

Original articles

## **Specificity of the Projective Field: reveries and transformative potentialities**

Tiziana Sola

Clinical Psychologist, Psychotherapist psychoanalytically oriented, President Association EIDEA (Associazione per lo studio e la ricerca clinica in psicopatologia), Professor at Faculty of Psychology, University of Chieti, Italy.

Email Corresponding author: [tizianso@libero.it](mailto:tizianso@libero.it)

### Abstract

This article suggests a reading of the projectives in Bionian key, with particular reference to the bionian elaboration by Antonino Ferro, who substantially considers the patient's associative flows as forms of the oneiric. The projective situation also represents a place of induction to reverie, in resonance with the concept of projective field, the peculiarity of which lie in the introduction of the element "third", i.e. the test material.

Keywords: Projective methods - Projective field – induction to reverie – activity of symbolization.

### Introduction

The practice of the Projective Methods converge into a multiplicity of approaches and knowledge induced not only by the fact that a dynamic concept of human nature imposes the need to think about the individual in terms of complexity, as Edgar Morin recalls, (1990), but also and especially for the implicit potentialities in founding mechanisms of the Projectives, which, more than tests in the psychometric sense, represent the real clinical evidence (Lagache, 1969), to mate necessarily inside a testeur/testé relationship of productive inevitable implications of transference and counter-transference.

Inscribed in that perspective, this article suggests a reading of the projectives in Bionian key (Bion, 1962, 1970) with particular reference to the bionian elaboration by Antonino

Ferro, who substantially considers the patient's associative flows as forms of the oneiric (Bezoari and Ferro, 1997. Ferro, 2002, 2006).

The projective situation also represents a place of induction to reverie, in resonance with the concept of projective field, the peculiarity of which lie in the introduction of the element "third", i.e. the test material. In this way the projective field can be portrayed as a space for "play", in the winnicottian sense, that consists of the encounter between the person who offers the test, the subject that accepts to be overseen and a highly evocative material (the cards, the images) that produces representations (the patient's responses), or else contents of metaphorical nature, to be considered in the same way as associative, dreamlike material or as reveries.

The projective act is thus provided, in a meeting ground, a transitional space (Chabert, 1983, 1998) outside which the administration of the test would lose all its exploratory sense. The main function of this encounter is to stimulate the imaginative activity to give course to a process of symbolization (Roman, 2006), induced not only by the material which acts as a mirror of refraction, but also by the empathic climate that develops out of the relationship of the two partners.

### Theoretical hypothesis

It is now known the theatrical metaphor, invoked for the responses to a projective test (Chabert, 1987. Brelet, 1993. Sola, 2001). Conceived as a possible *mise-en-scène* of dramas that the subject addresses to the clinical partner, they also set into motion the apparatus for thinking and the creativity of the latter, who, supported by a rigorous methodology, tries to understand the processes of construction of the thought of the person who performs the test, or, as Antonino Ferro would say, the possibilities "of development of the equipment of the thinking" (Ferro, 2002). Moreover, weaving possible narrative frames derived from the sequences of response of the patient, the clinician can get, of the latter, especially the activity (or the inactivity or the defect) of the processes of transformation.

Now, postulating that the images suggested at the test represent pictograms assimilable to alpha elements, the realization of a response is to be seen as the narrative product (Ferro, 2000, 2002, 2006) of what the Rorschach or T.A.T. sequence of images express in visual terms. Considering more that the images suggested subtend a latent symbolism susceptible to reactivate particular issues (Chabert, 1983, 1998. Brelet-Foulard and Chabert (by), 2003), it is possible to understand how the patient captures and organizes such issues in expressible forms in the Rorschach test or "lisible" narration in the T.A.T test. In summary, this is a work of analysis aimed to capture the nature of the links between the representations and their affective components. Those are aspects, however, of the relationship between container-contained.

### Clinical analysis

As evidence of what I stated, I suggest some productions obtained from the testing of Rorschach and T.A.T. in a patient, trying a reading, in the above-mentioned terms, focused on what is happening in the projective field. I'm trying to highlight how the sequences of response to Rorschach or some of the stories developed with the T.A.T portray a scene of what the patient puts in the *hic et nunc* of the administration, giving an idea of her perception of the present projective scene, represented by her and the clinician:

Wanda, 30 years old, employed

Married, a seven-year-old son

After a first psychic failure, with states of depersonalization and hallucinations, treated with psychoactive drugs, a few years later, she has a new crisis for which she consults a further psychiatrist. The latter sends her to a clinical projectivist psychologist believing that it is necessary a diagnostic study aimed to understand the status of her psychic organization and any possibility of a psychotherapeutic takeover.

The assessment takes place in multiple sittings, necessary for administering the Rorschach and the T.A.T. tests. The meetings are marked by a friendly and collaborative climate for W.'s part, despite the silent and relentless crying that accompanies her throughout the course of the evaluation process.

At Rorschach card I she expresses like this:

L.T.: 7"

Here I can see, but I saw it this morning...the sacrum then I can see a crow

Inv.: for the opening of the wings

Then I can see two figures facing each other

Inv.: love

Then I can see a little monstrosity, two eyes, four eyes, two half mouths and a nose

Inv.: I don't know if they are facing or profiles

The reaction to this first card gives immediately the idea of W.'s difficulty to be placed in a context of imaginative play to produce reveries. She manages to give shape to the image so wobbly, with the production of persecutory contents that gradually turn into an attack on the body integrity. The presence of the clinician and the task which he imposes, seem to cause a disrupting effect that attacks her capacities for thought.

Card II:

L.T.: 5"

The heart (lower red)

The lungs (red top)

A spinning-top (white detail central)

Two eyes, simply (white under the red top)

Here the projective field seems to be attacked by partial objects. The stimulus suggested (card with red) looks so intolerable to cause an explosion of primitive anguishes (beta components). She lacks the tools to think, to translate into a symbolic way (alfa components) the pulsional elements reactivated typically by this card. Both in this card and in the first one, we could say that the stimuli appear too urgent and overdosed as to the capacity of assumption and metabolization of the apparatus of thought.

Card III

L.T.: 2"

Well, a bow (D central)

Some blood, simply (side figures)

(Investigation of limits): I could see two figures, not fully-developed, or rather deformed or rather not defined, I could also see two legs, heeled shoes, boots. Just if I want to see something.

In this typically relational card, W. focuses on a conveying content. She can raise from the previous anguishes but, in front of the pictogram of the two side figures, she melts again in "a lake of blood". In the investigation, the more supporting attitude on the part

of the clinician, allows her to have access to perceptions of human female figures, even though fragmented, with allusions to details of seduction.

These first three cards show the great difficulty of Wanda to enter a space of imaginative play, due to an apparatus of “rudimentary” thought which fails to give well-thought-out shape to emotional perceptions. She captures the feelings evoked by the cards and has emotional resonance with the issues woken up by them, but being impregnated with negative emotions, she cannot translate them into well-thought-out thoughts.

When put in front of the images, she is unable to use them as vehicles of her “dramas”. All her sensorial and emotional baggage remains entangled in beta elements which threaten and sometimes keep the capacity of the container in check. A slight evolution of the projective field and a gradual slight improvement of the capacity of symbolization are however seen in the pastel cards. The colour effect and the sense of sharing perceived by W. as cards followed one another, dampen her projective identifications to give space to a greater imaginative impetus that summons feelings and contents related to the principles of pleasure.

Card VIII:

L.T.:8”

Beautiful colours... eh, a mix of all the other figures (laughs)

A tribal (D above) Inv.: (?) A tattoo

Autumn, some autumn leaves (Orange)

Ah, some animals too, I don't know which kind

Inv.: (?) a lynx

And a little geographic map, a piece of geographical map (green)

Card X:

L.T.: 12”

The last one is nice...

Ah, some light blue corals (laughs), non-standard (side blue) and... I don't know, I get the idea of a world full... of many things

and of the human body, this is the idea it gives me, not that I see something somewhere (black above and pink) Inv.: human skeleton

Inv.: ah, I even see a piece of land and some leaves, you know, as when someone uproots a plant? (top black)

Two lions too

It is a bit like if in all the figures there was this component of radiography, of bones

In card VIII, after the appreciation of colours, aggressive contents appear which may be better represented through mild alfa elements. In the last table we can capture Wanda's curiosity to glimpse “a world full of many things”, expressions of possibility of micro-transformations pervaded however by feelings of fear and loss (“the uprooted plant”) which recall the research of containment and protection. The environment remains however deprived of thickness, of three-dimensionality (Sola, 2006), the internal movement and an expression full of colour as a source of pleasure are lacking: expressions of the fragility of a container that does not tolerate too strong pulsional pressures.

But at the next sitting, in carrying out the T.A.T. test, in developing a story at card 16, the last one, white, after enormous difficulties to weave stories in the previous cards, and

an unstoppable weeping she frees a playful imagination that moves and vivifies unexpectedly the projective field:

“ indeed this white is reassuring, clear, quite... once upon a time there was a crocodile that was running astounded in the forest, touring and touring he finds a companion, a long and big snake and he started to make friends with him and they begin the adventure in the forest, they are touring, touring, touring and at last they share the nice and bad experience of the forest, always cheerfully singing”

In a fairy-like context, as a little girl, she evokes the encounter between two figures that meet and share a sort of explorative expedition in the forest.

Although among “cold-blooded animals”, the transferal evocation and a feeling/desire for a relationship of complicity in which to report “the beautiful and the bad experiences” are clear...

It is a small signal of dissolution, an indication of movement, of narrative and communicative thickness, which, supported by a containing relationship, opens a gleam to the possibility of recovering the memory of her “lost world”. A prototype, perhaps, of what might happen in a prospective psychotherapy?

## References

Bezoari M., Ferro A. (1997). Il sogno all'interno di una teoria del campo, in Gaburri E. (a cura di), *Emozione e interpretazione*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino.

Bion W. R. (1962). *Apprendere dall'esperienza*, tr. it. Armando, Roma 2009.

Bion W. R. (1970). *Attenzione e interpretazione*, tr. it. Armando, Roma 2010.

Brelet F. (1993). On cherche un metteur en scène, *Psychologie française*, 32-3, Sett. 1993.

Brelet-Foulard F., Chabert C. (2003). *Nouveau Manuel du T.A.T. Approche psychanalytique*, Dunod, Paris.

Chabert C. (1983). *Il Rorschach in clinica adulta. Interpretazione psicoanalitica*, tr. it. Hoepli, Milano 1988.

Chabert C. (1987). *La psychopathologie à l'épreuve du Rorschach*, 2eme édition, Dunod Paris 1998.

Chabert C. (1998). *Psyhanalyse et méthodes projectives*, Dunod, Paris.

Ferro A. (2000), *Teoria e tecnica nella supervisione analitica*, Raffaello Cortina, Milano.

Ferro A. (2002). *Fattori di malattia, fattori di guarigione*, Raffaello Cortina, Milano.

Ferro A. (2006). *Tecnica e creatività*, Raffaello Cortina, Milano.

Lagache D. (1969). *L'unité de la psychologie*, PUF, Paris.

Morin E. (1990). *Introduction à la pensée complexe*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris.

Roman P. (2009). *Le Rorschach en clinique de l'enfant et de l'adolescent*, Dunod, Paris.

Sola T. (2001). Una, nessuna o centomila diagnosi, *Supplem. culturale del Boll. dell'Ordine Psicol. Abruzzo*, Marzo Aprile 2001, Anno VI, n. 4.

Sola T. (2006). *L'apporto dei Metodi proiettivi nella psicodiagnosi clinica. Approccio psicodinamico*, Aracne Roma.

Paper presented: Nov 2013; Published online: Dec 2013.

© 2013 by the Author(s); licensee Mediterranean Journal of Clinical Psychology, Messina, Italy. This article is an open access article, licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported License.

Mediterranean Journal of Clinical Psychology, Vol. I, No. 3.

Doi: 10.6092/2282-1619/2013.1.935