Em suma, a sua obra impõe-se como recetáculo de interessantes, incessantes e frutíferos cruzamentos e vias de análise, fazendo do seu trabalho um caso quase singular e impressionante no panorama dos Estudos Clássicos, só comparável, em determinados aspetos, aos estudos de um Murari Pires ou aproximando-se das novas linhas narrativistas seguidas por Grethlein, Rengakos, Rood, Miltsios, Tsakmakis & Tamiolaki, entre outros. Como marca idiossincrática, cruza-se o pensamento moderno com o pensamento antigo, textos e sistemas semióticos ficcionais contemporâneos com textos clássicos, teorias hermenêuticas e epistemológicas com filologia e historiografia. A por vezes densa e concentrada sobreposição de temas e ideias e o intrincado aparelho conceptual e sintático que o suporta, demanda uma leitura persistente e paciente, que muito aproveitará a todos aqueles que queiram alargar horizontes de interpretação e ampliar perspetivas de análise. Com assinalável sagacidade e brilho intelectual, Breno Sebastiani revira os textos clássicos à luz de conceitos e reflexões hermenêuticas eminentemente contemporâneas, para testar a perenidade dos antigos e explorar novas problemáticas e cambiantes, algumas delas improváveis na *forma mentis* do homem antigo, mas possíveis e válidas à luz das novas teorias da receção. Por fim, o autor revela um sólido conhecimento dos assuntos e apoia-se num extenso e atualizado fundo bibliográfico.

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SOUSA E SILVA, M. de F.; Paiva, J., *Teofrasto, História das plantas. Tradução portuguesa, com introdução e anotação*, Coimbra, Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, 2016, 460 pp. ISBN: 978-989-26-1192-1

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The greatest surviving work of ancient Greek botany, although celebrated among historians of science, has been undeservedly obscure to many classicists and general readers. It is remarkable that although the Latin translation by Theodore Gaza was published as early as 1483, the first translation into a modern language did not appear until the early

20th century, when Sir Arthur Hort's English version was published in two volumes, alongside an edition of the Greek text, in 1916 and 1926 in the Loeb Classical Library. It is perhaps more remarkable that forty years after that translation was completed, Paul Vellacott, introducing his English translation of Theophrastos's *Characters*, unguardedly claimed that it was the author's 'only surviving work'.

Missed by Vellacott, Hort's translation was read by a great many others to whom the Greek text of the *History of Plants* was inaccessible. It remained the only version in any modern language until in 1988 Suzanne Amigues began to publish her Budé edition, with French translation and generous commentary, which was completed in 2006. Now, exactly a hundred years after Hort's first volume, comes a one-volume translation into Portuguese by Maria de Fátima Sousa e Silva and Jorge Paiva, both of the University of Coimbra.

Of these two Sousa e Silva is the Hellenist, Paiva the botanist. That is too simple a formulation, however, because Sousa e Silva has already translated the major biological treatises of Aristotle, Theophrastos's immediate predecessor as head of the Lyceum. She possesses therefore an ideal background for work on the *History of Plants*, which Theophrastos himself would have seen as the continuation of Aristotle's biological researches, or rather as their natural extension into a new scientific field. And Paiva, after a lifetime's work on botany and scientific nomenclature, was the ideal collaborator, able not only to bring his experience to the identification of the plants discussed by Theophrastos but also to claim a fuller understanding of the development of scientific classification and terminology than any previous editor or translator.

The translators wisely chose to use common (Portuguese) names of plants in the text, with scientific Latin names given systematically in the accompanying footnotes, which are numbered in a single sequence. There are Portuguese-Greek and Greek-Portuguese indexes of the names of plants and their parts, keyed to the standard sections of Theophrastos's text; scientific Latin-Portuguese and Portuguese-scientific Latin names of plants, keyed directly to the footnotes; a surprisingly comprehensive index of place names, keyed to page numbers; and briefer indexes of animals, on a similar pattern to those of plants. The ability to find one's way among the details of this crucial botanical text by means of multiple indexes, within a single handy volume, guarantees that it will be widely used.

There is also a full introduction, beginning with a brief outline of Theophrastos's life and times, and then plunging into the theoretical basis,

scientific underpinning and structure of the *History of Plants*. A useful, indeed indispensable, geographical survey of the sources of Theophrastos's information is followed by a study of scientific nomenclature and classification before and after his time. It is indeed important for the modern reader, who tends to take for granted the taxonomical system codified by Linnaeus, to understand the quite different aims and approaches of Theophrastos and his classical and medieval successors.

It would have been useful, perhaps, to show more fully that the *History of Plants* represents work in progress. It 'includes materials collected over a long period', as the introduction rightly says, and at least once the text seems to cross-refer to an earlier recension arranged in a different order (p. 24). The claim of a 'probable date of the treatise (314 BC)', in footnote 26 to the introduction, is surely oversimplified, not least because the *History of Plants* refers to at least two historical landmarks later than that date, the archonship of Simonides at Athens in 310 BC (6.3.4) and Ophellas' invasion of Carthage in about 308 BC (4.3.2). Moreover, discussion at the Lyceum was still continuing while the text was being compiled, as briefly hinted in footnote 38 to the introduction, which deserved expanding. To the two citations there (3.3.8, 3.5.6) one might add the telling quotations 'it may turn out that both reports are true' (2.7.5) and 'we must find out which of these reports is true' (6.3.6).

This last comment, as it happens, relates to *silphion*, a favourite medicinal and culinary spice of classical Greece, of which Theophrastos gives the best and fullest description. Section 6.3.1-6 is the major reference, well translated here and fascinating to read. There will be doubts, though, over the identification suggested in the footnotes with *Ferula tingitana* or with *Margotia gummifera*. If these plants, native to the former Roman Empire, are the ancient *silphion*, why did the Romans think that *silphion* was extinct? Why do these plants not have the highly distinctive taste and smell that ancient *silphion* had? – taste and smell that the soldiers of Alexander's expedition were glad to discover in central Asia in the plant *Ferula assa-foetida*, the source of a similar spice familiar in Indian food and medicine. The answer is, I would say, that *silphion* really is extinct, was more closely related to *Ferula assa-foetida* than to any other taxon, and cannot be identified with a modern Mediterranean plant.

The geographical survey in the introduction helps to demonstrate to what extent the expedition of Alexander supplied scientific information to Aristotle, Theophrastos and the Lyceum. Theophrastos was the first to

describe a series of useful trees and plants, unknown or little known to Greeks before his time, that were native to Egypt, the Levant, western and central Asia, and again his surveys make compelling reading. In several cases he has no name for the species concerned – he never imports foreign names of plants into his text – but they can be recognised with fair confidence from his text. Many of them were soon to form part of the materia medica of the classical world. He also gives a survey (4.4.4-10) of fruits and other foods that were first seen by Greeks when Alexander reached the Indus valley.

Among those Indian species is a tree less remarkable for its fruit than for its growth habit. The banyan, *Ficus benghalensis*, is described at 4.4.4 and its habit is also mentioned at 1.7.3. The translators boldly deduce that it had been naturalized in Greece (introduction p. 38; p. 78 note 176). Theophrastos never wastes words, and unluckily at this point they have misread one word. The crucial verb is imperfect: it is not that 'the Greeks call it a fig tree [customarily]' but 'the Greeks used to call it a fig tree [when they were in India]'. This description by Theophrastos is surely of the huge and famous banyan tree on the banks of the Akesines (Chenab), observed on Alexander's expedition. It was becoming a commonplace of the Alexander books, mentioned certainly by Nearchos (Arrian, *Indika* 11.7), by Onesikritos and Aristoboulos (Strabo, *Geography* 15.1.21) and probably also by Kleitarchos (Diodoros 17.90.5; Quintus Curtius 9.1.9-12): see Hugo Bretzl's *Botanische Forschungen des Alexanderzuges* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1903), pp. 158-190. But never mind all this. It is none the less true, and was well worth observing, that several species encountered on Alexander's expedition and first described by Theophrastos were soon to be naturalized in Mediterranean lands: the pistachio, for example (*Pistacia vera*), encountered in Bactria, and the citron (*Citrus medica*), observed in Media, not to mention rice (*Oryza sativa*), seen growing in India.

I have raised two tiny quibbles, on the identification of *silphion* and on the banyan tree. In contrast, let me now observe that a strange wound in Hort's translation, one that has puzzled many readers unable to consult other editions, is fully healed in Amigues' edition and in this new Portuguese version of the *History of Plants*. At the last minute before publication in 1926, after the index was completed, Hort or his publishers must have decided to omit part of book 9 – to cut not only the English translation but the Greek text as well. The section concerned (9.18.3-11) deals with plant drugs that were supposed to have a sexual effect, and it is assumed that this unexplained omission was a form of censorship. One of the plants concerned, salep or

Orchis mascula, is the source of a stimulant drink popular in London not long before Hort's own time and still popular today in northern Greece, Albania and Turkey. Historians of salep, among others, have been confused by the lacuna in Hort's edition: they need be confused no longer.

This new translation of the *History of Plants* is a thoroughly successful publication which does credit to the publisher and to the united skills of the translators. It will of course be standard from now on in Portuguese. It will also make itself indispensable to scholars who work in other languages, thanks to its convenient one-volume format, highly readable layout and good indexing. Passages of Theophrastos's argument that felt incoherent in Hort's mannered English and in the tightly constrained format of his Loeb volumes are refreshed by the comfortable layout and fluent style of this excellent version.

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