


The Revolt of Sacrificed Women

Maria Conceição Monteiro ^a 

ABSTRACT

*The gothic is a poetics in constant mutation that, through imagination, thematizes fears, anxieties and the priorities of a historic time. These are the images that involve the female characters in Patrícia Melo's novel, *Mulheres empilhadas*. They inhabit the locus of a dystopian curse, as victims of crimes, sexual violence and the very erasure of their lives. It is a dystopian narrative that merges reality and fiction and that is brought into the realm of the gothic poetics, exploring issues such as discrimination of politics, of religion, and of gender.*

Keywords: Gothic-dystopian poetics. Gender. Monster. Desexualization. Entheogens.

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^a Universidade Estadual do Rio de Janeiro, Instituto de Letras, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Letras, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brasil.

E-mail: mcmont@bighost.com.br

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I

In *Dystopia: A Natural History*, Gregory Claeys (2018) describes the images invoked by the term dystopia. Among them, with the pervasive idea of decadence, he highlights those that convey elements such as illegality, disorder, pain and suffering. For the historian, dystopia is a modern phenomenon linked to secular pessimism.

The term dystopia “is derived from two Greek words, *dus* and *topos*, meaning a diseased, bad, faulty, or unfavorable place” (CLAEYS, 2018, p. 4). This is an excellent characterization of the male figure physical materiality in Patrícia Melo’s *Mulheres empilhadas*. The monstrosity of the criminal, in the novel, derives from the discrimination that subjugates women, who are victimized by rape, torture and murder. The narrative provides the reader with a chain of disturbing images, which conjure experiences such as death and destruction, centered around the figure of the male rapist, individuals that have fallen into savagery, bestiality and monstrosity, exposing the obscure, negative, face of the human.

Women are their prey, an obsession of the patriarchal regime, that must be eliminated to sustain strength, masculinity and power. There is, undoubtedly, a certain despotism in the way through which this kind of man treats women, both in and outside the narrative, generating fear and terror. These are men who often act in groups to torture and abuse women. The group bond strengthens cooperation and approval among its members, making up for an evil kind of male solidarity that imprisons women. Acting in a group removes the responsibility of the individual; acts of violence and murder become a group responsibility. A “crime club” is formed, constituted by members of the women extermination squad. This group sees women as the “Other” to be hated, used and, ultimately, destroyed. As Claeys (2018, p. 34) pointedly signals, belonging to a group strengthens the sense of similitude, of the same, of the unity, through the juxtaposition of ‘us’ to ‘them’: ‘we’ are ‘men’, ‘they’ are ‘women’; and, in the name of the group honor, violence and murder are committed, reinforcing the oppressive power of the extermination squad.

These are the images that involve women in Patrícia Melo’s novel. It is the *locus* of the dystopian curse that they

inhabit as victims of the crimes, the sexual violence and the erasure of their lives. It is a dystopian narrative, one that merges reality and fiction, and is brought to the realm of gothic poetics, exploring issues of political, religious and gender-based discrimination. Dystopian narratives always seem to warn by exposing conditions of oppression or deprivation. Literary dystopia is concerned with portraying a society in which a significant number of people, in this specific case, women, suffer oppression and annihilation as the result of male, sexist and coward actions.

The novel here discussed may be thought of as a dystopian narrative for its real pessimism in relation to women, always subject to murder and erasure. The narrative catches instances of the absence of justice, of control and of legal and political assistance to solve cases in which women are murdered by men whose macabre desires, cruel and absurd, they refuse to satisfy. These are men who kill women because of a feeling of insufficiency and insecurity towards their own masculinity.

These women are sacrificed for not being recognized inside the machinery of generic production. Women are recognized as humans when they have their humanity articulated and mutable. An exchangeable humanity, a commodity. They don't have the power to act on their own. In relation to the frameworks of recognition, Judith Butler (2004b, p. 2) takes the following stance: if these frameworks made available to women presuppose an "undoing" that bestows recognition, or undo them by retention of recognition, it is possible to conclude, then, that recognition becomes a device of power in which the human is produced in different ways. In this sense, the lives of the minority depend on the existence of norms of recognition that produce and sustain the viability of people as human. However, these very norms of recognition constantly alternate to produce and un-produce the notion of human.

Transforming this process is what the nameless character in *Mulheres empilhadas* longs for. She fights a social battle to change the treatment given to women, in a way that the affirmation of rights becomes a way of intervening in the social and political process through which the human is articulated (BUTLER, 2004b, p. 15). In order for that to happen, it is

necessary to escape the chains of norms that only recognize women within a specific, dictated, pattern of behavior.

Thus, it is possible to consider that the women that populate the realm of the novel, as well as so many others outside of it, are not recognized in their differences and singularities. So, becoming a monster, or metamorphosing into a monster, means to include oneself in one's own humanity. It is an option that liberates women from normative recognition. Still according to Butler (2004b, p. 16), if one is someone who cannot be without doing oneself, the conditions of such doing are, in a way, the conditions of one's very existence.

Patrícia Melo portrays this *status quo* through a realism that comes alive in the pages of the novel, as it merges news reports with fiction, exposing, in a terrifying way – for there could be no other way – the lives of women in Acre, in the North region of Brazil, indicating that the issue is not just localized, but the consequence of a violent, negative, patriarchal attitude that is disseminated all through the country when it comes to the way women are treated.

The narrative in *Mulheres empilhadas* is composed by three main segments. The first is numeric and is concerned with the crime cases against women extracted from the newspapers. The second is alphabetic and tells the story of the female character, the narrator, a journalist from São Paulo that relocates to Acre for work. The narrator, after being physically assaulted by her boyfriend, reconnects with her long-deceased mother. She realizes, in that instant, that “we are all made of the same matter!” (MELO, 2019, p. 23, our translation), a warning triggered by the slap in her face. It is an epiphanous moment of rebirth of the dead, awakened with the drive and the hunger for a knowledge that was erased from the memory and needs to be reconstituted. Northbound, she carries a corpse within herself.

The parts that go from Alpha to Eta compose the third segment and constitute the focus of the present work. This particular segment is characterized by the narrator's ventures into the religious core of the forest, by the contact with the Amazon warriors who, under the effect of the shamanic beverages, battle the male perpetrators of violence towards women. It is a space that empowers women, a space of vengeance, of the exorcism of hate, long accumulated. Lastly,

it is a space to activate the machinery of memory, propelled by powerful plants that expand consciousness, called *entheogens*, that is, according to the etymology, generators of a state of those who embody a god.

In its foundation lies a dystopian novel, a realm of unhappy events, in which women live in conditions of oppression, under death threats that are both visible and invisible, but always go unpunished. The dystopian narrative makes use of characteristics that are intrinsically present in gothic poetics. Because it is political literature, the gothic text allows untamed elements, relegated to the shadows by the oppressive power regimes, to come to light. That is, dystopian elements permeate the gothic poetics, underlining how societies may serve as models of oppression and paranoia towards women. A means to change such regime may be through the transformation of the female body, its unfolding into something else, other.

II

I believe it is important to look for alternative ways through which we can think the body in poetic imagination, in the images delineated in the fissures of scientific rationality, in a way that construct images of women that subvert conventional forms of representation. The starting point, for me, is to look for a way that does not coincide with the rigidity neither of the biological body, nor the social one, which are viewed as determinant in the way of being.

The body reinvents itself incessantly, it escapes concepts that imprison it in a category, whether of sex or gender. It is not a metaphysical transcendence, but one of borders, a transformation of being. The monster that the female body embodies is not supernatural, but actually, an active force that, even though it may often metamorphose into non-anthropomorphic figures, constitutes an unfolding of the I. Thus, the transformation of the feminine into something other that needs to desexualize itself is nothing but the materialization of what is not commonly associated with the feminine and is linked to desire and action.

It is of my personal interest to think of the monster as liable to the incorporation of the feminine as a liberating

measure. It is not by chance that the monster, epistemologically, implicates a “warning”, as it points to the dangers underlying its own animalistic essence. The monster is strange, but it reflects what is most intimate, even if it appears, sometimes, in a twisted way. As it provokes ambiguity and contradiction, the monster exposes a potentiality of multifaceted agencies. The feminine, in gothic poetics, incorporates the monster, for the latter, however dangerous, marks the changes of a new way of being. A desexualized body is one that does not violate borders other than its own, but only allows itself to live experiences that are free from restraints, deterritorialized, more active.

Michel Foucault (1998, p. 17-30) synthesizes such apprehension when he demonstrates that what matters is to find how the subject is materially constituted through multiplicities of organisms, forces, energies, desires, thoughts etc. The dissolution of the body does not implicate its death but, instead, its opening to action, to a better comprehension of the being, to inclusions.

There are, undoubtedly, converging points in the gothic and dystopian narratives. That way, it is possible to think about the notion of a gothic-dystopian poetics, or the dystopian gothic, to reflect upon desexualization, violence and the female body transformation, as evidenced in the novel in question. Hence, we can consider *Mulheres empilhadas* as an expression of the dystopian gothic in which the female violence portrayed in the shamanic rituals, ultimately, even if not measuring up to the male violence, still is an affirmative response of taking a stance in a society ruled by corrupted laws and rights. Female violence is portrayed as a turning point in the mechanic wheel that spins the world of men, the exterminators of women.

If the male attitudes in *Mulheres empilhadas* may be considered barbarian as they inflict pain and suffering, they may also be the generators of monsters. In dystopian gothic, the monster rises as a symbol of transformation and transposition of borders. Monstrosity manifests itself as the consequence of a mechanism of persecution in which women are part of an othered group, isolated in their difference and exposed, in their vulnerability, to exclusion and death.

Here, women need to use resources that provoke the expansion of the mind to allow the monster that inhabit us to manifest itself and to avenge us. The context of the *entheogens*

makes up for a liberation of the monstrous self as it modifies vision and, at the same time, also expands the world of possibilities for women. It opens the realms of images and perception, of changes, and unchains a world of affirmative action. The colors are perceived and drenched in exuberant shades of yellow, red and blue. The character witnesses, right before her eyes, as if in a magic film tape, images of the *preto velho* (an entity of the *Umbanda*, presenting itself as old African man) smoking tobacco pipes; images of the Virgin; images of Iemanjá (a central deity in the *Candomblé* religion, concerned with different aspects of womanhood, such as fertility). She could hear an incessant chanting. Images of people singing, vomiting and laughing haunt her senses. She could see women standing in formation in the woods: the *Icamiabas* (a legendary tribe of women warriors), mothers, natives, *mulattas*, black, white, many women, sprouting from the earth, full of hatred; avengers, they would go after their abusers, the rapists, hounds of hell.

The murder of the native woman *Txupira* by three men, who had raped and tortured her, is the trigger of all conflicts and tragedies experienced by the narrator, such as the murder of her own mother. "Having a mother who was murdered was, perhaps, my secret identity" (MELO, p. 43, our translation). She learns that women die because they cannot speak. Not speaking "is a tragedy" (MELO, p. 45, our translation).

Going into the woods, she inhales the thick air of the forest. She drinks the *carimi*, which heightens the senses, opens her eyes "to see what is hidden, the reverse, the invisible; eyes that see what's within, in thought [...], in the dark of night" (MELO, p. 65, our translation). In this search, fueled by the tea, she floats through the woods, conscious that she was the daughter of a murdered mother and that she had been slapped by her boyfriend. And so, amidst this shamanic ecstasy, when the cosmos expands and memory is activated, there comes the image of the mother, the silence, the active vision of the red fluid splattered through the floor, her father trying to clean it to cover up his heinous crime. He had killed the girl's mother.

Standing next to the warrior, the Woman of the Green Stones, the narrator sees, in the depths of an abyss, a pile of dead women. In their midst, her mother. These are visions provided by the teas that activate the part of the "brain responsible for

storing emotional memories” (MELO, p. 230, our translation). If, on the one hand, “killing women is how *proto-machos* blow off their hatred”, on the other hand, women have to learn what to do with hatred, for it “serves many purposes” (MELO, p. 124-125, our translation). The narrator becomes unafraid of her own hatred and, for that to happen, it was necessary to transform. As she becomes fearless, she “monstrifies” herself, incorporating the monster. Not in its reactive negativity that inspires fear and leads to death, but in its active affirmation as a provoker of change. As she projects herself as a monster and becomes unafraid, she is empowered. As Claeys (2018, p. 79) states, to do good, it is necessary to kill off the dragon, to be good, it is necessary to cage the monster within oneself. No, not at all, I reckon the dragon must live and, for that to happen, the monster should come out. It is in the negativity provoked by the monster that women can catch a glimpse of forms of acting and being.

In this perspective, to be a monster also means, in the poetic imagination, to maintain a critical, transformative attitude towards the norms that constitute us, even if at the cost of exclusion. Being a monster is opening the door to a new human, to a new woman, to unexpected ways of living. If I think about the monster in relation to the female characters, or even in relation to non-fictional women, I can observe that, while the term may reveal prejudice and exclusion, it also saves me. Problematizing the issue makes the monster discourse fundamental to think about the body as a space for transformation. It is important to highlight that I do not consider the monster in its “aberrant corporeality” (SHILDRICK, 2002, p. 122), but, instead, in what makes the female body confront prescription. Being a liminal figure, it is always transformative and challenges the limits imposed on the human.

III

The axis, around which the forces that energize the gothic-dystopian poetics rotate, is the potential for subversion of imposed barriers, in this particular instance, women, whether through a social, sexual or gender-oriented perspective. The transposition of barriers leads the nameless character in *Mulheres empilhadas* in a path towards the acknowledgment

of her potential as a woman, simultaneously unearthing a history of violence that follows her from one geographical pole to another and solving it through resources that are imbued in the sublime and its more modern version, the *Unheimlich*, or the Freudian uncanny.

The presence of the sublime in the gothic narratives evokes elements of fear and dread that cannot be processed rationally. In Melo's novel, animism is a consequence of the experience with *entheogens*. Dead women become resurrected bodies, as if the forest had memory and its own modes of action. The telluric space opens itself so that, through imagination and ecstasy, due to a dilated and expanded consciousness, the narrator, representing all dead women, could violently avenge the violence they had endured. These female figures are an expression of gothic horror. The discovery by the narrator, as well as a feeling of recognition and the imperative necessity to maintain these spectral connections, becomes fuel to proceed, even if symbolically, with the learning of defense and imposition of the woman. The spectral bodies, anthropomorphized, are humanized in a game of vengeance.

David Punter and Glennis Byron (2004, p. 12) explain that, in this case, the surging of archaic fears, primitive terrors thought to exist in the depths of unconsciousness, even if they were banned from the civilized world, continues to haunt the childish portion of the adult brain, especially under conditions of terror and darkness. Through remembrance, the trauma experienced in childhood of witnessing the murder of her mother by her father, which was thought to have been erased from the memory, comes to light, through the expansion of consciousness, to reexperience the lost past and to free itself, so as to be able to act and not to be piled up among police files.

Patrícia Melo's novel is struck with the marks of a history of violence. There is, here, a moral violence against women, in which laws are erased in the name of the Father. The women who experience these tragedies must allow their monsters to come out so as to refrain from falling into the profound abyss of silencing. At the same time, through the monster, this body that is other, it is possible to question the very patterns of normality. It is important to observe the connection that Shildrick (2002, p. 5) establishes between the monster and vulnerability, for the monster is not simply an exteriority, but

also signals a transformation in the relation between “I” and “Other”. The meeting of these forces is necessary for women to reconstruct themselves in a vortex towards which all their liberating energy converges.

Melo’s narrative shows an ominous scenario of torment and complexity, exposing women who were murdered and never recognized. This scenario points to the necessity of active changes to reevaluate the *status quo* and rethink the subjectivity of women. The implication, here, would be to recognize that freedom is essential, and that this freedom starts with the very process of desexualization of women. They untangle themselves from sex, as understood in their cultural demarcation, unlocking the ties that still sustain the categories of body, of sex and sexuality, as well as the respective power relations among the beings, determined by these categories.

The tendency towards desexualization has manifested itself in history as a dynamic of dimorphism. From a cultural perspective, I suggest thinking of a poetics of *unsex-me* (MONTEIRO, 2020, p. 153-157), of desexualization, a path to think about a space that privileges the political and the personal, agencies and power, in which the barriers between gender and sex are dissolved. I elaborate on the poetics of *unsex-me* in line with Craciun’s (2003, p. 110-128) thought about the notion of desexualization. Being desexualized does not point to an inversion of gender; it means, rather, not to be stuck in a woman’s body, or to any other body for that matter. The *unsexed* being is not definable, does not follow any natural order, and any distinction that one may want to impose becomes problematic. I believe that a safe path to go through would be that which opts for incorporation and understanding of sexuality in a constant process of transformation, as a creative, erotic form of reinventing oneself.

Considering a study of hermeneutics on the theme, I can observe that what is portrayed is a sexual difference that is viewed as a natural and stable category, based on ideological oppositions that are ingrained in western thought. What should be sought is the difference between “I” and “You”, but not in a sexual way as in an equivalence between the natural organic/genetic and the social/cultural. “I” and “You”, “You” and “I”, are equations with pendulums that swing both ways, not just because one possesses a vagina and the other

a penis. The discussion about the difference and stability of gender incessantly allocates one over the other. The “Other” is conceived as a synonym of “Me”, even if there are divergences in the intellectual, social and economic spheres, to name a few. Eliminating sex and gender is, that way, a starting point to review other types of categories. If sex is linked to nature and gender to culture, then what saves me is the figure of the monster who, by undoing this dichotomic confusion, opts for a monstrous hybridity. The monster is force, not deficiency (LYKKE, 1996, p. 19).

IV

Adriana Cavarero (2009, p. 17-18) evokes the category of *horrorism* to trace a particular kind of violence in contemporaneity, which, in its singularities, can be associated to the realm of horror. The neologism serves as means to clarify that the present may be better understood through a certain type of horror.

The notion of vulnerability is fundamental to think about the body as I understand it. Vulnerability and instability, as means of reflecting on the body, help reviewing rigid, limited, theories on the most varied possibilities of being, of using the body, providing it with meaning. Vulnerability, according to Margrit Shildrick (2002, p. 133), is not a degraded condition of the other, but the very condition of questioning the centrality of the human being. It is no longer possible to separate the abstract from the material: both forms are equally discursively produced and instable.

The space of vulnerability for Patrícia Melo is the female body. In this context, the ponderation made by Cavarero (2009, p. 18), establishing a dialog with Judith Butler (2004a), is important, since, for the philosopher, vulnerability, understood in physical and corporeal terms, implicates that it is the relationship with the other that matters. That way, to recognize oneself as vulnerable means to recover a certain amount of collective responsibility for each one’s life. Considering, then, both one’s vulnerability and that of the other is fundamental, as it is a condition common to all. Nevertheless, in *Mulheres empilhadas*, female vulnerability is permanent and leads to death. In opposition to what Cavarero (2009) ponders, the

wounds here do not demand assistance, on the contrary, the violence inflicted onto women gives them no possibility of self-defense. Violence is absolutely unilateral. There is no reciprocity in Melo's narrative.

Still, it is important to notice the distinction that Cavarero (2009) makes between 'helpless' and 'vulnerable': the former occurs under certain circumstances, while the latter is a permanent state. The situations of horror that the characters in Melo's novel face are struck with violence, tortured bodies, helpless victims in their vulnerability. In this sense, following Cavarero's (2009, p. 19) thought, torture belongs to a certain type of circumstance in which the coincidence between vulnerable and helpless is the result of a series of acts, intentional and premeditated, destined to happen. Cavarero's *horrorism*, here, is patent, exposed, as a body in pain, objectified by the "reality of pain, in which violence takes time in doing its work" (CAVARERO, 2009, p. 23).

For these women, both vulnerable and helpless, only death remains. For the murdered body, remain abandonment and invisibility, as well as the neglect of the state, the law, and the society. Horror follows its path unlimitedly, and so *horrorism* is a form of violence that exceeds death itself, as we can observe in the countless deaths caused by the sexual aggression suffered by women, whose bodies are always exposed to the gaze, to the touch, and to violence.

I would like to highlight that, to review the concept of vulnerability, one should not run the risk of reinforcing binarism when negating body-sex, but it is necessary to perceive the body as means of action, commonly not associated with the female body. At the same time, I believe that the "feminine" is not to be denied, but rethought over in a perspective of what's to be, stripped from any impositions, whether patriarchal, racist, economic etc. The feminine would, then, transcend the notion of gender, becoming an option for acting, for becoming free.

As we can see, thinking of the body in narratives that constitute the dystopian gothic, in which destruction and violence derive from the annihilation of the female being, may be perceived as an active form of intervention in a world of inequalities, where women are always sacrificed in the name

of a male power that wants to establish itself as sovereign and perpetual.

The *unsexed* woman is also *abhuman*. Punter (2016, p. 101) raises an interesting point on the subject. For him, the *abhuman* body is, in a way, always the female body, for it is open to the possibility of contamination through conception, as opposed to the male body, which is culturally presumed (and thus the root of homophobia, the fear of penetration of the male body) to be inviolable. Hence, the difficulty in dissociating body and gender. That way, the *abhuman* is an important category to think of the desexualized body, for it precedes cultural and moral law. This body lies at the margins of the human, whereas the social constructs give in to desires, obsession, violence, all these characteristics that permeate our lives and over which we hold no control.

In *Mulheres empilhadas*, the monster's epiphanic moment happens through the shamanic rituals and the teas that expand consciousness, such as the *carimi* tea (MELO, 2019, p. 129) and the *ayahuasca*. Expanding or dilating consciousness is a means to refuse being an added number in the ever-growing pile of dead women. It means to allow the monster to possess oneself, even if through an epiphanic outlook. That way, women, to use Melo's metaphors, must be free and have "flying vaginas", like a bird, and their mission is to chase and terrorize murderers, that is, to have vaginas that "can swallow the violators whole, in a single 'gulp', and then vomit them into the land of the dead" (MELO, 2019, p. 121, our translation). It is possible to see the undisciplined unconscious open to revenge, to bloody ruthlessness, to the sensual celebration of the woman-monster, manifest through wicked, devouring desire.

Dystopian gothic is decadence and active transformation. Becoming a monster is necessary since the monster is a celebrated figure in the narrative due to its power of plurality and its subversive pleasures. It knocks down rules and borders, opts for terror, vengeance, and morbid desire. In the shamanic context, we have unconquerable, vengeful, serene and angry women. The images and actions of women in this hallucinating cosmos show that, to take a stand against a sexist society, and to change the game, women need to go through metamorphosis, whether transforming into specters or nightwalkers, both hallucinated and hallucinating.

The violence perpetrated against women becomes an incurable wound, but one that, at the same time, is susceptible to a cure when women reinvent themselves as monsters, exposing their monstrous 'I' through vengeful expression. Revenge not in its mediatic sense, but in the sense of not allowing their body to be the receptacle of other's destructive pleasure, of not allowing their dignity to be broken apart. Transcending gender happens in this movement from a dormant being to one that is dominant, indomitable, and that has mastery over oneself. Thus, the need to fuse opposites, eliminating binary differences (GILMORE, 2003, p. 191). The space of female action, under the liberating sign of poetic imagination, does not have a divine law or censorship; it only features the morbid courage of eliminating forces that place women in a dystopian realm of indifference and pain. The female figures in *Mulheres empilhadas* find themselves in a dance of fruition, in a state of exciting fascination and affirmative destruction.

I don't believe that it is the case to think of the violence, cruelty and morbidity that inhabit the universe of these literary figures from a moral perspective, but, perhaps, we should think about, as Shildrick (2002, p. 131) proposes, a new expression of ethics that may respond to the multiplicity of differences incorporated in the body. That way, dichotomic categories do not matter; instead of thinking of normative ethics, it is necessary to look for ambiguity and the unpredictability of an opening towards the monster. This movement recognizes the vulnerabilities of both the "Other" and "I".

I see the cruelty, violence and morbidity that constitute the actions of the protagonist, as well as those of the women under the forest and powerful teas' magic influence, as marks of an internal impulse – one that aims to change – and not merely as destructivity (negative), as generally understood. Destructivity (affirmative), however, is part of the necessity to instill fear and revenge, in a search of visibility as a powerful affirmation of being. Morbid actions illuminate, metaphorically, the bodies of the piled-up women that look for ways to free themselves through revenge, desexualization, and that, through what may be perceived as seemingly evil, desires the positive affirmation of being. If women were always considered evil or monstrous, sexual predators or, considering all those features, morbid figures, it is high time these characteristics are appropriated

to their benefit, as power: vengeance and transformation. Vengeance in the sense of looking for what belongs to them, ripping it out of the world. How many women are, up to today, killed for being afraid, whereas the main character and the resurrected women here are the ones provoking fear, a vengeance that does not aim at repetition, but, instead, above all, at taking hold of power and negating fear.

V

Finally, it is worth considering that the dystopian gothic may be thought of as a poetics of transformation and of transposition of gender divides, not just to cross them, but, above all, to question them. The elements that refute violence, violent on their own, accept the negative positivity of the binary, opting for Evil, for revenge, in the search for future completeness, for balance. In *Mulheres empilhadas*, the feminine abandons conventional, constructed, behavior, and opts to metamorphose into monster. This transformation is scary, for it is also liberating, a welcome deep breath into human existence.

Women, in Melo's novel, accept the monster in themselves as they refuse to continue being murdered, destroyed. This monster, an unfolding of oneself, surfaces through the abusive actions that the female body undertakes, a body as space for invasion, that leads to the externalization and exposition of dark secrets that can be associated with the gothic ambience. That way, moving away from the position of a victim, the monstrous figure arises to ratify a political action that promises conscientization about what it means to be women, in societies that discriminate against them and where their bodies are still part of a scenario of sexual subservience.

The gothic opens space for fear, a fear of the monster reclaimed by women in a dystopian space, as means of answering the question: "what to do with our hatred?" (MELO, 2019, p. 125, our translation). I can observe that, in this sense, the promise of a virtuous moral fails, and the world of a new woman is reborn, a woman that is repugnant, lovable, a beauty and a beast with enormous wounds. A woman that does not resign to being a shadow; on the contrary, she overtakes the shadows of the crushing female past, of fear. She is now the

generator of fear, of revenge, a powerful instrument in the poetics of desexualization, of *unsex-me*.

The role of dystopian literature, according to Claeys (2018), is to warn against real-life dystopias. However, it may also catch a glimpse of rational solutions in which panic and the irrational loom. The dystopian gothic defines the spirit of the times. We live in gothic and dystopian times.

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RESUMO

A Revolta das Mulheres Sacrificadas

*O gótico é uma poética em constante mutação que, através da imaginação, explora como temas os medos, as ansiedades e as prioridades de um tempo histórico. São essas imagens que envolvem as personagens femininas do romance de Patrícia Melo, *Mulheres empilhadas*; e é o lugar da maldição distópica em que elas habitam, vítimas dos crimes, das violências sexuais e do apagamento de suas vidas. Trata-se de uma narrativa distópica que mescla realidade e ficção e se inscreve no âmbito da poética gótica, explorando questões como discriminações políticas, religiosas e de gênero.*

Palavras-chave: Poética gótico-distópica. Gênero. Monstro. Dessexualização. Enteógenos.

Maria Conceção Monteiro é Doutora em literatura comparada (UFF/Nottingham University) e pós-doutora em literatura inglesa (UNESP), é professora titular de literaturas de língua inglesa da UERJ. Entre suas publicações, figuram: *Sombra errante* (2000); *Na aurora da modernidade* (2004); *Leituras contemporâneas* (2009); *Figurações das paixões nas literaturas de língua inglesa* (2013); *O corpo mecânico feminino* (2016); *Viagem ao fim do dia: poemas e contos* (2017); *Quando éramos todos vivos: e alguns poemas* (2019). Bolsista UERJ/FAPERJ.