

# Editorial

Antiquity remains the horizon pursued by the works published herein. Its thread connects studies on Ancient History with other works that regard its influence in subsequent times, especially in European culture. To introduce the reader to the contributions selected for this volume, a good method is to walk backwards in time. Thus, we start in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with Music and Literature. The *maestro* Davide Nadali conducts the music that reverberates in the first article, regarding 19<sup>th</sup> century Operas evoking Biblical figures of prophets, priests, impious kings and queens. Nebuchadnezzar or the mythical Semiramis, rulers of Babylonia, are two of the most interesting personages starring in such *libretti*, most of them composed by the talent of Nadali's own countryman, Rossini, Solera and, of course, Verdi.

José das Candeias Sales, on his turn, raises interesting reflections on how our own compatriot, the novelist Eça de Queirós, fashioned the literary characters of two travel comrades in the Middle East, a German and a Portuguese. Although both men shared a common European and Christian background, Eça de Queirós uses the Holy Land as a mirror presenting each other's personalities and cultures very differently.

José Jorge Gonçalves takes us still back further, to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, with his depiction of the manner how a Benedictine chronicler, Friar Leão de São Tomás, conceived the origins of monasticism by relating it to the *exempla* of the ancient Hebrew prophets and other heterodox movements before the rise of Christianity.

We must skip further back in time, right to Antiquity, where Nuno Simões Rodrigues, in the Greco-Roman world, tries to understand

how the Athenian *polis* coped with the meddling between private and public spheres.

L. Battini, on her side, inquires if ancient Mesopotamians, namely the Assyrians, left traces, in the surviving sources, of aesthetic judgments separating official “fine arts” from other arts and crafts, that would be considered, through a modern perspective, as “popular” or “minor”.

Adriaan de Man and Sandra Marques offer, in this volume, a short note as a preliminary study about ancient Greek vases in Portugal, probably Nikosthenic. It contributes for the knowledge about Greek artefacts in Portuguese collections, and also for its understanding among different styles, provenances and producers.

Luna Watkins wishes to attain a somewhat more ambitious goal. The short note she presents reflects the groundwork she has been developing on the relationship between concepts and definitions in ancient Mesopotamian religion.

Finally, the interview with Professor Pascal Vernus, the eminent French Egyptologist, is one of the highlights in this volume. We are all very grateful to the kindness he dispensed to us by sharing some of the stories and experiences of his life and career – it was only possible because of the not lesser consideration of our dear Colleague and Teacher, Professor Maria Helena Trindade Lopes.

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