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CONTRIBUTORS

Adriane da Silva Duarte is a Full Professor in the Department of Classical and Vernacular Letters (DLCV) of the University of São Paulo (USP), Brazil, and holds a Cnpq scholarship. She has published two books, *O dono da voz e a voz do dono. A parábase na comédia de Aristófanes* (2000), and *Cenas de reconhecimento na poesia grega* (2012), as well as translations of Aristophanic comedy and ancient Greek novel. She has also published articles on ancient Greek Theatre, the ancient novel, and Classical reception.

Carmen Morenilla Talens is Professor of Greek Philology at the Universitat de València. Since its inception she has dealt with classical theater and its survival. She is co-director of GRATUV (Grup de Recerca i Acció Teatral de la Universitat de València), member of the *Centro de Estudos Clássicos e Humanísticos* of the Universidade de Coimbra. She has directed R&D projects of the Ministry of Research and has been a member of *METra: Mapping Epic in Tragedy*, an R&D project directed by Andrea Rodighiero. She has collaborated with theater professionals and is a member of theatre juries and has been a member of the *Consell Valencià de Cultura*, an advisory body of the Valencian Government in cultural matters, and of several cultural entities. She combines academic activity and management at the University with social commitment in various fields, trade unionism, politics and cultural policy.

Christian Werner is professor of ancient Greek at the University of São Paulo and author of books and articles on Greek epic and tragic poetry and its reception in Modernity, especially in the prose of João Guimarães Rosa. Among his publications, stands out the monograph *Memórias da Guerra de Troia: a performance do passado épico na* Odisseia *de Homero* (2018)) and the translations into Portuguese of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (2018) and Hesiod's *Theogony* and *Works and days* (2022, 2nd. ed.).

Deidamia Sofía Zamperetti Martín is a Bachelor of Letters from the National University of La Plata, Assistant Professor at the Greek Department of the Faculty of Humanities and Education (UNLP) and researcher at the Hellenic Studies Centre of the IdIHCS (UNLP-CONICET). Scholar of the AGENCIA (FONCYT) with the thesis "From tradition to appropriation: the similes in Quintus of Smyrna's Posthomerica". She is currently part of the project PICT-2020-SERIE A-02425 (2022-2024) "From Threnos to

Epitaph: Subjectivity, social convention and 'generic' crossing in poetic forms of lament in ancient Greece. Inflections". She is a member of the Research and Development Project (PID) "Songs that plot. Choral performances concealed, unfolded, incipient or completed in Classical Greek literature and its tradition". Her recent publications include Plato's *Ion*. Editing and textual preparation (book, 2022), "Women and their voices: female speeches in Iliad VI" (book chapter, 2019), Two-faced Troy. Dichotomy and aesthetics of war narrative in the figures of Hector and Achilles in the Iliad (FAHCE, 2018).

Graciela Zecchin de Fasano is Professor of Classics at the University of La Plata. Member of the Scientific Committee of the Center of Hellenic Studies, University of La Plata, Argentina. Her PhD research concerned Homeric Epic (*Odyssey: Speech and Narrative*). Her main areas of research include Ancient Epic, Archaic Poetry and Greek Tragedy. She is co-editor of *Literature and Society in Ancient Greece* (2018, Mauad, UFRJ, Brasil, with Fabio Lessa) and *Cartographies of the Self in the Ancient World. Strategies of its textualization* (et alii, EDULP; 2022). She has published numerous articles and book chapters edited by Cambridge Scholars and Aracne editrice. She is currently directing the Project "From Threnos to Epitaph: Subjectivity, social convention and 'generic' crossings in poetic forms of Lament in Ancient Greece. Inflections" (PICT 2020 Series A-02425).

José Pedro Serra is a full professor at the Department of Classical Studies at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Lisbon. He graduated with a doctorate in Philosophy in 1980 from the Faculty of Arts at the University of Lisbon. In the same year, he completed the 5th year of a Theology degree at the Catholic University. In 1989, he obtained a Master's degree in Greek Literature from the Faculty of Arts (University of Lisbon) and in 1999 he obtained a doctorate in Classical Culture from the same University. In 2006, he published *Pensar o Trágico* (*Thinking About the Tragic)* (Lisbon, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian; republished in Ed. Abysmo, 2018), a work that was awarded the Pen Club prize for 2007 in the Essay category. He also received the Jacinto do Prado Coelho award from the Portuguese Association of Literary Critics. He is currently the Director of the FLUL Library and in charge of the research stream, Classical Culture and Reception – "Dia-logos".

Leonardo Bonturim Antunes (São Paulo, 1983) is a poet, translator, and professor of Ancient Greek Literature at Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul. His authoral works include "Regressos" (Martelo, 2023), "Casa dos Poetas" (Zouk, 2021), "Lícidas" (Zouk, 2019), and "João & Maria – Dúplice coroa de sonetos fúnebres" (Patuá, 2017). Among others, he

translated Sophocles' "Oedipus Tyrannus" (Todavia, 2018), the "Complete Fragments of Anacreon" (34, 2022), and Homer's "Iliad" (Zouk, 2022).

Leonor Santa Bárbara is a professor in the Portuguese Studies Department at NOVA FCSH, where she is the degree coordinator. She is also a researcher at CHAM - Humanities Center, in the research group Representations, Discourses, Materialities and Uses of the Past. Her work concerns Greek culture and literature, particularly from the Hellenistic period. She has translated several studies into Portuguese and has collaborated on translations of Greek and Latin texts. Recently, she has focused on the contemporary reception of the Classics.

Lucía Romero Mariscal is a Senior Lecturer in Classical Studies, as well as a Researcher at the Institute of Communication and Society (CySoc), both at the University of Almería. She has published widely on Euripidean drama and its contemporary receptions on the Spanish stage, as well as on ancient Greek literature and classical receptions in contemporary English and Spanish literature. She recently co-edited *What's Hecuba to me? Mythical Characters and Contemporary Theatrical Monologues for Academic Teaching in the Humanities* (*Personajes Míticos y Monólogos Dramáticos Contemporáneos para la Enseñanza Universitaria en Humanidades*), Coimbra: Universidade de Coimbra, 2023 (DOI: 10.14195/978-989-26-2474-7).

Maria de Fátima Silva is a retired Full Professor at the Institute of Classical Studies at the University of Coimbra. Her PhD field of research was Ancient Greek Comedy (*Theatre criticism in Ancient Greek Comedy*). She has since been undertaking research in the same area and has published several books and articles, as well as translations, with commentaries, of nine comedies by Aristophanes, and a volume with a translation of Menander's plays and best-preserved fragments. Recently focused on Reception Studies, she has coordinated and collaborated on several volumes such as *Portrayals of Antigone in Portugal*, *Portraits of Medea in Portugal*, *A special model of Classical Reception. Summaries and short narratives*, *The Classical Tradition in Portuguese and Brazilian Poetry*, and *Greek mythic heroines in Brazilian literature and performance*.

Maria António Hörster is a retired Professor of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Coimbra (FLUC). She holds a BA and a PhD in Germanic Philology. Her main research areas are Comparative Studies, Reception of German Literature in Portugal, and Translation Studies (Translation and Gender; Linguistics and Translation – German-Portuguese; Criticism of Literary Translation; Translation Didactics, and the History of Translation in Portugal). At FLUC she coordinated the Specialization Course in Translation (2002–2008), created and coordinated the Master's in Translation

(2002–2011) and two PhD courses in Translation Studies (2006–2012, 2008–2011).

María Silvina Delbueno holds a Master's in Comparative Literature from the National University of La Plata (UNLP) and is a full professor at the Law School of UNICEN (National University of the Centre, Buenos Aires). She directs research and extension projects at the Law School-UNICEN. Her doctoral thesis concerned the reception of Greek tragedy in Argentine literature, particularly Euripides' *Medea*. She is the author of *Medea in contemporary Argentine plays* (2024, ed. Corregidor, Buenos Aires), *Médée Kali* by Laurent Gaudé. Introduction, translation and notes. (2021, La Plata. Editorial Hespérides). She is currently participating in the project PICT-2020-SERIE A-02425 (2022-2024) "From Threnos to Epitaph: Subjectivity, social convention and 'generic' crossing in poetic forms of lament in ancient Greece. Inflections". She is currently conducting postdoctoral research at the University of Buenos Aires (UBA) on "The reception of the myth of Medea in two plays by Pascal Quignard" (2023-2024).

Marta González González is a Full Professor of Greek Philology at the University of Málaga, Spain. Her main research interests are Greek Religion, Mythology, and Ancient Greek Tragedy. Her recent books include: *La diosa Perséfone en la religión griega,* Madrid: Dykinson, 2023; *Funerary Epigrams of Ancient Greece. Reflections on Literature, Society and Religion*, London: Bloomsbury, 2019, and *Achilles*, London-New York: Routledge, 2018. With Erasmus+, she has spent time teaching in the following universities: Università degli studi di Catania, Università degli studi di L'Aquila, Universidade de Coimbra, Universidade de Lisboa; University of Peloponnese (Kalamata), among others.

Núria Llagüerri Pubill holds a doctorate in Greek Philology from the University of Valencia and won the Extraordinary Doctorate Prize. She is a secondary school teacher at IES Maria Carbonell i Sánchez (Benetússer). She has participated in the Ludere Association and is actively involved in the organization of the "Ludi Saguntini" Teaching Innovation Project and has spoken often on teaching innovation within the scope of Classical Philology. Her line of investigation focuses on the secondary characters of Greek tragedy and the ways in which they serve to configure the main character.

Rui Tavares de Faria is Invited Assistant Professor at the University of the Azores. He holds a PhD in Portuguese Literature (2009), from the University of Oporto, and in Classic Studies (2023), from the University of Coimbra. Besides teaching Portuguese Language/Literature and Ancient History, he is an integrated researcher in two Portuguese I&D Units: CECH

(University of Coimbra) and CEHu (University of the Azores). He is the author of several books, many articles, and has coordinated several edited volumes concerning Portuguese literature, linguistics, and ancient history and literature.

Susana Marques Pereira is a teacher at the University of Coimbra and an integrated researcher at the Centro de Estudos Clássicos e Humanísticos of the same University (CECH). Her current research, teaching and publishing focus on Greek Literature, the Reception of Greek-Latin Classics and the Didactics of Classical Studies. She is currently the researcher responsible for the Complementary Project "Rewriting the Myth" at CECH. She is the assistant director of the journal *Humanitas* and the main director of the University of Coimbra Press series Myth and (re)writing.

INTRODUCTION

MARIA DE FÁTIMA SILVA

> In a certain sense, all texts can be considered as parts of a single text which has been in writing since the beginning of time.[1]

Homer, whoever this designation conceals – perhaps above all a symbol of literary expression – considered by tradition to be the author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* – the two earliest surviving literary works of Western culture – was always seen, throughout Antiquity, as the main cultural reference for Greece. As well as being recognised as a 'theologian', for having established for the Greeks their gods (Herodotus 2.53); as "the wisest of the Greeks" (Heraclitus, fr. 56 A.D.-K.); as the one who taught them so many useful things, "strategy, military code, warriors' equipment" (Aristophanes, *Frogs* 1035-6); as the promoter of glory and immortality for heroes, through the sweetness of his words (Pindar, *Nemea* 7.20-30), there were countless merits that consecrated him as the father of a culture, the archive of a mythological tradition, the model of literary expression for all the production that Hellas has generated over time.

As storyteller of a paradigmatic conflict – the Greek campaign against Troy – and of the troubled return of a hero – Ulysses – who embodies, in a way, the mentality of Mediterranean man and the saga of any human being in search of a route to life, the author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* has become an unavoidable matrix for the universal and diachronic treatment of these two motifs, war and adventurous travel.

Perhaps the comic (Cratinus, Aristophanes) but above all tragic theatre of the 5th century BC was the main heir to the Homeric tradition, which served as a reference point for profound and suggestive innovations in the form of 'drama' (action). As Macintosh writes:[2] “Moreover, in many ways the very performativity of epic poetry is related not simply to its compelling

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[1] Todorov, Tzvetan. 1977. *The Poetics of Prose*. Translated by Richard Howard, 244. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

[2] “’Epic Performances’”. 2020. In *Epic Performances from the Middle Ages into the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Macintosh, Fiona, McConnell, Justine, Harrison, Stephen, and Kenward, Claire, 7. Oxford: University Press.

narratives, but also to its inherent dramatic potential (…) a kind of proto-drama". Not only has Aeschylus' tragedy been recognised as the "chops of Homer's banquet" (Athenaeus 347e), but also Sophocles and Euripides – to mention only the best – have not shied away from taking part in the same feast. In general terms, it can be recognised that "Athenian tragedy itself constitutes the last flowering of that epic tradition and its stories into an artform addressed to an entire community".[3] By manipulating the figures of the epic to take on new roles and express the concerns of a society that had evolved from a feudal model to a democratic one, Greek theatre established itself as a privileged interlocutor of the old Homer. Achilles, Ulysses, Agamemnon, Menelaus, Hector, the names of tradition, were remodelled to suit a different social standard, so that they became symbols of other collective concerns and experiences. Along with the great heroes, emblematic female figures – Helen, Clytemnestra, Iphigenia, Hecuba, Andromache – took on different roles, already foreseen in Homer, but later given greater prominence. Because they were beautiful, aristocratic, superior, they all embodied limit experiences, positive or negative standards, as wives and mothers, as sovereigns invested with power when their husbands were absent in battle, as widows or innocent victims of merciless combat.

Even if theatre played a more important role in recreating Homeric themes and figures, none of the other literary genres that Greece created escaped the same fascination. The lyrical poetry of the 7th-6th centuries BC (e.g., Sappho, Archilochus, Stesichorus, Pindar, and Bacchylides), or even, already in Hellenistic times, epic recreations (such as the *Argonautica* of Apollonius of Rhodes, or the *Posthomerica* of Quintus of Smyrna), and extensive narratives such as historiography (Herodotus' being particularly important), owed a great deal in structural and formal aspects, not to mention thematic recreations, to the model that the two archaic poems had established. Therefore, travelling through Greek literature will always mean, in some way, revisiting Homer under different formulas and interpretative readings.

With equal enthusiasm, the Romans – for whom Homer was still the educator par excellence, having already become a 'classic' – returned to Homeric themes, even if they had now been filtered through the different reworkings that the centuries had accumulated and through the expectations of a different cultural context. Rome's great epic, Virgil (*Aeneid*), its most important dramatic poets, Naevius, Ennius, Accius, Seneca, or the poetry of Ovid (*Metamorphoses*), all remained great debtors to the old Homer.

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[3] Lamberton, Robert. 1997. "Homer in Antiquity". In *A new companion to Homer*, edited by Morris, Ian, Powell, Barry, 40. Leiden / New York, Köln: Brill.

The importance of the author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as a source of culture and artistic and literary recreation, a kind of Bible for the Greeks and, from then on, for the Western world, did not end at the limits of Greco-Roman antiquity. The millennia that have passed have confirmed the potential of this matrix in all forms of artistic production: literature, visual arts, theatre, music and cinema. Perhaps without realising it, modernity has never ceased to turn to Homer as a source of inspiration for all models of creativity or, even more broadly, for the shaping of thought and a way of looking at the world and life.

Tracing this influence, even if only in literature, is a huge task, given the abundance of recreations that an increasingly large bibliography is amassing. Epic poems such as *Lusiads* by Luís de Camões or *Omeros* by Derek Walcott, tragedies such as *Andromaque* and *Iphigénie* by Jean Racine, the novel *Ulysses* by James Joyce, the short story *Homero* by Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen, are just some of the titles in an overwhelming ocean of creations, continuing what had already been, with the same formal diversity, a first stage of reception. This is our contribution to that campaign, taking into account the specific geography of the Ibero-American world. It's not a question of exhausting a field of research – such an idea would be to disregard Homer's prestige –, but of bringing together a few expressive examples of how this influence has also borne fruit in countries such as Portugal, Spain, Brazil and Argentina.

This book

The contributions in this book all recognise Homer as a kind of model incarnation of poetry and the poet. They also converge on a common focus: the Homeric imprint in various forms of literary expression – theatre, poetry, novels and short stories. They also focus on a single purpose: to detect the diversity of interpretations and manipulations to which the Homeric hypotext has been subjected. The time considered is above all that of the 20th and 21st centuries, the geographical map has a transatlantic cultural amplitude, thus honouring the inexhaustible capacity of the author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as a matrix in the expression of an unlimited contemporaneity.

The first section brings together contributions dedicated to Homeric-inspired theatre, the first two from Spain, one from Portugal and, finally, two from Argentina: Núria Llagüerri Pubill, Carmen Morenilla Talens, “Between the *Iliad* and the *Oresteia*: the vision of Chema Cardeña and Diana de Paco”, Marta González González, “*Sols el dol*, by Carmen Morenilla. The Trojan War never ends”, Maria de Fátima Silva, Maria

António Hörster, "*Glória ou como Penélope morreu de tédio,* by Cláudia Chéu: a Reading", María Silvina Delbueno, "Penelope-Ulysses and a point of disagreement in *Crónicas de Itaca* by Susana Lage", and Deidamia Sofía Zamperetti Martín, "An interpretation of *Penelope awaits* by Rodolfo Modern and Jorgelina Loubet at the light of the *Odyssey*".

Llagüerri and Morenilla return to the articulation between two great texts, the *Iliad* and the *Oresteia*, associated with Seneca's production, *Agamemnon* – which is equivalent to repeating, in some way, a process of rewriting already rehearsed in Antiquity – by analysing two contemporary creations: *Cenizas de Troya* [Ashes of Troy, 2006], by Diana M. de Paco Serrano, and *La Reina Asesina* [The assassin queen, 2002], by Chema Cardeña, both authors are already leading names in Spanish literature. The titles are expressive of the episode that supports, models, and rewrites: the end of the Trojan War and the return and death of the victor, now the victim of the hatred of a resentful wife.

Marta González explores Carmen Morenilla's play *Sols el dol* (2001), which follows a similar tradition and line of thought to the creations of Giraudoux's play *La guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu* (1935) and Seferis' poem "Helen" (1955), both of which were already inspired by an identical vision of the emptiness of war expressed by Euripides in *Helen* (412 BC). C.): the denunciation of the true identity of a war, founded on the uselessness of its pretexts and the ambitions it serves. In the expressive words of Caroline Alexander, quoted in this study: "Life is more precious than glory; this is the unheroic truth disclosed by the greatest warrior at Troy. (...) That glory, honor, and fame are more important than life is a heroic convention so old it can be traced securely to Indo-European tradition; glory – *kléos* – is achieved through heroic poetry, in other words, through epic".

The next three chapters have Penelope as their main motivation, exemplifying the countless nuances that the figure allows. Silva and Hörster took as their subject the text by a contemporary Portuguese playwright and director, Cláudia Lucas Chéu, who in her play *Glória ou como Penélope morreu de tédio* returns to the theme of the sovereign of Ithaca, read from the perspective of Telemachus / Pathos. Under the ambiguity of the word 'Glória', she plays with the meaning of *arete* and the ironic flavour of a feminine name, popular in Portugal. This is how this new Penelope is named. Instead of a paradigm of excellence, the mother that Telemachus describes is an ordinary woman, incapable of getting on with her life because she is tied to a meaningless wait that goes on forever. The Ulysses she is waiting for doesn't deserve this fidelity, which is perhaps a habit

developing into frustration, and which can awaken the vague desire for the absent one to die and leave her free of this shackle.

In *Crónicas de Itaca* by the Argentinian playwright Susana Lage, Delbueno emphasises the focus on the final reunion of the lords of Ithaca. It is also the theme of waiting that fuels the action of the play, embodied in a woman who frees herself from the weight of a long absence through what becomes her hallmark: cunning and infidelity. Time has made complete strangers of the two protagonists. When they meet again, what emerges is the total incompatibility between the pair and the impossibility of recapturing a past that seems to have been lost forever.

With *Penelope awaits* by Rodolfo Modern and Jorgelina Loubet, we return, at least in appearance, to the traditional pattern of the faithful woman who waits, with considerable resistance, for her husband's long-delayed return. Only in appearance, because, as Zamperetti Martín points out, this other Penelope doesn't shy away from giving in to the harassment of suitors, in the face of the repugnance of a Telemachus committed to avoiding maternal coquetry, which seems to lead to imminent adultery. More than a wife, the queen of Ithaca became mainly a woman, who legitimately struggles between the expectation of Ulysses' return and the desire to relive a love that gives meaning to her life. The return finally comes, but it doesn't bring peace, such is the disenchantment and degradation created by the passage of time. Only the strength of tradition can harmonise the reunion – "Let the legend continue".

A second set of chapters is dedicated to the Homeric influence on poetry, including the collaborations of Susana Marques Pereira, "Homeric echoes in contemporary Portuguese poets – revisiting the myth of Achilles", de Graciela Zecchin de Fasano, "A Monologue of sorrows: the lyrical voice of Telemachus in Daniel Mecca's collection of poems *Troy, take this chalice away from me*", Leonardo Bonturim Antunes, "Penelope's reception in the poetry of Mônica de Aquino and Ana Martins Marques", and Ana Isabel Martins, "*Penelope is Leaving*: one foot in the epic and the other one in hyper-contemporaneity". Through some specific elements, a certain cohesion is established between Portuguese, Argentinian and Brazilian creations.

Achilles is the theme that Marques Pereira uses to select some contemporary Portuguese poets marked by the Homeric tradition. After a brief overview of the traits with which the archaic tradition already drew the hero's personality – gathered in the *Iliad* – this chapter focuses on two poems: "Achilles and Patroclus", by Daniel Faria, and "In the shadow of Homer", by Eugénio de Andrade. It is the wrath of Achilles and its tremendous consequences that inspire them most of all, "allowing us to see

how, in today's world, reflection on human relationships, on the breaking of ties, on the precariousness of existence, on death, on the unfathomable, on the power of words takes precedence over the praise of heroism".

Zecchin de Fasano uses Telemachus as a motif to analyse compositions by the Argentinian poet Daniel Mecca. In the collection of poems *Troya, aparta de mí este cáliz*, the prince of Ithaca expresses, in a monologue, the consequences for a growing son during his father's absence. In establishing the thematic and formal guidelines for this rewriting, the author summarises: "Mecca has, in the transition from epic to lyric, abandoned the contextual data necessary to the narrative and incorporated an intimate debate of the soul, with an incomparable tone of perpetual hesitation. This is a 21st-century Telemachus with no gods in sight".

Bonturim Antunes, meanwhile, returns to the theme of Penelope, one of the most fruitful in Brazilian reception, through two poets, Mônica de Aquino and Ana Martins Marques. From the Penelope of tradition, the two authors take up not only the paradigm of fidelity that Homer contributed so much to creating but also some of the frailties, emotions and expectations that could make Ulysses' wife more human. And these also have a long tradition in antiquity. Within a vision marked by the passing of centuries and decisive stages in the history of human society, the vision now in question is one that valorises "gender roles and relations", making Penelope the worthy parallel of the hero of a thousand tricks.

Penelope also dominates the last chapter dedicated to poetry, which Ana Isabel Martins articulates, in her opening comment, with the title of a novel discussed below: "If António Ferreira writes the *Return of Penelope*, José Gardeazabal writes, chiastically, her *Departure*". And after announcing the independence that characterises this reading of the Homeric reference, Martins continues: "Gardeazabal's Penelope designs a framework, questioning heroic paradigms, redesigning other/new aesthetic-literary, philosophical, and political configurations". In other words, what we're talking about is a Penelope who struggles with the issues that tradition has attributed to her. Simultaneously, her reactions fit into a polyhedral analysis of contemporary experiences – "the tragedies and calamities that plagued the 20th century" – within what has come to be called *hypercontemporaneity.*

The novel occupies the next set of chapters, divided between those focusing on a broader plan of the Homeric narrative – Adriane Duarte, "*Romance da Pedra do Reino*: The Reception of Homer in the Brazilian Backlands", Rui Tavares de Faria, "The fantastic recreation of Ulysses' journey by Natália Correia in *The Island of Circe*"; while others favour characters of reference – Christian Werner, "Reading Diadorim in J. G. Rosa's *Grande sertão: veredas* with the Iliadic Achilles", and José Pedro

Serra, “Homeric echoes and contemporary voices: *O Regresso de Penélope – The Return of Penelope* – by António Vieira”.

Adriane Duarte takes a title by Brazilian writer Ariano Suassuna, *Romance da Pedra do Reino*, for her theme. Through Homer, Suassuna seeks to identify "the roots of Western culture", making his narrator – Don Pedro Dinis Ferreira-Quaderna – an endeavouring 'rival of Homer' as a singer of Brazilian or even universal history: “he emulates the Greek poet in his zeal to win the title of ‘Greatest Genius of Humanity’, a stage a step further from that of ‘Genius of the Brazilian Race’, which he also aspires to”. In this way, he seeks to free himself from the Portuguese colonial imprint and find his "mestizo ancestors, founders of the *sertanejo* kingdom". His aim is to write an epic novel, "a kind of *Sertaneid*, *Northeasterniad* or *Brazilianyssey*", in which he would narrate the deeds of those ancestors.

By analysing *The Island of Circe* by Natália Correia (1983), Tavares de Faria takes us to another geographical space, the Portuguese islands of the Azores and Madeira, where a kind of parodic odyssey takes place, starring the "odysseyologist" Emmeline Hurst. It is therefore a question of transferring the traditional Mediterranean adventure to the Atlantic and adjusting the saga of the Greek hero to other ports. The origin of the author, Natália Correia, who hails from the Azores, creates a particular affinity with the hero of the *Odyssey*, the ruler of Ithaca, in what can be considered marks of insularity.

Werner uses the well-known novel by Brazilian writer João Guimarães Rosa, *Grande sertão: veredas* (1956), as the basis for his reflection. "Sertão" is the mark of origin that Guimarães Rosa affirms as responsible for his identity and the literature he produces, even though his life path has made him a cosmopolitan intellectual and diplomat. It is in this emblematic title of the Brazilian author that Werner tries to find traces of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, identifying some fundamental correspondences: the themes of 'anger', 'revenge' and 'violence' triggered by the death of a companion, in which "a character as elusive as the Homeric Helen and Penelope, Diadorim" is involved. But because this character's true gender remains hidden for most of the novel, it is with Achilles that this chapter underlines his closeness.

José Pedro Serra emphasises the first sign of the parodic tone of this rewriting in the title of António Vieira's *The Return of Penelope*. In fact, the protagonist of the journey is this time a Penelope 'of a thousand tricks'. The same antithetical process applies to the space of the action: instead of travelling from east to west, Vieira's 'penelopeia' heads eastwards, starting in Singapore. The adventure doesn't even lack the traditional hurricane, symptomatically entitled 'Helena', nor the successive stages that the journey

involves. The use of epithets and formulas reinforces the parallel between the two 'odysseys'. But to the plot of the conventional narrative, Serra adds those that will be the focus of his analysis, paying particular attention to the novelties introduced by Vieira: “an immense sensitivity to astonishment and mystery; a penetrating vision of our world and of our life in society; the suspicious look at religions”.

Finally, the short story has also been a paradoxically adopted model for relaying episodes inspired by the long narrative that the epic is by nature. The final two chapters of this volume are dedicated to analysing two examples: the famous short story "Perfection", by the Portuguese novelist Eça de Queiroz – Leonor Santa Bárbara, “Odysseus and perfection” – and the collection by the Spanish author Irene Reyes-Noquerol – Lucía Romero Mariscal, “Celebrating Homer in Contemporary Spanish Narrative: *De Homero y otros dioses*, by Irene Reyes-Noguerol”.

In a brief analysis, Leonor Santa Bárbara returns to Portuguese novelist Eça de Queiroz's short story "Perfection". It's a direct rewrite of Book V of the *Odyssey*, the episode of the island of Calypso. In Eça's version, this is the place where 'human' and 'divine' touch, when the 'hero' meets the 'nymph'. Ogygia is the island of 'perfection', that oasis of abundance, wonder and eternity to which Ulysses, a privileged human being, has access. In love, the nymph promises him the eternal enjoyment of these divine goods and even – an extreme gift – immortality. But Ulysses suffers, and perishes, in hopeless longing for what, as a man, really motivates him – Penelope's ineffable imperfection.

Finally, Romero Mariscal brings our attention to the collection of short stories by Spanish author Irene Reyes-Noguerol, *De Homero y otros dioses* (2018). "Collection of lyrical stories" is the name given by Romero Mariscal to define her subject, a collection of 21 short stories inspired by the Greco-Latin tradition, in which "the other gods" who accompany Homer are names such as Euripides, Virgil, Ovid, Jorge Luis Borges, Luis Cernuda and Federico García Lorca. It's not just a question of associating a group of authors in such a way as to constitute a collection of followers of the classical tradition. A deeper purpose links these reference names: to trace an interaction that permeates different perspectives on the old Homer.

PART I

THEATER

CHAPTER ONE

BETWEEN THE *ILIAD* AND THE *ORESTEIA*: THE VISION OF CHEMA CARDEÑA AND DIANA DE PACO

NÚRIA LLAGÜERRI PUBILL
AND CARMEN MORENILLA TALENS

1. Introduction

The *Iliad* was considered the pinnacle of literature in antiquity, and despite falling into obscurity for centuries, today it is again considered the greatest example of classical literature in the Western world. It has sometimes been used to help understand the precedents of the *Oresteia*, a trilogy that has been the subject of numerous reworkings, either as a whole or focusing solely on the first tragedy, *Agamemnon*. Here, we shall discuss two plays that illustrate this, *Cenizas de Troya* [Ashes of Troy] by Diana M. de Paco Serrano and *La Reina Asesina* [The assassin queen] by Chema Cardeña.

Both authors have received numerous awards for their work in theatre, and although they have different backgrounds, they are both well-versed in the classical world and make use of it, transforming traditional tales for a specific socio-political purpose. As frequently occurs in contemporary drama, they have reworked earlier stories to convey current problems, and to facilitate this, they have both eliminated the presence of the gods, which is more striking in the case of De Paco's play, since in other respects it adheres closely to the plot of the Greek tragedies and those of Seneca. In both cases, one of the fundamental themes in their plays in general is the

situation of women,[1] but they also examine the limits and implications of power, the problems of effective communication and coexistence, and on a more personal level, the quest for one's identity and the bonds between an individual and society.

The plays we shall discuss here were written and performed in the early days of these two playwrights' respective careers, which have garnered success in the fields in which they have worked. They both draw on Greek myth and literature in these plays, but the results are completely different. Diana de Paco adapts Aeschylus' trilogy using reworkings mainly from Seneca, whereas Chema Cardeña creates a totally new play with an original plot but which makes frequent reference to classical epic and tragedy.

2. *Orestíada. Cenizas de Troya* [Oresteia. Ashes of Troy] by Diana de Paco Serrano

Diana de Paco Serrano is a senior lecturer in classics at the University of Murcia and has been a leading figure in Spanish drama for almost thirty years. She began writing plays in the mid-1990s, and from the outset her works evidenced great maturity of content, mastery of theatrical staging and a profound knowledge of the classical world, since in all of her plays she directly or indirectly reworks the classical myths.[2]

In 2000, she was awarded a doctorate from the University of Murcia for her thesis entitled *La saga de los Atridas en el teatro español contemporáneo* [The saga of the Atreidae in contemporary Spanish theatre] and in 2006 she premiered *Orestíada*. *Cenizas de Troya* [Oresteia. Ashes of Troy].[3] It is clear, then, that De Paco has a detailed knowledge not only of the Greek plays, but also of later reworkings. In this case, she even includes literal references to Greek expressions, such as "Por el sufrimiento a la sabiduría" [Through suffering comes wisdom], spoken by the chorus in the prologue and reiterated by the same in Part I – entitled *Agamemnon* – as "sólo a través del dolor se alcanza el conocimiento" [only through pain is knowledge attained], and "una sola mujer de muchos hombres" [a single

[1] This question has received particular attention in the case of Diana de Paco's plays. On the author's stance, see Rodríguez Alonso, 2022, 87-103, which does not discuss this particular play.

[2] For more on her early plays, see López Moro, 2010, 13-28; Serrano, 2016, 23-27, "Bio-bibliografía (teatral) de Diana M. de Paco".

[3] It premiered on 6 October 2006, at the Guerra de Lorca theatre in Murcia (Spain). It was also performed at the Classical Drama Festival in Merida from 9 to 12 August 2007, directed by Antonio Saura.

woman of many men] in reference to Helen and spoken by the Man who opens Part 1 and represents Aeschylus' chorus in the tragedy *Agamemnon*.[4]

It is beyond the scope of this paper to provide a detailed commentary on the play; instead, we shall limit ourselves to highlighting some particularly significant passages in order to shed light on the procedures De Paco employs, paying particular attention to the beginning because it influences perceptions of the play as a whole.

2.1. The play begins with a prologue which essentially reproduces the plot of Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*, with some notable differences. It opens with four women speaking to the audience, alternately lamenting the death of sons, husbands and fathers in the war, their former joy and their present deep sadness. Thus, the play starts at the end, with lamentations for those who died in the Trojan War, and then immediately moves on to the prolegomena. The audience is directly addressed at the end, too, creating a ring composition, a stylistic technique that, as we shall see, is frequently used to create a particular atmosphere through the reiteration it entails.

The play begins with the phrase "Todo comenzó en un día de violencia" [It all began on a day of violence][5] and this first speech ends with "Todo comenzó en un día de violencia que todavía hoy continúa, sin descanso, sin final" [It all began on a day of violence that still continues to this day, without rest, without end]. In a clear ring composition, the same Woman concludes this sequence[6] with a new speech, the final sentence of which is "Todo comenzó en un día de violencia, y de ese día nacieron años y años de dolor sin descanso, sin final" [It all began on a day of violence, and from that day sprang forth years and years of pain without rest, without end].[7]

Sequence 2 begins and ends with a speech by the Man who serves as the chorus and who recalls the previous misfortunes of the house of the Atreidae, as did the chorus in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, with the difference that Aeschylus' chorus also speaks of the sacrifice of Iphigenia, to which it refers in very expressive terms. Here, the focus is on the conflict between Atreus and Thyestes and the former's cruel revenge on the latter, namely the infamous feast at which Thyestes was served the flesh of his own sons, which is depicted on stage. The stage directions read:

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[4] For an interesting analysis of this play, see Martínez Martínez, 2013, 39-54.
[5] According to De Paco, this expression comes from Baricco, Alessandro. *Homero, Ilíada*. Círculo de Lectores, S.A., 15.
[6] The scenes are referred to as "sequences".
[7] Our emphasis.

> *Un banquete. Dos hombres sentados comen. Uno de ellos (Atreo) mostrará las cabezas cortadas de los hijos del otro (Tiestes). Este último descubre que ha comido carne de su carne. Vomitará hasta morir. El primero ríe endemoniadamente*.
>
> A banquet. Two seated men are eating. One of them (Atreus) shows the severed heads of the sons of the other (Thyestes). The latter realises that he has eaten the flesh of his flesh. He vomits to death. The former laughs fiendishly.

In these stage directions, De Paco reprises the theme explored in Seneca's *Thyestes*, a part of the myth that sheds essential light on the revenge that Aegisthus, son of Thyestes, later exacts when the opportunity presents itself. Thus, between the Man's two speeches, Thyestes foretells that the son he fathered with his own daughter will avenge him:

> he violado las leyes de la naturaleza mezclando al padre con el abuelo, a la esposa con la hija y a sus hijos con los nietos, el sol aterrorizado por todos estos crímenes cambió su curso en dirección opuesta y ahora el día se confundirá con la noche.
>
> I have violated the laws of nature by merging father and grandfather, wife and daughter and sons and grandsons; the sun, horrified by these crimes, has reversed its course, and now day is confused for night.

In the prologue of his *Agamemnon*, Seneca has the shadow Thyestes say:

> *... versa natura est retro:*
> *avo parentem, pro nefas, patri virum,* 35
> *gnatis nepotes miscui— nocti diem.*
>
> …nature has been perverted:
> I have merged father and grandfather, Oh impiety, husband and father,
> grandsons and sons ... day and night.[8]

It is very typical of Seneca to dwell in his tragedies on gruesome descriptions, laments for misfortunes suffered and disquiet about the impiety of what is being decided, and this is what we also see in the work of De Paco, who is well-versed in his work.

Because of the absence of the last link in the chain of family misfortunes recited by Aeschylus' chorus, namely Agamemnon's audacious and impious decision to sacrifice his daughter, this new generation is viewed

[8] *Agamemnon* 35 ff. in the translation by Luque Moreno (translated here into English).

more kindly than the horrifying and sacrilegious brothers Atreus and Thyestes.

The Man's final words endow the palace with the importance that Aeschylus gives it in *Agamemnon*. He says:

> En este palacio residen, lo que ocurre dentro no me está permitido contarlo, los muros del palacio tienen ojos y tras ellos se esconde la tragedia.
>
> In this palace they reside, what happens within I am not permitted to tell, the palace walls have eyes and behind them, tragedy lurks.

As we know, in Aeschylus the palace is Hades and it oozes blood; hence, before entering, Cassandra must shed her Apollonian attributes.[9] This is why the characters' position on the stage is so important, particularly that of Clytemnestra, the guardian of the gate.

Sequences 4 to 8 depict the sacrifice of Iphigenia with a considerable reduction in the number of characters compared with Euripides' tragedy. We believe it is significant that Achilles – a character who has an important function in Euripides – does not appear, no doubt omitted in order to focus on the fundamental thrust of the action. Nor does Menelaus appear, who in Euripides talks to Agamemnon and reproaches him harshly for insisting on being elected leader of the expedition but now not wanting to accept the painful consequences of this. However, Agamemnon's conflict between acting as king or as father is only briefly staged in several monologues spoken by the king.

The absence of Menelaus' reproaches, which in Euripides' tragedy reveal Agamemnon as being both ambitious and cowardly, here gives rise to greater sympathy for the king. This good ruler says:

> Destrozado me encuentras sí, por la solución que Calcante interpretó hace un momento. Sólo sacrificando a Ifigenia los vientos volverán a soplar. El futuro del ejército está en mis manos, el destino me obliga a tomar esta terrible decisión, actuando de otro modo perdería mi honor como rey y el respeto de la multitud, dones que honran y dignifican al buen gobernante.
>
> I am devastated, yes, by the remedy that Calchas proposed a moment ago. Only by sacrificing Iphigenia will the winds blow again. The army's future is in my hands, fate forces me to make this terrible decision, otherwise I would lose my honour as king and the respect of all, gifts that endow renown and dignity on the good ruler.

[9] As the god of light, Apollo cannot enter Hades.

In the following sequence, father and daughter hold a dialogue; Agamemnon insinuates that death awaits her, as he speaks of a long separation. This is followed by the sequence in which Agamemnon and Clytemnestra first enter into dialogue, and then a Woman informs Clytemnestra of the sacrifice awaiting Iphigenia. These are quick scenes with short dialogues, until the seventh scene, a monologue of supplication spoken by Clytemnestra, which she concludes by predicting future vengeance:

> Así pues, sólo hace falta un único pretexto para que los hijos que te queden vivos y yo misma te hagamos el recibimiento que mereces. ¡No, Agamenón, no me fuerces a que sea mala contigo, ni tú mismo lo seas!
>
> Thus, only a single pretext is required for me and your surviving children to give you the welcome you deserve. No, Agamemnon, don't force me to be evil to you, nor be evil yourself.

The eighth sequence consists of a monologue spoken by Agamemnon lamenting what he is about to do, and Iphigenia's entrance and sacrifice:

> *Ifigenia se aproxima lentamente a su padre, junto al altar. Agamenón la mira llorando. El rostro hierático de Ifigenia vaticina su muerte. Agamenón sacrifica a Ifigenia. El Atrida llora. Es un llanto sordo, el más amargo que jamás haya llorado un hombre. Es el llanto del Laocoonte. Los vientos de Áulide reaparecen.*
>
> Iphigenia slowly approaches her father at the altar. Agamemnon watches her weeping. Iphigenia's sombre expression foreshadows her death. Agamemnon sacrifices Iphigenia. The son of Atreus weeps. His muted sobs are the bitterest tears ever shed by a man, it is the grief of Laocoön. The winds begin to blow again at Aulis.

Here, Agamemnon is presented in a more kindly fashion than in Euripides' tragedy, and at the same time, Iphigenia is deprived of the decision to self-sacrifice: instead, she acts like an automaton.

The next two sequences provide a link between the sacrifice plot and the rest of the play. The ninth shows Aegisthus and Clytemnestra agreeing to avenge Iphigenia's death, with Aegisthus acting very aggressively, and concludes by staging the union between the two:

> *Clitemnestra, en brazos de Egisto, llora desconsolada la muerte de su hija y jura venganza. Después bailará enloquecida. Finalmente entregará su cuerpo ardiente al de Egisto, inflamadas las llamas de sus entrañas y su corazón.*

> Held in Aegisthus' arms, Clytemnestra weeps disconsolately over her daughter's death and swears revenge. Then she dances like a madwoman, Finally, she surrenders her impassioned body to Aegisthus, her heart and soul aflame.

The final sequence consists of a brief appearance by the chorus, anticipating the destruction of Troy. In Clytemnestra's action, in the importance given to her love for Aegisthus without abandoning her desire for revenge, and consequently, in the greater role given to Aegisthus, De Paco again follows Seneca's *Agamemnon*, in which Clytemnestra dwells on her affection for her new companion despite the harsh reproaches of the wet nurse, which remind us of those of Phaedra's wet nurse.

2.2. The first part, *Agamemnon*, opens with a speech by the Man, who corresponds to Aeschylus' chorus, and the plot in this part coincides with Aeschylus' tragedy of the same name. The Man begins by noting that the years have passed and many men have died:

> La ambición, el orgullo, la violencia han dejado innumerables madres sin hijos, palacios vacíos, esposas viudas, cientos de rostros marcados por el luto.
>
> Ambition, pride and violence have left countless mothers childless, palaces empty, wives widowed and hundreds of faces scored with grief.

These words emphasise the critical stance of Aeschylus' elders. Elders, because they say:

> Todos los hombres marcharon a Troya, jóvenes y adultos, excepto nosotros, que, debido a nuestra vejez, apoyamos nuestro cuerpo sobre un bastón, nosotros que razonamos con sensatez y destacamos por nuestra sabiduría, pero nos falta el vigor en nuestros miembros para enfrentarnos al enemigo.
>
> All the men marched to Troy, youth and adults alike, except us, we who must lean on staffs because of our old age, we who reason sagely and are noted for our wisdom but lack the vigour in our limbs to face the enemy.

After this, the Man, still in the role of Aeschylus' chorus, introduces the watchman, who in Aeschylus is the character who sets the play in motion, with a very similar speech:

> De lo demás callo, los muros conocen lo que dentro ocurre, y si voz tuvieran al igual que ojos, lo explicarían con claras palabras. Yo sólo hablo con quien ya todo sabe, con quien nada conoce, tampoco yo sé nada.

> I will not speak of the rest, the walls know what goes on within, and if they had a voice as well as eyes, they would explain it in clear words. I only talk to he who already knows everything; for he who knows nothing, I know nothing either.

As we have seen, in several sequences a Man or a Woman takes the place of Aeschylus' chorus; such is again the case in sequence 11, in which a Woman speaks to Cassandra as this latter relates her visions and predictions.

> Mujer: No en vano tienes fama de adivina, en todo lo anterior has acertado pero es mejor que ahora no alimente estas visiones. Debes reprimir tu fuerza y calmarte, estás enloquecida por la furia, y hueles en los muros de esta casa todo lo que ocurrió y ellos esconden, pero calma tus instintos y reposa, extranjera.
>
> Casandra: Y ahora, ¿Cuál será el crimen? ¿Qué es lo que se prepara? ¿Qué muerte inevitable va a tener lugar dentro de poco? ¿Dónde está? ¿Qué vas a hacer? ¿Contra él levantarás la espada, desgraciada? ¿Te atreverás ahora con tu hombre? (*Grito de Agamenón*.) ¿Lo escuchas?
>
> Mujer: Lo escucho. ¿Qué alarido es ese, animal o humano?
>
> Casandra: Ni siquiera el rey escaparse puede del destino adverso.
>
> Woman: It is not for nothing that you have a reputation as a seer, you have always been right before, but now it is better not to give free rein to these visions. You must suppress your power and calm yourself, you are maddened by rage, and in the walls of this house you smell all that has happened and that they hide, but hush your instincts and rest, foreigner.
>
> Cassandra: And now, what will be the crime? What is brewing? What inevitable death is soon to take place? Where is it? What are you going to do? Will you raise your sword against him, you wretch? Will you dare now with your man? (*Agamemnon howls.*) Did you hear that?
>
> Woman: I heard it. What kind of howl was that, animal or human?
>
> Cassandra: Not even the king can escape cruel fate.

As in Aeschylus, De Paco's play alludes to the sacrifice of Iphigenia and the coming of justice, but there is an important difference: De Paco's Clytemnestra is jealous. This is more Euripides' Clytemnestra, but above all Seneca's Clytemnestra. Let us contrast some of De Paco's passages with their equivalents in Seneca, just as an example. She says to the Woman:

¿Es que no ves que los celos, pese a los años pasados, me retuercen el pecho? Ya no puedo controlar mis impulsos, he dejado libre el timón y dónde me conduzca la marea del odio, la ira o la venganza, allí me llegaré dispuesta a todo. Cuando el alma está extraviada, mejor resulta confiarse a la suerte.

Can't you see that despite the years that have passed, jealousy writhes in my breast? I can no longer control my impulses, I have loosed the helm, and wherever the tide of hatred, anger or revenge carries me, there I will arrive ready to do anything. When the soul is lost, it is better to trust to luck.

Meanwhile, in the first dialogue between Clytemnestra and her wet nurse in Seneca's tragedy, *Agamemnon*, the queen says:

... fluctibus variis agor,
ut cum hinc profundum ventus, hinc aestus rapit,
incerta dubitat unda cui cedat malo. 140
proinde omisi regimen e manibus meis:
quocumque me ira, qua dolor, quo spes feret,
hoc ire pergam; fluctibus dedimus ratem:
ubi animus errat, optimum est casum sequi.

... I am swept by opposing waves, just as, when the wind tries to drag the deep sea to one side and the tide to the other, the wave hesitates, not knowing before which calamity to yield. That is why I have taken my hands from the helm: wherever anger, wherever pain, wherever hope wants to take me, there I am ready to go: when the soul has gone astray, the best thing to do is to let chance guide you.

De Paco has her Clytemnestra say to the Woman:

¿Tras diez años de abandono y lamentos, desconsuelo y soledad condenada a la tristeza, he de soportar ahora que vuelva unido a esa mujer troyana, de la que todos cantan su hermosura, Casandra, la hija del Rey Príamo, a la que raptó y ha convertido en su compañera de lecho? ¿Acaso esa bella joven es más digna que yo de su afecto? ¿He de dejar que esa extranjera se convierta en madrastra de mis hijos, esposa de mi esposo y princesa de mi reino? ¿A qué espero, desgraciada de mí, para preparar el crimen? ¿Qué más debe hacer Agamenón para ganarse mi desprecio y ser castigado? Ambos han de perecer, atravesados por la misma espada. Si, al ejecutarlos, pierdo yo la vida, no será desdichado final el de morir junto a quien quieres ver muerto.

After ten years of abandonment and lamentation, grief and loneliness, condemned to sadness, must I now accept that he returns united with that Trojan woman of whose beauty all sing, Cassandra, daughter of King Priam, whom he abducted and made his bedfellow? Is this beautiful young woman more worthy of his affection than I? Shall I let this foreign woman become stepmother to my children, wife to my husband and princess of my