



The pain of being Florbela Espanca: Considerations about the emotional ordeal in the sonnet "I ..."

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Abstract: Every pain result from a process of rupturing a hemostasis. After this fragmentation, the “I” enters a waiting process, followed, consequently, by an eminent psychic pain. The pain process differs from conventional pain because it depends of an organic pathological mechanism, generating pain that can’t be located, qualified or timed. This way, Florbela Espanca in her sonnet “I...” reveals indications that she suffers of psychic pain. We seek to analyze the descriptions about the suffering of Florbela Espanca in her sonnet "I ...", associating to the psychosocial representation of women in her work and in the Portuguese society of the twentieth century. This article followed a method of documentary analysis, using, in addition to the masterpiece of Florbela Espanca, bibliographic studies related to the theme. Moreover, we include a brief background and theoretical foundation on psychic pain and the work under analysis. We highlight as a latent difficulty the reduced number of researches in this methodological line that could contribute to the inferences about the Florbela Espanca’s literary work. The sonnet "I ..." indicates that the poet faced "pathological grief ". A process of pain occasioned by the rupture of the death. In the authors’ life, runs in many scenarios, physically, through the death of her beloved ones, and through the death of her lost loves.

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Introduction

Every pain result from a process of rupturing a hemostasis. After this fragmentation, the “I” enters a waiting process, followed, consequently, by an eminent psychic pain. The pain process differs from conventional pain because it depends of an organic pathological mechanism, generating pain that can’t be located, qualified or timed. Presumably, revealing a psychic pain that makes up her daily life, Florbela Espanca bare in her sonnet “I...”: “I am the one who is lost in the world, I am the one who has no north in life, I am the Dream’s sister, and of this sort I am the crucified... the sore... Shadow of a faint and empty fog, And that bitter fate, sad and strong, imposes brutally to death! Grieving soul always misunderstood! I am the one that passes, and nobody sees... I am the one who they call sad without the being... I am the one who cries without knowing why... I am perhaps the vision that someone dreamed, someone who came into the world to see me, and who never found me in life!” (Espanca, 1919).

The poetess reveals from the first verses feeling repressed, without perspectives and, finally, in a constant painful process. Florbela refers in the title the personal pronoun I, in the first person of the singular followed by suspension points that complements its sense. The pronoun I, syntactically, presents the function of a simple and determinate subject, then, there is a being that, since the utterance, expresses a feeling. The subject, in uttering his voice, affirms himself as an existing being.

Consequently, in the text there is a subject who lets himself be revealed, who expresses the unfolding of his soul. Suspension points also suggest continuity to speech - beyond what has been said in verses, there could be much more to be expressed. We analyze the descriptions about the pain of the "lyrical self" of the sonnet, associating with the psychosocial representation of the woman in the work of Florbela Espanca and in the historical context to which it is inserted. This study followed a method of documentary analysis, using, in addition to the masterpiece of Florbela Espanca, bibliographic studies related to the research theme. We also consider pertinent a brief history and theoretical foundation on psychic pain and the work under analysis.

Consonant, Ana Luisa Vilela (2012), Florbela Espanca is a “personality who, fundamentally, dazzles us and discomforts us, intrigues us and moves us”, and that is, also, a challenge for the critic, Inasmuch as, “controversially, her contribution made it a landmark of Portuguese poetry of the twentieth century.” In return for the status quo,

Florbela made the patriarchal society of her time uncomfortable. Using the sonnet, classic model of lyrical expression preferred by the poets of the time, called by the misogynistic male critique of “poetesses-of-parlor”, which Florbela dared to enunciate a discourse watered by eroticism. (Bonfim, 2015).

Commonly, the poesy of Florbela reveals the suffering, loneliness and the disenchantment. The conduction of her works follows a personal characterization, a literature that express its own frustrations and yearnings, transgressing even more to the conventional poetry when presses the eroticism in its verses. “I...” found in the “Book of Sorrows”, was edited in June of 1919 by Raul Proença. The book is dedicated to the father and to the brother of Florbela, who had died, explaining the name of the work that overflowed their hurt, pain and longing. The poetess represents a neo-romantic contribution to Portuguese literature, marked by the traits of the sentimental, the confessional, the passion and her female voice, making Florbela the great female figure of the first decades of Portuguese literature of the twentieth century, as defined by Rui Guedes “Florbela enters the temple of the classical writers through and independent literary space whose emblem is her own feminine condition.”

As for Freud, the activity of the neurons system ϕ (phi), ψ (psi) and ω (omega) generate conscience. The system ω is excited together with the perception producing the conscious feelings of pleasure and unpleasure, meanwhile ϕ and ψ deal with the quantity of stimulus exogenous and endogenous, not being registered consciously (Rocha, 2011). The experience of pain, in Freud, consists in the failure of devices to protect sums of great amount of excitation, both endogenous and exogenous. Once the pain has occurred, it will be represented as affection, a drive representative, mediating the access of the drive to the psychic sphere, to the system ψ (Caropreso & Monzani, 2012). In the meantime, feelings reveal in consciousness the balance of intensity of unconscious tensions. Love leaves the individual unprotected against suffering, since when there is the loss of the loved one or the love for unhappiness is irremediable. (Freud, 2006).

What triggers the effect of psychic pain or pain of love is the pain of mourning, when there is a brutal rupture with the beloved; pain of abandonment, when the beloved suddenly withdraws his love; of humiliation, when self-esteem is wounded; and pain of mutilation, when there is loss of part of the body. The more you love, more you suffer (Nasio, 1997). This way, the mechanism of pain can be undressed in phases: *the rupture*, *the psychic commotion* unleashed by the break and the defensive *reaction* of I to protect himself from the commotion. The defense of the self against the commotion occurs by the

sudden *divestment* of its representations followed by an eminent *overinvestment* in the psychic representation of the loved one or his love that ceased to exist. Therefore, the divestment of the self and the overinvestment of the beloved, together with the lucid evidence of the concrete absence of this beloved object, generate the psychic pain (Nasio, 1997).

In revealing particularities of Florbela Espanca, it can be inferred that the sonnet "I ..." is an autobiographical statement. All the pain and the search for understanding that Florbela felt so strongly are expressed in this sonnet, revealing a lost woman, searching for her own identity, and concomitantly close to her dream; presenting the common noun "dream" with an initial capital letter, certainly to emphasize the symbolism of the word. Adjective as crucified and painful, suggesting that she suffers from a pain that always holds her to the margins of herself, from the bitterness that filled her conscience. Moreover, when it's called "the crucified one", poetess induces the relation with the greater figure of Christianity that, according to the biblical tradition, even being innocent and savior of the sinful humanity, is killed under torture and public humiliation. In the verse under analysis, being crucified could indicate a public humiliation of the person by a patriarchal society hypocritical and intolerant with the essence of her soul. As a result of the feeling of not being accepted, being rejected or discriminated, breaks out the pain that can be perceived on both physical and psychological plane.

The pain plummet from the feeling emotionally lost and referred as a being incapable of evidencing her existential motivations in a society based in the repressive social determinants. At this threshold, the poetess enters in a waiting process. The waiting for a beloved one who elevates her existence to the balance that she always dreamed. The desire to find the love, highlighted in the sonnet under analysis and in Florbela's personal life.

Perhaps, the overinvestment on the lost beloved ones by her conducted the sonnet in analysis to an exemplar representation of the "pathological Grieve". A process of pain occasioned by the rupture of the death. In the authors' life, runs in many scenarios, physically, through the death of her beloved ones, and through the death of her lost loves. Florbela Espanca's suffering is conducted to a spectacular and premature death inducted by the author, not for the distance from her love, but by attaching more and more to him. The sonnet represents the concept of the "I" pain unleashed by deception, however, confidence in the dream of love while there is life.

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