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Sophocles in 16th-Century Portugal: Aires Vitória's *Tragédia del Rei Agaménom*

Abstract: Published in 1555, Aires Vitória's *Tragédia del Rei Agaménom* is the only translation of a Greek tragedy produced in Portugal during the 16th century. The strong resemblance to Pérez de Oliva's Spanish version *La venganza de Agamenón* reveals that Vitória did not render it from the original; his version is instead a moralised adaptation of Sophocles' *Electra*. The analysis of both Aires Vitória's and Pérez de Oliva's translations highlights the main differences between the two works and discloses the singularity of Aires Vitória's version, anchored into a deep understanding of classical texts as vehicles of Christian morality.

Aires Vitória's *Tragédia del Rei Agaménom* was the first tragedy translated into Portuguese and published among very few other translations from ancient Greek authors produced in 16th-century Portugal.¹ Due to the easy access to editions and translations imported from Italy, France, and other countries in Northern Europe, the production of translations, both in Latin and the vernacular, was extremely rare and often linked with scholarly exercises.² It is indisputable, however, that Sophocles' work — as well as Aeschylus' and Euripides' — was read and studied in scholarly circles, namely by advanced students of Greek, as several editions confirm its diffusion in Portugal and contain marginal notes that testify to its circulation.³

1 This is the case of Jorge Coelho's Latin translation of Lucian's *De Dea Syria*, published in 1540 (see Resende, chapter 1, *forthcoming*). Diogo de Teive's translation of Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* is unfortunately lost but, apart from these, there is a Portuguese translation of the first eight cantos of the *Iliad* dubiously attributed to D. Jerónimo Osório (Resende, 2020) and some free renderings of the *Anacreontea* and of Moschus' *The Runaway Love* by António Ferreira and Pero Andrade de Caminha (Pereira 2008, 38–42; 54–56). On translations of Aristotle and Galen, see Pinho, 2006, 316–317.

2 See especially Tarrío 2015, Fouto 2015, 92–93 and Resende, chapter 2, *forthcoming*.

3 Brandão, 1933, ccxxxvii. 16th-century copies of Sophocles' works still preserved in Portuguese libraries display marks of their circulation, namely in the University of Coimbra and amongst its professors. See especially *Sophoclis Tragoediae VII. In quibus praeter multa menda sublata, carminum omnium ratio hactenus obscurior, nunc apertior proditor*. Antuerpiae: ex officina Christophori Plantini, 1579. BNP, L. 4877, which presents the manuscript mark 'he do mestre de grego' ('it belongs to the professor of Greek') and *Sophoclis Tragoediae septem cum*

The performance of tragedies in academic contexts, such as the Colégio das Artes and other Jesuitic colleges, also contributed to the dissemination of ancient theatre.⁴ Even though George Buchanan's *Jephtes* and *Baptistes* had not been published by the time he was teaching at the Colégio das Artes, between 1547 and 1550, it is quite probable that they were performed there, as they were in the College of Guyenne, where he and Diogo de Teive had previously taught.⁵ In fact, despite a major preponderance of Seneca's theatre, the influence of Buchanan's plays — and even possibly his translations of Euripides — on Portuguese 16th-century tragedies, namely Diogo de Teive's *Ioannes Princeps* and António Ferreira's *Castro*, has been demonstrated by scholars.⁶

However, the *Tragédia del Rei Agaménom* does not relate to a scholarly reading and study of Sophocles. Firstly, it was not translated from the original Greek, being instead an adaptation of Pérez de Oliva's Castilian version of *Electra*;⁷ and secondly, even though we know almost nothing about the author and the circumstances of his translation,⁸ from the features it displays it is possible to argue that it was intended for a wider audience with no proficiency in either Latin or Greek.

The analysis that follows will highlight the main differences between the two versions and demonstrate how these enhance the singularity of Aires Vitória's translation, especially when considering his understanding of classical texts as vehicles of Christian morality.

The title of the Portuguese translation informs us that this version, printed in 1555, is in fact a second edition, which suggests a generalised interest in Vitória's work. The first one might have been issued sometime after 1536, but there

interpretationibus uetustis & ualde utilibus. Florentiae: apud Iunctam, 1547, BNP L. 4880 A., fl. 63v, with several marginal translations consistent with the scholarly study of Greek. Inventories of Renaissance libraries also testify to the existence of Sophocles' works in Greek, namely D. Teodósio I's, head of Casa de Bragança (Buescu 2016, 220).

⁴ Martyn 1987, 121–122 and Soares 2006, 183–184.

⁵ On the date of composition of Buchanan's plays, see Sharrat and Walsh 1983, 1–5. See also Martyn 1986, 89–91 and Soares 1996, 87–91.

⁶ See Martyn 1986; 1987, 137–157, Soares 2006, 186–187, Earle 2012, 293–294 and Fouto 2015, 102. On the influence of Seneca, see especially Soares 1996, 31–47; 133–159 and 1999, 81–96.

⁷ On Pérez de Oliva's translation, see especially Ansino Domínguez 1999, 17–20, Bañuls Oller *et al.* 2006, 39–121, Calderón Calderón 2011, 25–29 and Hernández López 2019, 53–82.

⁸ We know that Aires Vitória was from Porto. Vitória 2011, 37: 'Começa a tragédia de Orestes tirada de grego em romance trovada por Anrique Aires Vitória, natural do Porto [...]'. ('The tragedy of Orestes begins, which was translated from Greek into a Romance language, and was versified by Anrique Aires Vitoria, who is from Porto [...]'). See Camões 2011, 7–8.

are no extant copies that confirm this supposition, which is drawn from the author's own words:⁹

Tragédia da vingança que foi feita sobre a morte del rei Agaménom. Agora novamente tirada de grego em linguagem, trovada por Anrique Aires Vitória, cujo argumento é de Sófocles, poeta grego. Agora segunda vez impressa e emendada e anhadida pelo mesmo autor.¹⁰

A comparison between the two versions reveals that Vitória sought to adapt his work to Portuguese theatrical plays, as he not only changed Pérez de Oliva's prose into verse, but also recurred to rhyme and to the traditional metres *redondilha maior*. This choice is of the utmost significance if we consider that, in order to achieve the opposite reaction, António Ferreira made use of the Sapphic line in his tragedy *Castro*, which, as Thomas Earle points out, contributed to emphasise its strangeness and novelty.¹¹

More importantly, however, Aires Vitória also removed the Chorus and replaced it with two female characters (Clímenes and Etra) with very reduced dramatic roles, almost limited to being the protagonist's confidants. Pérez de Oliva had already diminished the role of the Chorus by eliminating most of the lyrical parts in his translation, and replaced the original episode-choral ode structure of the tragedy with a scene-by-scene division. However, neither the Castilian nor the Portuguese version display fundamental changes in the plot, as the prologue corresponds, in general, to the first scene; the parodos to the second, and the episodes to the third, fourth and sixth scenes, respectively.

9 The 1536 edition is lost and, according to Camões 2011, 10–11, there is only one extant copy of the 1555 edition. Francisco Maria Esteves Pereira published Aires Vitória's *Tragédia del Rey Agaménom* in 1918, a version which Joana Tinoco Silva reedited in 2008. There is also a manuscript copy of Francisco Maria Esteves Pereira's edition in Biblioteca da Academia das Ciências (1559, Manuscritos Série Azul). In 2011, José Camões published a new edition (Vitória 2011), which is also available in Centro de Estudos de Teatro, Teatro de Autores Portugueses do Séc. XVI — Base de dados textual [online] (<http://www.cet-e-quinheiros.com> — last accessed 01/09/2022).

10 Vitória 2011, 37. 'Tragedy of the vengeance that recounted the death of King Agamemnon, once again translated from Greek into the vernacular, and versified by Anrique Aires Vitoria, who based his version on the plot of Sophocles, a Greek poet. This copy has since been printed for a second time, corrected and elaborated by the same author'.

11 Earle 2012, 300: 'The effect of the heavy, pounding rhythm is to suggest the dance, which was a feature of the choruses of Greek tragedy, if not necessarily of Seneca. But more important, perhaps, is the strangeness of the hypnotic pulse, without parallel in earlier Portuguese verse, which forces the audience to realize that it is witnessing, not a homely Vicentine *auto*, but something entirely new, a classical tragedy, but in Portuguese'.

Since the exodus is consistent with the seventh scene, only the fifth, which consists of a dialogue between Orestes, Pylades and the Servant on the value of friendship, is an innovation by Pérez de Oliva, also reproduced in Vitória's translation. Furthermore, the final 'Exhortation to the Reader' is not found in the Castilian source, being original to the Portuguese version.¹²

Even though Vitória's elimination of the Chorus did not significantly alter the development of the action, it resulted in further distancing his translation from a classical conception of theatre, like the one embodied by Diogo de Teive and António Ferreira, who, following the principles of Horace and Giraldi Cinzio, preferred the five-act structure and did maintain a Chorus throughout.¹³

Overall, the formal changes undertaken by Vitória seem to be an attempt to tailor Sophocles' tragedy to Portuguese readers, strongly suggesting an intention to achieve the largest possible dissemination.¹⁴ It is also conceivable that such amendments were intended to encourage the performance of such translation, even though there is a lack of evidence to confirm this.¹⁵

Vitória's modifications were not limited to the structure: the fact that he was dealing with a translation, and not the original, probably added to his freedom. Indeed, besides transforming Pérez de Oliva's prose into verse and eliminating the Chorus, he also resorted to paraphrases, adjectivisation and metaphors to elaborate on the most lyrical and pathetic parts. This is particularly evident in the description of Clytemnestra's dream, which had already been altered by Pérez de Oliva:

Esta noche postrera soñaba que veía Agamenón, nuestro padre, beber en una fuente de sangre, así herido como lo enterraron.¹⁶

¹² For an analysis of the structure of Pérez de Oliva's version, see especially Hernández López 2019, 57–63. The structure of the Portuguese version was analysed by Serra 2011, 14–15.

¹³ Soares 1996, 50; 113–115. On the Chorus of Diogo de Teive's *Ioannes Princeps* and António Ferreira's *Castro*, see Martyn 1987, 128–130, Soares 1996, 110–113 and Earle 2012, 297–309.

¹⁴ Pérez de Oliva's defence of the Castilian as a literary language may also reflect the same purpose. See Bañuls Oller *et al.* 2006, 48–54 and Hernández López 2019, 22–24; 34–36.

¹⁵ Camões 2011, 7, mentions the absence of stage directions to argue against the performance of the play.

¹⁶ Pérez de Oliva 2019, 183. 'This last night she dreamt that she was seeing Agamemnon, our father, drinking from a fountain of blood, and that he was wounded as when he was buried'. Cf. Soph. *El.* 416–423: λόγος τις αὐτὴν ἐστὶν εἰσιδεῖν πατὴρ / τοῦ σοῦ τε κάμου δευτέραν ὁμιλίαν / ἐλθόντος ἐς φῶς· εἶτα τόνδ' ἐφέστιον / πῆξαι λαβόντα σκῆπτρον οὐφόρει ποτὲ / αὐτός, τανῦν δ' Αἴγιος· ἔκ τε τοῦδ' ἄνω / βλαστεῖν βρύνοντα θαλλόν, ᾧ κατάσκιον / πᾶσαν γενέσθαι τὴν Μυκηναίων χθόνα. Transl. Hugh Lloyd-Jones 1994, 205–207: 'They say that she was once

Following closely the Castilian version, Vitória amplifies his source as he emphasises the description of Clytemnestra's reaction to the dream, by insisting on her anxiety and disquiet, and depicts Agamemnon's action in greater detail, with a reference to the sound of him drinking his own blood:

Esta noite derradeira
 espertou com mil fadigas
 que lhe davam grã canseira.
 Com grã dor de coração
 espertou alvoroçada
 dizendo com grã paixão
 que ela vira Agamenão
 nũa fonte ensanguentada.
 E daquela água bebia
 com muito grande roído,
 o qual vinha assi ferido
 como foi na terra fria
 depois de morto metido.¹⁷

As Ansino Domínguez points out,¹⁸ Pérez de Oliva's alteration must be understood in light of his attempt to Christianise the Greek plot, because what was interpreted by the Chorus as a prediction of the arrival of the moment of vengeance¹⁹ becomes a way of illustrating Clytemnestra's remorse for killing her own husband.²⁰ In the Portuguese translation, this idea is further exploited, as Elec-

more in company with your father and mine, who had come to the world of light; and then he took the staff which he used to carry, and which Aegisthus carries now, and planted it beside the hearth and from it grew up a fruitful bough, which overshadowed all the land of the Mycenaean's'.

17 Vitória 2011, 65. 'This last night / she woke up with a thousand fatigues, / which gave her a great deal of trouble. / And with extreme pain in her heart, / she woke up, much agitated, / declaring, with strong emotion, / that she had seen Agamemnon / in a fountain of blood. / And, as he was drinking from that water, / with great noise, / he was wounded, / like he had been when in cold earth / he was buried, after he had been killed'.

18 Ansino Domínguez 1999, 19. See also Bañuls Oller *at al.* 2006, 83–84.

19 Soph. *El.* 453–477: εἰ μὴ 'γὰ παράφρων μάντις ἔφην καὶ / γνώμας λειπομένα σοφᾶς, / εἴσιν ἂ πρόμαντις / Δίκαια, δίκαια φερομένα χερσὶν κράτη· μέτεισιν, ὧ τέκνον, οὐ μακροῦ χρόνου. Transl. Lloyd-Jones in Sophocles 1994, 211: 'If I am not a mistaken prophet, lacking in wise judgement, Justice that has predicted the outcome shall come, carrying off just triumph with her strength; she shall come after them, my child, in no short space of time'.

20 Pérez de Oliva 2019, 182–183: 'Las grandes maldades, Chrisothemis, ellas son vengadoras de sí mismas, que continuamente representándose delante el pensamiento de quien las cometió lo atormentan, sin poderse defender. Velando tienen tristeza y durmiendo los sueños se les tornan en semejanza de las penas que merecen. Porque es propiedad de la culpa traer

tra stresses the torments of those suffering from remorse and guilt when trying to convince Chrysotemis to reveal their mother's dream:

Irmã, as grandes maldades
 elas são as vingadoras
 de tais torpes torpidades,
 rececendo a todas horas
 aquessas tais novidades,
 trazendo no pensamento
 a maldade cometida
 que lhe dê grave tormento,
 nam tendo segura vida
 nem em si contentamento.
 Quando velam tem tristeza
 quando dormem sobressaltos,
 sonhando sua crueza
 de temor nunca são faltos
 nem lhes vale sua riqueza.
 E andam acompanhados
 contino de grão temor
 o qual tem este primor:
 que nunca deixa os culpados
 descuidar de seu error.
 No pesar os acompanha,
 no prazer os traz cercados
 de milhares de cuidados
 que nunca os desacompanha,
 assi os traz atormentados.
 Assi nossa mãe agora,
 com o medo que terá
 de ser ela a causadora

simple el temor por compañero. Este nunca deja los culpados descuidarse en los placeres, nunca olvidarse en las tristezas, antes metido dentro en el alma es allí su perpetuo atormentador. Así ahora nuestra madre, habiendo sido causadora de tan grave mal, las sombras temerá, y los rayos que del cielo caen creerá que son todos a ella enviados'. ('Great evils, Chrysothemis, are their own avengers, for they continually present themselves in the thoughts of those who have committed them, tormenting them in a way that they are not able to defend themselves. In their vigil they suffer, and in their sleep their dreams become the sorrows they deserve. For it is the property of guilt to always have fear as a companion. This fear never lets the guilty disregard it, even in their pleasures, never lets them forget their sorrows, but is their perpetual tormentor within their souls. So now our mother, having been the cause of so great an evil, will fear the shadows, and she will believe that the rays that fall from the sky, they are all sent to her'.

de tanto mal, cuidará
do que é merecedora.²¹

Despite maintaining the same ideas already conveyed by the Castilian version – namely the total subjugation of the culprit to the torment of her remorse, while awake or asleep, in sorrow and in joy – the Portuguese version seems to be able to express Clytemnestra's anguish more firmly. Through the fast rhythm of the verse and the repetitive structures – notice, for instance, the verses 'quando velam [...] quando dormem' and 'no pesar os acompanha / no prazer os traz cercados' – Electra's discourse almost attains the force of a litany, thus amplifying the consequences of Clytemnestra's guilt and the pious nature of the coming revenge.

In addition to the transformation of the prophetic dream into a depiction of Clytemnestra's remorse, and the reduction of a scene of dramatic tension to a mere expression of guilt, other amendments reveal Pérez de Oliva's intention of Christianising the Greek plot,²² also evident in his translation of Euripides' *Hecuba*.²³ Thus, the libations ordered by Clytemnestra are replaced with incense and perfume,²⁴ and the urn with the supposed ashes of Orestes becomes a coffin with his embalmed corpse.²⁵ More importantly, however, he rejects most of the allusions to Greek religion, as the characters of the tragedy turn to the Christian God instead for help and guidance:

21 Vitória 2011, 64. 'Sister, great evils / are the avengers / of such dreadful infamies. / Growing every hour, / these novelties / bring to mind / the committed evil, / to give them grave torment, / preventing them from having a secure life / and contentment in themselves. / In their vigil they have sorrow, / in their sleep, they are troubled, / while they dream, their cruelty / does not let them be free from fear, / nor can their Plutus save them. / And they are continually / accompanied by great fear, / which has this perfection: / that never leaves the guilty / free from their error. / It accompanies them in their sorrow, / surrounds them in their pleasure, / never releases them / from a thousand concerns / and thus torments them. / So our mother, / fearing that / she is the cause / of such an evil, / will heed what she deserves'.

22 See Bañuls Oller *et al.* 2006, 84, Ansino 1999, 19–20 and Hernández López 2019, 81.

23 Hernández López 2019, 80–82.

24 Soph. *El.* 406. Cf. Pérez Oliva 2019, 182 and Vitória 2011, 63, 65.

25 Soph. *El.* 53–58. Cf. Pérez de Oliva 2019, 179 and Vitória 2011, 47.

Y pluguiese a Dios, mi ayo, que lo que vas a decir fuera verdad, si por algún estorbo de fortuna, que suele ser enemiga de los buenos, yo no he de cumplir mi deseo. Pero yo confío en Dios todo poderoso [...].²⁶

Although Vitória retains some of these amendments — namely, the references to incense and perfume instead of libations, and the coffin rather than the urn —, he also introduces references to pagan deities ('deoses'), in order to restore the Greek context that Oliva sought to erase:

Aio, pera haver entrada,
e aos *deoses* aprouvesse
que verdade se fizesse
essa morte desastrada.
Se me houvesse d'estrovar
a Fortuna mui cruel,
pois que sói de contrastar
aos bons té os matar
e aos maus é fiel...
Porém eu em *Deos* confio
pois que é tam poderoso
que nam me dará desvio
pera me sair baldio
meu desejo desejoso.²⁷

Vitória's lack of access to the original Greek text may explain the few pagan references he adds to his translation, mainly in the form of mythonyms, such as referring to the sun as Phoebus,²⁸ or commentaries to clarify mythological allusions, such as explaining that Diana was a goddess or that Paris was the son of

²⁶ Pérez de Oliva 2019, 174: 'And may it please God, my servant, that what you are about to say be true, and prevent that by some hindrance of fortune, which is usually the enemy of the good, I do not fulfil my wish. But I trust in almighty God [...]'. See Ansino 1999, 19.

²⁷ Vitória 2011, 46: 'For starters, that sounds / good to me, my servant, / and may *the gods* wish / that such a disastrous death / actually occurs. / Even if cruel Fortune hinders me, / for it is usually adverse to the good / until it kills them, / being faithful to the evil ones, / nevertheless, I trust *God*, / since He is so powerful, / that He will not let me deviate / that I might fail / in my longing desire'.

²⁸ Vitória 2011, 45: 'Também o tempo nos falta / pera conselho tomar / nesta empresa tam alta, / e pois que Febo se esmalta / será bom determinar'. ('Time is also lacking, / for us to take advice / on such a high enterprise, / and given that Phoebus is tinged, / it would be good to decide'). Cf. Pérez de Oliva 2019, 173: 'Ya la noche es pasada y el sol muestra las puntas de sus rayos, así que nos queda poco tiempo de tomar consejo [...]'. ('The night is already gone and the sun shows the tips of its rays, so we have little time left to take advice').

Priamus, king of Troy.²⁹ Yet, this mixture of pagan and Christian references — which is not at all uncommon in Portuguese theatre, even in the Vicentine *autos*³⁰ — not only contributes to distance the Portuguese version from its Castilian source, but also appears to stem from Vitória's aim of affording the translation with a 'classical' aura. Contrary to Pérez de Oliva, Vitória is not seeking to Christianize the original, on the contrary, as we will see later, in the prologue, he even argues that classical myths and authors are in fact able to transmit Christian values.³¹

The moralization of the plot and the attempt to present it according to Christian principles is nevertheless present in both translations. In fact, by displaying Clytemnestra and Aegisthus as terrible and unjust characters and, most importantly, by downplaying Clytemnestra's reasons to kill Agamemnon,³² the tragedy is discharged of its complexity, being thus transformed into a simple case of crime, and its resultant punishment.³³

²⁹ Vitória 2011, 40. Cf. Pérez de Oliva 2019, 170.

³⁰ On the use of mythology by Gil Vicente, see Pociña López, 2016. Earle 2008 analyses the use of mythology in 16th-century Portuguese Literature in general.

³¹ See, e.g., Vitória 2011, 39: 'nam podia deixar de me parecer que traria doutrina aos que a lessem com aquela entençaõ' ('I could not help thinking that this translation would bring doctrine to those who read it with the utmost attention').

³² Pérez de Oliva 2019, 196: '[...] Ifigenia, mi hermana, cuando iba a morir decía— según he oído — que bienaventurada era su sangre, pues por ella Grecia había de ser honrada. [...]. Si te parece que porque Agamenón mató mereció muerte, haces ley muy mala para ti, y no respondes a toda la culpa que te ponen; porque, después de la muerte de Agamenón, es otra culpa principal haber casado con Egisto, donde bien muestras que te movió más el encendimiento de tu sucio amor que la piedad que hubiste de tu hija'. ('When my sister Iphigenia was about to die, she said, as I have heard, that blessed was her blood, for by it, Greece was to be honoured. [...] And even if it seems to you that, for killing her, Agamemnon deserved to die, you are making a very bad law for yourself, and you are not giving an answer for all the blame you are accused of; because, after Agamemnon's death, it was your main fault to have married Aegisthus, and hence you showed that you were more moved by your dirty love than by the pity you had for your daughter'). Cf. Vitória 2011, 87–88: 'Porque eu ouvi dizer / que, levando-a, dezia / nam ter em nada morrer / pois que por ela podia / toda Grécia honrada ser. [...] / Fazes má lei pera ti, / todos grã culpa te dão, / que depois de morto assi / o triste de Agamenão / maior culpa houve aí / a qual foi tu te casar / com Egisto, matador, / e dás bem a demostrar / encender-te o sujo amor / pera isto se ordenar'. ('For I've heard / that, when she was taken, / she was saying that she did not mind dying, / since, with her death, / all of Greece would be honoured. [...] / You make a bad law for yourself, / and everyone finds you guilty, / for, after you killed / sad Agamemnon, / you were even more to blame / for getting married / to his killer, Aegisthus. / Thus, you clearly revealed / that you were burning with dirty love, / for this to have happened').

³³ Serra 2015, 98–99.

Such a simplification of Sophocles' play leads to the fact that, even when dealing with the intricate question of matricide, divine support is never questioned, and the righteousness of Orestes' action is legitimised by a strong sense of justice, as is clear from the following excerpt of Pérez de Oliva's version:

Ya pues no falta sino buena ocasión para nuestro hecho; del cielo la espero, en cuyo desacato se cometió tan gran maldad. Ayudadme, los que allá estáis, a limpiar de tan sucia fama la tierra por donde se ha divulgado la grave querella de la muerte de mi padre Agamenón. Y tú piedad, que sueles atar las manos en la venganza, suelta ahora las mías, que si te parecieren crueles cuando las vires bañadas en la sangre de mi madre, mirando cuánto más debo a mi padre, te parecerán piadosas. Principalmente que mi madre, en el arrepentimiento de me haber engendrado, pierde el derecho de ser de mí acatada; y en ser tan mal ejemplo en la vida, merece la muerte de mano de quien sea más cruel, porque teman, los que supieren, que todas las maldades tienen iguales castigos.³⁴

The same idea is present in the Portuguese translation, as Clytemnestra's death is characterised as a fair and pious punishment, despite its cruelty:

Do céu ajuda espero
 pois que em seu vitupério
 se fez um caso tam fero
 e do celeste império
 virá o castigo mero.
 E tu pois sóis, piedade,
 atar as mãos à vingança
 soltar-mas-á crueldade,
 como eu tenho esperança,
 pera vingar tal maldade.
 Se cruéis, vendo-as banhadas
 no sangue de minha mãe,
 te parecerem, untadas,
 vendo o que devo a meu pai
 piedosas serão chamadas,
 principalmente que ela

34 Pérez de Oliva 2019, 188. 'Now there is but one good occasion for our deed; from heaven I wait for it, in whose contempt so great an evil was committed. Help me, you who are there, to cleanse from such a foul fame the land where the grievous complaint of the death of my father Agamemnon has been spread. And you, pity, who usually bind your hands in vengeance, now let go mine, for if they seem cruel to you, when you see them bathed in my mother's blood, seeing how much more I owe my father, they will seem pious to you. Mainly because my mother, in her repentance of having begotten me, loses the right to be respected by me; and for being such a bad example in life, she deserves death by the hand of whoever is more cruel, so that they fear, those who know that, for every evil, there is an equal punishment'.

perde o direito devido,
 pois se maldiz com querela
 por me haver concebido
 polo qual desejo vê-la.³⁵

As Serra points out,³⁶ the elimination of the oracle of Apollo in Pérez de Oliva's translation not only conforms to his principle of minimising pagan allusions, but also reduces the ambiguity linked to the act of matricide and the consequences of such a crime. It is the Servant who formulates the need to resort to the death of Clytemnestra without indicating any uncertainty as to its legitimacy, understood, on the contrary, as a necessity given the cruel destiny of Agamemnon and the pending threat that falls upon Electra.³⁷

However, there is a tendency, in the Portuguese version, to avoid direct allusions to Clytemnestra's hatred, and it appears that only Aegisthus would be responsible for trying to kill the infant Orestes,³⁸ and only he intends to imprison Electra.³⁹ Clytemnestra's sin is thus closely associated with the death of Ag-

35 Vitória 2011, 74–75. 'From heaven I expect help / for, in its vituperation, / a case has been made so great, / that from the heavenly empire / clear punishment will come. / And even if you, pity, as usual, / bind the hands of revenge, / cruelty will unleash them, / for I have hope / that I will avenge such an evil. / If, seeing them bathed / in my mother's blood, / they seem cruel to you, greased, / seeing what I owe to my father, / pious they will be called, / mainly because she / loses the right that was due to her, / when she curses herself with quarrel / for having conceived me, / and this is why I wish to see her'.

36 Serra 2011, 17–19.

37 Vitória 2011, 43–47. See Calderón Calderón 2011, 28–29.

38 Vitória 2011, 43: 'E aqui foste livrado / por Eleca, irmã tua, / daquele tredor malvado / de Egisto, reprovado, que te dera morte crua'. ('And here you were released / by Electra, your sister, / from that evil traitor / wicked Aegisthus, / who would have given you a cruel death'). Cf. Pérez de Oliva 2019, 172: 'Aquí tu hermana Elecha te libró de los cuchillos de tu madre [...]'. ('Here your sister Electra freed you from your mother's knives'). The same idea is repeated by Electra. Vitória 2011, 56: 'Muito me é obrigado, / a mim, Orestes, de sorte / que ele por mi foi livrado / querendo-lhe dar a morte / aquele Egisto malvado'. ('Much does he owe / to me, Orestes, for / it was I who freed him / when that wicked one, Aegisthus, / wanted to kill him'). Cf. Pérez de Oliva 2019, 178: 'Déj, al menos, yo tengo mucho merecido; porque mi madre y Egisto, queriendo dél hacer como de mi padre, yo lo libré y lo di a un viejo honrado que lo criase escondido en buenas costumbres'. ('At least I deserve a lot from him, because when my mother and Aegisthus wanted to do to him what they did to my father, I freed him and gave him to an honest old man, who raised him with good habits').

39 Vitória 2011, 60: 'Egisto está inclinado / a te dar prisão mui forte / por Orestes ser livrado / por tua mão de crua morte'. ('Egisto is inclined / to give you a harsh imprisonment / since Orestes was freed / from a cruel death by your hand'). Cf. Pérez de Oliva 2019, 180: 'Egisto y Clitemnestra, nuestra madre, viendo que tú diste la vida a Orestes, que temen no sea él cuchillo

amemnon and her marriage to her husband's murderer.⁴⁰ Yet, Vitória's constraint when describing the cruelty of Clytemnestra as a mother, when compared with his Castilian source, gives rise to a problem as to the legitimacy of the matricide. Indeed, the need to justify Orestes' action is clear from the final exhortation to the reader, a part which is original to Vitória, and which stems from the need to ensure that the moral of the tragedy is understood. Thus, possibly due to the influence of Seneca's character, which, according to Edith Hall, had a predominant impact until the 19th century,⁴¹ Vitória reduces Clytemnestra's complexity to her adulterous conduct and advises women to love their husbands if they wish to avoid a similar fate:

Atente também toda sábia mulher
a Clitmnestra, que foi tam malvada,
a morte que houve tam desastrada
sem seu estado lhe a isso valer.
Procurem todas de gram amor ter
a seus maridos e tê-los amados,
nam lhe acontentçam tam desastrados
casos que aqui se podem bem ver.⁴²

By presenting Sophocles' *Electra* as a portrayal of divine justice, in which unjust tyrants are condemned while the virtuous prevail, Vitória reveals a moralistic conception of tragedy, in line of Chaucer, Isidore of Seville, and Lazare de Baïf, who, according to Alonge, reduces Electra to 'the image of a pure and heroic princess fighting against the evil Clytemnestra'.⁴³

This interpretation of the myth, which is crucial for adapting Greek tragedy to a contemporary audience and ensuring its favourable reception, is in fact

de la venganza, y que agora lo provocas con quejas tan ahincadas, han determinado ponerte en prisión [...]'. ('Seeing that you gave life to Orestes, Aegisthus and Clytemnestra, our mother, fear that he might be the knife of your vengeance, and since you are now provoking him with such intense complaints, they have determined to put you in prison [...]').

⁴⁰ Serra 2015, 98.

⁴¹ Hall 2005, 63–70.

⁴² Vitória 2011, 108. 'Pay attention, every wise woman, / to Clytemnestra, who was so wicked, / and whose death was so disastrous, / with no salvation from her condition. / Look out all of you, have great esteem / for your husbands and love them, / for may not such disastrous cases occur, / as the one you can see here'.

⁴³ Alonge 2019, 149. On moralistic interpretations of Greek tragedy, see especially Reiss 1999, 229–231, Serra 2015, 96–97, and Finglass 2017, 489–491. The interpretation of the prince's death in Diogo de Teive's *Ioannes Princeps* as a vehicle for criticizing the king and his politics of expansion would also fall under this moral conception of tragedy (see Fouto 2015, 102–107).

expressed by Vitória in the Prologue, where he advocates the reading of pagan texts as vehicles of Christian virtues. Insisting on the idea that the fate of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus was a consequence of their adulterous and wicked conduct, Vitória is of the opinion that one can ‘draw great moral doctrine’ from ‘those ancient poets’:

[...] acho nam haver aí nenhũa fábula escrita por qualquer daqueles antigos poetas, que eram grandes filósofos, da qual nam possamos tirar grande dotrina moral [...]. E assi nesta presente obra Egisto, que era adúltero, vivendo e permanecendo em vício sem se querer dele apartar, foi a punhaladas por Orestes morto, que outra cousa é senam os maus ensistindo em sua maldade nam poderem acabar em bem? E por Clitemnestra, molher del rei Agaménom, conhecemos de quanta culpa são dinas e quanto mal pera si buscam e causam a outrem as que de tais excessos e dilitos são cometedoras, e assi pelo contraíro dinas de eterna memória e grande louvor as que sempre hão vevido bem e honestamente [...].⁴⁴

Let us not forget that the prologue has no parallel in the Castilian version and appears to stem not only from Vitória’s need to justify the translation of a Greek tragedy, but also to legitimize the reading of Sophocles in a way that ensured its continuous relevance in the 16th century. Therefore, the insertion of motifs and references to pagan gods, which had been eliminated by Pérez de Oliva, is intended to present the tragedy as a Greek, rather than a Christian work, and indicates his edifying conception of the classics, as he confirms in his own words.

Thus, the changes undertaken by Vitória throughout his translation — whether the use of verse and *redondilha maior*, the elimination of the Chorus or even the development of the scenes describing Clytemnestra’s guilt — aiming to bring the tragedy closer to traditional Portuguese plays — should be understood as a means to facilitate a wider understanding of the original play by a less literate audience.

In conclusion, Vitória’s translation differs from Pérez de Oliva’s because it does not present the Greek characters as Christians but rather preserves the original pagan traits and exhorts a reading of the classics as vehicles of Chris-

⁴⁴ Vitória 2011, 38–39. ‘I think that there is no fable written by any of those ancient poets, who were great philosophers, from which we cannot draw great moral doctrine [...]. And so, in this present work, Aegisthus, who was an adulterer, who lived and remained in vice without wanting to depart from it, was killed by Orestes with a dagger. What else does it mean, if not that the wicked who insist on their wickedness cannot end well? And from the example of Clytemnestra, wife of King Agamemnon, we know how much guilt they deserve and how much evil they seek and cause to others, those who commit such excesses and crimes. And, on the contrary, how worthy of eternal memory and great praise are those who have always lived well and honestly [...]’.

tian virtues, thus promoting their diffusion beyond the scholarly and academic contexts.