], I asked myself at first where you intended to take the reader and take yourself. What amazed me is that [...] I found myself unexpectedly inside the book, understanding everything you wanted, experiencing everything [...]. It’s curious how your book and mine have the same root. [...] But Fernando, isn’t the fact that you wrote this book and I wrote mine the beginning of maturity? [...] Amen, Fernando, amen. For all of us. I have never

felt so much belonging to a “generation”. For the first time, perhaps, I felt the word ‘generation’ in another sense [...] I wanted to be more mentally organized so that I could write you a straight letter, putting into words impressions I had, [...], but difficult to me of reaching words. The truth, Fernando, is that after this book, I am even more your friend. But the truth is also that if I hadn’t liked it so much, I would have been too (SABINO, LISPECTOR, 2001, pp. 186-188).

Discussion

Jung’s theory of contrasexuality invites us to reflect on how the opposite sex, this alter, is constituted as a magnetic force that leads to the expansion of consciousness throughout life, by bringing contributions of functioning and perception opposed to the ego and the unconscious. The original formulation of anima and animus was advanced for its time, as it was theorized decades before social scientists started talking about separate concepts for sex and gender.

It is currently considered that there is no equivalence between Logos or the principle of creativity and the male sex, nor Eros or the principle of receptivity and the female sex. The dynamisms are present in the psyche of both men and women. The fact is that throughout culture there is an emphasis on reinforcing Logos and the principle of activity in the psyche of men and Eros and principle of receptivity in the psyche of women. Thus, contrary contents remain repressed or not expressed in consciousness, sometimes because they are unknown or do not have the necessary amount of energy for their eruption.

Through the relationship with alterity and contrasexuality we become deeper and more unique. Although such archetypes are active throughout the whole life cycle, they become

especially potentiated during metanoia, when the identity process deepens and the possibility of self-knowledge – for those who seek it – can become denser.

James Hillman (2008) writes about the anima in a broader perspective. In Hillman, anima is psyche, or soul, and is present in both men and women, being described through the poetic image of valleys, as opposed to peaks, inhabited by the spirit. In the peaks there is light, clarity, altitude, spiritual elevation, this is where the pneuma resides. The anima resides in the valleys, where there is darkness, dampness, depression, depth. The soul – whether in men or women – is what makes it possible for experience to be transformed into a psychic experience.

We learn to make friends in childhood. Often the first friends are siblings, cousins, school-mates. With friends we learn to relate symmetrically, which is different from what we experience with parents, teachers, authority figures and later with children, students, people for whom we will constitute ourselves as authority figures. With friends we learn to share, we experience other ways of being in the world, talking, behaving, loving. We learned cooperativeness (lending and borrowing, collaborating, producing together) and competitiveness (discussing, disagreeing, rivaling, breaking up).

Jung (1997) wrote about the coniunctio archetype, which refers to the union of opposing elements. It is a symbol that appears recurrently in alchemy, and that can be represented by the union between the sun and the moon, the masculine and the feminine, the king and the queen. The graphic representation of the Tao symbol is the union and juxtaposition between yang – light, creative, masculine element – and yin – dark, receptive, feminine element. The I Ching (WILLHEM, 2002), a Chinese oracular book consulted since time immemorial to seek self-knowledge, describes, through images, how principles of creativity and receptivity com-

plement and reciprocally stimulate each other. When one of them reaches its maximum point of expression, it manifests within itself the seed of its opposite.

The coniunctio alludes to the union of unequal and opposite, complementary elements, and symbolically represents the sexual relationship through which a new element is born. This is symbolized by the divine child, which manifests a potential for a greater totality than the simple sum of the elements that initially generated it. Thus, $1 + 1 = 3$. The coniunctio represents intrapsychic processes that culminate in the possibility of transformation and rebirth, and symbols that represent it exert fascination and fear. The pairing of male-female syzygy appears in alchemical illustrations of great significance, such as the series of engravings from the *Rosarium Philosophorum*, which Jung (1999) used in his book “Ab-reaction, dream analysis and transference” to understand and elucidate the phenomena transferences that constellate in the analysis.

The coniunctio archetype is also expressed in the theme of hieros gamos, a word that in Greek means “sacred marriage”, and which alludes to the ritual of copulation and/or marriage between a man and a woman, representing the union between a god and a goddess, with archetypal meaning. Hierogamy can also be understood as the differentiated dialogue between a person’s conscious and unconscious, a situation that can represent the goal of individuation.

Conclusions

We can say that in the relationship of friendship between man and woman there is the constellation of a quaternion represented by the man and his anima, the woman and her animus. These four elements interconnect directly and crosswise, and both through his anima and his friend, man relates to his unconscious. The same can be said about the woman in relation to her animus and her friend. The arche-

type of contrasexual alterity carries repressed, idealized, frightening and numinous aspects of the opposite sex. Through friendship with a person of the opposite sex, especially if it is a friendship that spans long periods of time, the individual will have contributions brought by the other on how he tends to relate to his internal alter. These friends, like love partners, but in a way that is not identical, can be consciously or unconsciously chosen because they carry idealized or terrible projections of the opposite sex.

Our partners represent what we admire or fear, what we love or hate about ourselves, what we know and don’t know about our journey. By externally relating to these separate aspects of ourselves, we can reconnect with pieces of our soul.

The lasting friendship between a man and a woman can be a complex individuation path, full of possibilities for development like marriage. And when I say “like marriage” I don’t mean “exactly like marriage”, because there are different qualities and difficulties involved, but I want to emphasize how much a pair of friends of the opposite sex is also a couple that forms a syzygy.

Cultivating a friendship like this requires skill and work, discernment and clarity, bearing numerous and rewarding fruits.

It is interesting to point out that the word “correspondence” means to respond reciprocally. The letters between Fernando Sabino and Clarice Lispector inspire us with lyricism to develop relationships of complicity and fraternal coexistence. Corresponding with a great friend is a way of soul making.

I don’t want to imply that friendship is always wonderful, and thus appear naive. The pains of friendship can dig crippling holes inside us. This is a risk to any kind of friendship. Disagreements represented by incomprehension, poor elaboration of jealousy, envy, attacks of anger and rivalry, acts of power and inferiority complexes – all of this can cause terrible wounds in the life of any human being. I purposely wanted

to delve deeper into the bright side of friendship, as psychiatry and psychology already tend to focus too much on pathology to the detriment of physiology.

Finally, I conclude: friendship – between people of different sexes and genders, ages, beliefs and behaviors – is one of the reasons why life deserves diving. ■

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Resumo

Anima e animus – amizade e individuação

O artigo aborda a amizade entre um homem e uma mulher como propulsor da individuação de ambos. Através de uma leitura simbólica da correspondência entre os escritores brasileiros Clarice Lispector e Fernando

Sabino, a autora mergulha na individuação proporcionada por tal relação de amizade, que perdurou por mais de 30 anos. Tece reflexões a respeito dos arquétipos da anima e do animus. ■

Palavras-chave: anima, animus, amizade, individuação.

Resumen

Anima y animus – amistad y individuación

El artículo aborda la amistad entre un hombre y una mujer como propulsor de la individuación de ambos. A través de una lectura simbólica de la correspondencia entre los escritores brasileños Clarice Lispector y Fernando

Sabino la autora profundiza en la individuación proporcionada por tal relación de amistad, que perduró por más de treinta años. Hace reflexiones acerca de los arquetipos del ánima y del animus. ■

Palabras clave: ánima, animus, amistad, individuación.

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