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A few years ago, at the end of the last century, Homer spoke to us on a newscast. In Greek and with the voice of a woman, to the common surprise. Yes, the old poet abandoned his distance of twenty-eight centuries and became a media for a few moments. It was June 14, 1986. Jorge Luis Borges had died. His wife, Maria Kodama, an Argentine of Greek origin, tied in two hexameters what her husband had been for her. And he quoted and recited in Greek: "You are for me the father and the venerable mother, the brother and the flourishing husband." Homer, the blind poet, spoke in the female voice of the wife of a, also, blind poet and literary man. Maria shared her beautiful language with the old rhapsodist. It mattered little that the ditch of more than two millennia and the natural evolution of the language altered the original accent of the aedo. Another note still associated Maria with the poet of the great Greek epics: the blindness of her husband. María Kodama borrowed the words of Andrómaca addressed to her husband, in the farewell before the doors Esceas of the wall of Troy. Two verses that are the summary of the exemplary marriage of the Iliad: Héctor and Andrómaca. In the Odyssey, the centripetal pair of all the action is Ulysses and Penelope; but these lines want, rather, to evoke the marriage of Troy, a living monument of matrimonial love that gives warmth and tenderness to the songs VI and XXII of the epic of Ilium.

The meeting next to the Doors Esceas

The battle around the walls intensifies. Hector is determined to launch into combat. The courageous zeal for his country is explosive: "My spirit encourages me to succor the Trojans." But his temper does not lead him to forget about family. He has to say goodbye to his wife and son, at any cost. He does not find them in the palace. He goes outside the city and, when he arrives at the Puertas Esceas, he finds Andrómaca and Astianacte -Rey of the city-, his son. Hector called it Scamander. Encounter emotional, pathetic. Feelings and forebodings weave the stage. Andromache tries, heart in the hand, to convince him not to launch into combat. The motives? The common son, still an infant, and she, who already feels like a widow. Widowhood that will be total solitude: he has neither father nor mother; nor brothers: the seven killed Achilles. Hector concentrates and overcomes all those loves for her: «Hector, you are for me the father and the venerable mother, the brother and the flourishing husband». The conclusion of his exhortation: "Have compassion and stay here on the tower. Do not leave the child orphan and your wife a widow. " Hector is a few steps away from a glassy dilemma: love and defense of the country or fidelity and love for his wife and his son. The first decision of the dilemma will almost certainly bring him death. For the feminine intuition of Andrómaca, it is already a fact. The second will retain him with his loved ones, but at the cost of the loss of Ilium. The pietas (?? ?? ?????) towards the homeland, in front of the pietas for the family. Hector recognizes that he is also tormented by the pain of his wife, superior to that of Hecuba and Priam because, also for him, his wife is already more than his parents, even alive them. Mutual struggle of the two exits. The pietas, of distance and wide route, like veneration towards the mother country, faced with the pietas, intense equally, but of neighborhoods, that incites to him to remain in the comfortable walls of its home. Hector resolves the conflict of values in favor of the country, invoking the help of the gods for him and his family, especially for his son.

The perspective of viewpoints, male or female, is striking in the face of destiny: what for Hector is courage (???? ?) rational that defends Ilión as first value, is for Andrómaca fury, anger (?? ???) instinctive and destructive, because he does not prefer her and Astianacte. Idiosyncrasy of man, more cold and serene when judging in moments of turbulence, different from feminine sensibility, more attached to what immediately affects. Hector is aware of what will come to Andromache, his wife, and advances even the leaden future of her as a widow. Accept now the same feeling of Andromache. If she just pleaded with him: "Do not leave your wife a widow", he ventures to draw back the curtain of the future to visualize her as a widow. Thus the mutual pain becomes more dramatic: she, a slave, weaving fabrics for another woman or bringing water from the fountain, amidst sarcastic and ironic comments: "Here goes the wife of Hector, the best of the

Trojans in combat!" . Hector's heart is torn and he is horrified by the vision of that painting: "Pain will be renewed, seeing you deprived of the man who would take away the day of slavery from you. But let my body cover the earth, rather than listen to your cries and know that they drag you. " Future fierce and lacerating that of his wife, all the more so because the present is still totally the opposite. Hector has preferred, however, not to sketch the future of his Escamandrio, whom Andrómaca has seen as an orphan, at the same time that he has asked his husband -as we already know- not to leave him in such condition.

From tension to humor

Very intense scene, with the mutual love of the spouses raised to the maximum voltage, to use a metaphor of our electrified world. Homer notices that high tension, which he has designed, and wants to cushion it. Andromache is a delicate wife, but at the same time, a very tender mother. Next to her is the wet nurse with her son. The poet chooses a nice detail: the child is frightened by the armor of his father, especially before the helmet and its ridge crest. It is the way in which Homer intervenes the creature in the drama of the scene. He, who can not utter a word - is ?? ???? , in-fante - sees his father's attire terrified and, implicitly, his entry into battle. The infant has just "spoken". His speech, without words, has been the horror at the sight of his father, armed and resolved to combat. The same speech of fear and trembling that her mother has uttered before her husband. And that scare Astianacte, so consistent with the feelings of his mother, now translates to the father and mother in a smile: "They smiled the dear father and the reverend mother. The fear of the child and the refuge in the mother's lap unleash the smile of their parents. That smile softens the trepidante of the moment. Homer has found in her the balm that gives a psychological respite to the pathos of the scene. Hector's terrifying appearance seems to have slowed down for the boy and even for Andromache. Terror has yielded to tenderness and sympathy. The son is now the axis and the most harmonious union of marriage, also destemperator of the painful sentimental torrent of the young spouses. In addition, Hector, already stripped of his helmet by naive command of his son, is able to pray before the deity. Hector is now a devout and humble subject of the gods, without the haughtiness of the chilling helmet and its terrifying plume. The same infant has been the cause of Hector taking off his helmet so as not to scare him, but also so that he falls down before Zeus and the other gods. Thus, simple, with his head uncovered, he can enter into prayer and supplicate precisely in favor of him, of his Scamander: "Zeus and the other gods, grant that this also my son be, as I am, striving among the Trojans [.. .], and that, upon seeing him return from combat, someone would say then: "He is much braver than his father" ». Thus the meeting, which began as a family, ends as a religious. Homer has led us through a hierarchical scale of values. And he has done it almost

without realizing it: on the pietas of the family, he has placed in Hector the love of the country; and to the pietas towards Ilión it is superimposed, in the hero, the ?? ?? ???? with Zeus and the other gods. In the mind of Hector, the value -la? ???? - has led, ascending, into the ?? ?? ????; He has merged with her, strengthening each other. It is true what his wife has told him: he has a lot of bravery and manly courage -virtus, which the Latins would later say-, even some hint of anger, at least that is how feminine sensitivity perceives him. But that value seeks the best. Because it is not brute bravery, but ???? ?, ascends to the last rung, the one of the best; then the? ?-??? look for the best (? ?-?????), perfection, even more than the virtus of Latinos.

Hector or Achilles?

When we studied, in the classroom of the humanities center of Salamanca, the Homeric characters for the academy of the 1973-74 academic year-and also decades later, when re-reading Homer-we were more attracted to Hector than Achilles. We felt more human and close to Ilión's warrior. It will be because the Achaean hero is almost pure and rude? ????? ? (virtus). Of indisputable audacity, but surly and resentful. Rarely does it reveal the other side of the? ?????: Kindness, compassion. In effect, the? ????? it entails courage and humanity, in equal and well-locked parts. On the contrary, Hector is brave, but very sensitive to his wife and his son, and possesses an ardor that seeks the best, excellence (? ?????). With this, his personality, his humanitas, is more complete than that of Achilles. In the end, the? ?????? ? of Achilles will kill the? ????? Of Hector; but facing the human spirit, Hector - at least that's how I feel it - triumphs over Achilles. This, the superman of the moment in the fantasy of children and also in the minds of adults, caused two worlds, the Greek and the Trojan, to revolve around him, his anger and his necessary victory. But Achilles did not reach that complete humanitas of Hector, perhaps because he was a "hybrid" child: of a goddess and a man. A demigod, in agreement; but less human, for that reason. Hector, son of only humans, did. He is a great hero, full of courage: "I learned to be brave always and to fight among the first Trojans", but not of extraterrestrial size. It influences, without a doubt, in that human aspect of Hector the peculiar coloring and the understandable "affective prejudice" of Homer. The poet, who probably was born in Asia Minor, region of Ilión, inclines the balance of the story towards his patriotic hero.

Las Puertas Esceas and the walls of Troy are a haven of peace and tenderness amidst the din of a long war. A convulsive scenario, so unfavorable for privacy, Homer has been drawn to make it the most appropriate for goodbye. There will be dismissed this well-

known marriage, patrimony of the humanity. Moreover, an epic that began with the word anger (?? ???), to condense the work around the fury of Achilles, is here suspended in this cove of gentle affection and even of humor content.

News of a goodbye of more than two millennia ago

Unfortunately, the particular circumstance of that encounter is also the property of humanity: war. How many times has it been repeated, in the course of human history, a farewell as well between spouses, when the bugle called the men to the front, to enter the combat! I came across the pages of Homer in the seventies. The passage evoked and the laments after the death of Hector were translated -or, to be more honest, we racked our heads to achieve it- and we discussed them, under the guidance of our Greek teacher, Father Pablo López, Legionary of Christ, tested Hellenistic. The public academy of the mentioned course was precisely on several characters of the Iliad. We represented them as neoreligious youngsters. Well, in that moment in which we followed the avatars of the young Homeric couple next to the wall, the Vietnam War (1955-1975) was in the most burning and decisive. It had already claimed lives twice as many years as the decade of Troy. It was almost daily news. In it the scene of the Homeric farewell was repeated very frequently: Vietnamese wives, from the north or from the south, and American wives gave their husbands goodbye; girlfriends who barely got rid of their fiancées, who went to the front to defend what the country asked of them, whether or not it was correct. And we, jealous students of the classical humanities, thought how human feelings sew and instantly combine different scenarios and centuries: Homeric and ours. That is the polyglot and pluritemporal ventura of works and perennial authors like Homer.

The lament of a widow

Andrómaca happened before. More than two thousand years before. A costumbrista painting of the gynoeceum of the royal palace of Troy: Andrómaca is at the loom; The maids prepare the hot water for Hector's bath when he returns from combat. There her husband wanted her, in the domestic occupations of the woman, not in the concerns of battles, the duty of the men. That was the order he gave her when saying goodbye: "Go

home, dedicate yourself to your work: the loom and the distaff, and order your servants to get to work. War, on the other hand, is the task of every male born in Ilium; above all, mine ». Brave and noble spirit of Hector. Suddenly, a moan goes through the palace doors. For Hector's wife, translated into a tragic scenario. He wants to know what the scream has caused. Like a madwoman, bursting her heart, she throws herself out of the house, towards the tower. And, faced with reality, the feeling is, suddenly, knowledge and, simultaneously, fading of so much pain. Recovered, it breaks into a long regret. Homer urges that elegy with the darkest tones and the most intense regrets, which he leaves in the mouth of Andrómaca. He cries his luck to come, when he begins to notice, with him in the mind and in the heart. Born in different places: Hector, in Troy; Andrómaca, in Thebes. She has already remembered her native Thebes, at the meeting of the Esceas Gates. Different origin, but the same destiny (?? ?? ??): Mutual pains and sorrows, to suffer from it after Hector's death. The place of this suffering will also vary, like that of birth: the mansions of Hades will now be the abode of Hector, while she will return, yes, to the palace, but alas, widow. For this, the known rooms will be for her one more lash in her torment. Astianacte will not even join them physically anymore. This name is pronounced twice by his mother in lament, not without irony, to bring to mind the joy of the infant until the present. By the admiration towards Hector, the Trojans said with respect the name Astianacte-King of the city- given to his son. But, from now on, they will shout it in mockery, because it has been orphaned. If in song VI, Homero made Hector tear the curtain on the future of Andrómaca, now induces the wife to draw back the veil of the future of the already orphan Astianacte: "Do not leave the child orphan", had implored Hector. And if he already sensed the orphanage of the son and its contents, he now masterfully describes it with selected impressionistic data and then sprinkled on the darkly colored verses: dismissed from here and there by his father's old friends, who accompany the they further increase their disdain with the sarcastic reed: "Get out of here. Your father is not our guest. " And the reaction of the orphan, as expected: "Crying, the child returns to his widowed mother." Homer has underlined the condition of the mother, intentionally leaving the adjective (?? ???) for the end of a verse that has already begun with the orphan sadly mourned in tears (?????? ????). Widow and orphan, helpless without Hector, his old protection and defender. And that leaf of the diptych that advances the future, is contrasted by Andromache, guided by Homer, with that of the past, full of the affection of his father and the life of a prince: before he ate the best of the sheep on the knees of his father and slept in a soft bed. Of all this, nothing now, because he is deprived of his beloved father. The contrast of the before -??? ?- of Astianacte with his now-?? ?-, attracts much more to the reader to the miserable fate of Andrómaca and his son, especially when that now supposes, possibly, a dishonored death: « Now, on the other hand, next to the concave ships, away from your parents, the worms that move will eat you once the dogs are satisfied. With these descriptive resources and with the antithesis, favored by the consonant rhyme of the two Greek adverbs, Homer achieves the com-passion of those who are living in the moment: the same poet, the widow, the orphan, the maids, who listen to his mistress wasted in tears, and-why not? -the reader. No matter the century in which each one lives. It is impressive that when Héctor and

Andrómaca say goodbye, she only anticipates her more than possible future and that of the son asking Héctor: "Do not leave your son orphan or your wife's widow". But it does not specify aspects of the two in those times that can come. It was at that moment that Hector would shine and enunciate the humiliating details of his wife's widowhood. Sixteen rhapsodies after the colloquium at the gates of the wall -in chronological reality, four or five days later-, when contemplating the corpse of Hector dragged by the horses of Achilles, it is she who has unraveled the details, alive and pathetic, of the orphanage of Astianacte. Passed moments of disinterested love, like the one who should reign in the family, who looks more at the good of the other, and suffers more for his affliction than for his own. Hector, in the farewell colloquy, was disturbed by the fate of Andromache and the mutual son, not his own; Andromache, Hector died, not so much distress his widow's sorrows as the misfortunes that have to live from now Astianacte.

Poem of battles and loves

The Iliad, poem of anger and bloody battles. But also, I sing to the love of the spouses. It has been said that the Odyssey is, instead, the poem of peace, of civilization, after the wrath and desolation of the Iliad and the subsequent fall of Troy. It has been pointed out that it is even more humanistic than the Iliad, and from the first word: ? ? ? ? ?. It has been highlighted that the Odyssey is a great poem to human love, faithfully maintained in the midst of a thousand obstacles and works, although with characteristics not quite similar to those we want for marital fidelity. But also the Iliad, as we have evoked, is an ode and a praise to human love, above all in canto VI and in XXII. The lyrical sensibility and beauty of these two episodes surpass the familiar pictures of the Odyssey. The record of Homer is rich and varied: the most hardened and fierce of a war, slips smoothly to the most cordial lyric.

The educator of Greece and the West

"You are for me the father and the venerable mother, the brother and the flourishing husband": synthesis and lesson of married love drawn by the hand of the poet. Andrómaca could not better define the love of a wife. And Hector, in the farewell of the Esceas Doors, repeats that same love: Andromache is everything for her, more than his father Priam and Hecuba his mother. Héctor, Andrómaca and Astianacte: a triangle of familiar love, that only the death of Héctor will leave turned into an angle -the widow and the orphan-; An angle open to pain and affront, although with the exemplary memory of

the life of the husband and the father. That noble and grateful memory recovers again, at least spiritually and emotionally, the family triangle.

Those words of Andrómaca evoke other, more ancient, pronounced by a man, the first in human history, and repeated by the second Adam: "The man will leave his father and his mother and will join his wife, and both they will be one ». They are not far, although in a male version, from those of Andrómaca. Héctor before Andrómaca, or - what do I know? - Jorge Luis Borges before María Kodama, could have personalized them: «You are everything to me and you and I are one. For you I have left my father and my mother ».

At the end of these evocations woven into the heat of the Iliad, there remains one with which everything has touched and beautifully harmonized the oestrus and the muse of the poet. The poet: just like that, Aristotle called Homer. And his teacher, Plato, wrote: "Homer educated Greece." The sentence has to be completed: Greece, then, educated Rome. Rome, at the same time with the Hellas, cut the spirit of Europe. So the phrase of Plato is equivalent to saying that Homer educated the West. Christianity corrected the grave errors of paganism, but also took advantage of the values of the Greco-Roman world, such as the union of man and woman. In that old Europe, Homer's art forged two marriages like that of Hector-Andromache, with his son Astianacte, and Odysseus-Penelope, with Telemachus as the fruit of his love. Then other literati continued the furrow of greatness-and limitations too - of human love, with bridal couples or legendary spouses: Calixto-Melibea, Romeo-Julietta, Renzo-Lucía ... But Fernando de Rojas, William Shakespeare, Alessandro Manzoni ... were educated by Homer.

Today marriage, even the Christian, goes through risky times. We know it and we see it perplexed. To cast an evocative look at the Homeric verses and, in particular, the couple of Héctor and Andrómaca, is to recover the breath and feel the beauty, the selfless love and the essential romanticism of that natural institution.