

Art and madness as the threshold for another history

Erica Franceschini*
Tania Mara Galli Fonseca

*Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Psicologia Social e Institucional.
Porto Alegre, RS, Brasil*

Abstract: We intend to problematize art and madness. We begin by discussing the experience of the researcher in relation to images of the world, to witnessing and to the image of the insane, and then inevitably to the *outside* they evoke. Subsequently, we stand before a wall, a limit situation in which madness as catastrophe and art as poetics compose a threshold, an absence which Blanchot transposes to language to bring other possible constellations into view, both as words and as their unnamable others. Finally, with Walter Benjamin, we touch upon the grain of the history of madness – immersed in the Writing Workshop at the São Pedro Psychiatric Hospital, in Porto Alegre, Brazil, we reveal that, in relation to madness, art can become the essential language of the perilous passage towards experience, transposing the experience of this horrific state to bring another sense to the world, recognizing other modes of existence which may come to be other poetics of life.

Keywords: art, madness, threshold, history, language.

It is about art and madness. And searching for the correct words for the unnamable, this time through the margins, the thresholds, the dark that insists upon making us fail when we want to give a voice to the existential catastrophe. Words and images occupy our perceptive and sensitive baggage, resonating in our body as chords or tolls to transform it into a passage, suspending us in the choice of saying, but still ensuring us that we will not be able to completely reveal that which looks at us. Always arriving, like a constant misunderstanding, the images produced by the Creativity Workshop of the São Pedro Psychiatric Hospital – SPPH, in Porto Alegre, the place where we carried out our research. They pile up in large stacks of brown paper in which they are stored, waiting for our touch. We touch them like someone who is blind, feeling them while trembling, our throat stutters when we want to express them without using common language, outside of their physical framing and phenomenal appearance. With them, we find the image of the anybody, the anonymous person who produced them, who, whether dead or alive, is marked by the scientific powers that named him a madman: mad and infamous, the shame of men in his radical alterity, an inhabitant of the other side of the world which is considered normal and civilized. However, this madman – who is considered impotent, mute and with no social/productive utility – puts himself in front of us with his work of language, a work which is impossible to interpret and translate using the canons of reason and good aesthetical norms. It is not about fine art, it is more about what we can call the expression of that which leaps from the

depths like a scream, a whisper, maybe a stutter. Nothing is easy to understand. We cannot hurry when cataloguing and interpreting the maddened signs painted with the hues of the paints, threads and writing pens. It is a work that suspends judgement, this is what it is about, for here the *ethos* of the translator is delicate, with deviations, details and insignificances. Our own vibrating body becomes threshold and imagination in these readings and moments of contemplation. We are positioned in the kairological moment as a two-faced Janus, with a face turned to the past and the other to the future, the densification of an intensive time which transports us to many possible directions, dividing itself into streams that reach others, constituting an agglutination of waters or even a constellation of stars that connect through their proximity and especially through their particular and intertwined meanings. Here, the meaning of each one, each thing, each element is created by the interferences of a group, of a collective negotiation of expression, of passages from one to the other, and not by demarcations aimed at the fixedness of a substantial identity. The plane of the image of the works we study shows itself to be reverberating, it absorbs what is close to us like something strange and distant, its presence becomes far-off, even though we are right in front of it. Presence and absence, light and dark, day and night, appearing and disappearing, everything that was part of an existence joins in what is and also the demands of what could have been when we placed ourselves in this *outside* that is the place of madness. To say that the madman is *outside* of himself means recognizing his functioning and relationship with the world, based on his Outside of himself, on what shatters good sense and common sense, which makes him distance himself from an I, because

* Corresponding address: ericafranceschini@hotmail.com

there are wild, impersonal and disruptive forces speaking inside the madman, and their manifestation in the exterior condemns him to live apart from what is called social life. If not isolated, like in asylums from the old times, he is still condemned to live without the trust of the other, exiled on the other side, prohibited from going through the doors – of family rooms and public squares – because he is confined to the limit between man and non-man, between man and animal. Since he is forbidden to go through, the madman, even if he moves, finds himself squeezed in the dark corner of morality and the mental asylum that is inside us. Thus, to find imaginative expressions and the thought that can be extracted from them in the Creativity Workshop of the SPPH and in its collection implies a transgression of the common manifestations of madness and those afflicted by it. We search for these profanations in the collection of images of madness, since we consider them to be the witness of a different story of madness, narrated this time by the madmen themselves, and maybe, with any luck, introduced into the social fabric by us, their precarious translators. It is from this place, and with this belief, that we carry out our search for the lost time. Here, belief means clarifying that it is not a pitiful and conformed attitude. Believing, in the words of Zourabichvili (2005, p. 1311), is “not wanting to follow, to paraphrase, to repeat a discourse that was not produced by us. Belief becomes a synonym of doing”. To become inseparable from the saying, changing the practice of language, outlined by the belief that the images we see do not refer to metaphors that “represent what they wanted to say”, but that instead express their own meaning, that have power in the presentation of things, being produced from the singularities that are inherent to a life. If we think that an image is not a reference to the visible, and that it does not offer itself to us except through what looks at us, always in a sidelong and furtive glance, in order to constitute a dialogue between art and madness we need to highlight this connectivity that unites both domains, to place ourselves in this in-between, this threshold, this *outside* that is inside, this belief that takes our eyes not to the heights of the transcendences of the models of man and healing, but that that is located in the ground of the experience, an experience – created in the relationship with what we see – with the threshold experience, as opposed to the frontier experience, since in it the IS of the identity that becomes an AND of a possible becoming. It is an operation in which the being is extinguished to benefit the relationship and the becoming. An experience which is always clear, for it escapes the cliché of the representations of the collection, always looking for the invisible, the unsayable, the unforgettable of the beings of the world. A world which is always mirrored, always between its actual forms and its virtualities, a world unfolded into multiplicities of meaning, destroyed and constructed at the same time, filled with forces of strangeness, enigmatic, which cannot be reduced to a name of identity. The actual-virtual duality that is covered with a certain way of looking “is primitive and irreducible”, says Zourabichvili (2005,

p. 1318), and its search is the endless and insistent work that has to be done in the name of the belief in a future world.

Facing the wall

In spite of everything, the wall. The piled-up concrete blocks, the difficulty of the diagnostics, medical records and prescriptions are revealed as files that indicate the catastrophic depth produced by madness. A catastrophe that passes the mass and divides the look to find the skin: in the trembling hands, the sieve of the decomposing time. We can only face the wall if we are open to its discontinuity: when facing the history of madness, we are launched to the *outside*, to the exterior of the exterior, a disaster that lays on the paradox of death: as a catastrophe and as poetics.

In this confluence of madness of catastrophe and art through poetics, we arrive close to a limit: by entering the wall, we can see the lives, which are imprisoned in the forgetfulness of its *inside*, live so that at some point they put culture and thought at stake, for they tried to recover a language that is their own. For Foucault (1964/1995), the mad-artists Nietzsche, Artaud and Van Gogh welcome madness and provide it with an expression that rises above the Western world.

As an expression of its invisibility, madness starts to leak through the wall, as contemplating it is not sufficient. It wants to spread out from its territory, lose its body in the cosmic dust of the world. Then, it is our glance that becomes sidelong, as to get close to the decomposition and to the irremediable fracture that leads to the darkness of this state of being is to recognize what is unsustainable in ourselves, what cannot be said and not even forgotten. The discomfort, as pointed out by Suely Rolnik (1995), presents itself in the moment we experience the turbulences of the invisible caused by differences. Difference and chaos, like the mud on the wall, move the particles that enable another plane to break through: when touching the ground, the *outside* produces the wild and vertiginous plane of the forces, in which the consolation of the forms and the tranquilizing organization of the world are not accumulated. Thus, we recognize that in the subjects who are considered mad there is a difference that is said to be radical (Fonseca & Brites, 2012, p. 18), a difference that ruins them and at the same time transforms them, always in a state of becoming.

By diving into the fog of the becoming, the hard territories and the concrete walls are abandoned, establishing an experience in the paradox of death as a possibility to say and silence what is imminent to the disaster as the unthinkable of the world. However, this state that silently leads us to the dreaded absence does not position the presence on the other side of the wall, but instead it mixes itself with it everywhere, until it is no longer possible to define what belongs to absence and what belongs to presence. In this game, the paradoxes constitute the scenario, and their strength “lined in the fact that they are not contradictory, but they make us watch the genesis of contradiction” (Deleuze, 1974, p. 77). Setting fire to the wall would be a necessary action, a form of artistic

expression that would allow madness to disappear from the opposition between the exterior and interior, the normal and pathological, in order for it to appear as a threshold experience.

In the arson, we are all suspects. The suspect (Blanchot, 2007) is the image of that who is and who is not – criminal – and that experiences this threshold, a non-place, such as the present absence of language that talks about itself, inside itself, distancing itself from the world. Thus, it frees the expression of its regulation and forces its transgression, bringing to the surface the fine line between the mad and what he is not. “What then is madness, in its most general but most concrete form, to the person who from the start refuses all possibilities of knowledge acting over him/her? Nothing else, for sure, except for the absence of work” (Foucault, 2006, p. 156).

In the absence of work and the wall, what is left for us is to question the being, creating tension in the being of literature and the being of madness, in which the frontiers are ignored: between one and the other, the disaster that foreshadows the creation of another (im) possibility. Something that speaks from this emptiness as an uncommon experience, an emblematic mystery of death, and death as the power of writing. Holes that subvert logic, questioning the inapprehensible in us: in the domain of art, is there an outlet for the language of madness? What is madness and what is not? A madman or a poet? As Foucault (Motta, 2002, p. 188) says, “where does the work end, where does the madness begin?”. A limited situation that mobilizes us to maintain the wall on fire as a way to bring attention to the critical dimension, so that we can unravel a different history, different ways to exist. Way-madness, artists-madmen, who live in art to save themselves. To survive, in spite of it all.

The death of the word

In the hope of surviving, we hold the fragile and transparent thread of this experience, open to the violence which is intrinsic to the act of thinking, which brings life to something that does not yet exist. The analysis of the relationship between madness and art is an imperative work in the contemporary world, for in it we always find excesses: excess of information, excess of images and filled spaces, which do not allow failure or emptiness, even when it does not move, for the race is always against time, i.e., in favor of the capitalist clock. Remains and holes find a hiding place both in madness and art, and its relationship goes against a life destined for a certain destination. It is the bleeding of a life that reinvents the act of dying. Then, let us start with death.

Dying is a misunderstanding of life. A rawness of the language that did not find its full comprehension and that points to absence in order to wait. And losing the time and gaining the disorder of Beckett (2003, p. 93): “monstrous silences, great lapses of time, nothing perfect, rereading old notes spending time beginning of the murmur

your last day lucky devil being here what good am I for”. Beckett does not offer his language to intellect and order, he does not seem to think about what he says, but says it anyway, being incapable of answering what good is he for in the end. After all, his text is a piece of machinery, and his language is the resource of forgetfulness.

Do we write so as not to be forgotten, or so that we do not forget ourselves? If we understand that writing does not occur at first sight, and that this operation is accomplished while it is being carried out, it is with forgetfulness that we will have an adventure in undecipherable territories of words and phrasal lapses, territories in which both poets and madmen lay their bodies, for they let themselves sail the waters where both the seduction of the track and the danger of absence float. Thus, it is always with the game of *appearing-disappearing* that language makes the mistake of forgetting.

Through the margins, art and madness are written. Through the third margin, which is far-off, the unthinkable spreads itself on the edge of the abyss, and the abyss, such as the burned wall, gets closer to the inexplicable margin of being. There, facing the foggy landscape of emptiness and absence, death comes as a cutting wind to whisper its chance and its delay. For death is the landscape that always existed in us and always will exist. A landscape which insists in language, where the power of the endless dying would not reveal it, without revealing the being as well: “*el arte no conoce un tipo particular de realidad – taja sobre el conocimiento. Es el acontecer mismo de oscurecimiento, um atardecer, una invasión de sombra*” (Levinas, 2001, p. 46), but by interrogating its failure, in which there would be a possibility of dispersion.

Since it witnesses the disperse, madness in the shadow of art leads again to an imperceptible relationship between the “Other” who lost his reason, imposing an essential loneliness in the face of the deadly abyss. The blurred eyes of the unlivable death, experienced by the *Homo Sacer* (Agamben, 2002) when he receives legal and holy interdictions. It is the loneliness of a life that has no value, as it is destined for the death that the *Homo Sacer* will carry out in the desert of indetermination and anonymity to find a contradiction in the impossibility of not being able to have his life sacrificed, for it is holy and impure. Thus, the *Homo Sacer* is deprived of any right, since he has a holy life which at the same time lacks value, he opens it to the death that cannot be sacrificed, staying in the threshold. Lastly, Agamben calls *naked life* the new political subject of modernity that constitutes a type of *income* (fundamental to financial conditions). “The fundamental income of the sovereign power is the production of the *naked life* as the original political element and as the threshold of the connection between nature and culture, *zoé* and *bíos*” (Agamben, 2002, p. 187).

In order to not define himself as dead or alive, the *Homo Sacer* creates a gap, a hiatus in his meaningless existence which makes him occupy the non-place that disconnects him abruptly from society through the

exclusion offered by camps for refugees and exiled individuals. A similar experience to that of the *Homo Sacer* is the experience had by the madman who, at the beginning of the Classical Age, is confined within the walls of the asylum, juxtaposing the prison of the subject with the prison of thought, since “madness becomes a condition of impossibility of thought” (Machado, 2005, p. 29), reducing itself to its total silencing. While madness is characterized as Unreason in the context of the Great Confinement, in the Modern experience it – madness – will be characterized as a mental illness, which subjects it to a cure, for man in a state of madness is seen as “a foreign with respect to himself, Alienated” according to Foucault (1964/1995, p. 535). Thus, if in the Modern experience art should represent reality, Lima and Pelbart (2007) emphasize that the relationship of art produced by the madman was understood as an expression of his mental state, and therefore as a symptom. Psychodiagnostics based on visual productions were common in psychiatric institutions.

The leap of the contemporary will be to move the artistic production as a representation toward art as a possibility of an intensive and fragmentary experiment, which is not only aimed at the remission of symptoms, but also at the production of creative processes. With this openness, there would be a transgression of unquestionable truths and certainties, creating a pretentious tension that wants to overcome the frontiers imposed between madness and reason, instituting art and reinstating language between both. As a result, aesthetical expression will be possible in the threshold of this impossibility – between the life and death of the *Homo Sacer*, the threshold experience of the being of language.

In this passage of *appearing-disappearing*, a different experience of the world begins: an experience which welcomes the tragic of the world by recognizing the presence of madness in its sinuous absence. A blurry relationship with “the other of all the worlds” (Blanchot, 2011), in which words present themselves – and do not represent themselves – in order to be felt and experienced (Levy, 2011). Hence, a world under the permanent threat of Nietzsche’s *tragic experience* would be a world in which art could surpass reason, representing madness in its structure, for art is also a non-rational experience since it admits in its discourse the deadly negativity of the tragic in Nietzsche, as said by Foucault in *History of Madness* (1964/1995).

The adventure of the outside

We lend rhythms to the world; we gather pieces and compose portraits in movement. In the fog, it is our own writing of the world that makes itself a small moving mystery. At the same time, the track creates a zone of inscription which disappears and fades away, passing by our eyes as vertigo. At first sight, we deal with a certain destruction of language that reveals its power in its capacity to create and found fleeting worlds, a fake evidence that introduces a distance between us and things. What pulsates

is the absence in which creation weaves its fringes. “The world brushes aside the object: “I say: one flower!” and I do not have a flower in front of my eyes, neither an image of a flower, nor a memory of a flower, but the absence of the flower” (Blanchot, 2011, p. 42).

To speak is to be attracted by signs. In linguistic discourses about reference, it is said that the world is composed of signs, and that each sign glues itself to an object, giving it meaning and fixing the word to the thing. However, if we consider the incident described above in which Blanchot says “one flower!”, we cannot accept this reductionist definition of language, since Blanchot transforms the thing for the word. It is the erosion that pulverizes the word until it falls into the gap, until it loses itself in the poetic wandering that ruins it and elevates itself to the last power that Deleuze defines as signs of art: “the signs of art are the only that are immaterial” (Deleuze, 2006, p. 36). The immaterial, that shoots blasts of possible meanings, enables paradoxes to compose a world, without the need to recreate it.

To walk through this other world, wandering off from the spectacle to rest in an alley or to transform the spectacle into an alley. The *flâneur* that wanders through the city to “flirt” with the world is the image of the walker who dissolves into the materiality of the crowd, and that at the same time feels the immaterial loneliness that torments him. By chance, it is the search for losing oneself; the experience of Baudelaire in the city and in poetry.

“Nature is but a dictionary” To properly understand the full meaning implied in this statement, one should keep in mind the many ordinary uses of the dictionary. In it one seeks the meaning of words, . . . in short, one extracts from it all the elements that compose a sentence and a narrative; but no one has ever considered the dictionary as a composition, in the poetic sense of the word. Painters who obey their imagination seek in the dictionary the elements which suit their conception, yet, in adapting these elements with a certain art, they give them an altogether new physiognomy. Those who lack imagination copy the dictionary. (Baudelaire, 1995, p. 887)

From the dictionaries of mundane meanings to the streets dissolved by the acoustic interstices of art, the experience of the *flâneur* gains laughter that erupts in madness. Such as the walker, the madman has the city at his disposal: in it, the crowd that inhabits him and the desert that he travels over. Madness is always a virgin to the pre-established path, rejecting geographical maps, refusing guides, choosing the way of transgression as the dangerous freedom that enables its creationist inscription. It is where art is placed on the edge of the abyss, and Bataille (1943) affirms the need to establish a *violence* against the language, as an essential crisis that would cause the emergence of a possible poetic inspiration. To the

author, there is a fallacy in the presence of the work, and it only expresses a brief *event*, never a totality. This violence that works firstly against itself accomplishes an operation that overflows the stratified, taking both art and madness into an adventure that extracts the subject from himself so he can inhabit the *outside*, the place to which Blanchot attributed literary practice.

Suddenly, the *flâneur* is ravaged by a storm. Drenched by the violence, he launches himself to the *outside* of what seems common and familiar to him, depriving himself of his own self to meet other everyday images. When he is capable of looking through the gray cloud, he realizes that he is no longer facing mundane signs, but instead has reached the unthinkable signs of art. Since he is on the *outside*, he meets madness and enables with it the deviation that brings out the rawness of the art glued to solitude. The *outside* is wild, it is animal. It is *The Dog* (1821-1823) of Goya (1746-1828): in the work that portrays quicksand, a dog has his head just on the outside, as if it were waiting for someone to save it, but it only finds its own loneliness and imminent death. The dog occupies one per cent of the entire painting, and the work that has no familiar objects is par excellence composed of loneliness, emptiness and absence: “never before has an artist adventured himself into such a radical renunciation to portray loneliness” (Hagen & Hagen, 2004, p. 75).



Figure 1. The Dog, 1820-1823. Oil on canvas, 131.5 x 79.3 cm
Source: Prado Museum, Madrid.

A portrait *outside* that acts on loneliness, and death transposes madness as a threshold, as the diverging margins of the corners. Before, it is the tragic existence diluted into the paints that makes the dog stay on the surface, even if the sand impels him to death. In the margins, Foucault

will name madness as the “absence of work” (1964/1995), an *outside* which is inside the work, which to rise up in the quicksand – the surface – needs to ruin it without destroying it. Thus, it dialogues with absence, in which silence is also talking, causing a collapse through the rubble. While madness is ruin, language is the (insufficient) attempt to re-erect this ruin, acting immediately in the fissure that deforms language. An outline imbibed with Bataille’s violence, which, by interrupting our glance, dissolves language and madness, loses itself in the crowd so as to, diluted in both, become another body. Floating now in the empty space, words also become things, bodies, sounds, and the sentences glide through a plane that belongs much more to rubble than to the statements, much more to fragments than to completion.

An excursion of the language in which madness touches poetry: to rescue in the word the sensitive dimension of thing, gesture and sound matter (Leminski, 1987/2009). Making the blood flow when the vein is perforated is to be able to free the word from the body that imprisons it, gaining the *outside*, that which announces the power of the nothing. A twist of the *appearing-disappearing* game that keeps the body in this threshold of the emptied but pulsating vein. The hole that remains is the movement of *désœuvrement* – “worklessness” (Blanchot, 2011) where the reality founded by the violence of language becomes an imaginary reality, “the point in which the realization of language *and* its disappearance coincide” (Pelbart, 1989, p. 75). Its fatality is the project that reaches what is most tragic about the language in the Nietzsche sense, for it welcomes at the same time reason and delirium in its own experience.

In the fog of indiscernibility, it is the tragic that explodes as an erupting volcano. The lava that floods the world carrying all matter, whether it is animate, inanimate, animal or human. Amidst the fire, the signs that made objects fixed gain mobility, shaking truths which were already instituted (Levy, 2011), taken with themselves in the volcanic flow the being of language, which is impersonal and undetermined since it is muddled up. In the meeting with the *outside*, art lapses into an indiscrete space in which madness reinvents itself, where the artist-madman and the language-work make themselves simultaneously, creating another world with what exists in this world. Like flesh and bone, through the skin, *outside* of it.

I have shit in my eyes
I have shit in my heart
God disappears progressively
laughs
radiates light
darkens the sky
the sky sings give the head to death the sky sings
the thunder sings
sunshine sings
the eyes with secretions
silence mixed with the shit within the heart.
(Bataille, 1970-1992, p. 61)

Writing workshop: brushing madness the wrong way

Even before we can fear the abyss, the fibers of the cliffs are already unraveling. Even before we can close the curtain, the body has already been positioned over the surface of the window. To see the world and for it to see us, we need to experience it. And when the eyes find it, it escapes once again:

Let us open our eyes to experience what we do not see, what we will no longer see – or even better, to experience that what we do not see with all the evidence (the visible evidence) that however looks at us like a work (a visual work) of loss. (Didi-Huberman, 2010, p. 34)

It is with this look which is fleeting, since it is emptied, that we experience art in the space of the asylum, to transform mundane banality into the unlimited expression of the being.

The first scene the eyes capture is a volume: a group of pavilions at the end of an extensive green garden. This group is called the São Pedro Psychiatric Hospital, located in the city of Porto Alegre (RS, Brazil).



Figure 2. São Pedro Psychiatric Hospital, 1922.

Source: Hospitais Estaduais¹

Then, the second scene: the glance that comes back is your *outside*, a small space which composes itself, constantly fades away and then started to be called *Writing Workshop*. The second scene then composes a new writing, for in the context of the experience it wants to enable us to see other possible widths for the meeting between art and madness, such as the unexpectedness of a word that has not been written, a future book that insists on the *violence* of the language that interrupts the stare by diluting all types of matter between our fingers, whether material or immaterial.

¹ Available from <http://hospitaisestaduais.blogspot.com.br/p/hpsp.html>



Figure 3. Creativity Workshop of São Pedro Psychiatric Hospital.

Source: Luiz Eduardo Robinson Achutti

Circulating on the *outside*, on this threshold in which the word refers to the being of language, the participants of the *Workshop* unstick themselves from the peeling walls of exclusion, control and imprisonment, another possible world, another form of existence for lives that breathe painfully. Writing as catching air, which pushes each body to the edge of the abyss of the unpredictable, is its own disaster: when the blank page is received, the body that loses its form explodes: “literature is on the side of the formless, or of the unfinished” (Deleuze, 2011, p. 11). Since they breathe and become something else, it is not only madmen who write, neither delirious writers, but, without trying to define them, they could be considered *unwriters* of lives, stories, languages.

Erratic lines announce the deviation of the *unwriter* who wants to bring the expression of his delirium to the surface, composing with it the tragic that enables him to write. And *unwriting*, for when suspended in this *non-place* workshop, he starts caring about the insignificances of daily life, simply because the channel to the *outside* was left open, to this stranger who finds it strange. On Wednesday afternoons, the group of the *Writing Workshop* meets to eat popcorn and drink coffee (a lot of coffee), but also to write poetry, dogs, walls, recipes for the flu, chairs, rain, death, word, autumn, madness. And for each strange thing, a new story is created.

The *violence* of the *outside*, such as this other who “is precisely the unknown, the foreigner, the exiled, the wanderer” (Levy, 2011, p. 42), screams for the writing to reveal another possible history, transcends the past toward an unthinkable future, so that this *outside*, which is already inside, can survive in the present. Hence, the writing of the *Workshop* follows that which Walter Benjamin proposes: “History should be brushed the wrong way” (Benjamin, 1987, p. 225). To brush history is to touch each hair that composes the hair structure, knowing that it will never be possible to penetrate the entire hair. An attentive brush that is sensitive to movements understands that the process never ends, that even after it is brushed, the hair keeps acting, living, tangling up again and becoming disheveled as soon as the wind touches it.



Figure 4. Art and madness in the Creativity Workshop.

Source: Luiz Eduardo Robinson Achutti

In the history of the world, madness was disheveled. Enclosed within the gates of the asylum, the excesses did not allow the impossibility of death to drain out, neither the strong absence which made it experience its own threshold by inventing another place and a smaller language. In the *Workshop*, writing worked as the brush that aims to question the dominant narrative of the experts, in order to – based on this emerging language – provide another texture to the thread, opening up to the production of a new history

of madness. The gesture would cause language to lose itself once again, in an endless movement of *unwriting*, such as the weaving and unweaving of Penelope, who inserts in the epic narrative of Homer an element of disorder, uncertainties and fugacity – this *appearing-disappearing* of statements and visibilities to discover that “there is something visible that can only be seen, something enunciable that can only be said” (Deleuze, 2005, p. 74).

Then, what can madness do with art? Art does not rise up like a way to recover mental health – it may be one of its effects – but it widens the cone so the traffic becomes free to the flows. An *unwriter* does not search for the word to express his disease, but instead the *infinite* of his being that *unwrites*. Hence, in its relationship with madness, art may become the essential language in the dangerous crossing toward the experience, transposing the experience of this terrifying state, to bring to the world a familiar meaning, recognizing delirium as another form of experience. Then, it may become the poetics of life, such as Manoel de Barros (2001) did when he affirmed that all that can be disputed by spitting from a distance can become poetry.

Transforming life, poetry or a work of art, not by imitation, but as a mode: mode-Nietzsche, mode-Arnaud, mode-mad. To dig these ways inside oneself in order to take over the world is to realize the intensity of discovering the unrecoverable of writing in the present, such as that which wants to write and which can be written in the *Workshop*, in the text. In the present, and when facing the paper, the surface of the senses and of expression would become flattened, narrowing life and death as intrinsic processes, while madness and art gain another image in a moment that could go by unnoticed, but that waits since it became an experience. Through “a gesture of interruption and suspension” (Gagnebin, 2014, p. 242), a constellation of possibilities is gained. Singular expressions which derive from the time in the abyss of this *outside* and that, by opening through art, produce new images of itself and of the world, surviving images. *Unwritings*.

Arte e loucura como limiar para outra história

Resumo: Pretendemos problematizar arte e loucura, inicialmente discutindo a experiência do pesquisador em relação às imagens do mundo, com o testemunho e a figura do louco e, conseqüentemente, com o *fora* que ela evoca. Em seguida nos colocamos diante do muro, situação-limite na qual a loucura enquanto catástrofe e a arte enquanto via poética vêm compor um limiar, ausência que Blanchot transpõe à linguagem para dar a ver outras constelações possíveis, tanto de palavras quanto de seus inomináveis. Por fim, com Walter Benjamin, pomos a história da loucura a contrapelo, e, mergulhados no Ateliê de Escrita do Hospital Psiquiátrico São Pedro, desvelamos que a arte pode, na relação com a loucura, tornar-se a linguagem essencial na perigosa travessia em direção à experiência, transpondo a vivência desse estado assustador para trazer ao mundo outro sentido, reconhecendo outros modos de existência que podem vir a ser outras poéticas de vida.

Palavras-chave: arte, loucura, limiar, história, linguagem.

Art et folie comme le seuil pour autre histoire

Résumé: Nous désirons problématiser l'art et la folie, initialement en discutant l'expérience du chercheur par rapport aux images du monde, avec le témoignage et l'image du fou, et, par conséquent, l'*extérieur* qu'elle évoque. Puis, on se pose devant le mur, situation extrême dans laquelle la folie comme catastrophe et l'art comme voie poétique composent un seuil viennent à construire un seuil, absence que Blanchot transpose en langage afin de révéler d'autres constellations possibles tant comme des mots, tant comme ses innombrables. Enfin, avec Walter Benjamin, nous prenons l'histoire de la folie à contre-poil, et plongés dans l'Atelier d'écriture de l'Hôpital psychiatrique de São Pedro, à Porto Alegre au Brésil, nous révélons que l'art, par rapport à la folie, peut devenir le langage essentiel de la traversée dangereuse vers l'expérience, en transposant le vécu de cet état terrifiant, afin de donner un autre sens au monde, tout en reconnaissant d'autres modes d'existence qui pourraient devenir d'autres poétiques de vie.

Mots-clés: art, folie, seuil, histoire, langage.

Arte y locura como el umbral para otra historia

Resumen: Nuestra intención es de problematizar el arte y la locura, inicialmente discutiendo la experiencia del investigador en relación con las imágenes del mundo, el testimonio y la figura del loco, y por lo tanto con el *afuera* que ella evoca. Seguidamente, nos ponemos delante de un muro, una situación extrema en la que la locura como catástrofe y el arte como vía poética componen un umbral, una ausencia que Blanchot transpone en lenguaje para revelar las otras constelaciones posibles tanto como palabras, tanto como innombrables otros. Por último, con Walter Benjamin, ponemos la historia de la locura a contra pelo, y sumergidos en el Taller de escritura del Hospital Psiquiátrico São Pedro de Porto Alegre, Brasil, desvelamos que, en relación con la locura, el arte puede convertirse en el lenguaje esencial de ese peligroso pasaje que nos conduce a la experiencia, que transpone lo vivido en este estado aterrador para dar otro sentido al mundo, reconociendo otros modos de existencia que pueden llegar a ser otras poéticas de vida.

Palabras clave: arte, locura, umbral, historia, lenguaje.

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