



## Passages

«Decoding hieroglyphic omens, astonished I feel.»

Francesca Nicoli

Among the pictures sent to me, there was one of a window, a passage that connects two dimensions, letting us contemplate the external world. This is the very meaning of “passage”: the possibility to improve constantly. Changing, transformation...

Life always imposes passages on us.

This happens in art, as well. The history of any artistic expression is an evolution, a succession of different genres and styles. Every single artist, in the span of his career, undergoes many changes and evolutions of the utmost importance to keep his/her creativity alive. This is what happened to Ataraxia, as well.

There are at least three albums that, in my opinion, respectively represent three moments of passage.

In 1995, besides «La malédiction d’Ondine», Ataraxia released an album inspired by springtime and autumn, «The moon sang on the April chair». A further title was given to the part dedicated to the autumn: «Red deep dirges of a November moon».

*«...Once I danced on the cliffs, amongst the sea-lilies, and the moon gave me its singing, while swinging on the April chair... time is over, life lived. Now I’m the autumn, a red mournful dirge under the November moon. Flames, I pray you, carve the hieroglyphics of instinct and pleasure on my skin and deeper inside, on my heart. I’m cold, and it’s November.*

*Words got dried, submerged relicts, the only holds of instants bitten to the core...»*

*Francesca Nicoli from «The moon sang on the April chair»*

The first part, dedicated to the spring, opens with the title-track, a dark-wave motif with an increasing rhythm, to symbolise the awakening of nature. The next track is «Verdigris Wounds», a tune that immediately impresses the listener. Aerial keyboards pads background the folk-style motif of the acoustic guitar, while a deep singing gives the composition an epic touch. An intense tune, to be listened to all in one breath, which nearly reaches perfection. If spring has inspired one of Ataraxia’s most wonderful and passionate songs, it can evoke melancholic atmospheres, as well, as in «The tale of the crying fire flies», dedicated to the fireflies crowding gardens. The silent dance of

those lights gives serenity. I am fascinated by the way they move, so indifferent to human things, and by their unforeseeable trajectories, mysterious airy spirals that only children can understand. Ataraxia have recreated the magic of their flight reaching a high level of musical creativity. The atmospheres full of spleen of the music distemper into a visionary lightness. «Rocking chair of dreams», the final track of part one, is a ballad with an irresistible movement that depicts spring as the cradle of dreams. The second part of the album, inspired by autumn, opens with a sacred hymn, «Satis Vixi», in the style of the great early Dead Can Dance. Next, Francesca, without any vocal accompaniment, interprets «Lady Lazarus», an odd example of vocals woven together *a cappella*. This second part of the work makes her vocal talent fully emerge, to reach a very hazardous level of experimentation in «Spiritus ad vindictam», a tune worthy of the most insane Diamanda Galas. It is totally out of any regulations, thanks to the hypnotic rhythm of the drum machine, and the crazy accompaniment of the flute. «The moon sang on the April chair» is a work that leaves a mark. Ataraxia have been inspired and led by two seasons so rich in nuances, chiaroscuro, and half tones, moments so far from the dryness of summer or the opaque darkness of winter, phases intimately linked to their peculiar way to feel and live music.

Collection albums, that almost every musician releases at least once in his/her life, are often a means to get money easily. But sometimes, they represent a pause to reflect and meditate before a new start. This is the case of «A Calliope... collection» released in 2001 for Future Insights.

*«Deeply beloved your singing was, your light barely touched the salty sea, and the flower-speckled fields. You go round restlessly, you remember, and the desire corrodes your gentle soul. It's not easy for us to look like the Goddesses, in their lovely aspect...»*

*Saffo - «Saffo - Poesia» - Mondadori (1996)*

In this work there are two exclusive tracks, that are worth talking about. The second one gives the title to the collection, and it is one of the most dim and melancholic tunes ever written by the band in that period. The ambient atmospheres of the prelude become leaden thanks to the hollowness of the keyboards that accompanies a tragic operatic singing.

