



## Evocations around Hector and Andromache A world heritage marriage

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And Homer spoke in a newscast... in Greek

A few years ago, at the end of the last century, Homer spoke to us in a newscast. He spoke in Greek and with a woman's voice, for a common surprise. Yes, the poet left his distance of twenty-eight centuries and mediatic for a moment. It was June 14th, 1986. Jorge Luis Borges had died. His wife, María Kodama, an Argentine of Greek origin, tied in two hexameters what had been for her her husband. And she quoted them and recited them 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 an, also, the blind poet and literate. Mary shared her beautiful tongue with the old rhapsody. It mattered little that the ditch of more than two millenniums and the natural evolution of the language altered the original accent of the aedo. Another note still associated Mary with the poet of the great Greek epics: her husband's blindness. Maria Kodama borrowed the words of Andromache addressed to her husband, in the farewell at the Scaean gates of the wall of Troy. Two verses which are the summary of the exemplary marriage of the Iliad: Hector and Andromache. In the Odyssey, the centripetal couple of all the action is Ulysses and Penelope; but these lines want, rather, to evoke the marriage of Troy, a living monument of married love that gives warmth and tenderness to the songs VI and XXII of the epic of Ilium.

The meeting next to the Esceas Doors

The battle around the ramparts was escalating. Hector is determined to jump into

combat. The courageous zeal for his fatherland is explosive: "My mood encourages me to help the Trojans." But his temper does not lead him to forget about the family. He has to say good-bye to his wife and son, to how it will take place. He can't find them in the palace. It goes out of the city and, when arriving at the Esceas Doors, he finds Andromache and Astianacte-king of the city-, his son. Hector called him Escamandrio. I find emotional, pathetic. Feelings and forebodings weave the stage. Andromache tries heart in hand, to convince him not to throw himself into combat. The reason? The common son, infante still, and she, who already feels widowed. Widowhood that will be total loneliness: he has neither father nor mother; no brothers: the seven killed by Achilles. Hector concentrates and surpasses 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: "Pity and stay here on the tower. Do not leave the child and widow your wife. "Hector is a few steps from a glassy dilemma: the love and defense of the fatherland or fidelity and love to his wife and son. The first decision of the dilemma will bring you almost certain death. For the female intuition of Andromache, it is already a fact. The second will hold you together with your loved ones, but at the expense of the loss of Ilium. The pietas (ε σ βεια) towards the fatherland, in front of the pietas with the family. Hector recognizes that he also torments 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 them being alive. Mutual scuffle of the two exits. The pietas, of distance and ample route, like veneration towards the fatherland, confronted to the pietas, intense equally, but of suburban, that incites to him to remain in the comfortable walls of his hearth. Hector resolves the conflict of values in favor of the fatherland, invoking the help of the gods for him and his own, especially for his son.

It draws attention to the perspective of looks, masculine or feminine, facing the destiny: what for Hector is bravery (θυμ ς) rationally defending Ilium as a value first, is it for Andromache fury, wrath (μ νος) instinctive and destructive, for he does not prefer her and Astianacte. The idiosyncrasy of man, colder and serene when judging in times of turbulence, different from feminine sensibility, more attached to what affects immediately. Hector is aware of what will come to Andromache, his wife, and advances even the future leaden of her as a widow. Now accept the same feeling of Andromache. If she just begged: "Do not leave your wife a widow", he ventures to take the curtain of the future to visualize her as a widow. Thus the mutual pain becomes more dramatic: she, slave, weaving fabrics for another woman or bringing water from the fountain, between infamous and ironic remarks: "There goes the wife of Hector, the best of the Trojans in combat!" Hector's heart is torn and horrified at the sight of that painting: "The pain will be renewed, see you deprived of the man who would take away from you on the day of slavery. But let my corpse cover the earth, rather than hear your cries and know that they are dragging you. "Future gritty and piercing his wife's, all the more so that the present is still totally the opposite. Hector has preferred, however, not to outline the future of his Escamandrio, whom Andromache has warned as an orphan, while she has asked her husband - as we know - that he will

not leave him in such a condition.

From tension to humor

A very intense scene, with the mutual love of the husbands, elevated to the maximum voltage, to use a metaphor of our electrified world. Homer warns that high tension, which he has designed, and wants to dampen it. Andromache is a delicate wife, but, at the same time, tender mother. Next to her is always the nurse with her son. The poet chooses a sympathetic detail: the child is frightened by the armor of his father, especially at the helm and his undulating crest. It's the way Homer makes the creature intervene in the drama of the scene. He, who cannot utter a word – is ὁ Πλοῦς, infant –, is terrified of his father's attire and, implicitly, his entry into battle. The infant has just "talked." 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 his mother has given to her husband. And that horror of Astianacte, so consistent with the feelings of his mother, is now translated for the father and mother in a smile: "smiled the dear father and the venerated mother." The fear of the child and the refugee in the nurse's lap unleash the smile of their parents. That smile softens the moment's exhilarating. Homer has been able to find in it the balm that gives a psychological respite to the pathos of the scene. Hector's terrifying taste 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 solid union of marriage, enrobing line also of the painful sentimental torrent of the young husbands. Moreover, Hector, stripped of his helmet by the naive mandate of his son, is in a position to pray to the divinity. Hector is now devout and humble subject of the gods, without the loftiness of the chilling helm and his terrifying plume. The infant himself has been the cause of Hector taking off his helmet so as not to scare him, but also to get down to Zeus and the other gods. So, plain, bare-headed, he may enter into prayer and plead patiently in favor of him, of his scary: "Zeus and the other gods, grant that this my son also be, like me, striving among the Trojans [...], and that, seeing him come back from combat, someone says, "he is much more courageous than his father." So the encounter, which began as a relative, ends as a religious. Homer has led us on a well-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 fatherland; and to the pietas towards Ilium is overlaps, in the hero, the εὐβεία for with Zeus and the other gods. In Hector's mood, the value – the ῥετ – has resulted, ascending, in the εὐβεία; it has fused with it, strengthening each other. It is true what his wife has told him: he has a lot of courage and manly courage – virtue, which the Latinos would then say – even some semblance of anger, at least the feminine sensibility perceives it. But that value looks for the best. Because it is not brute courage, but ἀρετ, ascends to the last rung, the best; So the ῥ-ετ look for the best (ῥ-ιστον), perfection, even more than the virtues of Latinos.

Hector or Achilles?

When we studied, in the classroom of the center of humanities of Salamanca, the Homeric characters for the academy of the course 1973-74 – and also decades later, to reread Homer –, we were more attracted to Hector than Achilles. The warrior of Ilium felt it more human and close. Is it because the hero Achaeus is almost pure and rude?  $\nu\delta\rho\epsilon\ \alpha$  (virtus). Of indisputable boldness, but surely and resentful. Seldom reveals the other side of the  $\rho\epsilon\tau$ : kindness, compassion. Indeed, the  $\rho\epsilon\tau$  brave heart and humanity, equally and well-locked. On the contrary, Hector is hardened, but very sensitive to his wife and son, and has a burning that seeks the best, excellence ( $\rho\epsilon\tau$ ). With this, his personality, his humanitas, is more complete than Achilles's. In the end, the  $\nu\delta\rho\epsilon$  of Achilles will kill the  $\rho\epsilon\tau$  of Hector; but in the face of the human spirit, Hector – at least so I am sorry – triumphs over Achilles. This, the superman of the moment in the fantasy of the children and also in the mind of the adults, made that two worlds, the Greek one, and the Trojan, revolved around him, his anger and his necessary victory. But Achilles did not reach that complete humanitas of Hector, perhaps for being a "hybrid" son: of a goddess and a man. A demigod, all right; but less human, that's why. Hector, the only son of humans, did. He is a great hero, full of courage: «I learned to be courageous always and to fight among the first Trojans», but not of alien size. In this human aspect of Hector, the peculiar coloration and the understandable "affective prejudice" of Homer influences, without a doubt. The poet, who was probably born in the Asia Minor, region of Ilium, tilts the balance of the story towards his patriotic hero.

The Esceas Gates and the walls of Troy are a backwater of peace and tenderness in the middle of the roar of a long war. A convulsed scenario, so unfavorable for intimacy, Homer has given trace to make it the most suitable for goodbye. This famous marriage, a world heritage site, will be dismissed there. Moreover, an epic that began with the word irate ( $\mu\ \nu\iota\nu$ ), to condense the work around the fury of Achilles, is here suspended in this cove of gentle affection and even humorous content.

News of a farewell of more than two millennia ago

It is also the property of humanity, unfortunately, the particular circumstance of this encounter: war. How many times has it been repeated, in the course of human history, a farewell like this between husbands, when the bugle called the men to the front, to enter into the combat! I found Homer's pages in the 1970s. The passage evoked and the lamentations after the death of Hector we translated them – or, to be more sincere, we carry our heads to achieve it – and the commented, under the guidance of our Greek teacher, father Pablo Lopez, Legionnaire of Christ, Hellenist. The public academy of the aforementioned course was precisely about several characters of the Iliad. We as youngsters neo-religious represented them. Well, at that moment when we followed the avatars of the young Homeric marriage next to the wall, the Vietnam War (1955-1975) was in the hottest and decisive. It had already been charging lives twice as long as the decade that lasted for Troy. It was news almost daily. It was very often repeated

the scene of the Homeric farewell: Vietnamese wives, north or south, and American wives gave farewell to their husbands; brides who were hard to get away from their promised, who went to the front to defend what the fatherland asked them, outside or not wise. And we, students jealous of the classical humanities, thought how human feelings sew and instantly combine scenarios and centuries so different: the Homeric and ours. This is the polyglot and multitemporal venture of the works and the perennial authors like Homer.

### The lament of a widow

It happened to Andromache before. More than two thousand years before. A customary picture of the gynoeceum of the royal Palace of Troy: Andromache is to loom; the maids prepare the hot water for Hector's bath when they return from combat. There she wanted her husband, in the wife's domestic occupations, not in the worries of battles, the duty of the males. That was the order that left him to say goodbye: "go home, devote yourself to your work: the loom and the distaff, and order your maids to get to work." War, however, is the task of all males born in Ilium; above all, mine. "Brave courage of Hector. Suddenly, a groan passes through the palace doors for Hector's wife, translated into a tragic faintest. He wants to know what the scream has caused. Like a madwoman, bursting the heart, throws herself out of the house, into the tower. And, in the face of reality, the presentiment is suddenly knowledge and simultaneously the fading of so much pain.

Recovered, dawn in a long wail. Homer urdeed that elegy with the darkest tones and the most intense sorrows, which he left in the mouth of Andromache. This is his future fate, when he begins to notice, with him in the mind and the heart. Born in different places: Hector, in Troy; Andromache, in Thebes. She has already reminded her of her native Thebes in the meeting of the Esceas gates. Different origin, but the same fate ( $\alpha\zeta$ ): Sorrows and mutual sorrows, grief after Hector's death. The place of this suffering will also vary, like that of the birth: the mansions of Hades are now the abode of Hector, while she shall turn, yes, to the palace, but, alas, widow. For this reason, the known quarters will be for her a lash more in her torment. Do not even join them physically Astianacte. This name is pronounced twice by his mother in the lament, not without irony, to bring to mind the joy of the infant until the present. By admiration of Hector, it tore the curtain of Andromache's future, now induces the wife to take the veil of the future of the already orphan Astianacte: "Do not leave the child orphan", she had implored Hector. And if he had already felt the orphan of the son and his content, now he masterfully describes it as a stroke of selected impressionistic data and then sprinkled in the verses with gloomy tints: dismissed from here and thereby the old friends of his father, who accompany and they further increase their disdain with the sarcastic recarpet: "Get out of here. Your father is not our dinner. "And the orphan's reaction, as expected: "Crying the child returns to his widowed mother." Homer has underlined the condition of the mother, intentionally leaving the adjective ( $\chi\rho\eta\nu$ ) for the end of a verse that has already begun grimly with the

orphan undone in tears (δακρυ εις). Widow and orphan, helpless without Hector, their old protection and defender. And that leaf of the diptych that advances the future, the contrast Andromache, guided by Homer, with that of the past, full of the affection of his father and of the gifted life of a prince: before he ate the best of the sheep on the knees of his father and slept in soft bed. Of this, entire nothing already, for he looks deprived of his dear father. The contrast of the before - πρ ν - from Astianacte with your now - νν - it draws much more from the reader to the unfortunate fate of Andromache and his son, especially when that now supposes, possibly, a dishonored death: «Now, on the other hand, together with the concave ships, away from your parents, the worms that move will eat you once the dogs are out.” With these descriptive resources and with the antithesis, favored by the consonant rhyme of the two Greek adverbs, Homer achieves the compassion of those who are living the moment: the same poet, the widow, the orphan, the maids, who listen to his mistress undone in tears, and - Why not? - the reader. It does not matter the century in which each one lives. It is impressive that when Hector and Andromache say goodbye, she only anticipates her more than possible future and that of the son asking Hector: "Do not leave your child orphaned or your wife widowed." But it does not concretize her aspects of the two in those times that can arrive. It was at that time that Hector supposed and enunciated the humiliating details of his wife's widowhood. Sixteen rhapsodies after the colloquium at the Gates of the wall - in the chronological reality, four or five days later - in contemplating the corpse of Hector dragged by the horses of Achilles, it is her who has unraveled the details, alive and pathetic, of the orphan of Astianacte. Moments of selfless love, such as that which must reign in the family, which looks more to the good of the other, and suffers more by his affliction than by his own. Hector, in the farewell colloquium, was disturbed by the fate of Andromache and the mutual son, not his own; to Andromache, dead Hector, grieve not so much her sorrows of widow as the misfortunes which have to live from now Astianacte.

### A poem of battles and love

The Iliad, a poem of wrath and bloody battles. But also, a song to the love of husbands. It has been said that the Odyssey is, on the other hand, 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 Iliad, and from the first word: νδρα. It has been highlighted that the Odyssey is a great poem to human love, maintained faithfully in the midst of a thousand obstacles and works, but with some characteristics not entirely similar to those we want for marital fidelity. But also the Iliad, as we have evoked, is an ode and a loa to human love, especially in the song VI and in the XXII. The lyrical sensibility and beauty of these two episodes surpass the family pictures of the Odyssey. Homer's record is rich and varied: of the most hardened and fierce of war, he glides softly 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. Andromache could not better define the love of a wife. And Hector, in the farewell of the Esceas Gates, repeats that same love: Andromache is everything to him, more than his father Priam and that Hecuba his mother. Hector, Andromache, and Astianacte: a triangle of family love, which only the death of Hector will become an angle - the widow and the orphan -; open-angle to pain and affront, albeit with the exemplary memory of the life of the husband and the father. This noble and grateful memory recovers, at least spiritually and affectively, the family triangle.

Those words of Andromache evoke others, older, pronounced by a man, the first of human history, and repeated by the second Adam: "The man will leave his father and his mother and join his wife, and both will be one." Not far, although in the male version of those of Andromache. Hector before Andromache, or - What do I know? - Jorge Luis Borges before Maria Kodama, they 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 basted to the heat of the Iliad, one remains with that everything has touched and harmonized beautifully the estrus muse of the poet. The poet: so, without more, he called Homer to Aristotle. And his master, Plato, wrote: "Homer raised Greece." The sentence must be completed: Greece, then, educated Rome. Rome, at the same time with the Helade, punched the spirit of Europe. So Plato's phrase equates to saying that Homer raised the West. Christianity corrected the grave errors of paganism, but it also took advantage of the values of the Greco-Roman world, like that of the union of the man and the woman. In that old Europe, the art of Homer 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 couples of boyfriends or of legendary husbands: Calixto-Melibea, Romeo-Juliet, Renzo-Lucia... But Fernando de Rojas, William Shakespeare, Alessandro Manzoni... were educated by Homer.

Today the marriage, even the Christian, crosses risky moments. We know it and we see it perplexed. Launching an evocative look at the Homeric verses and, in particular, the couple of Hector and Andromache is to recover the breath and to feel the beauty, the selfless love and the indispensable romanticism of that natural institution.