

Documentation for

“The dead must be killed once again”: *Plagiotropia* as Critical Literary Practice

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This document presents a selection of texts from *Húmus* by Herberto Helder (1967) and displays the quoted excerpts from Raul Brandão's *Húmus* (1917). Translations by Isabel Basto.

References:

RAUL BRANDÃO (*Húmus*, 2nd ed, Lisbon, Aillaud & Bertrand, 1921; and *Húmus*, 3rd ed., Lisbon, Vega, 1991)

HERBERTO HELDER (*Húmus*, Lisbon, Guimarães, 1967; and *Húmus*, In *Poesia Toda*, Lisbon, Assírio & Alvim, 1996).

Herberto Helder - verses 1-8:

Yards with slabs uplifted by the sole

effort of grass: the castle

the staircase, the tower, the door,

the square.

All this floats under

water, under water.

- Do you hear

the scream of the dead?

Brandão:

A soiled village – deserted streets – **yards with slabs uplifted by the sole effort of grass - the castle** - the untouched remains of fortifications with no use. **A staircase** carved in the alveoli of walls leading nowhere. Only a wild fig tree succeeded in entering the interstice of stones and thereof extracts juice and life. **The tower - the door** of the Cathedral with the saints in their niches - **the square** with raquitic trees and a zinc bandstand. Over this a denigrated and uniform tone: moisture embedded into stone, the sun embedded into moisture. (Brandão 17)

All this seems to **float under water**, which greens **under water**. (Brandão 11, 2nd ed.)

All dreams are standing for a thousand years and a day. – Do you hear them? **Do you hear the scream of the dead?...** (Brandão 187, 2nd ed.)

Herberto Helder - verses 9-10:

The stone uncloses the relentless gold tail,
only the water speaks on holes.

Raul Brandão:

At every scream grows paler, blazing, changes color, **opens the golden tail**, from fall to fall.... The combat is **relentless** between the living and the dead, among the living and the dead. (Brandão 258-259, 2nd ed.)

And the silence is mounting. **Only water speaks on wholes** dilapidated from stones, in dialogues that never cease, in a chorus of uninterrupted and fuzzy voices.... (Brandão 166, 2nd ed.)

Herberto Helder - verses 11-20:

They are words pronounced afraid of landing,
an afternoon coming on tiptoe, the sound
slowly of a
butterfly.

- Death does not have

only five letters. As the clarity on the water

to make me dizzy,

the stonework

carved:

with a people of statues on top,

with a people of dead below.

Raul Brandão:

Her **words** rare and small, **pronounced afraid of landing**, saddened me, and the paleness the black hair was framing made her look like a creature not belonging to this world. (Brandão 177, 2nd ed.)

Now I remember her as **an afternoon coming slowly on tiptoe**, and clinging to a minute, to silence, to things suspended in the light of the buttons about to open. (...) Now I do remember her as an afternoon coming **slowly** on tiptoe, and clinging to a minute, to silence, to things suspended in the light of the buttons about to open. (Brandão 57)

... more screaming to the world, more volcanoes of colors that portend disaster, and a buffered noise, weird, unbearable within ourselves, that I can only compare to **the sound from a butterfly** flapping against the walls of a vase. (Brandão 175)

That is why I insist that **Death does not have only five letters**, but the most beautiful, the most tremendous, the deepest of mysteries. (Brandão 101)

In my soul is reflected the dialogue of the universe **as the clarity on the water to make me dizzy**. (Brandão, 210 2nd ed.)

A street descends to the church in **stonework carved**... The stone crumbles, but I contemplate it alive, **with a people of statues on top, with a people of dead below**. (Brandão 27)

Herberto Helder - verses 21-22:

Ecstatic Springs, black spaces, unreasonable flowers

- every day in vain we repel the dead.

Raul Brandão:

Spring is here, but behind this blooming branch there once were in layers of golden springs, immense **ecstatic springs**, and **unreasonable flowers** behind this tiny blossom. (Brandão 173)

The night had, of course, such deep darkness and so **black spaces** that only the vacuum inhabited them... (Brandão 244, 2nd ed.)

Every day in vain we repel the dead - every day the dead mingle with our life. And do not quit. (Brandão 27)

Herberto Helder - verses 23-29:

It is necessary to create words, sounds, words

bright, obscure, terrible.

An oil lamp comes from woman's hand

to woman's hand, leaning

over a greatness.

Augments.

- Who is screaming?

Only the water speaks on the holes

Raul Brandão:

With words we construe the world. It is with **words** that the dead impose on us. It is with **words**, that are just **sounds**, that we build everything in life. But now that values have changed, what is the use of these words? **We need to create** different ones, **obscure, terrible**, in the **bright** flesh, that translate the anger, the instinct and bewilderment. (Brandão 196)

Joana is **leaning over greatness** that I cannot afford. She resists, fights and dares. **Increases**. And in the world only she does not mind dying. (Brandão 164)

...I can hardly distinguish life in the condensed darkness - a tiny light from **an oil lamp** that for centuries **comes from woman's hand in woman's hand**... Everything is back to gray. (Brandão 168)

The howl does not cease. Irritant. It fills the whole world. **Who is screaming?** We are? (Brandão 180)

Herberto Helder - verses 31-35:

We touch each other as trees in a forest
inside the earth. We are
a reflection of the dead, the world
is not real. To bear this and not to die from awe
- the words, words.

Raul Brandão:

No one knows what they are capable of, no one knows himself, let alone others, and only skin deep or deep within do **we touch each other as trees in a forest** - in the sky and **inside earth**. (Brandão 47-48)

This life is made of all our efforts and the efforts from the bottom. **We are just a reflection of the dead** and now that you want to talk with your voice, orders are more categorical and the conflict monstrous. (Brandão 177)

Behind that wall is the endless sky. To **not to die from awe** and **to bear this**, not to be alone and crazy, I invented the insignificance, **the words**, honor and duty, conscience and hell. And yet words are all we have, to have something to cling to. Is It then a world of formulas that I obey and you obey? Without it we could not exist. If we saw what is behind we could not exist. Our **world is not real**: we live in a world as I understand and explain it. (Brandão 49)

Herberto Helder - verses 36-42:

The coral moon rises

in silence, behind

the mountain in bone. It is the silence.

The silence and what is created in silence.

What stirs in silence.

It is a voice.

Death.

Raul Brandão:

The night is ostentatious. **The coral moon rises behind the mountain in the bone**, and afterwards in the chamfer of the battlements. (Brandão 35)

The silence... The worst of all **is the silence, and what is created in silence, What** I can feel that **stirs in silence...** (Brandão 38)

It is a voice - there are many voices. It is a scream – there are many screams. (Brandão 42)

The same sticky web and involves and neutralizes, and only one noise prevails, from **death**, facing limitless time to gnaw. (Brandão 18)

Herberto Helder - verses 43-49:

- In the astounded afternoons I found
a standing tree, the size
of a building. The trees
go through winter, resurrect.
They are the successive springs, delicate, springs
frantic. The first springs.
Springs reaching the peak with the dead.

Raul Brandão:

What I want is to start life drop by drop, even in the smallest things. I did not notice that I lived and now it is too late. I feel grotesque. Restart it in the **astounded afternoons** in spring and in the joy of the instinct. **I found** recently a rotten **tree**, they've let it **standing**, and a single branch still green unraveled blossoming... (Brandão 37, 2ⁿd ed.)

You did not make a move in life without obeying conveniences and without consulting your meticulous code. You have an Input and Output **the size of a building**. (Brandão 104)

Even **the trees** are dreams. They **go through winter**, with confined dream, with the humble dream they carry for centuries. (Brandão 86)

The same time they are on their way, and tonight is eternal the ingrained spring, **resurrected** every spring, **the successive springs the first springs** in which tenderness is still confused with ugliness, in which ugliness is already tenderness other springs - others, gold, green, purple, in which paint flows from blackness and blackness becomes paint. Most other **frantic springs** more other springs shy, splendid, frustrated, violent, and **delicate** and others that did not open, cover all of the dead. (Brandão 85-86) **Springs reaching the peak in the living and in the dead**. (Brandão 189 2nd ed.)

Herberto Helder - verses 50-58:

I close my eyes: there is another enormous thing.

Behind this village there is another larger village, another

larger image. There are words

one must immediately sink in other

words.

- A monstrous life.

When I speak something else is there when

I shut up.

Other larger figure.

Raul Brandão:

There are times when face **other main figure**, which scares us... . The village is governed by secular habits and rules but **there is another huge thing** beyond the scenario surrounding me.... **I close my eyes. ... Behind this village there is another larger village...** There are words that require a pause and silence, and there are words that **one must immediately sink in other words.** (Brandão 25-26)

And this **monstrous** and grotesque **life** is the only one we can live, as is the only one we defend in despair. (Brandão 23) Everything I do is an attempt. **When I speak something else is there, when I shut up,** when I laugh. (Brandão 27)

Herberto Helder - verses 59-73:

I close my eyes: I see the gestures coming. The awe
studded of worlds walks
recklessly.

- I feel the dead

The earth swirls. From afar
arrives a thrust. Goes on its way the immense
rotting forest. One hears
the pain of the trees. We feel the pain
of beings

vegetative,

having to rush their
slow life. On its way
a rummaging darkness. And soon to arrive
the scattered springs,
one after another.

Raul Brandão:

I close my eyes. (Brandão 25)

I consider. **I see gestures coming**, the courtesies, the
actions of end of centuries. (Brandão 26)

One minute alone with **the awe, studded of worlds**, that
walks headlong in silence, lasts a century and yet another
century. (Brandão 38)

The night comes, the night progresses. **I feel the dead.** Still
alive, already in their hands: I am part of the legion. (Brandão
40)

The disturbed soil. I feel an effort and revives the sweat of
doom; an effort in depth, and **soon to arrive the scattered
springs, one after another**, blooming again. There are
tombs to the bottom of the globe. **From afar arrives a
thrust** – yet another dead. ... **A rummaging darkness**, until
now we could repress, broke free from darkness and went
on its way. (Brandão 41)

Is on its way the immense rotting forest, trees like I have
never seen trees, and other rampant and frantic beings.
(Brandão 44, 2nd ed.)

We feel, when we hear, **the pain of the trees, of beings,
vegetative, having to rush**, to change **their slow life**,
slowly dispersed in tenderness. (Brandão 35)

Herberto Helder - verses 74-82:

Crossing the world the strange wind. The dead
pushing the living.

It is the turmoil,

the weight of awe, the forces

monstrous and blind. The stone still awaits

to bloom, the sound

has a weight, there are embryonic souls.

- All this was made from the inside,

all this grew from the inside.

Raul Brandão:

A tragic blur steps through - another shapeless blur prepares.
The dead push the living. Goes through the world the strange wind; it is death, struggling to part from life. (Brandão 42)

...the brain hurts, the slow awakening of submerged voices, the discussion, **the turmoil**, and to be able to distinguish between so many mouths speaking. (Brandão 36)

Loading upon us such a burden that if noticing no one would bear it. **It is the weight of awe.** (Brandão 37, 2ⁿd ed.)

Behind the words that deceive you, that nourish you, magic words, I feel something messy and frantic, the awe, the mess, the pain, **the forces monstrous and blind.** (Brandão 28)

In minerals, in concentrated and repressed stone, what an unconscious pain, what a blind and dumb effort for not being able to rock the walls and communicate with the soul of the universe! **The stone still awaits to bloom.** (Brandão 32)

The sound has a weight not conform. (Brandão 29)

There are embryonic souls, old shopkeepers looking at themselves with terror. (Brandão 43)

All this was done from the inside - all this grew from the inside, so that if it were material it would not fit the world, with colonnades, porticoes, debris and undergrounds, as a Gothic cathedral. (Brandão 67)