

WHEN THE NAME IS *MAL-DICTO*: DALÍ - WAGNER - TRISTÁN AND ISOLDE ¹

Stella Maris Gulian (EFBA)

The opera "*Tristán e Isolde*" intertwines the lives of Dalí and Wagner, both taken by the myth, which tells us about the *mal-dicción* of names and the suffering of love; but each one will resolve it differently, leading it to tragedy or living a drama with a certain resolution. Wagner began to write it while in exile in Zurich where he and his wife stayed at the home of his admirer and patron Otto Wesendonck. Otto's wife, Mathilde, awoke in the composer an intense love that he will capture in this work, prompting him to compose it; love made of suffering and longing that the "infinite melody" masterfully expresses: that permanent desire, that impossible love made of the longing for a total union that will only be realized in death. Wagner, fascinated with the impossible, advances writing it and shares the scores with Mathilde.

Thus, at the end of the composition of the 1st Act, he wrote to her with this dedication: "*I deposit all this at your feet so that these sketches celebrate the angel who has transported me so high.*" R.W.

His wife Minna intercepts her and the scandal breaks out. Wagner will propose to Mathilde that they both separate so they can get married, but she does not accept, so the musician tells her that he only has to face his love, the possibility of *Entsagun*, giving up, resignation due to the impossibility of reaching it, which will capture in his "*Tristan and Isolde*", that eternal suffering of love.

The Wagners traveled to Venice and from there he wrote to Mathilde: "*The struggles we have sustained can only end with victory. For me, getting away from your side means dying. From the depths of my soul and for all eternity I must thank you for writing Tristan.*"

¹ Exhibition at the *VIII International Congress of Convergence Lacanian Movement for Freudian psychoanalysis*. Barcelona, May 26th, 2023.

The plot tells us about Tristán as a knight endowed with fame and honor who fights to increase the kingdom of his uncle to whom Ireland demanded an annual tribute of 600 young men. He travels for that purpose, but instead of paying the tribute, he challenges Prince Morold to a duel, killing him and sending his head as a trophy and an answer that Cornwall will never pay the tribute again. But in the fight he is wounded by the poisoned sword of the treacherous prince, so he will only be saved if he returns to Ireland to be cured by the magical arts of Isolde - Morold's betrothed princess - presenting himself under the false name of Tantris, an anagram of Tristan.

Healed, he returns to Cornwall and tells the king what happened, praising Isolde's beauty and arts. But, despite being the heir to his kingdom, he shields himself in his honor and his dignity to offer her as his wife, asking him to go find her and thus seal the peace between both kingdoms. It is at this point that the play begins, where they are both on the ship traveling to Cornwall.

Isolde, full of hatred and revenge, tells her maid that she will use one of the filters her mother gave her - the filter of death - to deceive him by offering it to Tristán as a reconciliation.

However, after drinking it, they both wake up aroused, trembling with a passion that grows more and more. Isolde, disturbed, asks her maid: "*What filter was that?*", to which she desperately replies: "*The elixir of love!*"

"Power, fame, honor, loyalty, all dissipate." Wagner writes in the opening program. *"Only one thing lives: longing (Entsagung), the insatiable desire that is eternally reborn, dying of thirst, faint, never waking up."*

In the second act they meet in secret and, together, they sing the "*Sublime Night of Love*", which shows the heartbreaking and painful fusion into a single being. *"Dying without names and without being separated, given to each other in an ardently desired death of love! An absolute fusion that denies difference. A figure of an unlimited enjoyment, the possibility of the impossible that we can only yearn for."*

The king discovers them and, furious, his guardian draws his sword and confronts Tristán who, regaining his lucidity, throws himself on him, placing his chest and mortally wounding himself in a successful act.

Legend has it that Tristán is the son of an eminent warrior married to the King's sister who, after the nuptial night, must leave to defend their lands. His pregnant woman was waiting for him until she found out that he died because of the duke's betrayal, who stabbed him with his poisoned sword.

With a melancholic state, she gives birth to a child whom she takes in her arms and says: *"My son, for a long time I have wanted to have you. Sad I give birth to you and sad is the first caress I give you. Because of you, I have a sadness that will kill me. And since you came into the world with sadness, you will be called Tristan."* Saying this, she kisses the boy and dies.

What does Tristan do with the name improperly called "own"? The myth tells us about a subject who cannot undertake or sustain anything in his name, except when he exchanges it for Tantris when he goes to Ireland to heal, betting on life.

Once his parents die, he remains in the care of the Mariscal, who manages to restore his lands. However, when the time came to receive his inheritance, he renounced it in favor of the Marshal and chose to become a vassal and servant of his uncle, King Marke. *"There are two men who helped me and I must call them father. A good man has two things of his own: his land and his body. Thus, I give my land to the Marshal; I give my body to the king, leaving my country to serve him."* Does he give everything out of love for his father?

When he meets Isolde, he renounces her since he can have nothing for himself, and gives her to his uncle in this melancholic position that inhabits him; just as at the end of the second act, when he commits suicide by placing his chest against the sword of the King's guardian when the affair is discovered.

In the last act, Tristán dies in the arms of his beloved and she, outside the world, sings - as if she were in a distant world - the melody of the supreme joy of Death for love, a melody that

Dalí will ask to hear on his deathbed. The melody ends with the word Lust (joyful desire) and she falls dead.

Wagner created for this opera the "Infinite Melody", an expression of the eternal suffering of love, *Entsagung*. But if love has to do with life, how can love be called a state that exalts suffering, and joy more than pleasure; the absence and the nostalgia of the beloved more than the presence?

Three years after its conclusion, Wagner will take the daughter of his friend Liszt as a lover, with whom he will have several children. What was left of that love? Perhaps his opera and his infinite melody, created thanks to his muse.

Drama is not a tragedy. The drama can become a tragedy depending on what the subject does with it. Drama has a resolution, while tragedy confronts us with failure. The drama tells us about a destiny written by previous generations that allows the subject the choice of escaping - or not - from said destiny. To be able to perform a torsion against the jouissance inscribed in the lineage, reorienting the desire and the modality of jouissance.

The myth of Tristán marvelously shows us the tragedy that is unleashed when the subject cannot get rid of the deadly status of the enunciation that bears his name, remaining fixed in the place of the ghost of the Other, reading his name from there. And Wagner brings it to life in his work, making him hold this suffering position. In Isolde he finds a look that leaves him out of the longing for death, taking him out of his fate. Love surprises him. He manages to change his name to Tantris, at which point the myth makes the subject speak, expressing his longing for life, since with the same letters he reads differently. Wonderful opportunity to twist a destiny. But the poet insists, the subject cannot question what comes to him from the Other and, reading it as a mandate, goes back in his act. There is no room for desire. *Mal-dicto* mandate. You will be called Tristan out of sadness.

Dalí loved Wagner and his music. His admiration was so great that he populated his house in Cadaqués with numerous sculptures of the musician's face. But his position in front of love and his *mal-dicto* name was different.

The name he carried, Salvador, was that of his older brother who died when he was six years old. His parents took him to the cemetery and, terrified, he looked at his own name written on the tombstone. *"During all my childhood, in my body and soul, I carried the clinging corpse of this brother, because my parents constantly spoke of the other Salvador."*

When Dalí met Gala, both were absolutely fascinated and, from that moment on, they would never be apart. Her biography is linked to hers: her muse, her love. Gala was the engine that put into action the creative genius - like Mathilde for Wagner - of Dalí. But she was not only her muse, but she actively collaborated in his work, until Dalí decided to include her in his rubric. *"By signing my works as Gala-Dalí, I am telling the truth, because I would not exist without my twin Gala. Deep down, you don't know where Gala ends and Dalí begins."*

Dalí, with his art and his love, achieves a possible knotting, even a body supported by Gala. Dalí's love for Wagner with his Tristán and Isolda, does it tell you about his love? Does it tell you of the *mal-dicto* name?

They were together for 53 years until Gala's death (1982). From then on, he starved to death. He had lost his sense of life, falling into decay and abandonment. Dying, he asked to listen to Isolde's final monologue, "Death of love", his meeting with Gala in the afterlife? The indissoluble union?

La femme c'est le sinthome, the place where Gala was summoned by Dalí. The fourth ring that remedies a flaw in the structure, summoned to the neighbor's place. Jouissance, love, and desire knotted by the fourth ring, which leaves the subject well knotted in the reunion with himself, making up for said failure. But with Gala dead, Dalí entered into a subjective collapse.