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Anabela da Silva Moura - Instituto Politécnico de Viana do Castelo
Carlos Almeida - Instituto Politécnico de Viana do Castelo
Maria Helena Vieira, Universidade do Minho, Portugal
Joana Padrão - Instituto Politécnico de Viana do Castelo

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Carlos Almeida, Instituto Politécnico de Viana do Castelo, Portugal

Maria Helena Vieira, Universidade do Minho, Portugal

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Escola Superior de Educação do Instituto Politécnico de Viana do Castelo

Avenida Capitão Gaspar de Castro, apt.513 4901-908 Viana do Castelo Portugal

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Marta Pereira*Instituto Politécnico de Viana do Castelo
misabelpereira@ese.ipv.pt***Abstract**

From an early age, melancholy was understood as a harmful state to both body and mind. A sweet deadly web that would condemn its bearer to a dragging, dormant, aching experience. Melancholy was pointed as the cause of sadness, which irreparably would bring harmful consequences to its bearers. These, the epithet “the damned,” were accompanied by depression, painful reflection, the warm pain of a sweet poison.

From the Greek μέλας-melas, black and χολή - cholé, bile, black bile, melancholy promised little to life but a drag of the physical body. And the mind, it would be wandering between vagueness and oblivion of the pleasures of life. But what if melancholy is a space? A place of comfort for sentimental expression, for the pain of love, for the dry tear of the morning? What if, contrary to the norms of common sense, the poetic subject seeks this space, where she lives and wants to suffer, and which, in a way, she promotes? Is it possible to revisit the concept of melancholy as a sought place/space?

This is our proposal, having as object of study the poetry of Maria do Rosário Pedreira.

The poet's verses reveal a deep complicity between the poetic, feminine subject and melancholy. Moreover, it proves to be a desired place to, in consciousness, rest from an affliction of the soul. It is in this space that one finds oneself in solitude interspersed with brief stays of love. Deceived is the improvident who feels regret for the woman the poet portrays - there is evidence of pain, but there is also evidence that melancholy is the sentimental space that serves her. In MRP, the woman doesn't cry for anything except for a space where she feels complete after being lost. So be it, melancholy.

Keywords: space; melancholy; loss; refuge.

For Hippocrates, melancholy was a disease. In fact, the apathy suffered by the melancholics was, for the Greek in the second century, a malady that harmed both body and mind. This black bile, one of the four body humours, was expressed through persistent sadness, often for no apparent reason. The Hippocratic Humour Theory argued that health depended on the balance between four humours: blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile, proceeding respectively from the heart, respiratory system, liver and spleen. Each of these moods would have different qualities: thus the blood would be hot and humid, the phlegm cold and wet, the yellow bile hot and dry; and the black bile, cold and dry. According to the natural predominance of one of these moods in the constitution of individuals, the different physiological types would be shaped: sanguineous, phlegmatic, bilious or melancholic. Therefore, the moods generated behaviors: in the Choleric predominated the yellow bile so they were usually represented by a sword, in the sanguineous

prevailed the blood, considered sexually hyperactive, in the Phlegmatic the phlegm, calm and rational, not emotional and often represented reading, and in melancholics predominated the black bile, related to melancholy and often represented by people lying down in a depressive state.

When Aristotle referred to melancholy, he argued that all exceptional men were in some way melancholic. "He [Aristotle] refers to the transient imbalance *regarding the* quantity or quality of the black bile, which in this case tends, by heating, to overexcitation always close to madness. In the case of melancholic by natural temperament (or complexion) there is a greater stability of manifestations." (Carvalho, 2005:46).

Centuries later, particularly with the Renaissance revisit of the classical world, melancholy becomes an essential presence in artistic currents, claiming for itself a space of a sentimental forum. And it pleads in the same way the right to sadness, to sentimental self-flagellation, a fixed gaze on the melancholy of the days, a depression that promotes an emotional feverish state. There is then an assumed search for a sentimental space that enriches the soul by suffering. This was only possible because syndicating voices joined in claiming for the right to pain. Lyric poetry was a perfect ambassador in the construction and establishment of a relationship between the lyric poetic subject and the reader, the privileged listener of an emotive confession. In fact, the poetic subject reveals her feelings, the direct cause of an affliction of the soul, thus receiving the reader a faithful image, almost photocopying the frames of the interiority of the former. At first glance, the relationship seems to give more than receiving, for the confessor is stripped. Almost defenseless, the poetic self seems to have no shield for the assassination attempts that love can be responsible for in a human life. But far from the world of innocence, those who suffer in this way and express themselves in lyric poetry have a strong desire to reveal, show and confess.

For Martin Midekke and Christina Wald, sharers of the Aristotelian trail related to human exceptionality, it is important to say the following: "In 350 BC, melancholia is understood as an epiphenomenon of, or even, a prerequisite for, outstanding cultural and political achievement, and deep philosophical insight....it has frequently been understood as a painful condition which opens up an avenue to deeper insight, judiciousness and to creativity." (Middeke e Wald, 2011:1).

The authors add that, namely in literature, melancholy is accompanied by a sense of loss, an uncontrollable desire to want more, as if in response to a sense of lack of love, or the ability to love, in a context of loss of self esteem and self respect. (Middeke and Wald, 2011:3-4)

For the lyrical poetic subject, this tumult of loss is a place where she feels safe. She Knows it, searches for it, wants it. There she recovers, in a complex whirlwind of affection, to be lost soon

after. She does not seek for calmness, serenity, routine. It would be too painful. Rather, she seeks for a pain which understands and comforts, in words sung with emotion, while seeking for the other.

To dive in Maria do Rosário Pedreira is to touch the sea salt, the privileged place of the melancholy of departure, from the eyes of those who quietly sit on the shore watching the abandonment guessed in the early hours of dawn. It is contacting with a melancholic confessional tone, which tells of abandonment, loneliness, waiting, absence. A discontinuous mourning that ends whenever he returns. In the current poetic panorama, the author's work manifests different characteristics. The editor that finally gained courage to publish her own verses, writes as if outdated in time. She reinvents the place of love without idealizing the female figure and without mystifying the male presence. In her own words the poems are born from "the experience of loss", that eventually creates a strong unity in her poetic work. That fearless and hopeless cohesion is the author's geniality. The loving lyricism that runs through the verses is far from feminist writing, yet the poetic woman is not a victim. She is not passive. She is not reckless. She loves. The poetic subject courageously assumes the desertion of the other in an open letter to the auditorium, in which she confesses her vulnerability lying on a cold bed, where the body has been left to cool. Following the nightly union, and for such a short time - using human life as measurement- the two bodies unite, and then an eternal sacrifice of love, conscious and expected, follows. Veins and breasts line, knowing in passive awareness that tomorrow the sea will have soaked the touches and the promises, and that the other has been oblivious to it in whispered words. And the fingers run down the creek and murmurs. And the lips touch the story heard and suffered, which states to an attentive knowledge of the world: he is no longer.

And unlike Sheherazade, female narrator of a thousand and one stories told at night, to the delight of a man, thus postponing her death, the woman in Maria do Rosário Pedreira accelerates hers. She wants to die of abandonment. Because to die of abandonment means she hopelessly had to live of pleasure. And living in pleasure means she has shared time with him. This is the source of the strength that holds loneliness: love was made, but now only felt by one, in hours or moments that she will keep in the memory of affections, to shout in rustling words the corrosive evidence of loving alone.

Painful, stone-weight, the subject of female abandonment is however, presented without false shyness. The nightly malady, paradoxically so desired and longed for, seems certain. And the liturgy of lovers is poured into the bed, an accomplice witness to the surrender. Beatitude is not

invited to the table of charms because at night freedom is gained in full hands. But in the morning, the geography of the bodies departs.

It is from this macabre dance, where she twirls as female around an extinguished blaze, that is asserted a total mercy and even a conscious and eternal forgiveness to the departed. And likewise, regarding this vicious cycle that occupies night and morning there are always two certainties. Love existed and was made overnight. In conscience. And that in the morning, the forgiven loneliness is the only company of those who stay behind, looking at the sea. In conscience. And in total solitude because in Maria do Rosário Pedreira, there is no other consequence. From the union no pure and chaste offspring is born at any time. Surely it would not be born of a sin, but it would be born of abandonment. And in a cyclical and temporal passion, the hours are intensely of both. Thus, the relationship, from the offspring's point of view, will be sterile. The first concern will be to ensure every minute before him leaving, and not a primary will to ensure succession.

When contextualizing in the literary and referential space the poem “Foi sempre tão incerto o caminho até ti-The path towards you has always been so uncertain”, by Maria do Rosário Pedreira, which belongs to chapter II Os nomes interditos-The Banned Names, from the book Nenhum Nome Depois-No Name Later, it becomes clear the message contained in the titles and subtitles, regarding the sentimental landscape of the poetic self: In the Past there was a union between two bodies. Tortuous and helpless. That is why the name of the loved one is forbidden to speak (in fact, there are no names in Maria do Rosário Pedreira's poetics, which is a characteristic of the author), as it is also forbidden for the heart to love again. No name will happen on the lover's chest because she has definitely sealed it.¹

The poem begins with a declarative sentence that informs or states that the uncertainty of her love was the only certain fact. Walking to him and fulfilling love was fickle and unstable. The adverb “always” does not come by mistake: it means that at no time was the relationship peaceful and reciprocal; The immediately following adverb, “so”, tells us about the size and totality of the lack of certainty. Both adverbs produce a semantic field of dimension and continuity, was it not for the presence of a prefix that negates the adjective “certain”: “the path towards you has always been so uncertain;”

The first and second stanza are dedicated to describing the difficulty of the relationship, winding path, condemned before it even existed. The lexicon is harsh in presenting nouns that refer to an idea of pain such as "stones", "thorns", "wounds" and "journey", and deeply visual verbs like

¹ A retroversão dos títulos dos livros, dos títulos dos poemas, e destes últimos é da responsabilidade da autora do artigo

"tearing" or "shouting". The use of a comparison in the first stanza, which involves the presence of a fork, is figurative enough about the tearing of the flesh to which this love obliges. There is a third party warning in the 4th verse of the 1st stanza about the lie that surrounds the gaze of the one she loves. And as the female self confesses, her heart was deaf to these warnings, for she had already begun the wrong way of approaching: "... this little that was all to reach you".

"The longing for the other, the attempt to stop the exodus of love and to stop the sentimental nomadism is, after all, her unhappiness. The causes of her personal tragedy." (Mexia, 2012:9)

The harsh reality emerges in the 4th stanza, when the poetic subject, still in the hangover of a bodily moment, decides to be on the lookout, veiling her love during the hours given to sleep and assuming a deeply maternal posture. Smiling the most beautiful smile while watching, she notices that he softly calls two or three times in the middle of sleep. But no name is hers.

The confidence that she is placed in the bottom of a list of women is not meant for the listener or reader to take sides. Never is this demanded, nor war declared to the lover. The revelation exists in itself, and pain falls asleep when he wakes up. In Maria do Rosário Pedreira there is no desire for justice, nor the existence of a pride that at least requires separation or revenge. On the contrary, the understanding of the relationship is clear. She knows she has little time at his disposal. That he will inevitably depart. That she will obsessively wait for him.

"The woman is a mother, a sister, a suffering lover at every moment, afraid that he will fall asleep, that he will leave. She both expects the man to return as she hopes the following woman to be good to him. And this desperate tenderness for a past love feeds "sad songs" as sad as those, baleful, which we call "fados"." (Mexia, 2012:11).

Foi sempre tão incerto o caminho até ti:
tantos meses de pedras e de espinhos, de
maus presságios, de ramos que rasgavam a
carne como forquilhas, de vozes que me
diziam que não valia a pena continuar, que
o teu olhar era já uma mentira; e o meu

coração sempre tão surdo para tudo isso,
sempre a gritar outra coisa mais alto para
que as pernas não pudessem recordar as
suas feridas, para que os pés ignorassem
as penas da viagem e avançassem todos
os dias mais um pouco, esse pouco
que era tudo para te alcançar. Foi por isso que,

ao contrário de ti, não quis dormir nessa
noite: os teus beijos ainda estavam todos

na minha boca e o desenho das tuas mãos
na minha pele. Eu sabia que adormecer

era deixar de sentir, e não queria perder os
teus gestos no meu corpo um segundo que
fosse. Então sentei-me na cama a ver-te
dormir, e sorri como nunca sorrira antes
dessa noite, sorri tanto. Mas tu falaste de

repente do meio do teu sono, estendeste o
braço na minha direcção e chamaste baixinho.
Chamaste duas vezes. Ou três. E sempre tão
baixinho. Mas nenhuma foi pelo meu nome.

The path towards you has always been so uncertain:
so many months of stones and thorns, of
bad omens, of branches that tore the
flesh like forks, of voices that
said it was not worth continuing, that
your look was already a lie; and my

heart always so deaf to all that,
always shouting something else louder so
that the legs could not remember
its wounds, so that the feet would ignore
the feathers of the journey and would advance
every day a little more, this little that
was all to reach you. That's why,

unlike you, I didn't want to sleep that
night: your kisses were still all
in my mouth and the drawing of your hands
on my skin. I knew that falling asleep

was to stop feeling, and I didn't want to lose
your gestures in my body one second that
it was. So I sat on the bed watching you
sleep, and smiled like never before
that night, I smiled so much.
But you spoke

suddenly from the middle of your sleep, you reached the
arm towards me and you called softly.
You called twice. Or three. And always so
softly. But none were by my name.

The last verse serves as a liaison to the woman in the poem "Vem ver-me antes que eu morra de amor-Come and see me before I die of love," chapter II of the book O Canto do Vento nos Ciprestes-The Song of the Wind in the Cypress. The whole poem is covered by requests, introductory to the stanzas, which beg the male subject for a visit before the female dies. Love -so felt and so pathological- proves

to be a disease whose relief will come with death. The woman who speaks seems to boast a certain vanity of dying of love, a pride that is reflected in the clarification of a liturgy of the deceased explained through the verses. "... the outcome of a "disease" that is the sum of all insecurities, panics, resentments. (Mexia, 2012:11)."

The bodily senses are important as each one dominates its stanza, in a departure from physical life: if she first hears and sees, the woman in the poem finally feels, while already lying on the ground, abandoning herself to death, in a deadly communion with nature: Clothes and books, the latter so important in the life of the poetic subject, are memories kept from times of union, like the bed where she now lets life escape.

She implores three times: to come for her before she dies of love, before the blood cools and flowers fade, exuberant parallelism to Millais's figure of the fallen, flower-loving lady. She begs him to come at night so that he will not be able to recognize the agony of a corpse face. Her weakness is evidenced in the third stanza, when she no longer has the strength to hold the books in the lap, pillar of a lifetime, and when it is certain that that body will soon fall, with mold advancing on it. Come fast, she implores.

But if the woman in Maria do Rosário Pedreira owns certain characteristics, the same works for the male presence. Harsh, distant, nomadic, unmanageable, he does not answer the calls of the woman, who will die alone. He will not visit nor hold her hand. The man is the cause of the malady, the near death. There is no place for him at head of the bed.

The negative phrase that ends the poem "And you do not come" is of course the crowning certainty that despite the appeals and the arrival of autumn of life, he will definitely not come. It is up to the woman to die alone and smell the scent of fallen leaves.

Vem ver-me antes que eu morra de amor – o sangue
arrefece dentro do meu corpo e as rosas desbotam
nas minhas mãos. Da minha cama ouço a tempestade
nos continentes; e já quis partir, deixar que o vento
levasse a minha mala por aí; fiz planos de correr mundo
para te esquecer – mas nunca abria a porta.

Vem ver-me enquanto não morro, mas vem de noite –
a luz sublinha a agonia de um rosto e quero que me recordes
como eu podia ter sido. Da minha cama vejo o sol
tatuando as costas do meu país; e já sonhei que o perseguia,
que desenhava o teu nome no veludo da areia e sentia
a visa pulsar nessa palavra como um músculo tenso
escondido sob a pele – mas depois acordava e não ia.

Vem ver-me antes que morra, mas vem depressa –
os livros resvalam-me do colo e o bolor avança
sobre a roupa. Da minha cama sinto o perfume das folhas
tombadas nos caminhos. O outono chegou. E o quarto
ficou tão frio de repente. E tu sem vires. Agora
quero deitar-me no tapete de musgo do jardim e ouvir
bater o coração da terra no meu peito. Os vermes
alimentam-se dos sonhos de quem morre. E tu não vens.

Come and see me before I die of love - the blood
cools inside my body and the roses fade
on my hands. From my bed I hear the storm
on the continents; and I already wanted to leave, let the wind
carry my bag around; I made plans to run the world
to forget you - but I would never open the door.

Come and see me while I don't die, but come at night -
the light underlines the agony of a face and I want you to remember me
as I could have been. From my bed I see the sun
tattooing the back of my country; and I dreamed that I was chasing it,
that I was drawing your name on the velvet of the sand and felt
life pulsing in that word like a tense muscle
hidden under the skin - but then I would wake up and would't go.

Come and see me before I die, but come quickly -
the books slip from my lap and the mold advances
over the clothes. From my bed I smell the leaves
fallen on the paths. Autumn has come. And the room
got so cold all of a sudden. And you without coming. Now
I want to lie on the garden moss carpet and listen
the hearthbeat the heart in my chest. The worms
feed on the dreams of those who die. And you do not come.

In the world of Maria do Rosário Pedreira there are no faults. Not for a second the love felt is clouded by an attribution of responsibility or blaming of the other for cyclical abandonments, guessed loneliness, sea-eyes waiting. Love is felt in itself, and even though one knows of its remoteness, love is justified by its fulfillment. Admittedly, the woman suffers. Quite. But it was a life choice, and to some extent, a proud one. And always aware. Therefore, let us not regret the woman's fate. She still has much to tell, to confess beautiful words of hard loneliness, in a melancholic hug to the man she wants. She still has a lot to travel in the terrible landscape she has chosen for her journey.

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