

## Amorous Melancholy and Black Bile in *Tirant lo Blanch*

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Deeply influenced by Renaissance theories on the alleged geniality of melancholic subjects or by critical literature about Cervantes' *Don Quijote* (1605 and 1615) and Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1626), it is easy to presuppose that medieval concepts of melancholy are identical to those described in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century manuals. Such studies also have a propensity to postulate that some melancholic literary characters, either correspond to known medical symptomatologies, or they have been purposely developed by following medical humoral theories in vogue at the time of composition.<sup>1</sup>

This estimation is not consistent, however, with what can be discerned in medieval culture in general. Although medieval medical discourse on melancholy shared commonalities with early modern melancholy, it conceptualized the condition as an illness and not as a heightened intellectual state or a divine gift. Medieval medical treatises also understood that "melancholy" could afflict every sufferer differently and that the term could reference a wide variety of states of mind.

On the other hand, all through the Iberian Middle Ages, literary discourse depicted, dramatized and scrutinized, sometimes censuring and sometimes praising, a wide array of melancholic types: from Hispano-Andalusi lyric to troubadour and Galician-Portuguese poetry, from the "novela sentimental" and chivalry romances to *Cancionero* poetry and *La Celestina*, portrayals of lovers afflicted with what Josiah Blackmore aptly labels "angst-ridden *coita d'amor*" (641)<sup>2</sup> pervaded medieval literature and culture, and a multiplicity of affective tropes were fashioned to encompass the various experiences of individual sufferers.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, while medieval communities seemed to have been familiar with medical discourse and were consciously aware of the characteristics and etiology of the disease of melancholy, literary texts expanded on medical discourse and problematized within a fictional and poetic space the many possible manifestations and effects of the disease on individuals, families and communities and on the body-politic in general. In this essay, I will focus on one such instance of a non-medical

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<sup>1</sup> Studies of the topic of melancholy in the Iberian 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries have focused primarily on explaining Don Quijote's madness and his psychological make-up by contrasting it to the prevalent medical discourse during Cervantes' times. Using as a reference the very popular Huarte de San Juan's *Examen de ingenios para las ciencias* (1575 and 1592) several scholars have attempted to categorize Don Quijote's mental disorder. Otis Green, building on Iriarte's study, claims that Don Quijote was a choleric. Chester S. Halka, Harlad Weinrich and Teresa Scott Soufas, instead, see Don Quijote as suffering from melancholy. See Robert Folger (*Images in Mind: Lovesickness, Spanish Sentimental Fiction, and Don Quijote*, 234-248) for a discussion of these approaches and a different interpretation of the *hidalgo's* malady.

<sup>2</sup> Josiah Blackmore, "Melancholy, Passionate Love, and the "Coita d'Amor." PMLA 124. 2 (2009): 640-646.

<sup>3</sup> A list of such fictional sufferers would be very long indeed: the poet Macías, Ardanlier, Amadís, Leriano, Calixto Grimalte, Grisel, etc. All texts in the genre of "novela sentimental", in fact, share the same focus: "the exploration of the emotional processes underlying and caused by 'amorous captivity'" (Folger, 63). For relevant studies about this Iberian genre's corpus as well as about contemporary philosophical treatises on love and lovesickness, particularly in university and courtly circles, see Patricia Grieve 1987; Guillermo Serés 1996; Antonio Cortijo-Ocaña 2001; Pedro Cátedra 1989 and 2001; Robert Folger 2002 and Sol Miguel-Prendes 2019.

text that explores melancholy from a secular perspective, the chivalry novel *Tirant lo Blanch* by Joanot Martorell (1414-1465).<sup>4</sup>

At its most basic and descriptive level melancholy was thought to originate because of excess or unnatural black bile secreted by the spleen. Due to the plethora of parallel medical, moral and literary discourses delving into the subject, however, the word “melancholy” resisted definition and categorization. In fact, in medieval texts there is great variability on the uses and meaning of the word *melancholia*. In the Iberian Peninsula, for instance, the term “melancolía” or “malenconia” was used often and could have various meanings. Sometimes it alluded to *acedia*, others to black bile (*atrabilis*)<sup>5</sup> and the Galenic humors (“la malenconia és seca per la terra e és freda per l’aygua” as described in Ramon Llull’s *Doctrina pueril*) and in yet other instances it could be used to refer to a variety of emotions such as sadness or anger (as in the following examples from *Tirant lo Blanch*: “ab molta malenconia que li restà,” “amb molta malenconia dix” or “tota roja de malenconia” [she was all red full of melancholy]).

Barbara Rosenwein, on the other hand, in her study of the emotions in the Middle Ages provides illustrative tables of those nouns and adjectives inherited from the Classical tradition which describe emotions and, remarkably, the words in Greek and Latin generally used for emotional states similar to melancholy tend to be words other than melancholy: sadness (*tristitia*), sorrow (*maeror*); anxiety (*acedia*; *anxietas*; *taedium cordis*); pain, distress (*aegritudo*); worry (*sollicitudo*); despair (*desperatio*); agitation (*conturbatio*); anger (*orge* in Greek, *ira* in Latin) (52-53).<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, several of these terms were not only considered emotions but sins as well. Rosenwein credits authors such as Evagrius, John Cassian and other Desert Fathers with altering Antiquity’s long-held views on emotions:

They turned some emotions into sins and thus freighted them with meanings not explicitly given other emotions... When emotions became sins, they ceased to be cognitive appraisals (as they had been for Stoics) and became, instead, part of man’s corrupt and fallible nature. (49)

St. Augustine of Hippo (d. 430) reconciled this dichotomy and gave a new direction to the emotions tradition. He conceded that most emotions are good, if rightly ordered, and bad, if directed erroneously. For Augustine the important factor is man’s will (*voluntas*) (Rosenwein 50). In an analogous way, the emotions triggered by melancholy could be perceived as sinful but, ultimately, it was understood that some individuals might be able to harness those emotions better than others.

Nevertheless, despite the terminological and moral or ethical instability of melancholy, medieval moralists, doctors and writers persisted in attempting to describe the effects of such

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<sup>4</sup> This chivalric romance was probably composed between 1460 and 1464 by the Valencian aristocrat Joanot Martorell, but it was not printed until 1490. In 1511 Diego de Gumiel published a Castilian translation of the novel in Valladolid. *Tirant lo Blanch* narrates the deeds and adventures of an errant knight from Brittany. His quest takes him to tournaments and jousts all over Europe until the Emperor of the Byzantine Empire requests his assistance in the war against the Turks. In Constantinople Tirant becomes the captain of the Byzantine army and falls in love with the heir to the throne, Princess Camesina. After many more adventures and a period of enslavement in the North of Africa, Tirant will eventually defeat the Turks and save the Empire but he will unexpectedly die of natural causes before his marriage to Camesina.

<sup>5</sup> *Melancholia* is, in fact, the Greek word for black bile (*melas* “black” and *kholē* “bile”) while in Latin the term is *atrabilis* (*atra*, black). An excess of this bile was believed to cause depression.

<sup>6</sup> Her sources are Classical authors, particularly Cicero, the Bible and its commentaries, and Patristic authors (Barbara Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006, 47).

malady. Preachers such as Francesc Eiximenis and Alfonso Martínez de Toledo or physicians such as Jaume Roig and Arnau de Vilanova illustrate in their treatises the symptoms, causes and effects as well as the possible remedies of melancholy, both the spiritual manifestation of “melancholy” (*acedia*)<sup>7</sup> or the more psycho-physiological variety, related to lovesickness. Medieval literary romances, particularly chivalry novels and sentimental fiction or “*novelas sentimentales*,” also offer us a wide array of melancholic heroes.<sup>8</sup> In most instances, these heroes’ lapses into melancholic states are not caused by humoral imbalances or black bile but, more frequently, by the pangs of *amor ereos* or *hereos*.<sup>9</sup> In some instances, this amorous melancholy (also called love-melancholy) does not only cause somatic symptoms such as headache and lack of appetite and a sense of withdrawal and sadness but can lead the sick hero to more desperate, destructive and violent pathologies.<sup>10</sup>

My aim here is to focus on an example of such extreme pathology caused by “*malenconia amorosa*” in the Valencian chivalry novel *Tirant lo Blanch*, composed around 1460 by Joanot Martorell. What differentiates the fictional Breton knight Tirant lo Blanch, however, from other literary lovers afflicted with amorous melancholia or love-melancholy is that the pathological perversion in this romance is not prompted by an obsessive *cogitatio* of the beloved’s image, as is envisaged and codified in medical and philosophical treatises, but it is triggered, instead, by a different image, that of his beloved engaging in sexual intercourse with what is perceived as a diseased Other, the Moorish gardener, Lauseta. It is this act that will shatter Tirant’s mental image of a perfect Carmesina, transforming her into an abominable being in Tirant’s eyes and, in turn, drive him to murder. In what follows, I will map out how this process unfolds through the narration and how, at times, it echoes and, at times, deviates from concepts found in the medical treatises.

As is well-known Greek physicians considered melancholy as an illness rooted in the body’s humors but for Plato and Aristotle melancholy could be both a pathology and a divine mania.<sup>11</sup> Based on their ideas, during the Renaissance and, particularly, thanks to Marsilio Ficino, those born under the sign of Saturn and thus influenced by the melancholy humor were thought to be endowed with divinely inspired poetic and prophetic powers. In the Middle Ages, on the other hand, melancholy was regarded as a physical disorder and, as it is implied in the *Libro de los buenos proverbios que dijeron los filosofos y sabios antiguos* (“la enfermedad que faze errar los físicos y non pueden dar consejo”), healers struggled to find the correct treatment.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Giorgio Agamben describes *acedia* as “a scourge worse than the plague” (*Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture*. Trans. R. L. Martínez, U of Minn Press 1993, p. 3).

<sup>8</sup> Since the scope of my article is merely one particular episode from *Tirant lo Blanch* I cannot expand here on this topic but it is clear that the figure of the love-stricken hero is paramount in most of the medieval Iberian literary texts and their extreme “*passión*” and obsessive behavior certainly corresponds with many of the characteristics of a melancholic. As it will be seen throughout the article, in this tradition it is very difficult to separate a sufferer afflicted with *amor ereos* from a melancholy sufferer.

<sup>9</sup> While the name *amor ereos* as the pathological version of love distinct from ordinary love originates from Eros and thus the correct spelling would be without the “h” it appears as though the conflation with *hereos* (from “hero”) started with Johannes Afflacijs’ translation (c. 1100) of the same Arabic text that Constantine translated in his *Viaticum*. By the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the idea that this type of love is more likely to afflict heroes and noblemen is firmly established.

<sup>10</sup> Patricia Grieve suggests that “the poetic paradoxes” of courtly love lyric once transferred to Iberian prose by way of the sentimental romances result in destruction and violence (119).

<sup>11</sup> Hippocrates advanced the theory that the body is governed by four humors: blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile. Later Galen will link the four humors with four temperaments or complexions: sanguine, phlegmatic, choleric and melancholic. Aristotle’s views on melancholy appear in the *Problemata* (particularly Problem XXX) but it is widely believed now that Aristotelian views on melancholy were probably written by Theophrastus or some other follower of Aristotle and not by Aristotle himself (Jackson, 310).

<sup>12</sup> I wish to thank my student Alodia Martín-Martínez for making me aware of this reference.

Aristotle and Rufus of Efesus established the foundations of what would become the medieval categorization of a morbid melancholy phenotype afflicted by exaltation or apathy caused by black bile, hence the name (Klibansky et al., 40-41; Jackson 32-33).<sup>13</sup> This phenotype and its origin, black bile, became a very useful tool for Christian moralists who interpreted the symptoms of melancholy as evidence of sin. Scholastic authors transmuted the constitutive nature of the original melancholy, which had no ethical valence, into a moral illness through an identification with *acedia* (Melián 2).

Treatises that aim at describing melancholy coincided in their imprecision and ambiguity. The etiology of the malady was so encompassing as to become useless; there were as many perceived causes of a melancholic state as there were patients. Likewise, the multiplicity of terms used to label a number of conditions that conflated with melancholy added to the confusion: *tristitia*, *acedia*, *ira*.<sup>14</sup> Even in such apparently systematically organized treatises as the *Corbacho o Reprobación del amor mundano* (1438) by Alfonso Martínez de Toledo, Arcipreste de Talavera, we can observe that medical discourse does not succeed in demarcating the differences between the complexions or *conplysiones* and that there is considerable overlap between the various characterizations.

Revealingly, although Alfonso Martínez de Toledo indicates that there are four types of man (the sanguine, the phlegmatic, the choleric and the melancholic), he, nonetheless, prefaces his description in the chapter titled “De las conplysiones” with the statement that there are many types of men and, consequently, it is difficult to identify them (particularly since, as he claims, their hearts are deeply hidden), and more difficult still to give each of them suitable advice:

En onbres ay muchas maneras, e por ende son malos de conoscer, peores de castigar. E por quanto es cosa muy fonda el coraçón del onbre, segund Salamon dize, por ende non solo por lo que de partes de fuera demuestra es conocido, mas aun por las calidades e conplysiones que cada uno tyene es por malo o bueno avido. E son en quarto prencipales maneras falladas, segund las calidades dellos: unos son secretos, callados, e de cortas razones, flemáticos, adustos; e otros son en otras tres maneras: unos sanguinos, alegres e plazenteros; [otros] colóricos e furiosos; otros malenconiosos, tristes e pensativos (180).

Furthermore, Martínez de Toledo also concedes that, in spite of this neatly devised categorization in four distinct types based on the bodily humors, no individual is only one of these things.<sup>15</sup> Instead, an individual’s personality and general state of health will be altered depending on which humor “señorea” or takes hold of the body at any given moment:

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<sup>13</sup> Rufus de Efesus (second century AD) wrote a treatise on melancholy now lost. For more on Rufus see Michael R. McVaugh’s introduction to his edition of Arnau de Vilanova’s *opus*, *Arnaldi de Villanova Opera Medica Omnia*, 3, 16-17. Rufus views on melancholy influenced Galen and Ishap ibn Imran and the latter’s work was the direct source of Constantine the African (Klibansky et al., 49; Jackson 36).

<sup>14</sup> Even in modern English the word “melancholy” has innumerable synonyms: desolation, sadness, pensiveness, woe, sorrow, unhappiness, dejection, depression, misery...

<sup>15</sup> This idea is consistent with the medieval medical view that each patient was distinctive and that this radical individualism required personalized diagnostics and tailored therapeutic treatments and remedies. Michael Solomon discusses this in his 2018 article “Breaking Nonnatural Bread: Alimentary Hygiene and Radical Individualism in Juan de Avión *Medicina sevillana*.”

Esto segund más o menos; que el onbre de todas quatro conplysiones es conpuesto, mas una dellas señorea el cuerpo más que non otra, segund que aqui diré de las conplysiones de los onbres (180)<sup>16</sup>

As he continues describing the four “conplysiones,” Alfonso Martínez de Toledo makes clear though that some types are better than others: “E quiero primeramente poner las conplysiones mejores, segund e de mayor exellencia e mejores.” In his formulation, curiously, the worst of all, placed in the last chapter (after sanguine, phlegmatic and choleric types), are melancholics:

*De como los onbres malencolicos son rifadores*

Ay otros onbres que son malenconicos. Estos tales son como los susodichos e aun peores; que son ayrados, tristes, y pense[ro]sos, ynicos e malyciosos e rifadores...Pero de otra parte son muy tristes e pensativos en sus malenconias, e buscan luego vengança (203).

Despite its inherently generic nature, this description of the *malenconico* will correspond with the behavior exhibited by the chivalresque hero Tirant lo Blanch in the episodes I will discuss below. After Tirant’s arrival to the imperial court of Constantinople and his infatuation with Princess Carmesina this epitome of chivalrous virtue and strength will indulge in bouts of profound sadness and melancholy, obsessive thinking and worrying and, eventually, uncontrollable ire and murderous vengeance.

The process of “enamoration” in the hero Tirant lo Blanch highly resembles both the rhetoric of courtly love and the development of lovesickness as described by the medical *auctoritates* in vogue through Antiquity and the medieval period. In that regard, the description of his pathology appears to be quite predictable in terms of following the expectations of the chivalry or sentimental romance. Nevertheless, this medieval romance departs from convention in two ways: first, although the hero’s behavior seems congruent with a melancholic type, the causes of the malady do not entirely correspond to medieval humoral theory; secondly, there are several instances where this romance departs from others in the genre by employing a series of rhetorical tropes based on the duplicity of mirrors and disguises. In what follows I will describe these original elements and departures from convention.

Tirant lo Blanch’s arrival to the capital of the Greek Empire, Constantinople, is marked by a scene which illustrates the hero’s symbolism as a harbinger of light into an utterly sad and despairing world.<sup>17</sup> Tirant and his companions enter the very dark and mournful chamber where the Empress and Princess Carmesina are overcome with grief for the death of the heir to the Empire in battle against the Turks. Tirant, who has come to assist the Greeks in their fight against their Muslim enemies, proceeds to request a torch and to open the windows to let the light into the room: “Aprés anà obrir les finestres. E aparagué a totes les dames que fossen eixides de gran captivitat, per ço com havia molts dies que eren posades en tenebres per la mort del fill de l’Emperador.” (Chapter 117, p. 373).

As Tirant liberates the court dwellers from their melancholic emotional “captivity” our hero becomes trapped into a prison of his own as he gazes upon Carmesina’s beauty and becomes

<sup>16</sup> Other medieval authors expressed the same idea. The poet Ausiàs March, for example, says: “Dins lo cors d’om les humors se discorden .../ en un sols jorn regna malenconia, / n’aquell mateix colera, sanch e fleuma.”

<sup>17</sup> Later on in chapter 264 the Viuda Reposada will reiterate this link between Tirant and light, going so far as to equate Tirant to Jesus: “car així com Jesucrist il.luminà los seus apòstols, així il.luminau vós a totes quantes són, com entrau per aquest palau.” (770).

ensnared in it. The ensuing chapter, aptly titled “Com Tirant fon ferit en lo cor ab una fletxa que li tirà la deesa Venus perque mirava la filla de l’Emperador,” describes the instant when Tirant falls in love with Carmesina. Here begin a series of situations that exemplify a series of innovative takes on the rhetoric of courtly love and the *amor ereos* to which I alluded earlier.

First, unlike other lovers in the medieval romance tradition, Tirant’s eyes do not fall upon the lady’s eyes but upon her breasts and it is through them that Tirant’s eyes become imprisoned: “mostrant en los pits dues pomes de paradís que crestallines parien, les quals donaren entrada als ulls de Tirant, que d’allí avant no trobaran la porta per on eixir, e tostemps foren apresonats” (Chapter 118, p. 374). The narrator insists, directly addressing the reader, that Tirant had never seen anything of such value, curiously using an image related to food, “past”: “Mas sé-us be dir, certament, que los ulls de Tirant no havien james rebut semblant past [...] com fon aquest de veure la Infanta.” (374)<sup>18</sup> Immediately after this scene, as if to more emphatically press the point, they all enter another chamber where all the walls are decorated (“hestoriada”) with stories of the most famous lovers: Flores and Blanchaflor, Tisbe and Piramus, Eneas and Dido, Tristan and Isolde, Guinevere and Lancelot.

Naturally, the concurrence of all these events has the expected effect and Tirant becomes lovesick and starts to experience all the symptoms of *amor ereos* or *hereos*: “Tirant pres llicència de tots e anà-se’n a la posada, entrà-se’n en una cambra e posà lo cap sobre un coixí als peus del llit. No tardà molt que li vengueren a dir si es volia dinar. Dix Tirant que no, que lo cap li dolia. E ell estava ferit d’aquella passió que a molts engana” (Chapter 118, 374). When Diafebus inquires as to Tirant’s ailment, Tirant very easily diagnoses it with a memorable wordplay: “jo no tinc altre mal sinó de l’aire de la mar qui m’ha tot comprès” (Chapter 118, 375) which can be cleverly interpreted as “l’aire de la mar” (the air of the sea, seasickness) or “l’aire de l’amar” (the air of loving).<sup>19</sup> After admitting his grave affliction (“greu mal”) to Diafebus, Tirant falls into a melancholic and embarrassing state: “els seus ulls destil.laren vives llàgremes mesclades amb sanglots e sospirs.” Diafebus, in fact, now ironically recalls how Tirant used to make fun of and chastise those companions who had fallen in love in the past and called them fools: “Be sou folls tots aquells qui amau. ¿No teniu vergonya de llevar-vos la llibertat e de posar-la en mans de vostre enemic?” (Chapter 118, 375). The Breton captain is now the one who is suffering from such folly.<sup>20</sup>

From this moment on Tirant will recurrently exhibit all the symptoms of *amor hereos*; he cannot eat, he feels extreme sadness, he sighs and cries (“menjà molt poc de la vianda, e begué molt de les sues llàgremes” Chapter 119, 376). Just conjuring Carmesina’s face in his mind “li féu tant augmentar lo seu mal que d’una pena que sentia llavors ne sentí cent, acompanyat de molts gemecs e sospirs” and even though Carmesina was showing him favor he still had a “trist e adolorit continent” (Chapter 119, 385). His condition becomes so obsessive that it goes a step further than lovesickness and it becomes amorous melancholy or love-melancholy.

Diafebus remarks on Tirant’s unusual reaction: “deuríeu restar lo més gloriós home del món, e vós feu tot lo contrari ab molt gran desorde, que mostrau ésser fora de tot record.” Diafebus’

<sup>18</sup> Mario Vargas Llosa interprets the scene as sexually charged and appealing to the senses (*Lletra de batalla*, 70) Rafael Beltrán concurs and notices how the use of the word “past” (food) contributes to the cossification and derogatory devaluing of the female body, and resembles metaphors already used by the Provençal troubadours (Beltrán, *Llegir Tirant II*, 15).

<sup>19</sup> He will continue to equivocate later using the same wordplay when speaking to the Emperor: “- Senyor, la majestat vostra deu saber que tot lo meu mal és de mar.” (Chapter 119, p. 381)

<sup>20</sup> It is not a coincidence that the following chapter in the novel begins with a well-known Aristotelian statement which links *Tirant lo Blanch* to many other medieval texts such as the *Libro de buen amor*: “Natura condició és a la natura humana amar, com diu Aristótil que cascuna cosa apateix son semblant.”

accurate diagnostic is in accordance with melancholy and Tirant's adjectives to describe his own dejected state when replying to Diafebus underscore it even further: "extrema pena," "desaventura," "atribulat." A desperate Tirant formulates it in medical terms: "de qual metge puc esperar medecina? Qui em pot dar vida o mort, o vera salut si no ella [Carmesina]?" (Chapter 120, 385). It is evident that Tirant is "pres ab lo llaç d'amor" (as noted in the title of chapter 119).

Several chapters later in the narration another strange occurrence further illustrates Tirant's heightened lovesickness. In Chapter 163 the hero is about to depart to confront the Turks in battle. After he has "pres comiat" from the Emperor and members of the court, he approaches Carmesina and inquires if there something he can do for her. Carmesina reacts with such grief that she is unable to speak and she starts crying uncontrollably ("sanglots e espessos sospirs" and "vives llàgremes").<sup>21</sup> What happens next is deemed by the narrator as quite extraordinary, and thus described as never seen before:

No es troba en record de gents que semblant cas seguís jamés a negun cavaller com lo que seguí a Tirant, que havent pres comiat de la Princesa, caigué d'una hacanea en terra, que cavalcava, tot fora de si: e tan prestament com fon caigut, se fon llevat e alçà la ma a l'hacanea dient que es dolia. E l'Emperador ho véu e molts d'altres, e cuitaren envers ell. E feia demostració que mirava lo peu de l'hacanea. (Chapter 163, 565)<sup>22</sup>

Although Tirant dissembles by providing a plausible cause for his fall from the horse, adducing that he fell because he reached down to check on the horse's foot, Carmesina clearly interprets the fall as a consequence of Tirant's distress at witnessing her sadness: "Certament –dix la Princesa – que aquell cas no li és seguit sino per la mia partida." (566)

Lovesickness or "mal d'amor" was not always equated to melancholy in medical discourse but, as Massimo Ciavolella has argued, Avicenna (980-1037) fervently asserted that there was a connection between the two (1976, 58). In his *Liber canonis* he describes what Marion Wells defines as the most influential formulation of the disease (33):

Haec aegritudo est sollicitudo melancholica similis melancholiae, in quo homo sibi iam induxit incitationem seu applicationem cogitationis suae continuam super pulchritudine ipsius quarundam formarum [This sickness is a melancholy worry similar to melancholy, in which a man is seduced into a state of excitement or continual application of thought over the beauty of certain forms].<sup>23</sup>

Constantine the African's description of lovesickness in his *Viaticum* was also conceived as akin to melancholy, both in its manifestations and its causes as a humoral imbalance (Wacks 179-193). And through Gerald of Cremona's translation of Avicenna's writings the term *sollicitudo melancholica* becomes ubiquitous in all subsequent commentaries (Peter of Spain, Gerard of Berry, Dino del Garbo) to the point that later writers elide the distinction between *sollicitudo melancholica* and *melancholia*. In the fourteenth century, while commenting on Rhazes' *Liber*

<sup>21</sup> I do not have time to discuss it here but, naturally, Carmesina is also exhibiting the symptoms of *amor ereos*.

<sup>22</sup> It is worth noting that despite the seemingly serious overtones of Tirant's fall from the horse, the episode provokes amusement in the reader. The situation is quite absurd and thus, the comment about never having heard of such a thing is entirely ironical, particularly when one recalls that Tirant is often subjected to other occurrences where he falls and hurts himself, thus provoking hilarious moments.

<sup>23</sup> *Liber canonis* (quoted in Wells, 34)

*medicinalis Almansoris*, Gerard of Solo (ca. 1330-40) will coin the term “amoreos melancholia” which very aptly articulates Tirant lo Blanch’s affliction as well as that experienced by so many literary heroes of medieval romances. As Marion Wells asserts, “[b]y the time we reach the early modern period, the connection between lovesickness and melancholy becomes inescapable.” (35).

Avicenna’s concept of *sollicitudo melancholica* or “melancholy worry” grounds love-melancholy as a form of obsession *avant la lettre* (since that word was not used in the Middle Ages), fueled by a dysfunctional imagination. This overactive imagination will in turn corrupt the power of estimation. This obsessive process is clearly illustrated in Tirant’s fixation on his beloved Carmesina.

One of the medieval physicians that more exhaustively treated obsessive and compulsive behaviors prompted by melancholic love was the 13<sup>th</sup> century royal doctor and professor at the University of Montpellier, Arnau de Vilanova (admired by Ficino). In his *Tractatus de amore heroico* (c. 1280) he describes the physiological condition of *amor hereos* or lovesickness along the same lines of the treatises by Constantine the African and Avicenna. Arnau de Vilanova argues that

because of the violent desire, [the subject] retains the form [of the object of perception] imprinted upon his mind by the fantasy, and because of memory, he is constantly reminded of the object. From these two actions a third follows: from the violent desire and from the constant recollection arises compulsive cogitation. The lover dwells on how and through which methods he will be able to obtain this object for his own pleasure so that he may come to the enjoyment of this destructive delight that he has formulated in his mind.<sup>24</sup>

In his treatise Arnau de Vilanova defines the kind of thought that is constitutive of the illness of love as “*assidua cogitatio non de omni sed de re desiderata*’ (assiduous thought not about all things but about the desired thing)” (Wells, 37). The knight Tirant falls into this type of cogitation, whereby he imagines Carmesina and fixates on her. Gerard of Berry aptly describes what ensues from such cogitations:

The cause, then, of this disease [*sollicitudo melancholica*] is a malfunction of the estimative faculty [...] Thus, it believes some woman to be better and more noble and more desirable than all others [...] The estimative faculty, then, which is the nobler judge among the perceptions on the part of the sensible soul, orders the imagination to fix its gaze on such a person. [...] Moreover, the imaginative faculty is fixated on it on account of the imbalanced complexion, cold and dry, that is in its organ.<sup>25</sup>

Tirant’s appraisal of Carmesina along the lines described by Gerald (“believes some woman to be better and more noble and more desirable than all others”) is curiously framed in the narration by two scenes where the image of the beloved is reflected through a mirror and which constitute a narrative and chronological arc (from chapter 127 to chapter 283) spanning from an initial moment of adoration to a final moment of contempt of the beloved, who has been transformed in the deranged mind of the lover into an abominable being.

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<sup>24</sup> Quoted in Massimo Ciavolella, “Erotomania, Melancholy, Nostalgia: A Renaissance Perspective,” *MLN*, 2019, Vol.134 (6), p.S-215-S-223

<sup>25</sup> Gerard of Berry, *Notule super Viaticum*, text and translation (quoted in Mary Wacks’ *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages*, pp. 198-201)



The first of these two framing scenes takes place in chapter 127. Through a highly inventive subterfuge Tirant lets Carmesina know that he is in love with her. He gives her what appears to be a small portrait and tells Carmesina that the image in it depicts the lady whom he loves:

Tirant posà la mà en la mànega e trague l'espill e dix: “- Senyora, la imatge que hi veureu me pot donar mort o vida. Mane-li vostra altesa que em prenga a mercè.” La Princesa pres prestament l'espill e ab cuitats passos se n'entrà dins la cambra pensant que hi trobaria alguna dona pintada, e no hi véu sinó la sua cara. Llavors ella hagué plena notícia que per ella se faïa la festa, e fon molt admirada que sens parlar pogués hom requerir una dama d'amors (Chapter 127, 405)

Carmesina gazes into the object and finds only her own reflection in it.<sup>26</sup> She is delighted with Tirant's inventiveness and observes to her friends that she has never read about such case before: “- Ne en quants llibres he llests d'històries no he trobada tan graciosa requesta.” (Cap 127, 405).<sup>27</sup>

The second of the framing episodes is in Chapter 283, titled “Ficció que féu la reprovada Viuda a Tirant.” The events dramatized in this episode will bring about Tirant's derangement. It is a much-analyzed episode that features, on one hand, Plaerdemavida's role-reversal performance and, on the other, the diabolical but clever scheming of the Vidua Reposada.<sup>28</sup> Princess Carmesina's governess, the Vidua Reposada, lusts after the hero Tirant and thus tries to separate the young lovers by devising a farce or “reprovada ficció” to make Tirant believe that Carmesina is unfaithful to him. The Viuda first tells Tirant that Carmesina has betrayed him and even disposed of an aborted fetus to hide her debauchery and, when Tirant refuses to believe it, she persuades him to go to a room in an adjacent building to the palace's garden in order to spy on Carmesina and verify the facts himself. Once there, through a clever system of mirrors the knight will be able to look through a window into the garden below. Then, with the pretext of entertaining the princess, the Viuda Reposada asks Plaerdemavida to disguise herself (with a black mask made to order by the Viuda) as Carmesina's black gardener, Lausetà, and to put on a show:

e la Viuda ajudà a vestir a Plaerdemavida ab la cara que li havien feta pròpiament com la del negre hortolà; e ab les sues robes que vestia, entrà per la porta de l'hort. Com Tirant lo veu entrar, verdaderament pensà que fos aquell lo moro hortolà, e portava al coll una aixada

<sup>26</sup> Rafael Beltrán states that the protagonist of the romance *Jaufré* (12<sup>th</sup> c.) declares his love to Brunisen in analogous terms than Tirant but without the mirror (2006, 77) and Albert Hauf has suggested the *Lai de l'Ombre* by Jean Renart as a possible precursor of this episode (1995: 135-138). On the other hand, there are many examples of love declarations through mirrors in later texts, such as Lope de Vega's *El peregrino en su patria* and in some 16<sup>th</sup> century books of chivalry such as *Primaleón* (1512) y *Platir* (1533), among others. See Rafael Beltrán, Bienvenido Morros y Susana Requena, “Fortuna de la declaració d'amor amb l'espill: bibliografia i textos de referencia” *Tirant 4:3* (2001).

<sup>27</sup> Carmesina alludes to the act of reading several times in the novel; she judges events that happen to her based on what she has read on books. In other instances, she will even refer to particular authors, as when she mentions Ovid while speaking with Diafebus: “Illa on se llig d'aquell famós poeta Ovidi lo qual en tots sos llibres ha parlat tostemp d'amor verdadera.” It is, thus, unmistakable that she is well acquainted with amorous literature.

<sup>28</sup> A number of sources have been adduced as possible precursors to this episode (Ovid, Ubertino de Casale, Boccaccio, Masuccio Salerno, Roís de Corella). Scholars have also discussed how *Tirant lo Blanch* became the model for later texts (such as Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* or Shakespeare *Much ado about nothing*). For extensive analyses of this episode and of its possible sources, I refer the reader to Rafael Beltrán 2006 and 2001, Martí de Riquer 1990, Giuseppe Grilli 1994, Albert Hauf 2005, Josep Pujol 2002, Xavier Renedo 1995, Meritxell Simó 2008, and Rafael Mérida Jimenez 2013.

e començà a cavar. A poc instant ell s'acostà envers la Princesa e assigné's al seu costat, e pres-li les mans e besà-les-hi. Aprés li posà les mans al pits e tocà-li les mamelles, e feia-li requestes d'amor; e la Princesa feia grans rialles, que tota la son li féu passar. Aprés ell s'acostà tant e posà-li les mans dejús les faldes, ab alegria que totes estaven de les coses plasents que Plaerdemavida deia. (Chapter 283, 804)

The narrator emphasizes that, having just woken from a nap, Carmesina's clothes are untied and her hair loose. She, unaware of the fact that Tirant is watching the unfolding scene, happily frolics with Plaerdemavida.<sup>29</sup> The lady-in-waiting here is not just “dressed” as a man, but she also acts like one, chasing Carmesina, kissing her, touching her breasts, and even her genitalia, which she reaches by lifting the princess's skirts (in a gesture which recalls one which Tirant had performed earlier when he touched Carmesina's private parts by putting the tip of his toe under her skirts). Her masculinist display is so convincing that Tirant, spying through the window, utterly believes that what he is witnessing is real. The spirited lady is “performing” a reversal of both gender and race in the garden.

Overwhelmed with a furious rage Tirant leaves and determines to kill the imagined offender, the black gardener. Shockingly, however, his comportment is quite aberrant and cannot be solely blamed on amorous jealousy, or even on the humoral imbalance of his melancholic state. Other concerns factor into his reaction. Tirant vehemently conveys the dishonor that he believes Carmesina has inflicted upon him but, remarkably, he does not stress the betrayal *per se* as much as the person Carmesina has ostensibly chosen for her betrayal:

e tu, per més avilar-me, has permès que jo sia deshonrat per home de la més vil condició e natura que pogués ésser trobada, e enemic de la nostra santa catòlica fe...No creguera jamás que en donzella de tan poca edat hagués tan poca vergonya e tant atreviment, que sens temor cometés un tan abominable crim. (Cap 284, 806)

Later on, speaking to the Viuda Reposada, he will reiterate that the abominable offense in what he previously labelled as “cas tan nefandíssim” is caused by the fact that the black Moor is the alleged sexual partner: “car de mos ulls he vist posseir quietament a un moro negre lo que jo no he pogut obtenir” (Cap 285, 808). La Viuda compounds his delusion by referring to Carmesina as “donzella fengida, sotsmesa a un moro catiu negre, comprat e venut” (Chapter 286, 809). As Meritxell Simó cogently argues, the characters' comments underscore “hasta qué punto en el imaginario occidental de la época los negros y los sarracenos representaban el uso desordenado del sexo” (2008, 80). Carmesina's ostensible transgression is, thus, magnified for having engaged in intercourse with a lover who symbolizes “la alteridad más absoluta, religiosa (moro), étnica (negro) y social (esclavo)” (Simó, 81).

Tirant returns to his chamber in a miserable state and spends the next three hours pacing the room, crying and overcome with indignation and sadness, after which time he resolves to take his revenge on the gardener. Instead of opting for a public revenge, more in accordance with dignified knightly rituals, Tirant disguises himself so that no one recognizes him, furtively goes to Lauseta's house and cuts his throat:

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<sup>29</sup> It is worth noting that here we are witnessing an episode of feminine homoeroticism. See my article “Performing Knighthood: The Hero Tirant lo Blanch in Drag” as well as Rafael Mérida Jiménez, “Amor, pasión y muerte en un jardín imperial,” *Cuadernos del CEMyR*, 21 (2013): pp. 163-179, particularly p.176-177.

Après iqué tot sol de la cambra ab la gran ira que ab si portava; tot desfressat anà-se'n a la porta de l'hort, tan secret com pogué e trobà dins l'hort, que poc havia que era vengut, lo negre hortolà, a véu-lo a la porta de la cambra sua, que estava calçant-se unes calces vermelles. Tirant que el véu, mirà a totes parts i no véu negú, pres-lo per los cabells e posa'l dins la cambra e degolla'l. E torna-se'n en la seua posada que per negú no fon vist. (Cap 286, 810)

Tirant's act is not an impulsive revenge but premeditated murder; its surreptitious ruthlessness and irrationality demonstrate that Tirant is, at this point, unhinged and not acting according to his often praised chivalric virtue. He might have seen in the garden a perverted image of Carmesina reflected into the deceitful mirrors but after his criminal deed he himself is a reflection of perversion and no longer a mirror of chivalry. More importantly, this is a murderous act that not only remains unpunished but it is also repeatedly glossed over in the narration as of minor importance. Moreover, the figure of the lowly and black gardener is not only erased physically through murder and violence but he is then reconfigured as an impure being which symbolizes evil by an allusion to his "calces vermelles" or red undergarments.<sup>30</sup> The swift and cruel punishment of the "crim nefandíssim," thus, will be channeled toward the most innocent of all, Lauseta.<sup>31</sup>

Interestingly, Tirant's violent reprisal recall other instances where the fictional hero goes into a furious rage: Orlando Furioso becomes mad on finding out that his beloved Angelica is in love with the black Medoro. Similarly to Tirant, Orlando's collapse of his idealized image of Angelica will propel him to madness. It is precisely this episode from Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* that induces Don Quijote to ruminate on melancholic heroes, the crazy things they do and how to imitate them while he is in Sierra Morena:

¿Ya no te he dicho, - respondió Don Quijote- que quiero imitar a Amadís haciendo aquí del desesperado, del sandío y del furioso, por imitar juntamente al valiente Don Roldán, cuando halló en una fuente las señales de que Angélica la Bella había cometido vileza con Medoro, de cuya pesadumbre se volvió loco?" (*Don Quijote de la Mancha*, Parte I, Chapter 25).

Don Quijote, in fact, internalizes this behavior as if it were consubstantial with the chivalry code that he wishes to uphold and he will recreate it first in Sierra Morena and later in the episode about the retablo de Maese Pedro.<sup>32</sup> In the latter chapter, the hidalgo will become enraged and attack the puppets that represent the Moors who are allegedly in pursue of Gaiferos and Melisendra, after the former rescues the latter from her captivity:

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<sup>30</sup> The other character who is associated to the devil, the Viuda Reposada, will also be described in the narration as donning red undergarments. Furthermore, there are other passages where the Viuda Reposada is linked to the devil: "ab lo seu enteniment diabòlic que tenia deliberà de sembrar en la cort d'una molt bona llavor que es nomena sisània mesclada ab mala voluntat perquè millor esplet ne pogués eixir" (Cap 264,769). See Rafael Beltrán's article "Simiente de cizaña: sobre la relación entre el episodio de la Viuda Reposada (*Tirant lo Blanch*) y el Canto V del *Orlando Furioso*" for a detailed analysis of this reference.

<sup>31</sup> This outcome is similar to the one observed in Alfonso X's Cantiga CLXXXVI where the person who puts in motion the deception is the mother-in-law of the male character but the only one who suffers death is the black infidel slave, the "impure" being (Nuñez Rodríguez 1997, 270).

<sup>32</sup> Don Quijote does not err in his assumption. As Sylvia Huot contends in her study of courtly romances, madness is, in fact, an ever-present possibility in the live of a chivalric hero (*Madness in Medieval French Literature*, 7).

¡Deteneos, mal nacida canalla, no le sigáis ni persigáis. Si no, conmigo sois en la batalla! Y diciendo y haciendo, desenvainó la espada, y de un brinco se puso junto al retablo y con acelerada y nunca vista furia comenzó a llover cuchilladas sobre la titerera morisma (Parte II, Chapter 26).

Intriguingly, this happens shortly after the captive Melisendra had been furtively and impudently kissed by a Moor (who, by the way, will be whipped for this transgression by his own Muslim king, Marsilio):

Miren también un nuevo caso que ahora sucede, quiza no visto jamás. ¿No veen aquel moro que callandico [...] se llega por las espaldas de Melisendra? Pues miren cómo la da un beso en mitad de los labios, y la priesa que ella se da a escupir y a limpiárselos con la blanca manga de su camisa y cómo se lamenta y se arranca de pesar sus hermosos cabellos. (Parte II, Chapter 26)

As we can see, Orlando, Don Quijote and Tirant react similarly to what they deem as the unspeakable affront of seeing a black Muslim man touching a Christian woman.

Tirant will display an analogous fury. His previous relentless focus on an internally generated phantasmic object, the idealized image of a perfect Carmesina, could have driven Tirant, according to the medical literature, to melancholy and madness. Instead, like Orlando, the escalation of his rage and the murderous violence which ensues is not provoked by the *assidua cogitatio* of Carmesina or by a surge in black bile but by the loss of Carmesina to a vile lover. Donald Beecher and Massimo Ciavolella attribute the catastrophic effects of melancholic love to the corruption of the imagination, in which “the object is always present to be enjoyed, yet always absent, unreal and unattainable” (151).<sup>33</sup> In *Tirant lo Blanch* the protagonist’s melancholy is not only provoked by the loss of the object but further heightened by gazing at who has attained said object.

It is possible as well to further observe Tirant’s corruption of the imagination in the cataclysmic episode of the farce. Tirant remains perplexed and unable to decipher the clues of the deception. Once we observe, however, that the episode’s performativity is juxtaposed in various layers, it is easier to appreciate how the knight was deceived. First, the Viuda lies to Tirant about the reason to go to the room. Second, Tirant does not realize that the room itself is deceitful since it actually is, according to Xavier Renedo, in a *bordello* (32), then once inside the room he cannot witness the action in the garden directly but need to resort instead to not one but several mirrors, so what he sees will only be but a reflection of a reflection. Besides, what he thinks he sees (even when looking at it directly without the mirrors) is also distorted, because the black gardener is not really the gardener, the actions of that “gardener” are not really male advances on a woman but homoerotic gestures of a woman toward another woman, and Carmesina’s pleased reaction to the gestures are in accordance to an intimate homoerotic encounter, not a heterosexual one. Finally, Tirant is the only one among the characters who is unaware that he is witnessing a “performance.”

For Tirant, however, this reenactment also constitutes a striking reminder of the threat he has been summoned to avert with his knightly prowess. Lauseta’s ostensible possession of Carmesina symbolizes the imminent penetration of the Greek Empire’s frontiers by the advancing

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<sup>33</sup> Jacques Lacan also described the object of melancholic love as an impossible object and labelled it “object a.”

Turks.<sup>34</sup> In a Christian society deeply concerned about moral pollution through contact with other religious groups and a fear of miscegenation, the possession of a Christian woman by a Muslim man was perceived as eroding the integrity of the community to which she belonged.<sup>35</sup> If the woman in question is, besides, the heir to the Empire the geopolitical implications of the act Tirant is witnessing are obvious.<sup>36</sup> In fact, as Tirant watches the supposed sexual consummation in the garden, the imperial troops led by the Duke of Pera are being militarily defeated and any opposition to the Turks' inexorable advance towards Constantinople annihilated: "la flor de la cavalleria es perduda e jamés serà recobrada," (Chapter 288, 814) bemoans the Emperor. The Ottoman threat, so present in the minds of Martorell's contemporaries after the disastrous loss of Constantinople in 1453 (Runciman) is juxtaposed through the farce in the garden on the virginal white body of the Christian woman and, through her, on the imperial body politic.

Another issue that merits further consideration is the attitude of Tirant towards Lauseta as a black slave. Lauseta's presence in the novel is quite brief and appears to figure as a mere narrative pretext, but the fact that he is a black-skinned Muslim slave is not superfluous and it links the novel to other historical circumstances worth exploring.<sup>37</sup> The author of the novel, Joanot Martorell, must have been quite accustomed to seeing Muslim and black slaves in Valencia and the surrounding area during the 15<sup>th</sup> century and, therefore, the attitude of his protagonist towards Lauseta could certainly be construed as symptomatic of historical attitudes among Martorell's contemporaries.<sup>38</sup> The archival record certainly seems to corroborate this. Debra Brumenthal, in her book *Enemies and Familiars: Slavery and Mastery in Fifteenth-Century Valencia*, states that she selected this city as the focus of her research on slavery because "it boasted a slave (and free) population of considerable diversity" and because, given such religious, ethnic and religious diversity it offered "an ideal case study for exploring the role of 'racism' in medieval slavery." (4) Constant corsair activity and raiding of the North African coast ensured a steady stream of Muslim slaves.<sup>39</sup> In addition, with the arrival of western Africans through Portuguese slave-trade, by the last decade of the fifteenth century black Africans constituted 40 percent of the slave population in Valencia.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> This menace will be further dramatized in the narration when the enemy Sultan asks for Carmesina's hand in marriage as a condition for peace.

<sup>35</sup> There has been much written about the political and social implications of interconfessional relations in medieval Iberia and I cannot do justice to all but the obligated reference is Simon Barton, *Conquerors, Brides, and Concubines: Interfaith Relations and Social Power in Medieval Iberia* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); see as well Adriano Duque "Sex and the Border: Byzantine Epics and the Spanish Frontier Ballad" *Medieval History Journal*, 14.2 (2011): 213-228.

<sup>36</sup> See my article "Rehistoricizing the Reconquest" for a discussion of how the text *Tirant lo Blanch* alludes to the geopolitical context surrounding the historical fall of Constantinople in 1453 and a planned (but ultimately never attempted) crusade to reconquer it. Also Martí de Riquer, *Aproximació al Tirant lo Blanc* (1990), Lola Badia, "El Tirant en la tardor medieval catalana" (1993) and Rafael Beltrán. *Tirant lo Blanc* (2006).

<sup>37</sup> Meritxell Simó (2006) has discussed the interesting fact that the gardener's name is Lauseta, a term which recalls the famous poem "Can vei la lauzeta mover" by Bertrand de Ventadorn.

<sup>38</sup> While the fiction in *Tirant lo Blanch* takes places in geographically exotic or foreign locales (Byzantium, England, the North of Africa, etc.) Joanot Martorell's descriptions certainly allude as well to the customs, laws and attitudes of his place of origin, Gandia and the area around Valencia. Furthermore, many of the provisions and legal statutes regarding slavery were comparable all throughout the Mediterranean area in Martorell's life.

<sup>39</sup> Francisco Javier Marzal Palacios alleges that in comparison to other Mediterranean cities like Genoa, Barcelona, or Palermo, late medieval Valencia had the largest population of Muslim captives ("Una presencia constante: Los esclavos sarracenos en el Occidente Mediterráneo bajomedieval," *Sharq al-Andalus* 16-17 (1999-2002): 73-93).

<sup>40</sup> Between 1489 and 1500, according to D. Bénesse, seventy percent of the slaves imported into the city of Valencia were black (Unpublished Dissertation, "Les esclaves dans la société ibérique aux XIVe et XVe siècles," Université de Paris X, 1970).

Debra Blumenthal's research tackles a particularly contentious conundrum in slavery scholarship. On one hand, some medievalists, like Thomas Hahn and Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, have suggested that slavery was never race neutral and value discriminations were based on skin color.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, other historians like Robert Bartlett, sustain that in contrast to religious, linguistic and cultural difference, the color factor was negligible as a crucial marker in the Middle Ages. Debra Blumenthal argues that, according to the historical evidence that she scrutinizes (contemporary archival and notarial documents), "over the course of the fifteenth century, skin color increasingly came to be associated with slave status" (5) and, by extension, blackness was construed as a degrading attribute.<sup>42</sup>

Black skin evoked a set of negatively coded meanings in medieval society. Black was an indication of evil and sin while white was associated with purity and light: "[W]hiteness is desired, blackness is condemned. White is the color of the regenerated, of the saved; black is the color of the damned, the lost" (Barthelemy, 2-3).<sup>43</sup> In the multiethnic and multicultural Iberian peninsula Pamela Patton contends that dark skin played "a complex role in later medieval Iberian art and thought, where skin color constituted one measure in a series of binaries—good and evil, purity and filth, saved and condemned—that would become central to the visual practices and worldview of a multiethnic and multicultural Castile." The visual arts portrayed dark skin using the so-called "Ethiopian" *topos*, a term and artistic pattern which encompassed a wide array of dark-skinned peoples, real and imagined. The term became linked as well to a number of moral shortcomings, which ranged from acedia and pusillanimity to aggression and barbarity. As Pamela Patton explains:

No longer an actual people, much less members of a discrete "racial" group even in the nebulous terms by which medieval Europeans understood the notion, Ethiopians became largely symbolic figments, whose dark skin and resulting imperfect bodies could connote any of the multiple external dangers imagined by a fearful Christendom. The most forceful of these connotations was an association with sin, a significance anchored both in biblical traditions and in ancient humoral theories (221).

This is certainly how the protagonist in *Tirant lo Blanch* conceptualizes Lauseta, as a damned and inferior being, a polluted and polluting body, but, additionally, as an object of monetary value, hence the choice of a secret killing, so that he would avoid being held accountable for the pecuniary worth of the slave. Causing a slave owner the loss of a slave was subject to judicial prosecution and financial compensation. According to the *Furs de València*, for example,

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<sup>41</sup> See Thomas Hahn, "The Difference the Middle Ages Makes: Color and Race before the Modern World," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31.1 (2001): 1-37 and Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "On Saracen Enjoyment: Some Fantasies of Race in Late Medieval France and England," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31.1 (2001): 113-146 for the first approach and Robert Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization, and Cultural Change, 950-1350* (Princeton University Press, 1993) for the second position in the debate.

<sup>42</sup> For essential studies on the issue of the portrayal of 'Others' and of skin color in the Iberian context, see Michael Harney, *Race, Caste and Indigeneity in Medieval Spanish Travel Literature*; Mercedes García-Arenal, "Los moros en las *Cantigas de Alfonso X el Sabio*," *Al-Qantara: Revista de estudios árabes* 6, nos. 1-2 (1985): 133-51, esp. 149-50; Gregory Hutcheson, "The Sodomitic Moor;" Pamela A. Patton, *Art of Estrangement: Redefining Jews in Reconquest Spain* (The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012) and "An Ethiopian-Headed Serpent in the *Cantigas de Santa María*: Sin, Sex, and Color in Late Medieval Castile" *Gesta* 55:2 (Fall 2016): 213-238.

<sup>43</sup> Anthony Barthelemy. *Black Face Maligned Race: The Representation of Blacks in English Drama from Shakespeare to Southerne* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987).

the master could take legal action against the perpetrator if the physical injury suffered by the slave rendered him or her incapable of providing service,<sup>44</sup> as is clearly the case with Lauseta.

Ultimately, Tirant's fears, as he watches the very lurid (although false) sexual encounter between Carmesina and the alleged black slave, presciently foreshadow the anxieties about trade, warfare and travel in the Mediterranean which will figure prominently in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries Spanish captive tales and comedies and in English plays such as *Othello*, where the perceived historical threat of Muslim and Ottoman hegemony is dramatized on the female (and white) Christian body.<sup>45</sup>

Accordingly, this episode of the farce in the garden does not show the knight Tirant in a very positive light: gullible, irrational, prejudiced, secretive, and violent. It reveals to the reader a darker side to the hero, a sinful and blacker soul. This slippage into madness (or unreason) and rage places him in the role of savage. After murdering the black gardener, he falls in an even more acute state of melancholy. From chapters 288 to 291 Tirant engages in constant lamentations; he complains about Carmesina's "nefandíssim crim" and describes himself as "dolorós e miserable," tormented, in great pain, wishing death, and out of his mind, afflicted with such "passió que lo meu pobre entenement varieja" (821) At some point, his anguish is so extreme that he faints and happens to fall over his injured leg, causing it to break anew. Besides, blood starts to issue from his nose and ears and he becomes so ill that everyone fears for his survival.<sup>46</sup>

In another instance of equivocation in this chivalry romance the courtiers and Tirant's friends all presume that his extreme illness is due to his despair on account of the defeat suffered by the imperial army. They even interpret Tirant's wishes for his epitaph as a clear sign of the sorrow caused by the victory of their enemies, the Turks. Tirant requests that they paint on his grave the heads of black Moors and a phrase indicating that they were the cause of his death ("seran pintats caps de moros negres amb lletres escrites entorn del meu sepulcre: Causa odiosa per què morí Tirant lo Blanch," 824). No one else is aware that he has another black Moor in mind and that he is suffering from "amorereos melancholia."

When all are convinced Tirant is near death a Jewish healer offers a remedy to bring Tirant back from his estate of acute melancholy. She tells him about "los teus enemies turcs qui són prop del portal de la Ciutat e vénen per pendre venjança de tu" and upon hearing this he "demanà la sua roba, e feu-se, ab moltes tovalloles, lligar la cama, e armà's lo mills que pogué e pujà a cavall,... e ab tan gran voler anava que quasi tot lo mal li passà e trobà molt gran remei" (826). The irony is not lost on Tirant who, inwardly, reflects on the fact that a woman has saved him as a woman previously had killed him: "dona m'ha lliberat de mort, puix dona m'havia mort" (Chapter 292, 826).<sup>47</sup>

The feeling of imminent danger has finally propelled Tirant to action and now the narration proceeds quite swiftly. Still deeply disillusioned with Carmesina, he makes arrangements to leave immediately to join the fight against the Turks. He orders his troops to march to Malveí while he instead decides to travel there by sea. After he has embarked, Plaerdemavida visits him and it is

<sup>44</sup> *Furs de València*, Colón and Garcia, eds. (Barcelona, 1999), VII: 47.

<sup>45</sup> See Jack D'Amico, *The Moor in English Renaissance Drama* (Tampa: University of Florida, 1991) and Daniel Vitkus *Turning Turk: English Theater and the Multicultural Mediterranean 1570-1630* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008).

<sup>46</sup> Here again we have a scene which exhibits both dramatic or serious overtones and funny details.

<sup>47</sup> It is also quite revealing that the person who effects Tirant's recovery is not only a woman but Jewish, not a Christian, since even the Emperor's own physicians were unable to help Tirant. The ineptitude of the court's doctors had been stressed earlier in a previous episode where Diafebus actually killed one of them by cutting his head open for letting Tirant get out of bed when his leg was not fully healed (Cap 239, 722).

then that Tirant learns about what truly transpired in the garden. The Viuda Reposada's deception unveiled, Tirant now vows to dispatch her as he did the gardener (with a remark that, as a matter of fact, shows very little remorse for having taken Lauseta's life unjustly). Unfortunately, it is too late to go back to the palace and reconcile with Carmesina and both Plaerdemavida and Tirant find themselves caught in a terrible sea storm which takes them to North Africa and to captivity among Muslims.

As he sees the ship filling up with water Tirant decries his bad fortune: "Oh miserable de mi! ¿E com ha permès la tua divina bondat que jo haja a morir en la cruel mar, e m'haja a combatre ab los peixos?" Plaerdemavida chastises him for lamenting his bad fortune: "E no us deveu clamar de fortuna d'amar ne d'avorrir, car no es ofici seu, ne te senyoria neguna en coses que estan en llibertat del franc arbitre. Voleu saber que us ha forçat? lo vostre poc saber, qui ha deixada la rao per seguir lo desordenat voler" (Chapter 298, 838).

Plaerdemavida's remark about "lo desordenat voler" can be linked to the catastrophic effects of melancholic love which corrupted Tirant's imagination and propelled him to madness and murder. Eventually, Plaerdemavida and Tirant survive the shipwreck but they become separated. Their ensuing adventures, ironically, will evoke the previous episode in which one of them (Plaerdemavida) dressed as a black Muslim and the other one (Tirant) killed the real black Muslim slave who Plaerdemavida had impersonated, Lauseta. Now they find themselves at the mercy of Muslims, enslaved and dressed as Muslims. Plaerdemavida, naked, exhausted and in despair will be found by a Moor who had been a captive and slave in Cádiz. Remembering the mercy of his Spanish owner who freed him after he had saved her son's life, the Moor resolves to emulate the deed and takes Plaerdemavida to his house, where, dressed in Moorish garb, she becomes the companion of the kind Moor's daughter. Tirant, on the other hand, is found by the Cabdillo, whose lord is the King of Tremicen. Dressed as a Moor and disguising his identity he accompanies and serves the Cabdillo.

From now on the narration develops in the North of Africa, away from the Constantinople court. As Albert Hauf remarks:

The autor arranges things so that the conflict of contradictory feelings within the soul of the disenchanted hero finds an objective correlative in the irresistible force of the winds and waves of an actual storm which casts Tirant's galley on the coasts of Barbary. Fortune, or rather Providence [...] thus situates Tirant in the appropriate place and moment to give a new twist to his existence. As he is reborn from his material and spiritual wreck, he is given an opportunity to reconstruct and even to reinvent his identity in a rapid process of adaptation which involves his change of name. It will be through overcoming adversity that his virtue will remake and demonstrate itself, by means of the harsh catharsis of slavery and exile (1999, 70)

Tirant's adventures in the North of Africa then constitute a break in the narrative and will transform the hero but this metamorphosis, I would argue, is also possible precisely at this time because Tirant is no longer troubled by the compulsive *cogitatio* that brought about his murderous madness. He now knows that her beloved did not engage in intercourse with the black gardener.

For the remainder of the novel, Tirant will still act as afflicted by *amor ereos* but he will not experience again the *sollicitudo melancholica* that perverted his estimative faculty. Now, he still remains fixated on Carmesina, and he has reverted to assiduously cogitating on her beauty and perfection, but the event which elicited what appeared to be an acute melancholy attack was in fact



a reaction to what he envisioned in his agitated imagination as a “*crim nefandíssim*,” the most repulsive crime for Tirant, an act where his sublime object of desire had succumbed to the abominable embodiment of Tirant’s symbolic nemesis, a black Muslim. Thus Tirant, as Orlando and Don Quijote, unleashed his fury to punish the transgressor. Ultimately, what prompted Tirant’s worst melancholic spell, the one which impaired his rational faculties and drove him to a vengeful murder, was not really black bile but a black slave. That image became for him, in a sort of perversion, the compulsive cogitation that brought Tirant to his most wretched melancholic state, the awareness that a black Muslim slave had obtained his coveted object of desire. Ironically, however, what will eventually cause the hero’s untimely death, a “*mal de costat*,” could plausibly be caused by an excess of black bile, despite the fact that throughout the entire novel the humors and their imbalances, so prominently featured in the medical texts, are in fact never mentioned.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> This anti-climatic death of the hero and its symbolism has attracted much critical attention. I refer the reader to Rafael Alemany 1994, Martí de Riquer 1990, Lola Badia 1993, Tomás Martínez 1998, Joan Fuster 1994, Albert Hauf 1999 and Montserrat Piera 1999. Furthermore see Rafael Beltrán 2006 for an extensive discussion of other examples of the link between the “*mal de costat*” and *amor ereos* in medieval literary texts.

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