



*Figure 1*

**The Patasola: archetypal roots of the feminine identity  
in exile in a Colombian myth**

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## **Prayer to the Patasola**

‘Patasola, Patasola, I am sorry you live alone, but if you dare to attack me, I will cut off your crutches. You’d better go and pack your bags’. (Creepypastas y paranormales/Facebook)

According to oral tradition, when walking through the Colombian Amazon, the verses of this prayer must be repeated as a way of protection. The Patasola (one-legged one) is a hidden, disconnected yet threatening presence. Who is the Patasola? What does this mythological presence represent? How does this prayer for protection emerging from the Colombian cultural collective speak to us?

## **Current situation of violence against women and the feminine in Colombia**

Being a woman in a predominantly Western culture that has been overwhelmingly patriarchal for millennia implies a great challenge for the evolution of feminine consciousness. The current upsurge in violence against women in Colombia is alarming.

According to Corporación Sisma Mujer, in Colombia, every 13 minutes, a woman is assaulted by her partner or ex-partner; every half hour, a woman is a victim of sexual violence; and every four days, a woman is murdered by her partner or ex-partner. In 2016, various types of gender-based violence increased, such as intra-family, sexual

and interpersonal violence and femicide. Femicide is the murder of a woman because she is a woman and 'is usually accompanied by a series of actions of extreme violence and dehumanizing acts, such as torture, mutilation, burns, cruelty, and sexual violence, against women and girls who are victims of it' (<https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feminicidio>). This is due to the normalization of gender-based violence against women, who are dissuaded from reporting the violence they suffer, constituting a social fabric of individual, collective and institutional silences, even transferring the responsibility from the perpetrator to the victim and thus revealing patterns of violence, invisibility, denial, and silence (Corporación Sisma Mujer 2017).

The upsurge of this type of violence is linked to the work of female leaders and human rights defenders who have come out into public life to denounce femicide, and to work for the protection of the rights of girls and women. This type of protective action represents a risk factor for women (ibid.).

Violence of this magnitude informs us about an old collective trauma that not only continues, but which is also escalating. This leads me to ask myself: What are the archetypal roots of the feminine identity that has been left in exile in Colombia? '... archetypal images afford us the best clues to the understanding of the processes going on in the collective psyche. In myths ... we get the basic patterns of the human psyche' (von Franz 1996, p. 1). It is interesting to ask about the archetypal content of the Colombian myth of the Patasola: the story of a woman who ends up transformed into a monster and living in exile.

### **The origin of the Patasola: the first part of the myth**

A beautiful woman was married to a hard-working peasant, who spent his time selling his boss's crops in other towns. The boss, taking advantage of the absence of her husband, flirted with her, while she remained indifferent to his compliments and gifts. The neighbors noticed this activity, and one day, they told the peasant everything. The next morning, the farmer pretended he was leaving to sell the harvest outside the village and waited while hiding near the house. At dusk, he came in suddenly and found the lovers embraced in bed. Filled with rage, the peasant drew his machete and lunged at them. The boss was able to do little, because he died right there; the woman in turn lost a leg with a single machete blow and was left there on her own. From that day on, the Patasola has roamed the villages of Colombia, taking revenge on men.

(Ocampo 1988, p. 38).

### **The feminine in myths**

To speak of the feminine in a myth implies entering a complex and thorny terrain. From the standpoint of analytical psychology and the contra-sexuality raised by Jung, the feminine and the masculine are present in both men and women, both consciously and unconsciously. According to Marie Louise von Franz, whenever there is a female character in a fairy tale – in this case in a myth – it is necessary to consider the psychology of the feminine in two senses: the feminine as essence; and

the feminine in the psychology of the anima of men, that is, the way in which men deal with their own feminine and how they project it onto women (von Franz 1972).

The myth of the Patasola, seems to be created from a male perspective: ‘It is said that this character was invented by jealous men to frighten their unfaithful wives and instil terror’ (mundoyaoi.mforos.com). Next, I intend to carry out a reading of the myth from a feminine perspective, considering the intertwining of the essence of the feminine and the animus.

### **What is this story about?**

#### *Opening of the myth:*

‘A beautiful woman was married to a hard-working peasant, who spent his time selling his boss’s crops in other towns ...’ (Ocampo 1988, p. 38). This opening tells us that the story takes place in the archetypal field (Conforti 2013) of three, whose graphic representation is the triangle. The symbolism of this number is related to the rupture of the immobile balance that can be represented by the couple (Pascual & Serrano 2005) and the one that releases the tension of opposites (Jung 1969); archetypally it represents a perturbation (Conforti 2013) that produces a dynamic change in a previously stable pattern. In the story, we have a beautiful woman, who represents the feminine and the quality of connection, the eros relationship, married to a working peasant, the masculine, who is at the service of his employer, who in turn represents another aspect of the masculine, hierarchically in a position of greater authority and power.

*Development of the myth:*

‘... The boss, taking advantage of the absence of her husband, flirted with her, while she was indifferent to his compliments and gifts ...’ (Ocampo 1988, p. 38). The type of perturbation that is generated as a result of the archetypal field of three consists of the boss’ seduction of the peasant’s wife and her initial indifference. This external masculine attempts to penetrate the *coniunctio* between the feminine and the masculine. The dynamic change between feminine and masculine is set in motion by the appearance of another aspect of the masculine. Within this triangle, there are two different socioeconomic levels linked to positions of power: the external masculine has socioeconomic and labor power over the partner. This shows us a trajectory towards a situation of abuse in terms both of socioeconomic and labor class dominance and of gender, an aspect of power of the masculine both over the feminine and the less powerful masculine. ‘... The neighbors noticed, and one day, they told the peasant everything ...’ (ibid.). The collective is witnessing something that happens between the boss and the peasant’s wife, which thus far is more of an inference than an explicit fact, but about which there are already indications in the story. ‘... The next morning, the farmer pretended he was leaving to sell the harvest outside the village and waited while hiding near the house ...’ (ibid.). The expression ‘the next morning’ psychically points to an awakening of consciousness on the part of the male peasant – the masculine, who has the need to verify the rumors, that is, he is ready to meet and face something that may be a truth. ‘... At dusk, he came in suddenly and found the lovers embraced in bed ...’ (ibid.). This masculine awaits the moment that lowers the threshold of consciousness (dusk) to catch the lovers in the flagrant act and be certain

of the painful truth. The confirmation of the betrayal and the love triangle has been consummated.

*Myth crisis:*

‘... Filled with rage, the peasant drew his machete and lunged at them ...’ (ibid.). The betrayed masculine, possessed by the aggressive and destructive instinct, turns towards the other aspect of the masculine, as well as the feminine with homicidal intention. ‘... The boss was able to do little, for he died there ...’ (ibid.). The betrayed male kills the aspect of the masculine that betrays him, who had a role of power over him. He kills that part of himself that may simply idealise the wealthy boss. ‘... The woman in turn lost a leg with a single machete blow and was left there on her own ...’ (ibid.). The betrayed masculine amputates the feminine dimension and his wounded anima: her eros, her capacity for connection with others, and her capacity to have her own balance and orientation in life. He leaves her secluded in dangerous darkness. The betrayed betrays the feminine with whom he is married, as well as himself, and his anima.

*Lysis of the myth:*

‘... From that day on, the Patasola has roamed the villages of Colombia, taking revenge on men ...’ (ibid.). The feminine, both women and men’s anima, survives by wandering in exile in the collective unconscious activated from the archetypal field of

betrayal. The field of betrayal has been constellated in the three members of the triangle. As a result of the activation of betrayals at different levels, the course taken by the perturbation and the dynamic change in the triangle is a destructive and non-generative one: it ends up in the elimination of the external masculine and the mutilation, torture and exile inflicted on the feminine.

### **The Patasola as a symbol: the second part of the myth**

She is described as “ the most terrible, bloodthirsty and devilish being to ever disturb peasant minds.” This character is considered a sort of beast or monster that has the power to metamorphose at will. The Patasola takes the shape of a beautiful, sensual woman, coveted by all, with a penetrating gaze and an aggressive attitude. She lives surrounded by snakes that resemble lianas, camouflaged in the darkest part of the jungle, watching over men to bewitch them with her gaze, attract them to her, and satisfy their sexual appetites. It is said that she wanders through the heart of the mountains crying plaintively in search of comfort and always deceiving the listener with her, who believes, when hearing the anguished voices, that she is a person lost in the woods and naively answers her cries, with which she attracts the victim and devours him fiercely.

(<http://mundoyaoi.mforos.com/873520/8985113-mitos-colombianos-leanlo-es-mounstroso/>)



When observing the images, we can see that there is an evolution in the way the Patasola has been represented, from an expression predominantly associated with the plant world, through an expression strongly associated with the animal world, and finally, a version that tends to approach the human world, but without becoming fully human. According to Kalf and Neumann, the animal-plant symbolism that arises from the psyche is an expression of the earliest phases of the development of consciousness (Turner 2005). This fact tells us that feminine identity in this myth appears more as something between plant and animal, and less as human, being thus closer to the collective unconscious. The recovery of the human traits of the character is an indicator of the closeness to the personal unconscious and to consciousness. Nevertheless, the character never fully recovers her human condition.

## Psychic anatomy of the Patasola



*Figure 2*

### *Mutilation of a leg by the husband*

Being left with only one leg implies losing the bipedal nature that is typically human. Symbolically, psychologically and archetypally, the amputation of a leg means a castration of the capacity for self-affirmation, balance, and orientation in life. The

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fact that it is the husband who amputates her leg illustrates how both the external masculine, with whom the woman is related, as well as her unconscious masculine dimension (animus), from the psychological and symbolic point of view, are the ones that inflict this castrating and destructive action. This is an example of how women have internalized their own oppression of the feminine, in that in the myth the oppression not only comes from outside but also from herself (Wehr 1987).

The frequent use of objects of aggression with the quality of cutting, mutilating or amputating, in the present violence against women in Colombia, corresponds to the same type of weapon used in the myth of the Patasola – the machete, a broad, sharp weapon. This reiteration indicates that the use of this object of aggression has become a pattern. The injury suffered by the peasant woman in the myth has the characteristics of a femicide.

### *A single cow leg and hoof*

In addition to lacking a leg, the only leg left to the Patasola turns into a cow's leg, as her foot turns into a hoof. The fact that she has a hoof leg is characteristic of four-legged animals, and being a cow, a digitigrade animal, tells us that she is not even able to walk with the entire sole of her foot on the ground. She walks as if tiptoeing. Psychologically, not having feet, but rather only one hoof, not being able to stand on the soles of her feet or to have full contact with the ground, implies not being rooted, not having one's own firm position in the world. Both the stability and the direction

or orientation of one's life are severely compromised.

When referring to the symbolism of the shoe, Marie-Louise von Franz says that it represents one's own point of view or attitude towards reality, and there is a connection with the power complex because 'one "puts one's foot down"' when one wants to affirm power (von Franz 1995, pp. 24). Based on this symbolism, the mutilation of the leg-foot of the peasant woman, which turns her into the Patasola, allows us to relate this myth to the amputation of the power of the feminine.



*Figure 3*

### *Elongated arms*

In the animal world, gorillas, orangutans, chimpanzees and bonobos have elongated arms and use them to grasp the branches of trees for movement, to support themselves on the ground, and to balance their two legs, while their hands have a mainly supportive function.

Elongated arms imply a regression of bipedalism, which results in less efficient locomotion; decreases one's field of vision; prevents the transportation of objects and offspring; and represent a setback in the hand-brain coordination. The elongated arms of the Patasola imply a regression from a human to an animal stage. Psychologically, the elongated arms of the Patasola imply a restriction in her ability to move in life, to see and become aware, and to see the world more widely, as well as its possibilities of creation that are given by the hands.



*Figure 4*

*Claws instead of hands*

The claws are long and sharp nails, typical of predators. They help hunt the prey, with a precise and firm grip. Given the meaning of predation, we see how the fact that the Patasola has claws, and therefore, predator traits, tells us how her form of interaction occurs through hunting as the only way to survive. The claws of the Patasola indicate a regression, an involution to a primitive stage of animal, erotic and power impulses, which are more connected with the unconscious, which entails the loss of the essence of the feminine that awakens the spiritual and mystical life and allows the birth to a more evolved life. On a symbolic level, the hands turning into claws implies a loss in the execution of actions as well as the properly human 'authority, power, and strength' (Cirlot 2014, p. 304).



*Figure 5*

*Sharp fangs and teeth, a bloodsucking vampire*

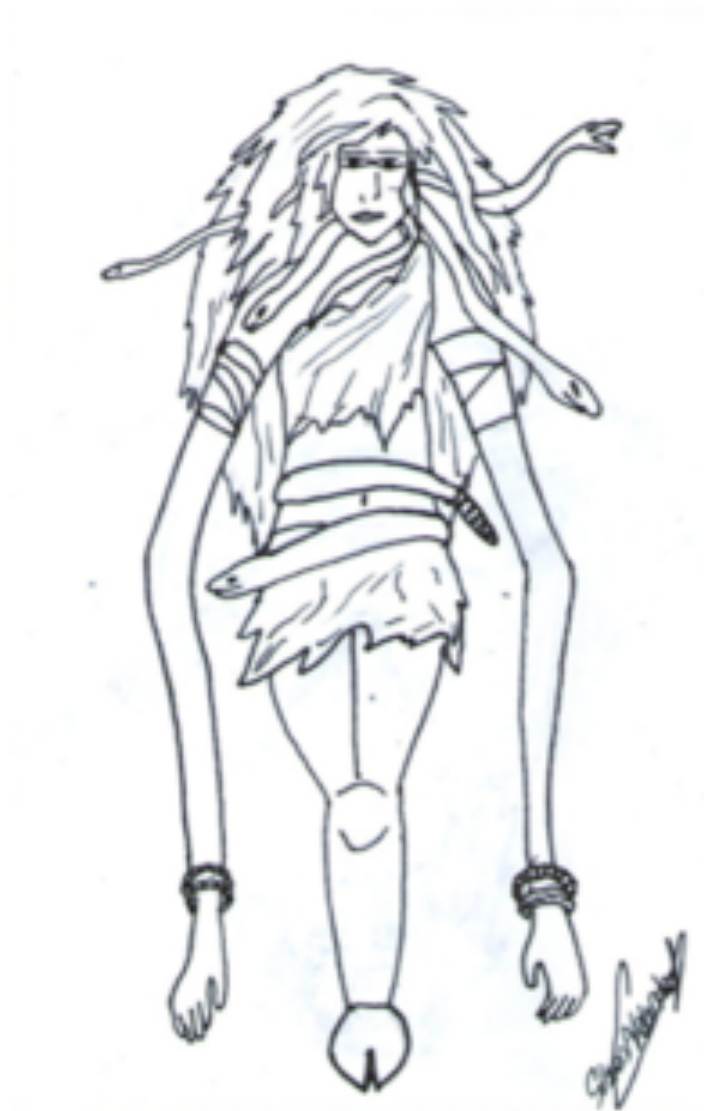
Sharp fangs and teeth are typical of predators. Similarly, it is a vampiric trait, associated with a creature that feeds on the vital essence of other living beings—usually in the form of blood. In symbolic and psychological terms, predatory and vampiric traits reveal to us a form of interaction of control and domination, of dependence and independence. Whoever sucks blood or takes the energy of another is benefiting at the expense of that other, and that implies both a state of control and dependency, as well as the devouring character of the terrible mother that is projected on others and with which the Patasola is associated. Another inherent trait of the vampire is related to the phenomenon of trauma: ‘Some have compared the vampire to the “hungry ghost”, the revenant of unmetabolized deprivation and trauma, which obsesses us, keeping us out of life’ (Ronnberg & Martin 2010, p. 700). The vampire represents the psychic dimension of the return of the repressed, which returns in the dark again and again without reaching the light of consciousness, keeping us alienated from life. In that sense the vampire is a symbol of the complex.

*Snakes in her hair: the Colombian Medusa*

The matted or snake hair is a direct evocation of the Gorgon or the Medusa. The Medusa is the result of a curse. Athena condemns Medusa by turning her hair into



snakes and giving her eyes a glow with the power to turn everyone that looks at her into stone. The Patasola is said to be ‘a horrible woman with eyes of fire’ (Ocampo 1988, p. 242). ‘The Gorgon is a power of terror, associated with fear, defeat and haunting that can freeze one’s heart’ (Villalobos 2008, p. 51). These characteristics are exactly the same as those we see in the story of the Patasola: She is ‘malefic, of great ferocity, similar to the Furies’ (Ocampo 1988, p. 241).



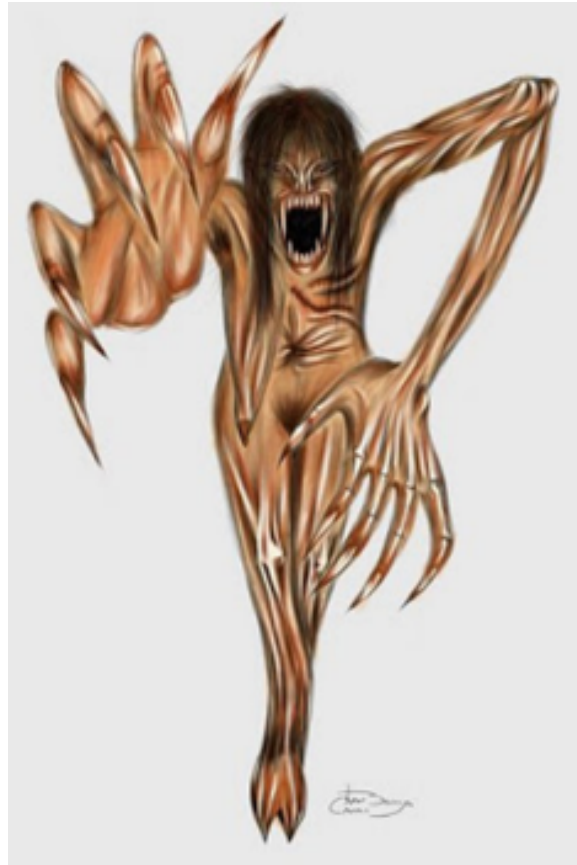
*Figure 6*



*Transmogrification<sup>1</sup> of the feminine*

‘A being in a myth or fairytale is generally condemned to assume an animal form or to be an ugly old woman’ (von Franz 1990, p. 7) as the result of a curse or a spell. This is the case of the Patasola. A spell, a possession psychologically speaking, indicates that there is a vanishing of the ego. That is to say that, in the relationship between the ego and the unconscious, this myth shows us that the feminine has been fully devoured by the unconscious, the ego has been eclipsed by the action of an archetypal complex of the undervaluation of the feminine that sometimes has its roots in its opposite pole: the fear of the power of the feminine.

In Colombian culture, the myth of the Patasola represents an invasion into the consciousness of the archetypal image of the feminine in a very primitive, regressive and bestial state, to the point that it is impossible to look at her directly because her figure is paralyzing and annihilating.



*Figure 7*

*A single breast of the Patasola and a bone in her hand*

We are facing a second type of mutilation or amputation. In this case, it is an eminently feminine, erotic and nourishing part of the body. It may well be the anatomical symbol of a relationship. The amputation of a breast from the Patasola psychologically represents the mutilated aspect of the female eros, of its connection and relationship with others, as well as its nurturing or life-giving function. She is destined to be left wandering in solitude in the jungles and mountains of Colombia, and any type of connection or contact that she establishes is destructive or deadly. Should someone attempt to get close to her, she will scare them off or

devour them. In the images in which the Patasola appears with only one breast, she has a bone in her hand, as evidence of the trace of the ingested flesh, indicating her devouring quality.



*Figure 8*

*Wandering in the jungles of Colombia*

The myth tells us that the Patasola ‘was taken’ to the middle of the jungle. Abandoned, to die slowly and to pay for her infidelity. The fact that the Patasola lives in the jungle is the product of punishment. This fact of being left alone in the middle of the jungle produces terror. It is a response that is congruent with the situation. The forest or the jungle symbolize the dangerous aspect of the unconscious (Cirlot 2014). On the psychic plane, it means that it ‘is “outside” the inhabited precincts of consciousness’ (Ronnberg & Martin 2010, p. 118). This wandering in the jungles of Colombia, in psychological terms in our collective unconscious, speaks to us of the pattern of silencing of women and the feminine. Nevertheless, the collective psyche does not stop expressing and representing its truths through symbols<sup>2</sup>, in this case in the myth of Patasola, which is a denunciation of the patterns of invisibility of women and the feminine, as it is in Colombian culture.

**The archetypal field of the Patasola**

The monstrosity of the Patasola puts us in the archetypal field of terror that arises as a result of trauma. The Patasola has been inflicted with a terrible wound: she has been mutilated, turned into a monster, dehumanized, and relegated to living in exile. When a human being has lived through an experience of this type, what can happen to their psyche? What emotions and behaviors are generated in response? Pain and

deep anger are coherent responses to such torture.

A conversation between Michael Conforti, Ph.D. and Richard Tarnas, Ph.D. (22 January, 2018) regarding the archetypal and the numinous, made me think that what makes the Patasola so mythical and archetypal is the horror we feel when we see her. She is full of numinous energy. She invites us to enter another domain, in a field where great collective suffering is housed, where the possession of perversity, evil, pride, selfishness, the thirst for dominion and power, greed, revenge and violence prevail (Villalobos 2008). Being in this field is virtually a direct invitation to a descent into the underworld.

In this myth, it is the woman, the feminine, who becomes the receptacle and container of all these low instincts that the collective – and, particularly, the patriarchal culture – is not able to assume or bring to consciousness, thus automatically projecting it onto this feminine figure.

The myth of the Patasola tells us about that part of every human being, especially women and the feminine, which has undergone two profound transformations. On the one hand, she has been tremendously hurt and rejected, expressing the deep anger that arises in response to such violent attacks, particularly the amputation of self-management, power, independence, mobility, creativity, and a dignified and visible place in the collective and in the consciousness of a nation. On the other hand, she has been the one who carries all the projections of fear, terror and anger that others cannot assume for themselves.

## **The peasant woman and the Patasola: a double face of the woman and the feminine**

The peasant woman in the myth is a woman who undergoes a kind of splitting when she becomes the target of multiple projections and turns into the Patasola. She becomes virtually the opposite of herself. From being the most beautiful and irresistibly attractive woman, she almost automatically becomes a monstrous and bloodthirsty being. This tells us about how we are moving in the field of projections. We are not seeing the human being in front of us, but rather two polarized aspects of the feminine. This phenomenon reveals the great dissociation of the feminine in Colombian culture and shows the high level of cultural resistance that exists for women and the feminine to acquire a level of consciousness that allows them to be human.

What happens between these two poles? Exploring what leads to love betrayal in myth can help us look at the more human experience of woman and the feminine. There are no sources that tell us more specifically why the peasant woman ends up accepting and responding to the patron's flirtations. Other versions of the myth say that it was the peasant woman who seduced the boss. Faced with this situation, it is only possible to generate established hypotheses in relation to archetypal aspects that allow us to delve into feminine and animus psychology. Thus, we can see at least four possible hypotheses. First: the peasant woman is abused by the boss; second: the peasant woman ends up in the affair with the boss from an ambivalent position; third: the peasant woman engages in the affair of her own free will, although not very

consciously; fourth: the peasant woman is the one who seduces the boss by her own decision, and based on the psychology of men's anima, this seduction is a projection of the masculine over the feminine. Irrespective of the scenario and the reason why the woman ended up in the affair with the boss, the result is the same: the transmogrification of the feminine, that is, the transformation of the feminine into the monstrous.

### **The potential for redemption in the myth of the Patasola**

The dismemberment of a peasant woman's leg is the result of a wound inflicted as a consequence of an act of revenge. Psychologically and symbolically, it speaks to us of a process in the Colombian collective psyche of fragmentation, separation, dissolution of an attitude of self-affirmation about reality and amputation of the power of women, of the feminine.

Dismemberment has the potential 'which may lead to differentiation and renewal' (Ronnberg & Martin 2010, p. 766). Nevertheless, the myth of the Patasola itself does not give us any indication of a transition to a phase of differentiation or renewal. On the contrary, it suggests that the Patasola remains wandering in the Colombian jungles and forests, that is, she is condemned to exile in the collective unconscious.

When reviewing the prayer to the Patasola that I mentioned in the beginning, we can see that it is an invocation that seeks to repeat the same dynamic of the myth, that is, it reproduces the state of isolation, disconnection, aggression, mutilation, and exile.

We could say that, in psychic terms, this sentence represents a defense mechanism that prevents contact with this part of the psyche, prevents bringing it to consciousness and de-potentiating its energy, and thus prevents alignment with a more generative pattern.

The prayer is also a reflection of the fracturing of the attitude of self-affirmation and power of women and of the feminine, present not only in the myth of the Patasola, but also in Colombian reality. What the myth does make clear to us is that, for there to be something in the order of redemption, the first thing that is needed is that, as a society, men and women can become aware of the exile of female identity and of the degree of dismemberment it undergoes with respect to the rest of the psyche. Only after this awareness has been achieved can we begin to speak of some kind of redemption.

The road to bringing the message present in the myth of the Patasola to consciousness is still long, from an archetypal perspective and from a feminine perspective. Only then can our collective open itself to disturbances that can break the spell and the possession by which we have been collectively held, carry out a defrosting process, and leave the state of paralysis that both trauma and possession have generated in us.

The redemption of the feminine will occur to the extent that women can: first, become aware of the trauma, of how we are both possessed and aligned to the masculine by idealizing it and to the feminine by devaluing it; second, to the extent that we can bring to light both our dark dimension of destruction and self-destruction, as well as



that of courage, empowerment, connection, self- autonomy, strength, and creativity. Men, in turn, need to become aware of how they are possessed by instincts of violence and abuse of power; to identify, process and retrace their dark, violent and dehumanizing projections onto women and in their anima; and to recognize and integrate the dimension of value, power, connection, and creativity of the feminine, and align with it in a generative manner.

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