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Tuberculosis and the Artistic Creation: A Historical Account of a Disease Both Romantic and Tragic

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Introductions

"For more than a century and a half, tuberculosis provided a metaphoric equivalent for delicacy, sensitivity, sadness, [and] powerlessness […] pathology of energy […] hyperactivity alternating with languidness […] white pallor and red flush […] it is a disease thought to be multi-determined (that is, mysterious) that have the widest possibilities as metaphors […] it was an existential illness that defined and redefined its victims […] portraying women stricken with the glamorous wasting disease […] women paradoxically function as a beautiful allegory for dying" (Susan Sontag, 1933-2004, American essayist and writer in Illness as Metaphor 1978) (Dickon & Gonzalez, 2019).

Having been recently invited to write the afterword of an intriguing book by my colleague and friend Palma Rodrigues about the important História do Sanatório Marítimo do Outão (History of the Maritime Sanatorium of Outão) and considering the experiences I have been confronted with lately, as I will mention below, having as motto what John Wilson argues in an article published in the JAMA magazine in 1966, entitled "Tuberculosis and the creative writer" (Wilson, 1966), "all art is forged out of human experience, and pulmonary tuberculosis is one of the deepest and most testing experiences that a man [or woman] can undergo". I decided to write something I had already wanted to deepen, "to dissertate on its relation with Romanticism and the most diverse creative manifestations (painting, opera, music, theatre, poetry, literature and cinema), an artistic, cultural, intellectual, philosophical and political movement that was born in the centre of Europe and had important repercussions in Portugal, as well as in many other countries, having covered a period somewhere between the 18th and 19th centuries".

Tuberculosis and its historical contextualisation in the field of artistic creation "It is in art that man definitively surpasses himself" (Simone de Beauvoir, French writer and philosopher, 1908-1986).

The expressions "spes phthisica", "phthisis" or "consumption" Frith (2014); Barberis et al. (2017) were already used by the Greeks, meaning decay and putrefaction induced by a disease, as was later exemplified by Giovanni Morgagni (1682-1771), one of the most distinguished anatomists in the history of medicine, who described a clinical case as: "[…] the patient expelled pus from her mouth as a result of a repulsive putrefaction of her lungs" (Rutecki, 2009). Among the therapies used in conventional medicine (Frith, 2014; Barberis et al., 2017), besides rest, good nutrition and a change of environment, especially in sanatoriums (situated in mountains or next to the sea, depending on the case), it is generally emphasised the use of opium derivatives (the famous tincture of laudanum) (Riva, 2014) that was advocated by e few doctors, to the point that some of the characters we will became genuinely dependent on it, and even radiotherapy, recommended by the Russian doctor Ivan Manoukhin (Maragliano, 2014), with results that did not match what he claimed.

The expression "White Plague" Harris (2007) appeared much later, in 1961, on the initiative of Oliver Holmes (1809-1894), a remarkable doctor and professor at Harvard University, who, besides being an eminent physician, was also a respected writer and an appreciated poet. It first appears in his 1861 book Elsie Venner. This denomination established a notorious dissimilarity with the so-called "Black Death or Black Plague" of poor connotation, such was the magnanimous impact with which it indelibly marked the history of humanity over the centuries, above all in the Middle Ages, Portugal included.

The diseased of plague, especially in the clinical form complicated by pneumonia and/or sepsis, had a darker skin colour partially resulting from the extensive subcutaneous haemorrhagic suffusions. However, they also bled a lot (mainly epistaxis). But the dark colour of their blood and the skin of the extremities, also depends on the intensity of hypoxaemia the patient had, in direct relation to the extent of the pulmonary compromise and/or the severity and duration of the septic

shock, as a reflection of the more or less severe respiratory and/or circulatory insufficiency they presented, generally called cyanosis.

Whereas, in later stages of the infection of tuberculosis, especially in the era before the discovery of anti-bacillaries, patients infected with Koch's bacillus became pale due to marked anaemia and their subsequent consumptive state, often having repeated haemoptysis of live blood and in mild to moderate quantities, which was in marked contrast to that of plague patients.

What they had in common, for both to be called "Plague", was their associated high morbidity and mortality, their contagious character, and their marked geographical dissemination. However, the classical epidemic outbreaks of more abrupt emergence only existed in true Plague, caused by a bacterium called yersinia in honour of the microbiologist who first described it, Alexander Yersin (1863-1943). Nevertheless, it is paramount to be able to distinguish it from other epidemic phenomena, or even pandemics, known under the generic name of "Plague" but which today we know originated from other micro-organisms (namely viruses or bacteria), through the results of studies brought to us by a new science, paleogenomics applied to microbiology (Rivera-Perez et al., 2016).

Because of the acute nature of the plague, the afflicted were almost invariably left looking like the living dead in a short time, as can be inferred from the painting (Fig. 1) Pestilence, 1805, by painter William Blake (1757-1827). While those suffering from tuberculosis, given the usual long evolution of the disease, looked much more like walking corpses which, according to the aesthetic standard of the time (before going into a real consumptive state, especially in the case of women), would stimulate the exaltation of the beauty of their marbled skin tone, sometimes contrasting with the slightly faded red of the cheeks, evident in febrile fits. It was believed that this apparent lethargy inspired artistic creation, not only by the patient himself but also by those who observed them, because the natural languor that the patient exhibited appealed to recollection and induced a spontaneous contemplative feeling of pity and tenderness on the part of those that look at them. The exacerbation of this feeling, considered sensual by some, together with the extended stay in sanatoria and the consequent separation from family and friends, not infrequently aroused "senseless" and "suffocating" passions among the patients or between these and the professionals who treated them, described in multiple testimonies, both real and in literature. This is apparent when we contemplate the 19th-century portrait of Marie Duplessis by painter Édouard Viénot (1804-1872) (Fig. 2), which I will discuss later.

In this regard, referring to two quotes that express these concepts well is worthwhile. First, Washington Irving (1783-1859) (Barberis et al., 2017), American diplomat, essayist and writer who was also affected by tuberculosis, stated that "the thinness of the phthisis seemed to be able to hide the physical aspects of the mortal body, freeing the soul to express itself in its spiritual fullness... the love which survives the tomb is one of the noblest attributes of the soul". As Victor Asensi (2020), an infectious disease specialist and professor at the University of Oviedo said in a lecture, "[…] tuberculosis, by making artists feel that their death was approaching, sharpened their urge to express their creative gifts, impelling them to produce their masterpiece before dying as if the disease were an inheritance from the gods".

Figure 1

Figure 2

At one time, another disease took the same name of plague: the "Blue Plague" Raza Kolb (2020). Some authors have applied this term to cholera, which in the 19th and 20th centuries caused significant epidemics in various countries worldwide. The patients were depicted with bluish skin in the terminal phase of the disease due to the cyanosis caused by the haemodynamic and respiratory collapse due to very fast and intense dehydration caused by the intractable diarrhoea, as can be seen in various prints from the Wellcome Collection, of which that of 1832 by John Gear (18061866) is an illustrative example (Fig. 3).

Figure 3

In Painting

Painting is, by definition, the branch of artistic creation where the materialisation of this vision is most immediate (Jeanette, 2020; Barrett, 2017; Hoakley, 2021; Jeanette, 2020; Norval, 2019; Ogden, 2020; Luce, 2014; Newland, 2017; Norval, 2019). Eloquent examples of the above are the Allegory of Spring, 1482 (Fig. 4) by Sandro Botticelli (1445-1510), John Keats (Fig. 5), 1819 by Joseph Severn (1793-1879), or Beata Beatrix, 1882 (Fig. 6) by Dante Rossetti (1828-1882). While the social drama of this disease was exemplarily portrayed in the painting Misery, 1886 (Fig. 7) by Cristóbal Rojas (1857-1890), the despair inherent to the loss of a family member or friend in these dramatic circumstances is well captured by Claude Monet (1840-1926) (Fig. 8) in Camille Monet in her coffin, 1879, by Félix Barrias (1822-1907) in The Death of Chopin, 1885 (Fig. 9), by Eugeen van Mighem (1875-1930) in Dying Augustine, 1905 (Fig. 10), and by Richard Cooper (18851957) in an untitled painting from 1912 belonging to the Wellcome Collection Museum (Fig. 11). Or, above all, by Edvard Munch (1863-1944) (Fig. 12) in Dead Woman and Child, 1944, (as well as in many others by this brilliant painter), while in Ophelia, 1851 (Fig. 13) by John Millais (1829-1896), death assumes more of a character of redemption and liberation from earthly suffering.

Figure 4

Figure 5

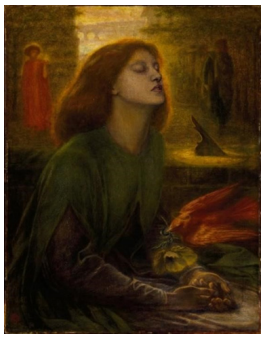

Figure 6

Figure 7

Figure 8

Figure 9

Figure 10

Figure 11

Figure 12

Figure 13

In scenic representation (opera and theatre)

As far as scenic representation is concerned, we should highlight in opera Dacy and Wijdicks (2021) La Traviata 1853, by Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901), based on the novel by Alexandre Dumas (son) (1824-1895), and Lady of the Camellias, 1848, in which Violet is the character with tuberculosis. Upon reconciling with her lover Alfredo, near the end, she begins to feel her body draining away. Before finally collapsing, she gives him her portrait, asking him to give it to her future love.

Moreover, in La Bohéme, 1896, by Giacomo Puccini (1958-1924), Mimi (the character affected by the illness) asks Rodolfo, before they sing the last duet in honour of their love and recalling their first meeting, if she was still "as beautiful as the dawn", to which the lover replies, somewhat suggestively, "as beautiful as twilight".

Sarah Bernhardt (1844-1923) (Barnes, 1995), one of the most famous actresses of all time, played Violet in Lady of the Camellias and saw her half-sister die from tuberculosis at a young age, like her mother, who was a courtesan. According to some authors, Bernhardt had a troubled personal and professional life and also contracted tuberculosis. One day she declared: "God has appointed me to go through many trials […] So I am very happy to suffer".

There are several film adaptations of these two operas, namely: Traviata, 1953, directed by Vittorio Cottafavi (1914-1998), Mimi, 1935, directed by Paul Stein (1892-1951), La Bohème, 1987, directed by Luigi Comencini (1916-2007) and, in 1983, by the director Franco Zeffirelli (1923-2019)

In certain opera characters (Vidal, et al., 2006), we can see descriptions that could correspond to this disease according to some experts. Leonora in La Favorita, 1764, by composer Gaetano Donizetti 17971848). Manon, in the opera of the same name by Giacomo Puccini (1858-1824) in 1893 and by Jules Massenet (1842-1912), 1884, inspired by the book Histoire du Chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut, 1731, written by the French writer Abbé Prévost (1697-1763) and also adapted for the cinema in various versions, respectively in 1926 by Arthur Robison (1883-1935), in 1954 by Mário Costa (1904-1995), and finally in 2013 by Gabriel Aghion (1955 -). Last but not least, although not as consensual, is Eurydice in the 1926 opera Les Malheurs d'Orphée by Darius Milhaud (1892-1974).

In theatre, we should mention Macbeth, 1623, by William Shakespeare (1564-1616), in which King Edward practises what came to be known as the "royal touch" (Murray et al., 2016), consisting in performing a public ceremony to cure tuberculosis scrofula by touching the infected with his finger. This practice became widespread in England and France and is supposed to have begun with the Gaulish King Clovis (487-511), having continued until the end of the 19th century.

Bernard Shaw (1856-195), afflicted by tuberculosis, was admitted to a sanatorium in Madeira, Portugal. He wrote the play The Doctor's Dilemma (Boyce, 2012; Molloy, 2021), first performed in London in 1906 with a 1958 film version directed by Anthony Asquith (1902-1968). The subject addressed could not be more up-to-date since, concerning tuberculosis, it refers to the problems of therapeutic innovation, the finite resources in health, and also the professional ethics of those whose primary objective is personal promotion.

Eugene O'Neil (1888-1953) Molloy (2021); Markel (2010), who also had tuberculosis, deals with the theme in two of his plays: The Straw, 1919, and Long Day's Journey into Night, 1956. The first tells a dramatic love story between Eileen and Stephen, who met in the sanatorium undergoing treatment, based on his own experience at Gaylord Farm sanatorium. The second tells the story of Mary, a morphine addict suffering from tuberculosis and experiencing many tribulations due to these two devastating circumstances. This still happens today in the many cases, like some I`ve treated in consultations and the infectiology wards along my forty years of clinical experience.

Moving on to what was published in Portugal Marques (2021), the young and beautiful Maria de Noronha is worth mentioning in the famous play Frei Luís de Sousa, 1844, written by the most significant national literary exponent of Romanticism, Almeida Garrett (1799-1954). After Maria died with great drama from tuberculosis, her parents dedicate themselves to a religious life after receiving a visit from a pilgrim assuring him that the first husband of Dona Madalena (future Soror Madalena das Chagas), his mother, who in the meantime had married Manuel de Sousa Coutinho (future Knight Luís de Sousa), in a second marriage, due to the supposed death of Sir John of Portugal, in the Battle of Ksar el-Kebir, but who after all would be alive, therefore the nullity of the marriage would have to be considered unduly celebrated. This drama

was later adapted to the cinema in 1950 by António Lopes Ribeiro (1908-1995). The same year, it was also presented in its integral version at the D. Maria II National Theatre. In 2001, director João Botelho (1949 -) also adapted it to the cinema, under the name Quem és tu? (Who are you?).

In cinema

As both in opera and theatre, examples are diverse in cinema and extend throughout the 20th century to the present (Vidal et al., 2006; Crosswell & Karimova, 2013). The first film dealing with this theme dates to 1913, a silent movie called Au Ravissement des Dames, directed by Alfred Machin (1877-1929).

In the 1936 film Camille by George Cukor (1899-1983), based on the novella Lady of the Camellias, one of the main characters, the beautiful Marguerite, proclaims, already almost dead, to her lover Armand, "[…] perhaps it is better that I live only in your heart, where no one can ever see me".

The Citadel, 1937, directed by King Vidor (1894-1982), was based on the book by Archibald Cronin (1896-1981), a doctor and writer. The protagonist, Andrew Manson, was a pulmonologist who had to confront the harmful effects of the coal mining industry on the health of the miners he was treating, among whom tuberculosis raged at an alarming rate. It had a notable political impact in the United Kingdom at the time, given the social issues addressed, which remain current.

In the 1945 film The Bells of St. Mary by Leo McCarey (1898-1969), Sister Benedict contracts tuberculosis. At first, she did not kindly take the transfer to an institution where she could not carry out her usual professional duties, proposed by Father O'Malley on his doctor's advice, because she thought it as a reprimand. When she realised the reason was to preserve her health, she said goodbye, happy, because she dreamed of returning to her mission after being cured.

In the 1948 film Drunken Angel by Akira Kurosawa (1910-1998), two main characters have tuberculosis. Matsunaga, who does not accept she is sick, becomes involved with a less convenient company leading to being fatally wounded by her ex-boyfriend, Okada, a former prisoner. Meanwhile, a student, also a patient of Sanada, chose to follow the doctor's advice when he abandoned his alcoholic habits, allowing him to regain his patients' respect. As he is about to scatter Matsunaga's ashes on his father's land, he learns that Miyo, his student patient, has been cured after all. He ends up celebrating with her instead, regretting the fact that Matsunaga did not listen to him.

The 1966 film This Property is Condemned, set in New Orleans, and directed by Sydney Pollack (1934-2008), tells a dramatic story about a love not fully understood and accepted, in which the female protagonist, Alva, eventually falls ill and dies of tuberculosis.

The 1967 film Mouchette directed by Robert Bresson (1901-1999) and based on the novel of the same name by George Bernandos (1888-1948), also deals with this subject.

The 1970 film Brzezina, directed by Andrzej Wajda (1916-2016), inspired by the life of painter Jacek Malczewski (1854-1929), also focuses on the subject of tuberculosis, through the story of a couple, Boleslaw, a pianist, and Barbara who dies much earlier, so the former becomes very depressed and goes to live alone in a forest, visiting the grave of his beloved every day. One day Boleslaw receives a visit from Stas, his brother, who had come from a sanatorium in Switzerland. While Boleslaw shows difficulty in starting new emotional relationships, Stas' clinical situation worsens, and he asks his brother to bury him with his sister-in-law.

The 1981 film Priest of Love, directed by Christopher Miles (1939 –), was inspired by writer David Lawrence (1885-1930), best known by the name DH Lawrence, who was affected by the disease, with the purpose to commemorate the centenary of his birth. The title comes from the quote, "I will always be a preacher of love and with great joy. As soon as one becomes truly aware of its enormous power, there will never be any disillusionment or despair."

Heavenly Creatures, 1994, directed by Peter Jackson (1961-), tells the dramatic story of young Juliet who, in addition to being diagnosed with tuberculosis, had to endure the jealousy provoked by her boyfriend, Pauline, who, during their estrangement following that diagnosis, fell in love with someone else, in addition to the suspicion that he was perhaps an unacknowledged homosexual. More so, her parents, considered a model couple, divorced when it was discovered that her mother had an affair with her psychiatrist, although her father supposedly already knew this for some time. The film ends with the young couple getting caught committing a murder, arrested and forbidden to meet again after their release since, despite the seriousness of the crime, their young age meant that the sentence was only a few short years.

The 2001 film Moulin Rouge by Baz Luhrmann (1962 -), a musical drama, was partly inspired by the operas of Puccini and Verdi, mentioned above, and the dramatic life of the inimitable painter Toulouse Lautrec, in which the character Satine suffers from tuberculosis, leaving her lover, Christian, a poet, inconsolable at the loss of her love.

Finally, the 2009 film Bright Star, directed by Jane Campion (1954 -), portrays the story of the poet John Keats who, as I will mention later, besides having studied medicine, was one of the exponents of the poetry of the Romantic era in England. He died at twenty-five as a victim of tuberculosis, just like his brother Tom and, almost a decade before, their mother.

To end this chapter, we should note that the life of René Laennec (1781-1826), physician and inventor of the stethoscope, also a victim of consumption, was also made into a film in 1949 by the director Maurice Cloche (1907-1990).

In literature

Notable examples are worth highlighting in literature Vidal et al. (2006); Chalke (1962); Self (2022). Samuel Richardson (16891761), one of the great British writers of his time, wrote Clarissa in 1748, and it is generally considered his most accomplished work. The main character that gives the book its name becomes involved in a complicated love affair and dies. Richardson describes it in a good way, with what is used at that time to characterise those affected by this illness from an aesthetic point of view, saying that even when bedridden, she was still capable of awakening the following feelings: "one cannot stop to contemplate the adorable corpse and admire the enchanting serenity of her haughty aspect". Those around added, "They never saw such a lovely dead woman before, for she looked more like she was sleeping, still with her cheeks and lips flushed."

In Victorian England, nobody surpassed Charles Dickens (1812-1870), embodying the social chronicler. He saw, with rare critical sharpness, the human dramas brought about by the Industrial Revolution in terms of the exponential increase of the population in the outskirts of the great cities of the United Kingdom and the inherent degrading working and living conditions, where tuberculosis (adapted the term "consumption" which he used extensively), raged menacingly, causing many victims, as reported in several of his books (Boev, 2021; Hagele, 2022), particularly in Dombey and Son, 1846.

On the other hand, Emily Brontë (1818-1848) Helm (2002); O´Callaghan (2022) published only one novel, Wuthering Heights, 1847 (adapted for film in 2010 by Andrea Arnold, 1961-), which had a completely different stance from previous writers. She lived a life full of tragic events, including the death, probably from tuberculosis, of four of her siblings, two of them in childhood. This perhaps contributed to her being very withdrawn and deeply introspective, trying to hide her writings, which also included poems, discovered at a certain point by her sister, also a writer, Charlotte Brontë. Tuberculosis runs throughout the book, with Catherine, the main character, dying from it. The author describes her in a very romantic way, as was the rule in those days, saying, "She was rather thin but young, and fresh-complexioned, and her eyes sparkled as bright as diamonds". The painting entitled The Brontë Sisters of 1834 by Branwell Brontë (1817-1848) (Fig. 16), where, in addition to the complexion of the three characters, we see that, although half hidden, the figure of the painter (and brother) is also concealed. It symbolises the family conundrum experienced by all since the artist died from the same infection a few years later, as he suggestively caricatured in a drawing of 1848 (Fig. 17).

Figure 16

Figure 17

In France, the novel by Alexandre Dumas (son) (1824-1895) Lady of the Camellias, 1848 Groos (1995), also bears a robust autobiographical stamp since the author is the illegitimate son of the great writer Alexandre Dumas (father) and a simple seamstress (in turn, daughter of an Italian black woman) who met a tragic end of life due to tuberculosis. This forever marked the writer psychologically and was strongly reflected in the literary work he left behind. It was adapted for theatre and opera and inspired movies, as mentioned above. It was based on real facts, where Marie Duplessis (1824-1848), a slender courtesan with a pale face and slanted Japanese-like eyes, (see Fig. 1), it was said she was a lover of both the writer himself and the composer Franz Liszt. Duplessis was particularly fond of flowers and died of tuberculosis at 23. Dumas stated something about the disease that transpires the thinking of the time: "It is fine to suffer from the lungs; everyone has tuberculosis, especially poets; it is typical to expel blood when a strong emotion arouses coughing, just as it is common to die before the age of thirty". The novel was adapted into a film by Raymond Bernard (1891-1977) in 1953.

American abolitionist Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896) D'Amico (2022); Gordon-Reed (2011); Wraab (2020) also dealt with this theme in her book Uncle Tom's Cabin, 1852. The book had a significant impact at the time, to the point of being the best-selling book of the 19th century, right after the Bible. Stowe was allegedly accused of triggering the US Civil War with its publication when she met with future president Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865). The novel has had several adaptations for theatre and cinema. The most notable being those by George Aiken (1830-1876) in 1852 for theatre. In cinema, during the silent era, adaptations by Harry Pollard (1879-1934) in 1927 and one by John Gay 1924-2017) in 1987. The events that stimulated the decision to write this book were related to the writer's manifest disagreement with the publication of the so-called Fugitive Slave Act in 1850, as well as in the real life

of a writer and former slave refugee in Canada, Josiah Henson (17891883), author of his autobiography published in 1849, which she read, and, whose house was later transformed into a museum. In a later publication, entitled A Key to Tom's Cabin, published in 1853, the writer admitted having been influenced by other sources, namely the collection of depositions made by Theodore Dwight (1803-1895), which was materialised in the edition of American Slavery As It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses.

It was initially intended to come out in fascicles, but due to its enormous success, its publisher, John Jewett (1814-1884), suggested that it take the definitive form of a book with illustrations by Hammatt Billings (1818-1874). It defends Christian values regarding human relationships. Harriet said that the destructive nature of slavery revealed itself above all when it "caused forced separation from family members", which she classified as an "outrage to people's feelings and affections". Although tuberculosis is not explicitly described, many authors find sufficient reason to associate it with the description of young Eva's illness, not only because of the clinical manifestations described (fig.15, taken from Encyclopaedia Britannica, author and date unknown) but also by the experience of the writer herself. Her mother's cause of death was due to this infection, as was common knowledge since it was responsible for about a quarter of all deaths in her country at this time. Through her death, Eve obtains the promise that the enslaved people will be freed by her father, which conveys a rather romantic vision of it.

Figure 15

Victor Hugo (1802-1885) Mahoney and Chorba (2019); Lewis (2016) made a fierce social criticism in the 1862 novel Les Miserables, in which the main character, Fantine, had to resort to prostitution to meet financial commitments she could not otherwise meet and eventually fell ill and died of tuberculosis. The dramatism of this story (Fig. 14), illustrated by Émil Bayard (1837-1891) in 1880 for one of his book editions, was also passed on to the theatre in the form of a musical, first performed on stage in 1985 in an adaptation by Robert Hossein (1927-2020), which subsequently toured the world, and also to the cinema in 2012 by Tom Hooper (1972 -).

Figure 14

In Russia, the work of the writer Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881) (University of British Columbia [UBC], n.d.) stands out. Crime and Punishment, 1866, The Gambler, 1867 and The Idiot, 1869 - of notorious autobiographical nature since the author was immensely marked by the death, by this illness, of both his mother and his first wife. The disease also afflicted the book's characters: Katerina Ivanovna in the first one, Kirilov in the second, and Ippolit and Marie in the third.

This exposition would not be adequately summarised without mentioning another style of literature commonly called "Diary". In this respect, what Marie Bashkirtseff (1858-1884), a Russian (Ukrainian) writer and painter, that was affected by tuberculosis and was companion of a great French painter Jules Lepage (1848-1884), is exemplary (Bashkirtseff, 1901; Schiff, 2022; Konz, 1995; Bashkirtseff, 2022).

Marie Bashkirtseff was dying of Tuberculosis. She spent her last weeks with her friend and fellow painter, Jules Bastien-Lepage. Jules was also dying of cancer. "I hide a mystery; death has touched me with its finger." And so it was. In the last days of the diary, written in 1884, some passages illustrate the author's despair, living in permanent anguish: "To think only that we live but once, and that this life is so short! When I think of this my senses forsake me and my mind becomes a prey to despair! [...] And I am losing this precious life, hidden in obscurity, seeing no one. [...] And my life is being ruined. [...] And I am made to waste my time miserably. And the days are passing, passing, never to return, and carrying a part of my life with them, as they pass. [...] Must this life, already so short, be still further shortened, ruined, stolen – yes stolen – by miserable circumstances?" In this diary, the following passages should also be highlighted:

Wednesday, October I: Nothing but sorrow and annoyance! But why write all this down? My aunt left for Russia on Monday; she will arrive there at one in the morning. Bastien-Lepage goes from bad to worse. I am unable to work. My picture will not be finished. Here are misfortunes enough! He

is dying, and he suffers intensely. When I am with him I feel as if he were no longer on this earth; he already soars above us; there are days when I feel as if I, too, soared above this earth. I see the people around me; they speak to me, I answer them, but I am no longer of them. I feel a passive indifference to everything—a sensation somewhat like that produced by opium. At last he is dying; I still go to see him, but only from habit; it is only his shadow that is there: I myself am hardly more than a shadow. He is scarcely conscious of my presence. I am of no use to him; his eyes do not brighten when he sees me; he likes me to be there, that is all. Yes, he is dying, and the thought does not move me; I am indifferent to it; something is fading out of sight—that is all. And then everything will be ended. Everything will be ended. I shall die with the dying year.

Thursday, October 9 —It is as you see—I do nothing. I am never without fever; my physicians are a pair of imbeciles. I have sent for Potain and put myself into his hands again. He cured me once before. He is kind, attentive, and conscientious. After all, it seems that my emaciation, and all the rest of it, do not come from the lungs, but from some malady I contracted without knowing when, and to which I paid no attention, thinking it would go away of itself; as for my lungs, they are no worse than before. But it is not necessary for me to trouble you with my ailments; what is certain, however, is that I can do nothing. Nothing! Yesterday I went to dress myself to go to the Bois, and twice I was on the point of giving up, I was so overcome with weakness. I succeeded at last, however.

Sunday, October 12 —I have not been able to go out for the past few days. I am very ill, although I am not confined to bed. Potain and his assistant come to see me on alternate days. And how shall I be able to go see Bastien-Lepage?

Thursday, October 16 —I have a constant fever that is sapping my strength. I spend the whole day in the drawing-room, going from the easy-chair to the sofa and back again. Dina reads novels to me. Potain came yesterday, and is to come again to-morrow. This man is no longer in need of money, and if he comes to see me so often, it must be because he takes some little interest in me. I cannot leave the house at all, but poor Bastien-Lepage is still able to go out, so he had himself brought here and installed in an easy-chair, his feet supported by cushions. I was by his side, in another easy-chair, and so we remained until six o'clock. I was dressed in a white plush morning-gown, trimmed with white lace, [...] Bastien-Lepage's eyes dilated with pleasure as they rested on me. "Ah, if I could only paint he said. And I! There is an end to this year's picture!

Saturday, October 18 —Bastien-Lepage comes almost every day. His mother has returned, and all three came today. Potain came yesterday: I am no better.

Sunday, October 19 -Tony and Julian are to dine with us tonight.

Monday, October 20 —Although the weather is magnificent, Bastien-Lepage comes here instead of going to the Bois. He can scarcely walk at all now; his brother supports him under each arm; he almost carries him. By the time he is seated in his easy-chair the poor fellow is exhausted. Woe is me! And how many porters there are who do not know what it is to be ill! Emile is an admirable brother. He it is who carries Jules on his shoulders up and down their three flights of stairs. Dina is equally devoted to me. For the last two days my bed has been in the drawing-room, but as this is very large, and divided by screens, poufs, and the piano, it is not noticed. I find it too difficult to go upstairs. The journal stops here. Marie Bashkirtseff died eleven days later, on the 31st of October, 1884.

Despite her apparent limitations, Jules Lepage left a self-portrait evocative of her state of mind, having forever lost the friend with whom he shared their last days (Fig. 18). Bashkirtseff was known in French high society, where she lived almost her entire life as La Dame en Blanche (Lady in White), given her vast beauty. Several epitaphs were placed in the mausoleum that her friends had built, including an architect and also painter, Jules' wife, Emile (1854-1938), a / And the flower's immortal perfume remains".

French poet André Theuriet (1833 - 1907) O Mary ! O you in white O you of radiant beauty / Your being is not gloomy in the pitch - black night / Your spirit is alive, vibrant and is its memory

Figure 18

It would be unthinkable not to mention The Magic Mountain, 1924, by Thomas Mann (18751955) Wilson (1966); Vidal et al. (2006); Abrahão (2020); Silva (2017); Bamforth (2009); Meyers (2017); Humphreys (1989). Nobel Prize in Literature 1929 winner. It is considered by many to be the most profound on this theme, which extrapolates past experiences by accompanying his wife, Katharina (1883-1980), when she was hospitalised at Davos sanatorium in Switzerland, where she moved to take refuge after Hitler's rise to power soon after having been in the USA. Mann was also ill and was suspected of contracting tuberculosis, which meant he had to undergo temporary surveillance until it was concluded, with the scant means available at the time, that he was spared. This novel, written between the two World Wars, presents the sanatorium

as a world in itself by allowing time to be suspended and to acquire a rhythm of its own. One gathers immense reflections on the meaning of life and death from the characters' dialogues. The author wrote, "A human being who lives first of all as an invalid is only a body; and that is the most inhuman of debasements. In most cases he is no better than a cadaver [...] illness meant an overemphasis on the physical, sent a person back to his own body, cast him back totally upon it, as it were, detracted from the worthiness and dignity of man to the point of annihilation by reducing man to mere body".

Also worthy of note is writer Somerset Maugham (1874-1965) Simkin (2022); Helman (2002), a doctor by academic training who never practised as a physician but devoted himself exclusively to writing. He had a traumatic childhood due to the death of his mother from tuberculosis when he was only eight years old and, about two years later, of his father, to the extent that he has written that these events "were a wound (in his soul) that never completely healed". Just as he would lose to tuberculosis, his secretary and lover Gerald Haxton (1882-1944), about which he left saying, "In one way or another, albeit indirectly, everything I have written during the last twenty years has to do with him". A paternal uncle raised him and he never fully assumed his homosexuality. Maugham was married for twelve years and had a daughter, which he later confessed was a real frustration he regretted. Despite never having practised medicine as a student, he never failed to reflect an eminently humanistic vision of the profession. He said, "I was in contact with what I was most looking for, life lived to the limit […] I saw how human beings die […] I saw that hope can represent both fear and relief from suffering […] I saw the dark expressions of despair stamped on the faces of the patients". He also contracted tuberculosis, leaving a 1938 booklet entitled Sanatorium about his experience during the disease at the Nordrach-on-Dee Sanatorium, sadly destroyed for somewhat obscure purposes in 2016. During his stay a few years later in a Trudeau sanatorium where he accompanied his beloved's illness, he wrote, "The great tragedy of life is not that men perish, but that they cease to love".

In Portuguese literature, we must mention the novel Amor de Perdição (1852) by writer Camilo Castelo Branco (1825-1890) Flor and Diniz (2014); Fiolhais (2022), one of the most prolix in the national literary panorama. Camilo had a troubled life, full of adventures and great passions, exacerbated by his bellicose and phlegmatic personality. He was of aristocratic origin and studied Medicine, first and then Law, having been a patient and confidant of Ricardo Jorge (1858-1939). He suffered significant traumas, including the loss of a stepson and, at a later stage, was confronted with some illnesses (possibly tertiary syphilis with compromised eyes and consequent blindness), which he refused to accept, committing suicide shortly after a medical consultation where it was understood that he was going to be hopelessly ill forever. The main character, Teresa of the novel, dies of tuberculosis in the convent where she was staying after a "forbidden" love affair because she was a nun.

In the 1868 novel A Morgadinha dos Canaviais by Joaquim Coelho, better known as Júlio Dinis, Portuguese physician and writer (1839-1871) (Fiolhais, 2022; Carneiro, n.d.; Grieben, 2016), the character Henrique, who has tuberculosis and subsequently dies from it, like the mother, two brothers of him as well as the writer himself, a reality that may have contributed to this characterisation. The novel was adapted to the cinema in 1949 by Caetano Bonucci (1913-1953), an Italian engineer and filmmaker born in Cape Verde.

Recently, another book entitled A Febre das Almas Sensíveis, 2018, by Isabel Rio Novo (1972-) (61) addresses the problem of senatorial hospitalisation in the first half of the 20th century in 19 20 Portugal, where well known Portuguese personalities of literature such as Soares dos Passos, Júlio Dinis and António Nobre are mentioned as characters in the book.

In Poetry

Several illustrative examples can be cited in this form of artistic expression. Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894) Faherty (2017); Heitman (2015); Morens (2002) was one of the great poets of this stylistic type and an inveterate traveller, being one of the most translated British authors ever. Lawyer by academic training, he never practised law to devote himself exclusively to travelling and writing. Stevenson had childhood respiratory issues, as did some of his closest relatives, which led some authors to consider he might have bronchiectasis, sarcoidosis or even familial telangiectasia, which made him move domicile frequently to escape the harsh climate of England and the USA, where he also lived, as his wife was American. He and his family found refuge in the Samoan Islands, where he died. On his grave, the following epitaph was written, using his words: "Under the wide and starry sky, Dig the grave and let me lie. Glad did I live, and gladly die, And I laid me down with a will. This be the verse you grave for me: Here he lies where he longed to be". His consumptive state and slow evolution were interpreted as having originated from infection by Koch's bacillus, for he had frequent fits of hemoptysis and died with extremely thin. This can be seen in an 1887 painting (Fig. 19) by John Singer Sargent (1856-1925).

Figure 19

George Byron, aka Lord Byron (1788- 1924) Morens (2002); Black (2022); Lawlor and Susuki (2000), was another great poet of that generation and one of the leading exponents of that artistic movement, having known and befriended other poets. He loved the Sintra Mountains in Portugal, where he briefly stayed during the French invasions. He was also affected by tuberculosis and left saying of himself that "I will like to die of consumption, because women have more compassion when they see a sick man on his deathbed […] and they will be able to say: you see poor Byron, how beautiful he is when he dies", an expression that some authors have classified as "cemetery poetry", capable of "finding beauty in the horror and melancholy of phthisis". Lord Byron's attitude towards himself and illness was well illustrated in two paintings (Fig. 20), by Thomas Philips (1770-1845) dated 1813 and Joseph Odevaere (1775-1830) dated 1826. He died dramatically from a feverish illness while a soldier in the war of independence that opposed Greece against the Ottoman Empire and is therefore considered a hero to the Hellenes.

Figure 20

John Keats (1795-1821) Frith (2014); Smith (2004); Maloney (2014); Dubovsky (1981) was one of the most significant authors of Romanticism in England, even though he died at twenty-five, shortly after giving up his medical studies, a profession he never exercised, having decided to devote himself exclusively to writing. As well as dying from tuberculosis, he saw his mother die from the same disease when he was only fourteen. His contemporary, Percy Shelley (1792-1822), also one of the exponents of that same movement, published in his honour Adonais: an Elegy on the Death of John Keats in 1821, where he wrote: "Ah even in death he is beautiful, beautiful in death, as one that hath fallen on sleep." Keats, for his part, said, "Of godlike hardship tells me I must die like a sick eagle looking at the sky. [...] —I Know the colour of that blood. It is arterial blood. I cannot be deceived by that colour;—that drop of blood is my death-warrant;—I must die."

On the other hand, Shelley Johnson (2022); Wilcockson (2022), Moorman (1939); VanDyke (2022) said this about his dying friend: "You may still look like a consumptive one. This appearance reflects a disease commonly found in poets such yourself" Shelley, a militant atheist, once took anatomy classes to become a doctor. According to some authors, Shelley died from tuberculosis to the extent that it was interpreted that part of his heart resisted the incineration since it was partially calcified. His wife, writer Mary Shelley (17971851), author of the novel Frankenstein, kept it until her death as if it were a secret talisman. This relationship, considered scandalous by the moral parameters of the time, was partly recorded in the 2017 film Mary Shelley by Saudi director Haifaa al-Mansour (1974 –), as in the painting (Fig. 21) Shelley's Funeral, 1889, by Louis Fournier (1857-1917).

Figure 21

In Portuguese poetry Fiolhais (2022); Rosemberg (1999), António Augusto Soares de Passos (1826-1869) stood out. Having died of tuberculosis, Soares de Passos had the following epitaph placed on his grave: "Here lie decayed bones, cold ashes / they will make the brief days of my life / mortal if what you see does not overcome / listen to the tremendous voice that speaks to you / remember you are dust and in the way / sooner or later you will become dust".

Also worthy of mention is the figure of António Nobre (1867-1900), a Political Science graduate in France, and diplomat, who wrote of the tuberculosis that victimised him when he was still young: "gravedigger, my friend! open the grave for me / deep, as deep as the black sea / I want to sleep, at last / the millennial night in that hidden grave".

In Music

Apart from the Opera previously mentioned, references to the disease are scarce Wikipedia contributors (n.d.). Noteworthy, however, are two Blues compositions. The first, entitled "TB Blues", 1931, by Jimmie Rodgers (1897-1933), who died of tuberculosis, and "TB Sheets", 1967, by Van Morrison (1945 -), who tell us about his somewhat claustrophobic experience with a companion who suffered from tuberculosis and was locked in a room, having written in the song "so, open up the window and let me breathe, I said, open up the window and let me breathe", indeed translating a moment of great experiential anguish.

Personalities affected by Tuberculosis

"Man cannot possess anything as long as he fears death. But who does not fear it, possess everything" Leo Tolstoy, Russian Writer, 1828-1910

Although it is not my purpose to present an exhaustive list, some personalities, besides the ones in the text, deserve to be highlighted, given their notoriety in various domains, especially in the artistic field, and with particular reference to those of Portuguese nationality (Vidal et al., 2006; Self, 2022; Wikipedia contributors, n.d.; Abbott, 1982; Asensi, 2020;

Breitenfeld et al., 2018; Hoakley, 2021; Pawels, 2022, Rosário, 2021; Mahito, 2000; Andrade, 2018).

I settled on chronological order, as in the other sections.
Armand du Plessis, known as Cardinal Richelieu, French statesman and clergyman (1585-1642); Jean Poquelin, better known as Moliére, French playwright (1622-1673); Paulus Potter, Flemish painter (1625-1654); Baruch Spinoza, Dutch Sephardic philosopher of Portuguese descend (1632-1677); Henry Purcell, British composer (1659-1695); Jean Wateau, French painter (16841721); Henry Fielding, British writer (1707-1754); Giovanni Draghi, known as Giovanni Pergolesi, Italian musician and composer (1710-1736); Lawrence Sterne, British writer (17131768); Michael Haydn, Austrian composer (1727-1806); Luigi Boccherini, Italian musician and composer (1743-1805); Michael Bruce, Scottish poet (1746-1767); Johann von Goethe, Germanic thinker (1749-1832); Friedrich Schiller, Germanic physician, poet and thinker (17591805); Francisco Vieira, better known as Vieira Portuense, Portuguese painter (1765-1805); Georg Hardenberg, better known as Novalis, Germanic poet and thinker (1772-1901); Thomas Girtin, British painter (1775-1802); Jane Austen, British writer (1775-1814); John Constable, British painter (1776-1837); Niccolò Paganini, Italian musician and composer (1782-1840); Kirke White, British poet (1785-1806); Carl Maria von Weber, Germanic musician and composer (1786-1826); Eugene Delacroix, French painter (1798-1863); King Dom Pedro IV of Portugal, First Emperor of Brazil (1798-1834); António Feliciano de Castilho, Portuguese writer (1800-1875); Richard Bonington, British painter (1802-1828); Elisabeth Browning, British poet (1806-1861); Louis Braille, French inventor and musician (1809-1852); Walt Whitman, American essayist and thinker (1819-1892); Bulhão Pato, Portuguese poet (1829-1912); Gustavo Bécquer, Spanish writer (1836-1870); Edvard Grieg, Norwegian musician and composer (18431907); José Tomás de Sousa Martins, Portuguese physician (1843-1897); Paul Langerhans, German pathologist (1847-1888); Henri de Maupassant, better known as Guy de Maupassant, French writer (1850-1893), Maejer Haan, Flemish painter (1852-1895); Paul Ehrlich, Germanic microbiologist and immunologist (1854-1915); Cesário Verde, Portuguese poet (1855-1886); Júlio de Matos, Portuguese physician (1856-1922); Axel Munthe, Swedish psychiatrist and writer (1857-1949); Camilo Passanha, Portuguese poet (1867-1926); Raul Brandão, Portuguese writer and journalist (1867-1930); Charles Laval, French artist (1868-1916); Máximo Gorki, Russian writer (1868-1936); Aubrey Beardslay, British painter, 1872-1898; Rainer Rilke, Germanic poet, 1875-1926; Manuel Laranjeira, Portuguese physician and poet (1877-1912); Maria Blanchard, Spanish painter (1881-1932); Bela Bartok, Hungarian composer (1881-1945); Karol Szymanovski, Polish composer (1882-1937). Igor Stravinski, Russian composer (18821971); Franz Kafka, Czech writer (1883-1924); Amadeo Modigliani, Italian painter (1884-1920); James Innes, British painter (1887-1914); Juan Gris, Spanish painter (1887-1927); Francis Unwin, British painter (1885-1923); Guilherme Santa Rita, better known as Santa Rita Pintor, Portuguese painter (1889-1918); Mark Gertler, British painter (1891-1939); Erwin Schulloff, Czech composer (1894-1942); Florbela Espanca, Portuguese poet (1894-1940); John dos Passos, American writer of Portuguese descent (1896-1970); Ferreira de Castro, Portuguese writer (1898-1971); António Aleixo, Portuguese poet (1899-1949); Eric Blair, better known as George Orwell, English writer (1903-1950); Emmanuel Mounier, French philosopher (1905-1950); Dmitri Shostakovich, Russian composer (1906-1975); Adolfo Rocha, better known as Miguel Torga, Portuguese doctor and writer (1907-1995); Paul Gadenne, French writer (1907-1956); Miguel Hernandez, Spanish playwrighter (1910-1942); Albert Camus, French-Algerian writer (1913-1960); Nelson Mandela, South African politician and Nobel Peace Prize winner (19182013); Sebastião da Gama, Portuguese poet (1924-1952) and, Desmond Tutu, South African prelate and Nobel Peace Prize winner (1931-2021).

Concluding remarks

"Culture serves, fundamentally, to learn how to die" (José Riço Direitinho, Portuguese writer, 1965 -)

From what was exposed so far, we can conclude that as well as the title that I have decided to give to this historical overview on tuberculosis, this disease had not only an immense epidemiological impact throughout the history of the world (Frith, 2014; Barberis et al., 2017; Chalke, 1962; Daniel, 2006; Doria et al., 2017; Krause, 1996; Paulson, 2013) to the point that some experts admit that it has been, until today, and globally, the deadliest infection that ever existed (Paulson, 2013). In addition, in the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century (colleague Palma Rodrigues' book focuses on this period), it greatly influenced the creative activity of painters, writers, poets, playwrights, film-makers, thinkers, composers and musicians, besides infecting and causing the death of many of them, as mentioned above.

Although in some cases the illness has been confirmed by scientifically correct means, or even by autopsies, in other cases only the known biographical data and clinical descriptions, although not always in agreement, have stimulated this speculation which, almost certainly, will be entirely impossible to confirm one day. Thus, for example, some hypothesise that the brilliant Austrian composer Wolfgang Mozart (1756-1791) was also affected by it.

Its aetiology has been attributed over the centuries to various causes. Some attributed it to vampires, and others to amorous grief (Frith, 2014; Barnes, 1995; Chalke, 1962; Moorman, 1931). René Laennec was a doctor and died of tuberculosis, and he thought with conviction, as did François Arouet, better known as Voltaire (1694-1778), an illustrious French philosopher and writer, also affected by the same microorganism, that it would rather be melancholy, for he left it said that "among the causes of phthisis, I do not find any better explanatory cause than the sadness of unrequited passions, especially when they are deep and long-lasting". Others thought it was hereditary, as several family members were affected by it in successive waves.
Such was the case with painter Edvard Munch (1863-1844) Harris (2007); Jeanette (2020); Barnes (1995); Chorba and

Jereb (2017); Hoakley (2017), who saw his mother and sister die, and was later confronted with his father's psychiatric pathology, that said: "Two of the greatest misfortunes that can affect a human being, tuberculosis and mental illness, came to affect me as an inheritance […] the illness tormented me a lot throughout my childhood and adolescence […] Despite having been so close to it, I never really wanted to believe that death was inevitable. On the other hand, on second thought, with so much sickness and death in the family, I think we were all born for this". Munch bequeathed numerous touching canvases alluding to this enormous suffering (see Fig. 12). The same happened to other families, just like the previously mentioned Brontë sisters (Figs. 16 and 17).

From a psychological point of view, its impact was felt with great intensity, both by those affected by the same infection, and especially by relatives and friends, considering the emotional link to the patient, as well those that treat him, or, simply those share the same space.

Some records illustrate the inner suffering of its victims, well expressed by the English poet Alexander Pope (1688-1744) Papper (1989); Sharma (1999), for whom several authors attributed to "Pott's disease" his enormous physical deformity. "'My ill state of health ever since the cold weather began renders vain any such pleasing thoughts as of the enjoyment of your fireside: I cannot express how thoroughly I'm penetrated by the sharpness of it. I feel no thing alive but my heart and head; my spirit, like those in a thermometer mount and fall thru' my thin delicate contexture just as the temper of air is more benign or inclement".

We should highlight three Brazilian poets who died in their early thirties Rosemberg (1999); Cope (1955) Álvares de Azevedo (1831-1852) wrote: "Rest in my lonely bed / in the forest of forgotten men / in the shadow of a cross write on it / he was a poet, he dreamed and loved life". Castro Alves (18471871), on the other hand, said, "I know I'm going to die, inside my chest a terrible evil devours my life". No less movingly, Barbosa de Freitas (1860-1883) wrote, "it's early still, oh pale gravediggers! / I still want to live adventures, deceits... / I want to sing about my sweet dawn / which smiles at me, at twenty-two years old! / it's early still, oh pale gravediggers".

Moreover, finally, Kathleen Mansfield (1888-1923) Cope (1955); Mansfield, (1933), a New Zealand writer, wrote about her experience of hospitalization in a sanatorium in her diaries the year before she died of tuberculosis "The world as I know it is no joy to me and I am useless in it […] this isolation is death to me […] I do not want to earn a living: I want to live".

Another complementary vision, as a patient himself, was given to us by Anton Chekhov (18601904) Vilaplana (2017), a Russian doctor and writer, who, perhaps because he was not a layman, transmitted apart from anything else, disbelief, both in treatments and in life itself, as is evident in what he left written to his wife, in a letter dated about five years before he died. "I was diagnosed with pulmonary apical TB and accordingly awarded the right to describe myself as an invalid […] the idea of having to undergo treatment and fuss over my physical condition produces in me something akin to revulsion. I'm not going to be treated […] you ask if I am happy? The first thing I have to tell you is that I am ill. And I now know that I am very ill […] I feel as though I'm in prison and full of rage, terrible rage".

Emily Brontë adopted a similar posture Groos (1995). as she had a personality where great pride stood out and deep scepticism regarding the capacity of Medicine and doctors themselves. When stricken with tuberculosis, she refused, almost until the end, the help of sister Charlotte's doctor. However, by then, it was too late. Behind this attitude would be an unacknowledged but somewhat lucid posture of distrust of the real capacities for successful treatments prescribed by doctors or charlatans like the Russian writer did.

Perhaps the best way to translate the self-image of someone doomed to die soon from a drawnout and incurable illness was bequeathed to us through his self-portrait painted in 1824 (Fig. 22) shortly before his death, by the great French painter Théodore Géricault (1791-1824), not very different from the one painted by his friend Charles Champmartin (1797-1883), just before the artist's funeral. He attended the Salpêtriére Hospital, where his friend Étienne-Jean Georget worked (1795-1828). Georget was one of the first French doctors dedicated to Psychiatry and died shortly after Géricault from tuberculosis. The painter visited also other hospitals, like Beaujon and Bicêtre, where he drew inspiration to produce part of his work, whether on the physiognomy of psychiatric patients or on anatomical studies on corpses. He suffered and died from an incurable osteoarticular fistulized disease with a long evolution, which led him to profound cachexia, which is very clear in the two pictures below. This clinical picture could have corresponded to bone tuberculosis, according to some experts (Miller, 1941; Stirling, 1997; Blake, 2023, Michel, 1992; Snell, 2016).

Figure 22

The other complementary perspective is that which relatives, friends or cohabitants have of the illness affecting the person to whom they have deep emotional links. American poet and writer Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) Rutecki (2009); Galbo (2022) died at 40 of unknown causes, with several possible causes, including suicide, drug abuse, alcoholism, syphilis, cholera and rabies itself. Poe never recovered from the fact that his father left the family when he was one year old, his

mother died of tuberculosis the following year, his uncle, who assumed parental responsibility after, died when he was eleven, and his younger brother the following year. Nevertheless, above all, the irreparable loss of his lover, cousin Virginia, only thirteen years of age, whom they married, after having had the authorisation requested, also due to tuberculosis, at the end of a relationship which had lasted eleven years. These facts decisively influenced his literary style and themes. This tremendous literary figure described his beloved as "She was delicately, morbidly angelic", adding that "the death of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetic subject that exists", admitting some biographers that the writer himself was also affected by it. It is also worth quoting an excerpt from a poem alluding to this enormous suffering, where it says, sublimely: "Gently, most gently, on thy victim's head, / Consumption, lay thine hand! Let me decay Like the expiring lamp, unseen away, / And softly go to slumber with the dead".

While George Sand (1804-1976), French writer and lover of famous French-Polish pianist and composer Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849) (Galbo, 2022; Kongsgaard, 2011), that contracted tuberculosis and victimised him and lasted for a painful eleven years, exclaimed in an entirely nonchalant manner that his companion "coughed with infinite elegance". However, he could not help seeing in him "a poor melancholic angel", expressions that embody the notion of a double paradoxical facet with which this disease was seen in this period, as I have been arguing here (Lawlo & Susuki, 2000; Daniel, 2006).

This vision of the misfortune of the other has perhaps never been so well internalised and creatively expressed as in some paintings by the great Swiss artist Ferdinand Hodler (1853-1918) Stirling (1997), of which the one entitled The Disappointed Souls, 1892 (Fig. 23), is an excellent example. Hodler's life was filled with suffering since childhood. He first faced the death of his father, two younger brothers, and then his mother, all from tuberculosis, in his early teens. He later lost his beloved companion and model, Valentine, to a rapidly evolving cancer, greatly influencing the themes in many of his most successful works. Hodler himself died, thought to be by suicide, some four years after losing the company of Valentine.

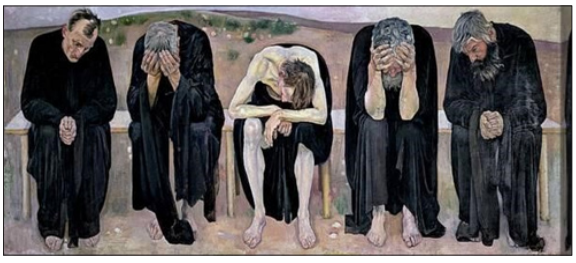

Figure 23

Another aspect of burning importance was the associated charge of stigmatisation, which was very well illustrated in what Anton Chekhov (1860-1904) (Vilaplana, 2017) vented to his wife in a letter already partially mentioned before "[…] nobody knows anything about my illness, so rein in your customary malice and don't blab about it in your letters". In essence, this state of mind was as if this stigma could lead the person to a deep loneliness, due to the fact of not being able to share their anguish with anyone else.

In Portugal, many families lived this drama, a reality registered in the tragic life of many patients that were treated in the multiple existing sanatoria (Lech, 2021; Almeida, 1995; Araújo et al., 1994; Carvalho, 2019; Maltez & Almeida, 2014; Nunes, 2022; Queiroz & Seda, 2011; Veloso, 2010; Veloso, 2012; Nunes, 2015; Rocha, 2015; Santos, 2010; Almeida, 2007). My family also experienced it. My paternal grandmother, Rita Poças, spent a long time in the sanatorium of Caramulo in the preantibiotic era, waiting to be able to marry my grandfather, José Martins. At the end of an interminable couple of months, she returned home, recovered and was able to construct her own family. She wrote a daily letter to her future husband, who always answered her with the same cadence. This marriage resulted in the birth of my father, Manuel Poças (the eldest son) and my uncle and godfather, José Poças.

My maternal grandparents had eight children living opposite my paternal grandparent´s house. My maternal grandfather Severo was my other grandfather's uncle; therefore, my mother was her father-in-law's first cousin. Two of the eight children died of tuberculosis - the eldest from a pulmonary form and the youngest from a meningeal one. After the last died, my mother became the youngest.

Next door to my paternal grandparents' house lived my maternal grandfather's older sister, Ana Martins, my great-grandmother. She married her uncle, who immigrated to Brazil, where he lived for many years, leaving there the rest of his siblings with numerous descendants. He returned to Portugal when World War II started. This last couple had twelve children born during my great-grandfather visits to Vilar do Paraíso. This village is said to be where Camilo Castelo Branco flirted with Fanny Owen, as told in Agustina Bessa Luís historical novel published in 1970 named after that famous character (Bessa-Luís, 2019), later adapted to the cinema by Manuel de Oliveira in 1981 under the name Francisca, who also died of tuberculosis. A fourth-generation cousin, Sara Xavier, still lives in that house and recently made the Martins family tree. Across the road, next to my maternal grandparents' house, lived my mother's godparents.

I visited those four houses several times a year when we went to Porto. My parents tried to explain the intricate web of kinship to me and my brother Jorge, and although I only understood it later, I tried also explain it after to my children and grandchildren. This was also the case when I visited my cousin Fernando Martins, former Director of Instituto Nacional de Café (National Coffee Institute) and later of the Bank of Brazil when I had the opportunity to meet all his six brothers. I showed them an old photo album I had inherited from my paternal grandfather, which contained many relatives who had stayed there and who, even today, I have no idea who they were. Travel story I told in my first book, Ode or Requiem (Poças, 2015).

When my mother was in her late teens, she was portrayed by her godfather, who died of tuberculosis shortly after finishing the painting (Fig. 24). After some time, she developed a tuberculous scrofula, treated with surgical drainage and streptomycin, the first antibiotic efficacious in this infection that was introduced into the pharmaceutical market in Portugal shortly before. Unfortunately, not in time to save the painter's life. Even today, my mother still denies having had tuberculosis, fighting back vehemently: "My doctor told me it was lymphatic ganglionitis", a popular expression aiming to hide the enormous burden of stigma associated with the disease, as I came to see when I witnessed the emergence of AIDS. I´ve treated, till today, hundreds of HIV patients who have never really been free of this stigma, as Susan Sontag emphasised so well in the extraordinary book from which I took the quotation I have chosen to begin this text.

I wrote it, therefore, as can be inferred, with much affection and nostalgia, for which I decided to dedicate it to my mother, not only for what I have already shared but also because I spent many hours in her room reading the studies about what I needed to write it, always listening to music in her company. Despite being very ill, with marked hypoacusis and old age, she loves music and reading and was a much-appreciated Fado singer and amateur theatre performer when she had tuberculosis. Today my mother is bedridden and ninety-two years old. In the few moments of lucidity that she still has when free from the inebriating effects of the opioid drugs she takes, my mother would certainly not remain indifferent to the simple farewell gesture if she could take note of it with the true awareness of yesteryear. Times have gone by, and it is not at all possible to imagine them ever coming back. Therefore, this text represents for me, and for some of the possible readers to come, an emotional farewell to my dear MOTHER, as I have just finish of written it, after having spent a whole night at her side, glimpsing in the pitch of the night, her faint breathing.

Figure 24 : Lucília Leite of 1946 by Bernardino Oliveira Dias (1909-1947)

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