



Patty's stilettos: A clinical case study on the intersection of queer identity and mature adulthood

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Abstract

This work aims to present the clinical case of Patty, whose immaturity is related to not having been born yet; she lives in an embryonic state, not separated from the mother, subjugated to the feminine complex and reveals a secret bond that is expressed, consciously, through the use of nail polish and high-heeled shoes and, unconsciously, through the initial dream with Isis, symbol of integration that allows liberation. To do this, we evoke principles of the sociologists Beck and Bauman and the Jungian psychoanalyst Kulkarni, among others, we return to the Jungian theory on homosexuality, the non-pathological nature of homoaffectiveness, and we record that nothing is more obstructive to development than persistence in a unconscious state. Likewise, we propose that the link between the psyche and the impact, which influence one another, reveals the various visions of individuation and emphasises the question of liberation in the process of individuation.

Descriptors

Complex, homosexuality, individuation (psychology).

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Os stilettos de Patty: um estudo de caso clínico sobre a intersecção entre identidade queer e idade adulta madura

Resumo

O trabalho tem como objetivo apresentar o caso clínico de Patty cuja imaturidade está relacionada com o fato de ainda não ter nascido, vivendo em estado embrionário, não separada de sua mãe e subjugada ao complexo feminino, revelando um vínculo secreto que é conscientemente expresso no uso de esmalte e salto alto, e inconscientemente expresso através do sonho inicial, com Isis, símbolo da integração que permite a libertação. Para isso evoca as lições dos sociólogos Beck e Bauman, da psicanalista junguiana Kulkarni e outros. Retoma a teoria junguiana sobre a homossexualidade, a natureza não patológica da homoafetividade, registra que nada é mais obstrutivo ao desenvolvimento do que a persistência em um estado inconsciente. Propõe que a ligação entre a psique e o impacto influenciam-se reciprocamente, explicita as várias visões de individuação, enfatiza o quesito da libertação no processo de individuação.

Descritores

Complexo, homossexualidade, individuação (psicologia).

Los tacones de aguja de Patty: un estudio de caso clínico sobre la intersección entre la identidad queer y la edad adulta madura

Resumen

Este trabajo tiene por objetivo presentar el caso clínico de Patty, cuya inmadurez se relaciona con el hecho de no haber nacido aún; vive en estado embrionario, no separada de la madre, subyugada al complejo femenino y revela un vínculo secreto que se expresa, conscientemente, por medio del uso de laca de uñas y zapatos de tacón e, inconscientemente, por medio del sueño inicial con Isis, símbolo de la integración que permite la liberación. Para ello, evocamos principios de los sociólogos Beck y Bauman y de la psicoanalista junguiana Kulkarni, entre otros, retomamos la teoría junguiana sobre la homosexualidad, la naturaleza no patológica de la homoafectividad y registramos que nada es más obstrutivo al desarrollo que la persistencia en un estado inconsciente. Asimismo, planteamos que el enlace entre la psique y el impacto, que se influyen recíprocamente, pone de manifiesto las varias visiones de la individuación y enfatiza la cuestión de la liberación en el proceso de individuación.

Descriptores

Complejo, homosexualidad, individuación (psicología).

Introduction

What to expect from this paper? We will talk about stiletto heels: the stiletto heels of Patti. Patti's stiletto heels. And we will do so by looking at the reflections of the German sociologist Ulrich Beck, the psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Swiss C. G. Jung, and thanks to the approach proposed by psychosocial studies. In conclusion, to clarify what is proposed, I will also use a clinical case.

Let's start with Patti's stiletto heels. The first Patti I want to talk to you about. Who is Patti? Or rather, who was Patti? Patti was not Patti. In fact, Patti's real name was not Patti. Patti, in terms of identity, was Marino. Both Patti and Marino were my mother's best friends, born in 1950 and raised in a small town west of Milan.

Patti (born Marino) was born in a male body and soon realized that she was not interested in playing soccer or with toy soldiers and engaging in war games. Patti, born Marino, preferred spending afternoons playing with dolls, especially my mother's dolls. Then, a few years later, in preadolescence, she preferred spending afternoons trying my mother's nail polishes and, secretly, even her mother's. I repeat: and secretly even her mother's.

Because in those years, one had to hide if, for example:

- a woman found herself loving another woman
- a man found himself loving another man
- a person acknowledged that their corporeality did not correspond to their gender identity and therefore nurtured fantasies related to transition.

In this regard, the case of Pier Pasolini Pasolini (whose hundredth birthday we celebrate in 2023) is striking. Just like his need to love at night. Far from everyone.

Yes, because in those years, one had to hide if, for example (as emphasized by Jungian psychoanalyst Claudette Kulkarni (1997, p. 22):

a woman who finds herself loving another woman is often responding to a deep psychological instinct to act, despite internal conflict or external opposition, and that this is a significant movement in the service of personal and collective individuation and a movement towards understanding oneself.

Yes, because in those years, one had to hide if we consider that it was only in 1973 that the American Psychiatric Association (APA, 1973) removed the diagnosis of "homosexuality" from its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM, 1973).

But let's go back to Patti, born Marino. Why am I talking about Patti and her story, which came to me (and thus to you) through my mother? I talk about Patti because I met her in the early eighties when I was five or six years old. And I clearly remember our meeting. I remember a woman with a chignon and some

facial hair (because her transition, for various reasons - especially economic ones - was only partial). I remember her warmth and kindness.

Only after her death - and when I was already a teenager - did I understand that Patti was not born a woman and that her real name was Marino. And so I decided to ask my mother some questions, and she told me a lot about her life and answered almost all of my questions, except one. She couldn't answer when I asked if Patti had died peacefully.

I wanted to bring you Patti's story to pay tribute to her. And applaud her courage. The courage not to hide! And because - in my opinion - she was not fully allowed - as Claudette Kulkarni (1997) says - to love who (by nature) she wanted to love. She was not allowed to love another person (of any gender) and thus respond to a deep psychological instinct to act, despite internal conflict or external opposition.

Before talking about another Patty, in this case, a heterosexual man who ends up queer, I would like to look at what sociology has theorized since the 1990.

Zygmunt Bauman (2000) theorized liquid society. Giddens (1991) emphasized self-reflexivity. American Psychiatric Association [APA] (1980) proposed that we have become homo optionis. But none of the three managed to describe Patti's suffering, and even before that, Marino's.

Bauman (2000) is well known for his theory of liquidity. In "Liquid Modernity" (2000), Bauman emphasizes that what unites all forms of modern life "is precisely their fragility, temporariness, vulnerability, and inclination to constant change" (p. 82) So, "being modern" means modernizing - compulsively, obsessively [...] always becoming, avoiding completion, remaining indefinite." For Bauman (2000), the modern person never reaches completion but is rather involved in an endless series of new beginnings. In *Modernity and Self-Identity*, Giddens (1991) argues that people ask themselves "What to do? How to act? Who to be?" p. 70. These are focal questions for all those living in the circumstances of late modernity - and to which, at some level or another, we all respond, both discursively and through everyday social behavior. He then adds (Giddens 1991, p. 54) that "a person's identity is not to be found in behavior, nor - important though this is - in the reactions of others, but in the capacity to keep a particular narrative going. The individual's biography, if it is to maintain regular interaction with others in the day-to-day world, cannot be wholly fictive. It must continually integrate events which occur in the external world and sort them into the ongoing "story" about the self". According to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002, p. 13), "individualization has become the source of the social structure of second modernity itself. Individualization is a concept that describes a structural sociological transformation of social institutions and the individual's relationship with society." Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002, p. 165) argue that we live "in an era where the social order of the nation-state, class, ethnicity/race, and the traditional family is in decline", in an era where "the ethics of self-realization and individual achievement is the most powerful current of modern society. The human being who chooses, decides, shapes, and aspires to be the author of their own life, the creator of an individual identity, is the central character of our

time". In summary, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) argues that individualization means "the human being becomes (in the radicalization of Sartre's meaning) a choice between possibilities, homo optionis. Life, death, gender, corporeality, identity, religion, marriage, parenthood, social bonds - everything is becoming decidable down to the details; once fragmented into options, everything must be decided" (2002, p. 5). This, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) claim, is an experimental life, condemned to activity, where everything is a matter of self-responsibility. It is no coincidence that Mauro Magatti (2018) recently wrote in *Corriere della Sera* titled there is no freedom without responsibility and that Erich Fromm (1941), in this regard, emphasized in "Escape from Freedom" (1941, p. 8) that "Modern man is still anxious and tempted to give his freedom to dictators of all kinds". Mothers, fathers, spouses, leaders, politicians, and so on. Fromm (1941, p. 6) also noted that "If humanity cannot live with the dangers and responsibilities inherent in freedom, it will probably turn to authoritarianism".

Using the words of Magatti and Chiara Giaccardi (2014), if in Western society we have already freed ourselves, what other liberation should we then seek? Why are men not yet free (if they have freed themselves from the political, economic, and spiritual chains that have bound men? (Fromm, 1941). Why are rates of anxiety, depression, and suicide increasing? Mary Watkins (2003) has noted that "it is the capacity for dialogue, not reason, that distinguishes human beings from other living beings. This dialogue takes place with oneself, with others, and with God (Niebuhr, 1955, p. 73) and the capacity for dialogue is a necessary precondition for human liberation, especially from rigid, stereotyped, and one-dimensional limitations." In this view, liberation is based on a paradigm of interdependence, where the liberation of one is intimately connected to the liberation of the other (2003). In this sense, the other can include economic, political, sociocultural, spiritual, and psychological entities (2003). Thus, liberation - in my opinion - is precisely what psychosocial studies seek to investigate.

Jung and homosexuality

Jung (1916/1967, para. 167) writes about a man who contacted him to cure his homosexuality. This man was little more than twenty, of an appearance still completely childish. There is even a touch of girlhood in his appearance and in his way of expressing himself. [...] He is intelligent, with marked intellectual and aesthetic interests [...] his feelings are tender and soft, given to the typical enthusiasms of puberty. There is no trace of adolescent insensitivity. Jung proceeds to diagnose that without a doubt, he is too young for his age, a clear case of arrested development. The patient, telling Jung that he wanted to be cured of his homosexuality (1916/1967, para. 169), added, giving an association to his initial dream, "naturally, I remembered yesterday that I was going to you for a session and that I was in search of a cure" (Jung, 1916/1967, para. 168). In this regard, Jung writes that the patient has simply come to the doctor to be cured of that unpleasant condition, his homosexuality, which is anything but

poetic. For Jung, however, what is not poetic is going to a doctor to be cured, not the young man's homosexuality.

Here, Jung (1916/1967) does not suggest curing the patient of his homosexuality; he wants the patient to develop and mature according to his own nature. In this case, becoming an adult means becoming a person of any gender, responsible, and prepared to face life/society. Prepared means that this man - having clarified his nature, that is, understanding who he is and what he wants - must live his life without expectations and hopes and fulfill his purpose in a society that does not accept homosexuality and considers it a disease to be cured. So, while the patient knocks on Jung's door to be cured, Jung helps him confront and clarify his nature and thus transform into a mature person. Jung helps the patient examine the impact of his nature (homosexuality) on his psyche and his immediate social context, which led him to seek a cure. Jung (1916/1967) adds: the patient had, of course, nothing like an adequate understanding of the treatment he was about to undergo. This is very often the case. Patients enter therapy because of inner pain and may be able to articulate ideas or reasons, but the true reason is often not evident to them when they first enter the analyst's room. It is only through analysis that it will become clear why they came.

For Jung, the initial dream gives the analyst the opportunity to understand his real problem, and in this case, it is not the patient's homosexuality; rather, his lack of separation from his mother and his mother complex have caused his arrested development. Indeed, the patient confirms his closeness to the mother, as is the case with many males. Jung adds (1916/1967, para. 171) by this, we must not understand a particularly good or intense conscious relationship, but something in the nature of a secret and underground bond that expresses itself consciously, perhaps, only in the delayed development of character, that is, in relative infantilism. It is important to emphasize here that Jung is not talking about homosexuality in general; he is only talking about this individual, who appeared immature to him because he was too close to his mother and/or his mother complex. Jung (1916/1967, para. 171) adds the developing personality naturally moves away from such an unconscious infantile bond; for nothing is more obstructive to development than persistence in an unconscious state.

I propose that the link between the psyche and the impact of society, and vice versa, is immense. Thanks to the example that Jung brings us, we first recognize that the patient is too close to his mother and therefore is immature and not separated. This is the psychic aspect. The social impact on the patient is given by the patient's homosexuality in Swiss society of the 20th century where homosexuality was not accepted. So the patient, who is quite adapted (perhaps too adapted and therefore one-sided) to the social reality of his time, seeks therapy to be cured of this, instead of being cured of his real problem: his immaturity and the fact that he has not yet been born. So, as Jung emphasizes, the patient lives in an embryonic state (not separated from his mother and the mother complex) and must separate. Remember this when I present Patty's dream to you.

What, then, is the process of individuation, according to Jung? It is one's identification with the totality of the personality, with the self (Jung, ([1935]/1990, p. 138) and a process "of differentiation, which aims at the development of the individual personality" (Jung, 1921/1971, para. 757). Thus, individuation is a moment when the individual is "a point of intersection or a line of separation, neither conscious nor unconscious, but a bit of both" (1916/1967, para. 507). Furthermore, "individuation is the process in which the patient becomes what he is really" (1946/1966, para. 171).

Following Verena Kast (1993), individuating means becoming (the person you have never been):

- Becoming independent from parents and parental complexes;
- Becoming more competent in relationships;
- Becoming more "whole" (spiritual).

Following James Hillman (1997), individuating means:

- Descending
- Making peace with your biological family
- Finding a place you can call home
- Giving something back to society

From my point of view, beyond what Kast (1993) and Hillman (1997) emphasize, individuation also involves:

- Asking for forgiveness (without being forgiven)
- Regaining integrity

Furthermore, I strongly believe that the psychoanalyst not only helps patients find their own center (as emphasized by Verena Kast, 1993) but, as Mary Watkins (2003) says, accompanies patients towards their own liberation (and is therefore a process of liberation).

I apologize for the inconvenience. It seems there was an error in processing your request. Let me try translating the text for you:

According to Jung (1916/1967, para. 501), the purpose of analysis is to give the patient "adequate knowledge of the methods by which they can maintain contact with the unconscious, and has acquired sufficient psychological understanding to discern the direction of their vital line at the moment". For Jung, analysis means transformation (alchemical), development, and differentiation from the collective, and thus becoming oneself. Analysis as rebirth. And this cannot happen before middle age (cannot happen before 35/40 years) because the individual must grasp the sense of their mortality. Let's also remember this when looking at Patty's clinical case.

Patty: nail polish and stilettos

Patty, a Canadian carpenter living in Berlin (heterosexual defining as queer), is sociologically individualized (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) and well-adapted in liquid society (Bauman, 2000). On one hand, he challenged the certainties of modern life, i.e., the social order of the nation-state, class, gender, ethnicity, and traditional family structure, and struggled for self-realization; simultaneously, however, even unconsciously, she felt trapped in the impasse described by Bauman (2000). During our first session, Patty described a sense of emptiness, feeling stuck, and that her romantic relationships did not last.

From the first meeting – where he showed up in work overalls, pearl-colored nail polish, and women's shoes with heels – it was clear that he was aware of having a problem and was seeking a solution. But what was the problem?

For Jung, the initial dream gives the analyst the opportunity to understand the true problem. Let's look at Patty's initial dream:

"I dreamed that I was in a bar/sandwich shop with three friends. We are in a public setting. Therefore, the issue is collective. I was at the bar ordering a sandwich. What is a sandwich? Fast food. Not a nutritious meal. And, by the way, Patty comments that she never received her sandwich because she was distracted by the arrival of Isis. A woman! When my friend Isis (named after the Egyptian goddess, not the organization) arrived and hugged me, I realized, at that moment, that I was attracted to her, and I gave her a very sensual hug."

Here, two aspects are important:

- (1) The friend is named after the goddess Isis.
- (2) Patty is sexually attracted to her, thus emphasizing the issue of eros (and its impossibility) and the sexualization of the relationship.

Who is Isis, from the perspective of Greek mythology? She is the Goddess of maternity, fertility, life, and magic. Isis protects women and children, heals the sick, and her maternal behavior was invoked in healing spells. Isis, the wife of Osiris - once Seth (jealous of his brother Osiris) hatched a plan to kill him - could not forget him. She searched everywhere until she found him in Byblos and brought his body back to Egypt. Seth discovered it all and tore his brother apart (scattering him far and wide). Then Isis managed to find and reunite the parts of her dead husband's body (only his penis was missing). Using her magical powers, Isis succeeded in making Osiris whole, bound, neither alive nor dead. So, I propose, Isis is the symbol of integration. She is the Soul that allows integration and transformation: thus liberation!

What does Patty need to integrate to compensate for the emptiness she reported in the first session?

She told me she went to school in "Chatt." She said it was the kind of school where all the boys always wore orange and white clothes and had cow-licked hair. I ask her what she meant by cow-licked hair, even though I already knew,

and she points, furtively, to a person sitting in front of the bar counter. Then Isis goes behind the counter and, along with all the waiters, points to the guy. Patty says she doesn't feel comfortable in a uniform environment and prefers a queer one. This needs to be listened to and respected. But is there more to her wearing stilettos and nail polish? I take the opportunity to ask her what queer means. She replies: experimentation. Then she adds: I don't agree with the binary imposition of culture. If I like a pair of women's shoes, I wear them.

Isis was curled up on the couch with completely different clothing and glasses that she only wore in the evening; she seemed very tired. We move to a private setting: from the public (bar) to the private (home). I ask Patty to tell me more about Isis, and she tells me about a woman very different from the one represented in the dream. She says Isis is very sociable (organizer of fantastic parties), had an open relationship with her boyfriend, and led a very libertine life. Then she adds that she recently left her boyfriend and is now with a woman and is monogamous.

What do Isis's glasses help to see? The transition from the public context to the private one.

I tried to take a photo thinking she was cute, and she shyly put her hands on her face and then burst out telling me not to take a photo when she looked so ugly. So I put away the phone and sat on her lap.

Appreciation, shame, inferiority, and anger are the emotions that refer to this part of the dream. So Patty puts away the phone (the symbol of mediated relationships) and sits on the lap (the symbol of the relationship with the mother, of protection and (re)generation) of Isis.

I ask him what comes to mind, specifically about this last image: the lap. He remains silent for a long time (prolonged silence - as Jung explained to us - is an indicator of the activation of an unconscious complex), and then he makes a joke that has nothing to do with what we are saying and that sounds a lot like exorcism. As if to defend himself!

So what comes to mind is what he told me during the first session: 'I have not had traumatic experiences in my life' - and then, when he told me, a few sessions later - 'My mom died of uterine cancer when I was two years old.'

I think that lap, in English, means knees, but also womb. Maternal womb. The womb of the mother he has no memory of. Then, following my intuition, I ask him what comes to mind when thinking about painted nails. He answers without blinking beauty. After a few seconds, I ask him why the choice of pearl color (as nail polish). He tells me, still without blinking (as if he were not the one speaking), that it was his mother's favorite color.

Contrary to Jung's patient, Patty does not confirm her closeness to her mother (in words) but does so with a dream, with nail polish and stilettos. Thus confirming her lack of separation from her mother and her maternal complex.

Patty - in the dream we analyzed and through the friend Isis (who acts as a symbol for integration and the Goddess of motherhood - has the need to return

to the womb. Returning to the womb is necessary, and, perhaps, will allow her rebirth. Regenerate as generating oneself! Before this, however, one must go through the need for integration: integrating the mother she has never truly known. Only in this way can Patty separate from her and truly be born. This will be possible only when she manages not to succumb to the temptation of sexual sublimation (sexual attraction to Isis) and self-destructive drifts (it is worth remembering Patty/Marino's alcoholism) brought about by the reference to Isis as the Goddess but the terrorist organisation.

The emptiness that Patty referred to during our first session is therefore necessary. Unpleasant but necessary. The emptiness allows us to understand that her immaturity is related to the fact that she has not yet been born, to the fact that Patty lives in an embryonic state (not separated from her mother and subdued by the maternal complex) and must separate. Patty is like Osiris, a mummy without a penis: neither alive nor dead.

Therefore, Patty must differentiate and have as her primary goal the development of her individual personality. To date, Patty is not differentiated, but thanks to the dream we have analyzed, we can recognize psychological undifferentiation and - from an aesthetic point of view - pseudo-maternal integration, sanctioned by the use of pearl-colored nail polish and stilettos.

Here, as with Jung's patient, it is not about curing her homosexuality or queerness and therefore the need for conformity to society (as the Frankfurt School believed), but about revealing a secret and underground bond that is consciously expressed in wearing nail polish and heels and unconsciously expressed through this dream.

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