Revisiting Mythology through Precarity and Resilience: *Iphigenia in Splott* (2015) by Gary Owen

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Abstract: *Iphigenia in Splott,* the winner of Best New Play at the UK Theatre Awards in 2015, finds inspiration in real experiences and autobiographical events that stretch between realism and imagination. This retelling of the Greek myth of Iphigenia subverts the depiction of the innocent classic heroine killed for the sake of her nation's war effort by making of her the spokeswoman of precarity in 21st-century England. In the form of experimental political drama, the play vindicates socioeconomic concerns that ostracize vulnerable elements of society, subverting the fatality of myths and its associated position of victimhood.

Precarity and its consequently generated vulnerability to society may activate forms of individual or collective resilience. Effie, the fierce young woman in Gary Owen's play, speaks up the silenced voice of an entire neglected layer of Welsh society. Her world of contemporary outcasts in a continuous spiral of unemployment, drinking and doping is confronted through an understated revision of the most barbaric human sacrifices in Greek mythology. This paper explores the intersections between gendered forms of resilience and other factors inherent to social and economic precarity present in the play. The *lumpen-precariat*, defined by Guy Standing in 2012 as a detached class of victims out of any system falling into social illnesses, drug addiction and passivity, shapes this analysis offering a panorama of responses to structural forms of vulnerability. Through Effie, this paper argues that gender performativity presupposes a complex convergence of social norms and interplays of obligation and desire within the general spectrum of precarious conditions. These gendered norms have everything to do with how women can appear in public space, how the public / private divide is enforced, and how that distinction is enacted at the service of sexual politics (Butler 2009).

Résumé : *Iphigénie à Splott*, Meilleure Nouvelle Pièce et Prix du Théâtre du Royaume-Uni en 2016, trouve son inspiration dans des expériences réelles et des souvenirs autobiographiques qui se situent entre réalisme et imagination. Cette relecture du mythe grec d'Iphigénie subvertit la représentation de l'héroïne classique innocente tuée au nom de l'effort de guerre de sa nation en faisant d'elle la porte-parole de la précarité dans l'Angleterre du XXIe siècle. Sous la forme d'un drame politique expérimental, la pièce présente des inégalités socio-économiques qui mettent à l'écart les éléments vulnérables de la société, subvertissant ainsi la fatalité des mythes et les figures de victimes qui y sont généralement associées.

La précarité, qui implique une vulnérabilité face à la société, peut activer des formes de résilience individuelle ou collective. Effie, la jeune femme farouche de la pièce de Gary Owen, fait entendre la voix silencieuse de toute une couche négligée de la société galloise. Son monde de parias contemporains, englué dans une spirale continue de chômage, d'alcoolisme et de drogue, est défié à travers une critique acerbe des sacrifices humains les plus barbares de la mythologie grecque. Cet article explore les intersections entre les formes de résilience genrées et d'autres facteurs inhérents à la précarité sociale et économique présents dans la pièce. Le *lumpen-precariat*, que Guy Standing définit en 2012 comme une classe de victimes détachées de tout système, associée aux maladies sociales, à la toxicomanie et à la passivité, façonne cette analyse en offrant un panorama des réponses aux formes structurelles de vulnérabilité. À travers Effie, cet article soutient que la performativité du genre présuppose une convergence complexe de normes sociales ainsi que des interactions entre obligation et désir, qui innervent tout le spectre de la précarité. Ces normes genrées ont tout à voir avec la manière dont les femmes peuvent apparaître dans l'espace public, la façon dont le public et le privé sont délimités, et la façon dont cette distinction est mise en œuvre au service d'une politique sexuelle (Butler 2009).

Keywords: adaptation; Greek mythology; *Iphigenia in Splott*; resilience; precarity

Mots-clés : adaptation ; mythologie grecque ; *Iphigénie à Splott* ; résilience ; précarité

The contemporary English-speaking stage has recently drawn on the transformative potential of Greek mythology to powerfully reflect upon the invisibility of marginalized subjects.[1] Over the years, the taste for Greek theatre has largely influenced British culture due to its universal topics and the particular emphasis on the association between politics and drama. An immense array of adaptations, revisions and translations clearly proves the relevance of Classics on the contemporary British stage. Mythical retellings have proliferated in recent decades. 2015 was particularly referred to as "the year of the Greeks", since the Greek tragedies seemed to accurately mirror "the world of austerity economics" by expressing the archetypal conflict of "human beings against the Gods, and against destiny and against their own fundamental weaknesses" (Rebellato 2015). Yet, this interest is not totally new. In the history of contemporary British theatre, we find playwrights such as Edward Bond, who highlighted the relevance of Classics through plays like *The Short Electra* (2003) or *Dea* (2016), recently produced at the Secombe Theatre in London. In the nineties, the explosion of "in-yer-face" theatre also traced back to the Greeks to revive the combativeness of political drama and radical aesthetics with iconic playwrights such as Sarah Kane and her play *Phaedra's Love* (1996) or Tony Harrison and *Prometheus* (1998). On the Welsh stage, Gary Owen emerges as a new dramatic voice inscribed within this tradition of confrontational drama revisiting a Greek myth in his awarded play *Iphigenia in Splott* (2015). Thus, the creation of a continuum in contemporary dramatic discourse seems to deliberately reconfigure ancient mythology as a constant source of inspiration.

Both ancient Greek and contemporary British drama share the focus on profound reflection upon the tragedies of society and a critical approach for the audience (Komporaly 2017; Rodosthenous, 2017).

Theatre has been urgently responding to the human questions fueled by the perception of "an event which presents a perspective on and of the world" (Postlewait 2009: 12). As Rebecca Schneider postulates in *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (2011), the historical returns of time on stage exhibit variations that reveal the multifaceted nature of History. Theatre's long obsession with the anthropos, with expressing the human psyche in dialogue form, offers a challenging medium to question the audience's ethics. As Patrick Duggan (2017) explains: "theatre and performance bring 'us' (makers/thinkers/audiences) into an ethical relationship with one another, both with the 'staged' images and those represented in them, as well as with the concerns raised by those representations" (43).

This article therefore begins by delineating arguments about adaptation and precarity addressing particularly the role of social responsibility and resilience articulated by a representative number of authors. The potential for resistance that I contend is that the possibility of enlarging the concept of the precarious might produce a shared acknowledgement of social vulnerability. In the second part of this article, I turn to the example of *Iphigenia in Splott* by Gary Owen to throw light on the potential of the text to elucidate and illuminate the complexity of precarity/resilience duality displayed in the theoretical framework. Conclusively, the play will be examined as the embodiment of gender performativity attached to the general spectrum of precarious conditions in contemporary British society.

Adaptation, Precarity and Resilience

The field of reception studies is defined, in William Brockliss's words, as "an inherently interdisciplinary field in its encompassing of a variety of departments and disciplines, each with its own canons, practices, and shared working assumptions" (2012: 11). Clearly, reception studies establish a continuous dialogue between the past and the present and also require some 'lateral' dialogue in crossing boundaries of place, language, genre or time (Hardwick). Indeed, as Maarten De Pourcq, Nathalie de Haan and David Rijser contend,

classical reception studies address plural forms as it consists of various attempts to engage with classical reception from the perspective of different fields of study.

Linda Hutcheon defined adaptation as repetition with variation in an extensive transposition that always involves both (re-)interpretation and (re-)creation. Adaptation is therefore a necessary process which alters/rewrites the original work to make it applicable and relevant within the contemporary context. Inevitably, artistic experimentation cannot exclude the socio-political dimension of plays that provide "destabilising and deconstructive readings" and obey "a genuine desire for recontextualisation" (Komporaly 5). Owen's play adapts the myth and exploits it to denounce the violence of austerity and the objectification of the young people in relation to their living conditions. Adaptations are engendered primarily from association: we approach the new interpretation in terms of the source, or model. That is, we are challenged to think of these two separate texts as simultaneously different and the same and authors are evoked in order to create distinction or identification.

From this view, adaptations set up a dramatic strategy that helps tie together theatre and political action by providing reinventions and recreations of well-known stories that offer new approaches, often aggressive and dissident, that demand the interrogation of traditional meanings and that might involve the transgression of boundaries (Komporaly). It also entails an authentic recontextualization with the specificities of the contemporary moment. Therefore, this article also examines the concept of precarity within this recontextualized consciousness. This connection emerges out of a desire to expand the way in which contemporary British drama engages adaptation with 'precariousness' in a convivial approach of contemporariness.

When it comes to describing "precarious", it is necessary to consider the different approaches of this concept. This term, defined by Johnson (1968) as "dependent; uncertain, because depending on the will of another; [...] changeable or alienable at the pleasure of another" is closely related to the human condition, since anything that

is precarious, whether it affects economic circumstances, emotional stability or an environment respectively, directly impacts individuals. Human beings are receptive and susceptible to external conditions. Hence, as Judith Butler states:

> We are moved to act when we are moved by something that affects us from the outside, from elsewhere, from the lives of others, imposing a surfeit that we act from and upon. According to such a view of ethical obligation, receptivity is not only a precondition for action but one of its constituent features (2012: 136).

I suggest that an explicit approach to precarity as a social ecology preconfigures a broad spectrum of spaces, people and sociopolitical conditions. It also draws attention to the similarities between 'ecology' and 'precarity' as the latter "exposes our sociality" and the dimensions of "our interdependency" (Puar et al. 170; Fragkou 6). The analysis of precarization in middle-class labour is not new but later elaborations on the phenomenon identify a more ontological condition encapsulating both political and intellectual terms and across different institutional, governmental, inter/disciplinary, and bodily contexts relevant for the application in literary texts. This particular understanding that precarity is present in our lives threads my connection with contemporariness and recontextuzalizations in drama just because "everyone is precarious, given our existence as bodily beings who depend upon one another for shelter and sustenance" (Butler 148).

In brief, this view resembles the reality of precarity when it comes to finding similarities between human beings resonating with the "Being-with" which "aporetically, means to be singular and plural at the same time" (Aragay and Middeke 5). In their volume *Of Precariousness: Vulnerability, Responsibilities, Communities in 21st-Century British Drama and Theatre* (2017), Mireya Aragay and Martin Middeke postulate that, although "Being-with" enables dual possibilities to occur simultaneously, every human being is different and unique with respect to others because of its personal nature and essence and also, partly because of its own immanence. This indicates that the possible similarities originated among people may vary since

the individuality of the human being is an inherent fact of life. For this reason, "what human beings ultimately share is their mortality, their finitude, their temporality, their transitoriness in time. Here lies the fundamental precariousness and the fundamental vulnerability of being and existence" (Aragay and Middeke 5).

Certainly, precarity is part of our lives but the marginalization of individuals associated to the term must be confronted. The integration of diverse social groups configured in societies is due to multiple factors including the economic incomes and political ideals. The very idea of group distinction can already be considered precarious, since it anticipates that this social structure will be made up of people who will be privileged with a 'good life' while others will suffer more unfavourable circumstances. In her lecture "Can One Lead a Good Life in a Bad Life?" (2012), Butler queries the theory of Theodor Adorno by asking about the relation of moral conduct to social conditions and how the broader operations of power and domination enter, or disrupt, our individual reflections on how to live at maximum level. Social categories and morality issues are inextricably related to this questioning as Gary Owen will explore in his precarious Iphigenia.

This disruption is also explored in Guy Standing's essay "The Precariat: From Denizens to Citizens?" (2012), in which he defines the group of the unprivileged as "the global precariat, consisting of millions of people scattered around the world, living and working in insecure jobs and conditions of life" (589). Those who belong to the precariat, referred to as precarians or denizens, are considered to be people "who have a more limited range of rights, and weaker entitlement to them, than the citizen" (590). This social structure has been continuously growing over time, mainly due to the influence of capitalism and globalization, with the inclusion of a vast number of different people with specific personal situations, from the young to the elderly, who either have no other choice, or who choose to be part of it. Nevertheless, arguably, the majority of precarians share a common feeling of uncertainty, due to the internalization of the phenomenon by assuming this state as permanent and irreversible,

together with the idea of considering it irredeemable. More specifically, Standing defined the *lumpen-precariat* as a "victim of being in the precariat who [has] fallen out of even that group into social illnesses, drug addiction and chronic anomie, listless, passive, waiting to die" (589). In short, experiencing precarious events leads to a particular understanding of life that forces to confront precarity itself.

In addition, the question of the problematic nature of precarity underlies the concept of resilience as a potential performative configuration. Resilience can be defined as "an individual's capabilities and resourcefulness to respond to problems, or people's ability to generate active solutions" (Aranda et al 549). The idea of being 'resilient' goes further to describe someone who embodies these characteristics as part of his/her inherent essence and identity. As Kay Aranda, Laetitia Zeeman and Julie Scholes state:

> The normal resilient subject reflects these capabilities or potentialities; to be resilient is to be independent, exercising rational choices, acting in one's own best interests and whose internal states are reflected in external behaviours (551).

Thus, resilience is perceived to be a natural condition of human beings, awakening towards certain events or circumstances. The benefits that can be obtained from this capability may eventually vary according to each individual, since it is possible to assume that each one acquires and exercises resilience differently. This conception places special emphasis on young people as they are more susceptible to all kinds of changes or, in other words, they become more vulnerable in terms of assimilating and facing adversities.

The younger generations are the ones subjected to intertwine precarity and resilience more frequently in the neoliberal era. The contemporary *Iphigenia* of Gary Owen clearly exemplifies this nexus by providing a broad spectrum of social and cultural conventions that problematize the daily life of the young precariat. Environment, family, school or social aids and resources are appointed as some of the factors to be involved in this process. As Dorothy Bottrell acknowledges, young people are forced "to refer to positive outcomes, not only

as normatively defined but also on their own terms, which in specific contexts of adversity may include and require resistances" (323). Instead of further pursuing an ontological acceptance of the inherent nature of resilience in young people, *Iphigenia* directly addresses the singularities of the precariat posing ethical questions of obligation and responsibility.

Iphigenia in Splott: A Resilient Heroine?

Winner of the George Devine, Meyer Whitworth and Pearson best play awards, Gary Owen represents one of the most unique voices on the contemporary British stage. Some of his titles include *The Shadow of a Boy* (2002), *Crazy Gary's Mobile Disco* (2014), *The Drowned World* (2014), *Mrs Reynolds and the Ruffian* (2010) and *Love Steals Us from Loneliness* (2010). He was also the co-writer and creator of the BBC Wales series *Baker Boys*. In June 2015, he made his Royal Court debut with *Violence and Son*, directed by Hamish Pirie.

Iphigenia in Splott— an innovative adaptation of the sacrifice of the resentful and angry Iphigenia against the dominant social ethos— looks back to Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis* by navigating the mythical and literary background. The play was promoted as an adaptation of the classical Greek myth that narrates the sacrifices of a young girl demanded by the policies of austerity in Britain after the economic crisis of 2008. The play premiered at the Sherman Theatre in Cardiff on May 8, 2015. It earned the acclaim of critics and audiences and won the James Tait Black Prize for Drama at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and the UK Theatre Award for Best New Play in 2016. In a review for *The Guardian*, Andrew Haydon stated, "By any measure going, this is perfect theatre: intelligent, moving, and horribly, horribly relevant. Most of all, though, in those final moments, it feels like the start of a revolution" (Haydon). Most reviewers acknowledge the play's use of Euripidean sources, its participation in the tradition of British political theatre as well as the very strong effect achieved at the close of the play. As Rebeca Gualberto notes: "Owen's adaptation is overtly political, but quite significantly, so too is the myth

of Iphigenia" (123). Structurally, Owen's alterations of the original text are transitional and less abrupt than expected considering the reinvented codes to the contemporary recontextualization and specific engagements with the issue of precarity. For this purpose, Owen constructs a profoundly shattering monologue that adopts the fast-paced rhythms of performance poetry in his rewrite of the classical myth, which critically denounces the austerity measures in Britain, particularly their influence on the precariat's life and the access to the National Health System (NHS).

As Gualberto points out, the text looks back to Euripides' Iphigenia, recreating the story of the tragic Greek princess—the daughter of Agamemnon who was sacrificed to the gods for the sake of Greece—by reflecting upon the capriciousness of the ancient divinities and the legitimation of violence. Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis* was first produced posthumously at the Great Dionysian festival in 405 BCE. Critically, this play is also a rewriting that had been previously narrated and exploited in at least two poems from the Epic Cycle (Michelakis 21-26). Euripides effectively maps and concentrates on a single episode: the sacrifice of Iphigenia, which is dramatized "with a distinctive mixture of psychological intensity, pathos, irony, and astonishing reversals" (Grene and Lattimore 89). The relevance of this myth for the contemporary stage is not new. The cruelty of the plot and the psychology of the character constitute a perfect ground for a case of adaptation and reinterpretation.

Gary Owen's *Iphigenia in Splott* is set in Splott, a suburb in the south of Cardiff, Wales, characterised by constant decadence and influenced by vandalism, lack of civic education, poverty and violence. Effie's long monologue on a bare stage opens with her disdainful agitation giving the finger to the audience: "Yeah I know it's a shock. / But you lot, every single one / You're in my debt. / And tonight – boys and girls, ladies and gents – / I've come to collect" (Owen 1). Her accusations initiate the play with an implicit call for action as an "ethical solicitation" (Butler 2012a: 135) transgressing the boundaries between the actor and the audience. This defiant and aggressive atti-

tude holds up an unconventional mirror to one's living conditions as intrinsically entwined with the political and social dynamics of the system. This approach fosters a position of interpretation in spectators who are therefore urged to pose uncomfortable ethical and political questions.

As I argued in the theoretical framework of this article, Effie illustrates the collective of the *lumpen-precariat*: a group that may easily become *supplicants*, pleading for benefits or social services, relying on random decisions of bureaucrats making moralistic judgments on whether their behavior or attitude is deserving (Standing 2011). In the play, Effie performs the role which public media and discourse have prescribed for her; she enacts the precariat's (self-)destructive anger that makes the 'safe' middle class and 'respectable' working class fear her and her class, seeing her as unpredictable and guided by primitive and self-destructive instincts (Simonsen 65).

In a setting of *denizens*, Owen builds a character that could seem unrelated to a middle-class audience but focused—at the same time—on a Greek heroine as a potential 'one of us' rather than a member of the dangerous and self-destructive precariat. This contemporary adaptation suggests the possibility of the precariat's anger in socially transformative interpretations. In the classical text, Iphigenia is sacrificed for the benefit of the nation without replication, whereas Effie moves from 'fury' to 'anger' by addressing a transition of resilience towards an increasingly meaningful and justified anger.

Effie's chaotic and destructive lifestyle is totally transformed when she discovers her pregnancy after a one-night stand with Lee. The brief romantic encounter results in more triggering events for Effie's complex life: Lee is married, has a child and is not interested in her. Yet, the resilient subject emerges and decides to give birth to the baby, experiencing the decision positively as a hopeful and transformative experience which could help her out of her precarity.

The experience of being a single mother provides a wide horizon to the protagonist who feels now less alone. Her grandmother, Nan, helps Effie get a room of her own and her friend, Kevin, offers to

help her with the baby. This combination conjures up the image of a resilient heroine throwing before the audience's eyes a portrait of heightened empowerment in line with a renewed acknowledgement of herself and her identity. For some moments, the possibility of the Butlerian "good life" becomes a reality rather than an impossibility. Hence, "wellbeing and resilience are therefore argued to result from the ongoing iterative and interactive navigations between selves, communities and environments" (Aranda et al. 552).

Nevertheless, this moment of communion and hope futilely disappears to throw light on one of the main criticisms of Owen's production. The social and economic contexts of the play are the post-2010 cuts implemented by the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition government as part of their austerity programme building the neoliberal commitment to minimized state benefits and social services. As Owen himself argues, the most vulnerable are "the ones that face the worst cuts even though they're the least able to take them" (Bano para. 17). Faced with pain, Effie goes to the hospital, where, after a series of tests, she waits in agony for the results to be positive while repeating to herself: "On my own. And not alone. And me and my little girl wait" (Owen 52). The absence of medical assistance in these decisive moments is conceived as the main motive for her desperation, which is quite noticeable in the repetition of "No one comes. No one comes. No one comes" (Owen 53). This scene scrutinizes the impact of the violence of austerity on the life of the precariat in a poignant attack on the British National Health system. As Iphigenia in Euripides' play must die for the global benefit of the war—boats must sail and Troy must fall—, Effie's daughter must be sacrificed for the sake of austerity which makes the system endure. As Gualberto notices, Effie is "sucked" into the dynamics of the myth because austerity economics (the myth) "is the ethical framework that legitimizes her suffering" (137).

Her daughter's death challenges her newly acquired strategies for resilience. Resonating with her initial *lumpen-precariat* fury, Effie's monologue affects the audience while addressing her appalling nar-

ration of the death of her premature daughter: "I hear my baby girl cry——and I hear her stop" (Owen 58). At the other end of this dramaturgic spectrum, Effie's resilience opens the gates toward a paradigm of overcoming all painful circumstances. Moreover, precariats are often depicted as an acknowledged class of the social dynamics whereby they are forced to accept their condition, often in the form of "unwarranted paternalism and coercion of individuals and groups identified as vulnerable" (Mackenzie, Rogers and Dodds 2).

To redress the ghostly haunting of her vulnerability, Effie becomes more poetical and less aggressive at the end of the play. The interpellations to the audience— "Your baby gets sick, she gets well because of me. Your mum gets ill, she gets healed because of me" (Owen 306)—explore the discrimination of the National Health system and the "economy of abandonment" for the less privileged (Povinelli). The embodiment of precarity captured in the desolation about the death of her baby operates a multiform dispossession that embraces again the myth of Iphigenia and her final subjugation.

Like in Euripides' play, Effie faces a choice. When the baby dies in an ill-equipped ambulance while they are being transferred to another hospital because there are not enough beds in special care, Effie is guaranteed several hundred thousand pounds in compensation (Nicolás). For her, that economic reparation could imply abandoning her precarious conditions of living: "Get me a house. / Get me a car. / Get me by; for years and years" (Owen 61). However, the resilient heroine once more sacrifices herself for her ethical disposition and asserts that there is no effective compensation for her loss. As Gualberto argues: "Effie becomes Iphigenia at this moment. As in Euripides's tragedy, she chooses to surrender to myth" (134). The legitimization of her sacrifice is deeply grounded on her recognition of belonging to the precariat class, the excluded one, the irrelevant and 'willing' to sustain the neoliberal system.

Iphigenia's acceptance of death reconciles dramatic fiction and mythical tradition. Both texts raise the possibility of modifying mythical tradition from the prism of fate, acceptance and resilience. In

doing so, Owen's play in effect reshapes the myth by adopting it to denounce "the inherently violent ethics which, in the myth, objectify and condemn the most vulnerable among us" (Gualberto 125). The theatrical space of the play attests ethical responsibility in the light of precarity. Effie's experience indirectly addresses the "task for politics" (Butler 2012a) signaling the nexus between resilience and precarity argued in this article. The audience is left to reflect on a more collective and institutionally shared notion of responsibility by reinterpreting fate, "good life" or dependency while placing some obligation on state institutions and economic measures of the British government.

Conclusion

Since the performative turn in the 1980s, performance has been largely viewed as a progressive force - an activity that supposedly produces a more democratic world by stressing the iterability and contingent nature of all identity and reality (Lavery). The formation of identity is dependent on multiple self-recognitions and the need for the other's recognition. Asking for recognition "is to solicit a becoming, to instigate a transformation, to petition the future always in relation to the Other" (Butler 2004: 44). *Iphigenia in Splott* assumes the existence of the Other in the form of the audience to be instigated and claimed. The demand for recognition is reinterpreted as the demand to be the object of certain addresses, and establishing a scene of interlocution becomes the object of a struggle for recognition (Ferrarese 770). Theatre calls for a strong performance to prove itself, to confirm its claims by adhering to a mode of showing that prevents the audience from mistaking a theatrical event for an actual one.

Mythological adaptations definitely contribute to exploring a world of decadence and pessimism from a contemporary perspective. *Iphigenia in Splott* provides a starting point to analyze how Owen incorporates and transforms elements from classical mythology in his work, to the extent of forming a significant part of a hybrid narrative. Classical culture offers the author diverse elements that he modified and converted into transcendental social discussions. For example, the

Agamemnon figure in the play responsible for the human sacrifice is not just depicted as representative of neoliberal austerity in public welfare, but as any spectator who watches this tragedy instead of actively acting against. As Effie concludes, society should thank her: "Christ Effie, thanks. You took the cut for us" (Owen 306).

Furthermore, the motifs from classical mythology that Owen incorporates are reshaped to suit his own perspective, resulting in a unique kind of writing through a combination of slang language, poetry and soliloquy. The irreverent tone of the heroine is typical of the *lumpen-precariat* class, a group with no privileges and often dependent on state subsidies. Owen also decides to discuss the stereotypical view of Effie as representative of her class by suggesting how we tend to blame it for being the cause of the destruction of the welfare system.

This article has attempted to demonstrate the resilient nature of the character of Effie, who is able to overcome her precarious conditions. Through the adaptation of the myth, Owen emphasizes how the protagonist extracts from the audience an ethical response stemming from empathetic emotions and a consequent need for urgent action. Effie's story is just one of the many tragic lives that seem somehow to navigate between fate and reality. Thus, the play makes us see contemporary social suffering in the tragic light of Euripides. It shows how we still sacrifice vulnerable humans to sustain a system that is making a whole social group feel trapped and powerless in a desperate position. Therefore, readers and audiences can question their awareness of situations of vulnerability that further perpetuate precarity in society and thence agencially respond to such phenomena.

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[1] This article offers a new direction to some conclusions presented in my pedagogical application "Exploring Angry Vulnerability Through the Performance of *Iphigenia in Splott* by Gary Owen (2015)", included in the volume *What's Hecuba to Me? Personajes Míticos y Monólogos Dramáticos Contemporáneros para la Enseñanza Universitaria en Humanidades* edited by L. Romero and R. Gutiérrez. Universidade de Coimbra Press, 2023.