Hector: Tragedy
by Antoine de Montchrestien

Translated, with Introduction and Notes,
by Richard Hillman
Introduction to *Hector: Tragedy*  
by Antoine de Montchrestien  
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The reasons for proposing an English translation of this tragedy by Antoine de Montchrestien are less salient than for the same author’s *The Scottish Queen* (1601, 1604), which presents particular politico-dramatic interest from the perspective of French-English connections. Hector can lay claim to no such distinction. It is, however, the most accomplished French dramatic treatment, according to the conventions of the late-Humanist theatre, of material that was attracting dramatists on both sides of the Channel—the so-called “Matter of Troy”, which the Middle Ages had deployed in multiple narrative forms. On the English side, the ineluctable dramatic instance is Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* (c. 1602), but there were many more, including Thomas Heywood’s *The Iron Age* (1611-13) and others now lost, dating mainly from the 1590s. On the French side, the dramatic tradition dates back to the mid-fifteenth century.

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For the French plays, the present overview is indebted to Françoise Charpentier, *Les débuts de la tragédie héroïque: Antoine de Montchrestien (1575-1621)* (Lille: Service de Reproduction des Thèses, Université de Lille III, 1981), pp. 420-21, which is still the most extensive study of Montchrestien’s work. For a thorough survey of relevant plays from the mid-sixteenth century through the Classical Age, see Tiphaine Karsenti, *Le mythe de Troie dans le théâtre français (1562-1715)*, Lumière Classique, 90 (Paris: H. Champion, 2012).
with *La destruction de Troye la grande*, by Jacques Milet (1425?-68), a sprawling dramatisation, in the free-wheeling style of the French mysteries (multiple scaffolds, spectacular action, octosyllabic quatrains), of a vital common source for numerous European authors: the twelfth-century verse *Roman de Troie* of Benoît de Sainte-Maure. In the late sixteenth century, the influence of Euripides (*Hecuba*, *The Trojan Women*, *Andromache*) and Seneca (*The Trojan Women*) gave rise to several neo-classical adaptations, most notably *La Troade* (1579), by Robert Garnier, who was Montchrestien’s chief dramaturgical model. A further sprinkling of French plays on Trojan themes appeared between 1563 and 1605. It would appear, however, that Montchrestien’s was original in concentrating its action and emotion on the theme of the death of Hector.

That concentration results in considerable dramatic power, which arguably remains accessible across the constraints of late-Humanist theatre (and I hope, to some extent, even in translation). The process begins with reduction of an essentially familiar plot-segment to its basic elements: the hero’s failure to heed an ill-omen, despite the pleas of his family, especially his wife Andromache, followed by his death at the hands of Achilles and the mourning that ensues. Attached to the key moments are lengthy expressions of intense emotion, as well as debates about the nature of heroism and the relative roles of divinity and human action in mortal affairs.

Since little of this will self-evidently seem “dramatic” by early modern English theatrical standards—despite a parallel penchant for rhetorical elaboration in the early years of Senecan influence—it is worth insisting that contemporary French audiences, as well as readers, accepted such elements as the basic characteristics of neo-Humanist tragedy, which the play shares with *The Scottish Queen* and Montchrestien’s other four tragedies. Invariably, the premise is a tragically charged situation, unrelieved (or otherwise varied) by comic elements, which in this case is heightened by especially heavy irony, with the universally known outcome reinforced by its classically mandated mechanism. Developing the emotional responses and the metaphysical framework in which to place them depends on rhetorical skill, deployed in extended monologues, stichomythia

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3 Behind Benoît’s romance lay legends transmitted under the names of Dares the Phrygian and Dictys of Crete, but these subsequently had little independent influence. There were editions available in Montchrestien’s time, including a faithful translation of Dares into French by Charles de Bourgueville (*L’histoire véritable de la guerre des Grecs et des Troyens, etc.* [Caen: B. Macé, 1572]), but to claim that Dares and Homer virtually account for Montchrestien’s basic material appears exaggerated and askew (*pace* Christopher Norman Smith, *Introduction*, *Two Tragedies: Hector and La Reine d’Ecosse*, by Antoine de Montchrestien, Athlone Renaissance Library [London: Athlone Press, 1972], pp. 1-24, 18-19). Smith does, however, provide a useful discussion of theatrical and intellectual backgrounds.

4 Charpentier, p. 421.
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(adapted to presenting contrasting points of view), and moralising choric commentary. Alexandrine couplets constitute the basic verbal medium (subject to lyric variation for the choruses). Action on stage is largely limited to entrances and exits (whose staging is sometimes problematic, as will be seen)—although Hector’s affectionate interplay with his infant son as he arms himself (ll. 281-301 [Act I]) stands out as a supplementary interlude.1 As for the potentially spectacular events—the panicked populace in the street (ll. 1605 ff. [Act IV], ll. 2041 ff. [Act V]), and especially the scenes of warfare—they are evoked, however vividly, through narrative reports.

Given the restrictive formal conditions, the disposition and manipulation of such elements in Hector may be seen as highly accomplished. Indeed, largely on these grounds, Charpentier unequivocally pronounces the play Montchrestien’s “chef-d’œuvre [masterpiece]”.6 She does so, it is notable, on the widely shared assumption that Hector constitutes the author’s final work, since it is the only one of the tragedies not to have appeared in some form in the first collected edition of 1601, figuring for the first time in that of 1604. Reasonably, then, she dates composition between these dates.7 More questionable, for reasons to be expounded below, is her confident proposal (of whose radical nature she appears oblivious) that Hector shows the influence of Shakespeare’s Troilus and Cressida.8 In support of this idea, she recalls that Montchrestien’s self-imposed exile in England (reputedly the consequence of a fatal duel) might have begun prior to 1604.9 I will return to the questions of chronology and influence, but it is also important to note that this placement of Hector within Montchrestien’s œuvre serves a highly teleological reading, whereby his presumably final play marks the culmination of an evolution from a “tragédie

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5 This is one of several details derived directly from the Iliad; see the translation, l. 281 (Act I), n. 47.
6 Charpentier, p. 416.
7 Charpentier, p. 700. The two editions in question are Les tragédies de Ant. de Montchrestien, sieur de Vasteville, plus une Bergerie et un poème de Susane (Rouen: J. Petit, 1601), and Les Tragédies d’Antoine de Montchrestien, sieur de Vasteville. ... Edition nouvelle augmentée par l’auteur (Rouen: Jean Osmont, 1604); a second edition including Hector appeared two years later: Les Tragédies d’Antoine de Montchrestien, sieur de Vasteville. ... Dernière édition revue et augmentée par l’auteur (Nyort: J. Vaultrie, 1606). Exceptionally, and without explanation, Hector is dated prior to La Reine d’Escosse by Jeff Rufo, “La Tragédie Politique: Antoine de Montchrestien’s La Reine d’Escosse, Reconsidered”, Modern Philology 111.3 (2014): 437-56, 443.
8 Charpentier, pp. 422-23, virtually takes Montchrestien’s use of Troilus and Cressida for granted (“sans doute [undoubtedly]” [p. 422]); acquaintance with Shakespeare’s work on the part of a French dramatist has never, to my knowledge, been claimed for such an early date. (Cf., however, Richard Hillman, “Setting Scottish History Straight: La Stuartide of Jean de Schélandre as Corrective of Macbeth”, Modern Language Review 113.2 [2018]: 289-306.)
9 Charpentier, p. 423, n. 7. The dates of his sojourn in England remain uncertain. For discussion of Montchrestien’s life, see Charpentier, pp. 1-53, as well as my introduction to The Queen of Scotland in the present series, pp. 3-5.
renaissante qui a surtout été celle du malheur [Renaissance tragedy which was chiefly one of woe]” towards a new aesthetic of “courage”; Charpentier thus concludes: “Cette pièce ouvre largement la voie à la tragédie héroïque [This play opens wide the route to heroic tragedy].”10 It is essentially from the same literary-historical perspective that Montchrestien’s first (and still principal) editor, Louis Petit de Jullerville, detects anticipations of Pierre Corneille in Montchrestien’s poetic expression.11

Certainly, the idea of Hector as a tragedy of “courage” exalting the prevailing neo-Stoic ethic matches a number of expressions within the text, such as the following, which is invested with choric authority:

O happy is the state of mind
That hope eschews along with care,
And likewise which avoids despair,
Unable to be undermined
When human chance seems to conspire
From its hands to snatch its desire.

[O bien-heureuse la pensée
Qui n’espere rien en souci,
Et qui ne desespere aussi;
Ne pouuant estre trauersée
De vois les accidens humain
Luy voler ses desirs des mains.]
(ll. 1847-52 [Act IV]; pp. 54-55)

Still greater authority is lent by Montchrestien himself in the dedicatory Epistle addressed to his patron (also for the 1601 volume and in his political life): the powerful Henri II de Bourbon, Prince of Condé, first prince of the blood and possible heir to the throne. There Montchrestien explains his placement of Hector at the beginning of the collection—incidentally, he says nothing about its being a new play—on the grounds that its hero deserves to march first in the heroic line as a prime example of noble blood (indeed royal, like Condé’s), showing the qualities that distinguish it from the vulgar. The playwright elaborates as follows:

10 Charpentier, p. 471.
11 I retain as my edition of reference Antoine de Montchrestien, *Les tragédies*, ed. Louis Petit de Jullerville, new ed. (Paris: E. Plot, Norrit et Cie., 1891), from which I have supplied page numbers for quotations from the original. The 1972 edition of Smith does not differ significantly from that of Petit de Jullerville, which is still more widely available.
If such “glory” (decidedly one of the play’s keynotes) reaches a kind of paroxysm at the point of extinction, as with a torch, such, we are told, is the intrinsic quality of “vertu [virtue]”—another recurrent term, which, as its etymology warrants (from “vir”/“man”), comprises “manhood” in both the physical and moral senses (though it is often inflected by context towards one or the other).

Yet if it was Montchrestien’s intention to exalt Hector’s uncompromising thirst for personal “glory” as an exclusive ideal of manly behaviour and to offer Stoical courage as the only response to adversity, the text effectively opens up another perspective revealing the cost to others—most comprehensively (self-defeatingly, in a real sense) to all of Troy, but most immediately and intensely to the hero’s entourage. That Troy is doomed appears an irrevocable decree of destiny; the audience knows enough to trust Cassandra, the play’s first speaker, on this point. But mitigation and inflection of that destiny’s realisation through human actions, notably Hector’s own, may remain possible within the system: otherwise, it would simply not matter whether he went out to fight or not on the fatal day, whether or not he exercised “prudence”. And if his lapse of prudence, too, is inevitable, then one draws close to the principle of Heraclitus of Ephesus—blasphemous, surely, within this play-world—that “a person’s character is his fate (divinity)”.12

In fact, the terms “prudence” and “prudent” (identical in French), with variants of “wisdom” (“sagesse”, “sage”), resound through the play as moderators of reckless action for glory’s sake,13 and the application to Hector in particular comes with contemporary resonance: this is the premise of Christine de Pizan’s widely disseminated Epistre Othea—a supposed letter of advice written to the young Trojan hero by “Othea, deesse de prudence / Qui adrece les bons cuers en vaillance [Othea, goddess of prudence, / Who edifies hearts stout in valour]”.14 I will be suggesting that the Epistre marks Montchrestien’s work in fur-
ther ways. In any case, at least by way of the consequences of an act presented as imprudent, this “tragedy of courage” may surely lay claim to double credentials as a “tragedy of woe”.

Apart from Hector’s intuitions of his wife’s own dismal fate (ll. 324 ff. [Act I])—for “history”, as is also well known, will not grant her final wish to follow him in death—abundance of “woe” is amply displayed from the start by anticipation, and it is brought out most strongly, as the tradition warrants, through laments by Andromache and Hecuba, although the personal devastation of Priam legitimises the response as more than feminine weakness. As both king and father, Priam had initially aligned himself reflexively with the ideal of glory, before becoming an insistent advocate for prudence in the face of the ill omens. Andromache’s feminine grief is allowed, within the constraints of Alexandrines, to veer into outbursts of convincingly poignant grievance—directed against Priam, against Hector himself—before she returns to more conventional objects of blame: destiny and its instrument, the treacherous Achilles, who strikes Hector down contrary to all dictates of chivalric honour.

By this route, paradoxically, Achilles partially transcends his primary role as emblem of perfidy to become a de facto figure of death’s arbitrary and irresistible power. The con-

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Parussa, ed.). On the Epistre’s broad diffusion in manuscript and print, see Parussa, ed., p. 11 and n. 22. The titles of early printed editions highlighted the basic moral point—e.g., Les cent histoires de Troye. Lepistre de Othea deesse de prudence envoyee a lesperit chevalereux Hector de Troye avec cent histoires (Paris: Philippe Le Noir, 1522).

15 See esp. ll. 881-82 (Act II); p. 28: “When the thirst for glory is excessively strong, / The soundest judgement becomes altered and goes wrong [Quand le desir de gloire et trop immoderé, / Le plus sain iugement en deuient altere].” The following Chorus, however (ll. 897 ff.), uncompromisingly affirms glory as the supreme value.

16 See her dynamic peroration, ll. 2325-74 (Act V). Karsenti, p. 327, perceptively identifies the central importance of Andromache in transforming the story of Hector into tragedy “[p]arce qu’elle incarne le refus de la fatalité [because she incarnates the refusal of fatalty]” and offers this persuasive summary:

La résistance d’Andromaque [sic] ouvre un espace de mise en question de l’action dans le cadre tragique d’un monde soumis à la nécessité de la mort, et c’est dans cet espace que s’élaborer et se formuler d’éthique radicale d’Hector, qui dessine un mouvement inverse d’acceptation du destin.

[The resistance of Andromache opens a space where action is called in question within the tragic framework of a world subject to the necessity of death, and it is in this space that the radical ethic of Hector, which traces a contrary movement of accepting destiny, is elaborated and formulated.]

17 The certainty of death by uncertain means is indeed one (commonplace) lesson that Pizan in the Epistre draws from Hector’s killing; another is the need to obey one’s father, one’s sovereign and, more generally, to follow wise advice. She does not present the death-blow as such as treacherous but rather as proof that one should always be properly armed, both literally and spiritually. See sections 90-91 (pp. 327-29). On the death of Hector within a French tragic tradition of representing the assassination of an otherwise invincible hero, see Antoine Soare, “Les tragédies de l’assassinat et
cluding lucubrations of the Chorus on universal mortality (ll. 2382-84) thereby emerge as something more than the standard clichés. And even that Chorus, in adding a practical warning against allowing a state to depend on one man’s strength (“The welfare of a state is feeble and unstable, / If it depends on one alone, though brave and able [Que le bonheur publique est foible est vaillant, / S’il depend de la main d’un seul homme vaillant]) (ll. 2379-80 [Act V]; p. 68), remains equivocal on the mechanisms of destiny with respect to human actions.

Finally, then, despite Montchrestien’s claim to be presenting an unequivocal paean to heroic glory, a more sceptical (if not quite contrary) reading is also made available. Such ambiguous duality has a rough parallel in The Scottish Queen, which swings radically from condemnation to transcendent eulogy with regard to its heroine. But in Hector, where human politics give way to questions of human possibilities in the face of destiny (if there are any), the doubleness is built into the situation and developed throughout, producing destabilising shifts of ground that define debating positions impossible to resolve in the face of the secrets of the gods.

I

It is the detail of Achilles’ flagrantly ignoble killing of the hero, surprised when unable to defend himself, that leads Charpentier to deduce Shakespearean influence. This would be, then, a borrowing of a quite straightforward and limited nature. Certainly, Montchrestien’s play does not deal at all with the love-story at the centre of Shakespeare’s: Troilus appears only once (l. 823 [Act II]) as a non-speaking character, and when he is mentioned elsewhere, it is likewise simply as one valiant prince amongst others.

In comparing the two texts on the key point, it should also be stipulated that Achilles’ stealthy killing of Hector while the latter has his guard down, busy with an opponent he has just overcome, usually one whose armour appeals to him, is a recurrent motif in one form or another across the sources and analogues; it is sometimes moralised as a lesson against covetousness. Behind it, moreover, may lie an episode from a prominent work in the common heritage of European literature. Somewhat curiously, there is


A rare exception is the account of Dares Phrygius, which Smith, ed., nevertheless claims as a major source for the French playwright. There, while he does surprise Hector engaged in despoiling the slain Polybete of his armour, Achilles engages him in a fair fight; see Bourgueville, trans., p. 46.
a fairly close parallel with the death in the heat of battle of the Volscian warrior-princess Camilla, according to Book XI of the *Aeneid* (ll. 768-804). Otherwise invincible, she is imprudently distracted by the resplendent armour and accoutrements of Chloreus—a weak moment that Virgil explicitly characterises as a lapse from her otherwise masculine character.\(^{19}\) This enables Arruns, fearful of confronting her directly, to cast a spear surreptitiously, with fatal results.

Some details do especially tie together the versions in the two plays: in both Hector is surprised on foot, unarmed, when he is occupied with the slain warrior’s armour, and killed by sword-stroke.\(^ {10}\) Most accounts have him thrust through with a spear on horseback while attempting to carry off his dead prize from the press of battle.\(^ {21}\) In *Troilus and Cressida*, the hero’s attraction to his opponent’s armour, which carries an intertextual trace of the covetousness strenuously condemned in John Lydgate’s *The Hystorye Sege and Dystruccyon of Troye*,\(^ {22}\) is mitigated by his ensuing remark on the contradiction between inward and outward value—a fitting insight to achieve, ironically, at the moment of death (*Tro.*, V.ix.1-2).\(^ {23}\) Montchrestien makes Hector’s adversary more formidable physically—
indeed, vaguely larger-than-life—rather than vacuously glittering, but there is agreement
with Shakespeare’s Hector that glorious armour should betoken a glorious hero:

Hector with a ravished eye measured out his height,
Brandished the feathered crest in the air clear and bright
That belonged to the shining helmet on the ground,
Which longed to have that star of war with it be
crowned.

[Hector d’un œil ravi mesure sa grandeur,
Fait branler son pennache en la claire splendeur
Du casque flamboyant qui gist dessus la terre
Et veut s’orner le chef de cet astre de guerre.]
(ll. 2175-78 [Act V]; p. 63)

The conspicuous lack of such concordance in
T roilus thus stands out more sharply as part
of Shakespeare’s general subversion of pretensions in war as in love.

What most radically distinguishes the two texts, however, is more than a matter of
detail: among the extant versions, only Shakespeare compounds Achilles’ violation of
chivalry, and the concomitant imputation of cowardice to him, by having Hector sur-
rounded and rendered helpless by the Myrmidons, then at least partly slaughtered by
them, according to Achilles’ prior instructions. It is a fact not always given due weight
that this element is imported by the playwright from the subsequent death of Troilus,
as narrated in Caxton’s translation of Le Fèvre and elsewhere. (The protagonist’s fate,
laconically anticipated by Chaucer, is left indefinitely, and ironically, suspended at the
conclusion of Shakespeare’s play.

Paradoxically, this difference may prove a point of convergence after all. For while
Montchrestien restricts the factual account, as reported by Antenor, to the basics of
Hector’s death, he charges it insistently with bitter condemnation of Achilles, such as, in
the sources, is attached rather to the even more obviously treacherous death of Troilus.
The process begins with Priam’s expostulation:

meeting with his kinsman, Telemonian Ajax (Jacques Milet, La destruction de Troye la grande, etc.
[Lyons: Denys de Harsy, 1544], fol. 92v).

24 See the translation, ll. 2155, n. 207, and 2172-75 (Act V).

25 Achilles presumably makes it a “point of honour” to get in at least one blow (“[m]y half-supped
sword” [V.ix.19]).

(Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), V.1806: “Despitously hym slough the fierse Achille”. In Le
Fèvre, trans. Caxton, the killing of Troilus is described in bk. III, fol. xxxv.
O treason of the Greeks! Breech of the law of arms!
Was it Hector’s lot to incur his fatal harms,
Not in fair combat but by the stroke perfidious
Of a brutal butcher less strong than treacherous?

[O Grecque trahison! ô desloyales armes!
Falloit-il donc qu’Hector tombast dans les alarves
Non par un combat juste, ains par le lasche effort
D’un meutrier inhumain plus perfide que fort?]
(ll. 2193-96 [Act V]; p. 64)

And if the dragging of Hector’s corpse around the walls is Homeric, the mutilation of
his head is not, and this degradation too is given added impact intertextually by recalling
descriptions of the treatment of Troilus, whom Achilles decapitated before dragging the
body through the field at his horse’s tail. (The latter detail is likewise adapted for Hector
by Shakespeare [Tro., V.xi.4-5].) Again, Priam’s outrage is powerfully aroused by an ele-
ment extraneous to the previous accounts of Hector’s fate:

What sense has honour now? The Manes violate!
Without respect or shame, cadavers mutilate!
To slaughter him, crush him and disfigure him so
That his features no longer as human we know!
Now you may truly say, O coward cruelty,
That you surpass yourself in inhumanity.

[Qu’est deuenu l’honneur? les Manes violer!
Sans honte, sans respect vn Cadavre fouler!
Le meutrir, le derompre et le gaster en sorte
Que plus d’vn corps humain la figure il ne porte!
Maintenant peux-tu dire, ô lasche cruauté,
Que tu passes toy-mesme en inhumanité.]
(ll. 2207-12 [Act V]; p. 64)

If this perspective implicitly refutes the heroism of Homer’s Achilles in triumphing
over Hector, it does so by echoing a number of the post-Homeric accounts of the
treatment of Troilus—witness the exclamatory comment in Raoul Le Fèvre’s Receuil, the
original of Caxton’s narrative:

O quelle vilonnie de trayner ain si le filz de si noble roy qui estoit si preu et si hardy[!]
Certes se noblesse eust este en achilles Il neust point fait ceste vilonnie.
[O what vylonnye was hit to drawe so the sonne of so noble a kyng, that was so worthy and so hardye[!] Certes yf anye noblesse had ben in achilles he wold not haue done this vlonny.] 27

But it is in the thirteenth-century prose narrative of Guido della Colonna, as a postscript to his description of Troilus’ death, that one finds an extended indignant apostrophe to Homer linking Achilles’ treachery to the fates of both Trojan heroes; the passage is worth citing at length because it tends to confirm that the violent condemnation of Achilles in Montcrestien’s play stems from a collapsing of two notorious acts of villainy in the sources—perhaps the ultimate evidence of intensity through concentration:

Sed O Homere, qui in libris tuis Achillem tot laudibus, tot preconiis extulisti, que probabilis ratio te induxit ut Achillem tantis probitatis titulis exaltasses, ex eo precipe quod dixeris Achillem ipsum in suis uiribus duo Hectorum peremisse, ipsum uidelicet et Troilum, fratrem eius fortissimum? Sane si te induxit Grecorum affeccio ... verum non motu dice-ris racione sed pocius ex furore. Nonne Achilles fortissimum Hectorum, cui nullus in strennuitate fuit similis neque erit, proditorie morti dedit, cum Hector tunc regem quem in bello ceperat ipsum a bello extrahere tota intencione vacabat, scuto suo tunc post terga reiecto ... ? ... Sic et fortissi-mum Troilum, quem non ipse in sua uirtute peremit sed ab aliis mille militibus expugnatum et victum interercere non erubuit, in quo resisten-ciam nullius defenseonis inuenit et ideo non uium sed quasi mortuum hominem interfecit amplius. Nunciud Achilles dignus est laude, quem scrisisti multa nobilitate decorum, qui nobilissimi regis filium, uirum tanta nobilitate et strennuitate uigentem, non captum neque deuictum ab eo, ad caudam sui equi, dimisso pudore, detraxit? Sane si nobilitas eum mouisset, si strennuitas eum duxisset, compassione motus nunquam ad tam uilia crudeliter declinasset.

[But O Homer, you who in your books extol Achilles with so many praises, so many commendations, what credible reason led you to exalt Achilles with such great titles of approbation, especially on the grounds that Achilles himself with his own strength killed two Hectors, namely himself and his most formidable brother Troilus? Indeed, if affection for the Greeks induced you ... truly you will be said to be moved not by reason but rather by furor. For did he not do the mighty Hector to death by treachery, whose vigour never was, nor ever will be, equalled, at a moment when Hector had all his mind on a king whom he was


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beginning to lead out of the combat, having slung his shield beyond his back ... ? ... And thus it was with the most mighty Troilus, whom he did not himself slay in exercising his manhood, but did not blush to kill by means of a thousand other soldiers once he was subdued and overcome, in whom he found no resistance in defence, and therefore, not a living man but a nearly dead one, he killed more thoroughly? Is Achilles really deserving of praise, whom you endow with great nobility, for having shamelessly dragged at his horse’s tail a man of such great nobility and flourishing vigour, not captured or subdued by himself? Truly if nobility had moved him, if manly vigour had inspired him, moved by compassion he would never have cruelly stooped to such vile deeds.] 28

From an intertextual perspective, it is as if Shakespeare, deploying the freedoms available in his theatre, recreates, in his staging of the death of Hector, Montchrestien’s symbolic and imaginary conflation, itself amply authorised by Guido. A good part of the English audience might have been expected to have recognised at least the manipulation of Caxton—and found it to be ironic at the still-living Troilus’s expense.

II

All in all, Charpentier’s supposition of a direct connection between the French and English plays is worth taking up, and taking seriously, with circumspect attention to context and circumstances—insofar as is possible. For the contexts and circumstances are not clear-cut for either play. What we do know without a doubt is that Montchrestien could not have read Shakespeare’s prior to 1604, as Charpentier casually proposes, 29 since it did not appear in print prior to the (two-state) Quarto of 1609. As for seeing a performance, if the usual date of the English play’s composition is accepted (1601-2), that is conceivable (though we have no documentation of performances)—provided, of course, that Montchrestien did indeed come to England in time to compose his work for 1604 publication. That could not have been prior to 1603, however, since his purpose was to seek the good-will of the royal father of the late Scottish Queen, as would make no sense


29 Charpentier, p. 423.
prior to James's accession. The opportunity for influence by *Troilus and Cressida* appears narrow indeed.

A further possibility exists, which I present with due diffidence. It seems to have been almost universally accepted, given its first appearance in the 1604 collection, that *Hector* must have been composed shortly before that date. But might it have been in existence, perhaps even in print, closer to the 1601 *terminus a quo* posited by Charpentier and others? Again, it is worth recalling that Montchrestien’s 1604 letter to Condé makes no claim for *Hector* as a new play, or even as one his patron does not know, but merely asserts its claim to priority of placement within the volume on the grounds of its exemplary content.\(^3^0\)

A brief bibliographical digression may be in order here, if only to confirm that the full picture is not securely in place regarding even the play’s contemporary accessibility in print. A provocative, if hardly decisive, document exists in the Arsenal library of the BnF (Ars. GD-11404) – namely, a stand-alone edition in 24° format carrying two title pages. The first bears the imprint of La Petite Bibliothèque des Théâtres, a series produced by the Parisian publisher Belin and Brunet in the late eighteenth century (although the precise date on the page is impossible to decipher); the second is written out in a late-nineteenth century hand\(^3^1\) and reads as follows: *Hector, // Tragédie par A. Montchretien, représentée à Paris en 1603.// Rouen Jean Osmont 1604*. In fact, however, while the text, typographical layout and page numbering conform to the version included in Osmont’s 1604 duo-decimo collection, in which *Hector* is usually supposed to have first appeared, the catchwords, signature numbers (in Arabic, not Roman) and printer’s devices confirm identity instead with the tragedy as printed in the successor collection produced in Niort by J. Vaultier in 1606. The mystery (and the interest) are enhanced by a number of manuscript modifications added in an early seventeenth-century hand, which has corrected the list of speakers at the opening of several acts and supplied a missing speech-heading (“Heleine” on p. 43, in turn miscorrected to “Hecube”). Finally, the same corrector has appended to the last page (though without specifying the play’s title) the “Personnages” of *The Scottish Queen*, which indeed follows *Hector* in the collections of both 1604 and 1606. Yet against the obvious possibility that this text was being prepared for integration

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\(^3^0\) Not only is there no claim that Condé will be discovering *Hector* for the first time, but Montchrestien does not exclude it from his claim to have revised all his plays for this occasion.

\(^3^1\) This according to my colleague, Pierre Aquilon, on whose expert dating of the manuscript interventions I gratefully rely.
into the latter stands the stubborn fact that none of these corrections has made its way into any extant edition.\textsuperscript{32}

One way or another, the apparent circulation of the individual edition, with its early seventeenth-century corrections, must be accommodated, as well as the claim for 1603 performance, which might well have taken place in the provinces as well as in Paris.\textsuperscript{33} Thanks to the censorship question, we have evidence that \textit{The Scottish Queen}, in its earlier version, was being acted in both Paris and Orléans (if not elsewhere as well) between 1601 and 1604; further, its “book” (in whatever form) was simultaneously in circulation—hence subject to suppression.\textsuperscript{34} It was usual for French plays of the period (like English ones) to be published as a supplement to performance, if at all.

The further the date of Hector may be pushed back, the less plausible Shakespearean influence would be. On the other hand, it begins to become conceivable that the influence went the other way. The dates of \textit{Troilus and Cressida} are not definite enough to confirm this as possible—or, again, to rule it out. But the hypothesis is consistent with what we are increasingly recognising as the responsiveness of English playwrights, including Shakespeare, to contemporary French material.\textsuperscript{35} The currency of a contemporary Matter-of-Troy play from across the Channel might well have added impetus to the vogue in England. Moreover, to carry conjecture a step further, the ambivalence of \textit{Hector} concerning personal glory and its destructive consequences, even in a work which by generic definition has no place for a Thersites, might have fed naturally into the mixture of idealism and cynicism that distinguishes \textit{Troilus and Cressida}. But then the tragic human costs

\textsuperscript{32} The 1627 Rouen volume published by P. de La Motte, \textit{Les Tragédies d’Anthoine de Montchrestien, sieur de Vasteville. ... Édition nouvelle, augmentée par l’auteur}, is out of the running: while it prints the dedicatory epistle to Condé in its latest version, notably including the mention of Hector, the play itself is not included. (Despite this volume’s claim to be a new edition, its texts, to judge from the presence of the earlier form of \textit{The Scottish Queen}, including its first title, \textit{L’Escosoise, ou le désastre}, are taken over from \textit{Les Tragédies of 1601}.)

\textsuperscript{33} For what it may be worth, representation in 1603 is also indicated by Antoine de Léris, \textit{Dictionnaire portatif historique et littéraire des théâtres, etc.}, 2nd ed. (1763; fac. rpt. Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1970), s.v. “Hector” (p. 227).

\textsuperscript{34} On the censorship, see Frances A. Yates, “Some New Light on \textit{L’Écossaise} of Antoine de Montchrestien”, \textit{Modern Language Review} 22.3 (1927): 285-97, 285-88. The BnF holds a copy entitled \textit{L’écossaise (Marie Stuard Reyne d’Ecosse): tragédie} issued in Rouen in 1603, the British Library what is described as the second edition, \textit{Ecossoise, ou le Desastre ... Tragdie} (Rouen: Iean Petit, 1603).

\textsuperscript{35} I have developed this subject elsewhere from various angles. See especially Richard Hillman, \textit{Shakespeare, Marlowe and the Politics of France} (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2002); “\textit{A Midsummer Night’s Dream} and \textit{La Diane} of Nicolas de Montreux”, \textit{Review of English Studies} 61.248 (2010): 34-54; and “Mercy Unjustified: A Reformation Intertext for \textit{The Merchant of Venice}”, \textit{Shakespeare Jahrbuch} 154 (2018): 91-105.
The downfall of Troy were also a commonplace, as is highlighted by *Hamlet’s* request to the Players for a Troy speech (albeit by way of Virgil’s Aeneas) and his eagerness to have them “come to Hecuba” (*Hamlet*, II.ii.701)—the latter a stock figure of desperate grieving. Montchrestien, without explicitly going as far as the ultimate catastrophe, concludes with a progression from Priam to Hecuba, then finally—most movingly, with a discourse that, in a convincingly distracted and conflicted way, goes to the heart of the central issue—to Andromache.

As the broader perspective confirms, the crowded discursive field of late medieval and early modern Troy material is notably polyglot and multi-cultural, with a recurrent French presence. Montchrestien’s *Troy and Criseyda*, of course, came most immediately by way of Giovanni Boccaccio’s *Il Filostrato*, but ultimately through precursors writing in Latin and French (Guido delle Colonna, Benoît de Sainte-Maure). Shakespeare may well have supplemented with various extant French translations a partial acquaintance with the *Iliad* obtained through George Chapman’s 1598 version of seven books. Guido’s Latin prose (and to some extent Benoît’s French verse) lay behind the English of Lydgate’s poem, which Shakespeare may (or may not) have used. And of course the ineluctable history commonly referred to as Caxton’s was actually his translation of Le Fèvre. Somewhat surprisingly, even the mystery-play version of Milet was in print, with an edition as recent as 1544.

What reason might there finally be to admit Montchrestien’s *Hector* within this discursive field as a potential fount of dramatic ideas, in accordance with Shakespeare’s eclectic practice, rather than a supplementary intertext presenting a few more or less tangential points of contact with a play whose main business lies in the love-story, which has its own distinct tradition? A starting point might be the innovative choice and treatment of its subject, which effectively identifies the tragedy of the fall of Troy, both symbolically and practically, with that of its ultimate hero. So much can be inferred from the *Iliad* itself, which ends with the burial of Hector. The identification is also intuitively reflected in the title of the (anonymous) 1614 adaptation of Lydgate, *The Life and Death*
of Hector;\textsuperscript{40} which nevertheless, like its original and the other “historical” sources, begins well before and ends well after the Hector sequence isolated by Montchrestien.

The Trojan-war framework supplied by Shakespeare for his version of the love-story adopts this perspective, beginning with a telling remark introducing Ulysses’ famous speech on order. That speech is widely recognised as adapted from a hint in Homer by way of Chapman—“The rule of many is absurd”\textsuperscript{41}—then enriched by Elizabethan homilies on order and obedience, but it is Shakespeare who makes Ulysses begin by evoking the preeminent Trojan hero:\textsuperscript{42} “Troy, yet upon his basis, had been down, / And the great Hector’s sword had lacked a master…” (\textit{Tro.}, I.i.75-76). The defeat of Troy is thus from the outset made commensurate with Hector’s elimination.

For his part, Montchrestien, with an irony of which he could not have been unaware—and which might conceivably have struck Shakespeare—recognisably transfers the same Homeric affirmation of the need for discipline to Hector himself. At the point where the latter has reluctantly accepted his royal father’s formal injunction (rather than the women’s pleas) not to go forth to fight on the ominous day, he suddenly speaks (rather surprisingly), not as a seeker of personal glory, but as a prudent general, giving advice and encouragement to those who go in his place. The Chorus (at this point no doubt comprised of venerable counsellors\textsuperscript{43}) has just asked heaven’s aid in renewing the Trojans’ will to fight after ten years. The situation thus mirrors that of the Greeks in Homer and Shakespeare, in need of an injunction to maintain order. Hector acknowledges the need for the gods’ favour, but then urges, like Ulysses in Shakespeare, collaborative effort subordinating individual to general interest. The passage is worth quoting at length for the parallel to Ulysses’ instance of the foraging bees who work together to bring honey to the hive (\textit{Tro.}, Liii.81-83):

\begin{quote}
But reflect, as well, on the perils we sustain
When order is not kept and a strong arm is vain.
Let him command who ought, and him who should obey:
No little honour lies in serving in that way.
Multiple commands are naturally confused;
But as one sole spirit through the body diffused
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{40} \textit{The life and death of Hector} (London: Thomas Purfoot, 1614); STC 5581.5.
\textsuperscript{41} Homer, \textit{The Seaven Bookes of Homers Iliads}, trans. George Chapman (1598), ed. Bullough, pp. 112-50, p. 120. The original is \textit{Iliad}, II.204: “Lordship for many is no good thing. Let there be one ruler.” (References are to \textit{The Iliad of Homer}, trans. Richmond Lattimore [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Phoenix Books, 1951].)
\textsuperscript{42} On the homiletic elaborations, see Bevington, ed., \textit{Tro.}, Longer Note to Liii.78-108.
\textsuperscript{43} On the composition of the play’s choruses, see below, pp. 25-27.
Hector wishes that he could sally out with his fellow-warrors so as to help bring back “of honour a great harvest [grande moisson d’honneur]” (l. 878; p. 28). The gross irony, of course, is that he will finally bring home nothing but death and despair, having yielded to the temptation of individual initiative. More subtly, in preaching the lesson, like Shakespeare’s Ulysses, of the value of “order” over “a strong arm”, he implicitly declines the role of Troy’s only hope, of which his family and countrymen remain as convinced as does Ulysses in the English play: “my one and only hope [mon unque esperance]” (l. 827 [Act II]; p. 27), as Priam puts it, just prior to the speech. Hector’s rhetorical exercise, then, is in line with his earlier excuse for risk-taking when he enumerated the supposedly adequate substitutes for himself in ll. 227-30 (Act I)—substitutes including Troilus, who is present on stage for the speech in Act II. On the one hand, then, his appropriation of the Homeric “order” speech offers a rare moment when his obsession with personal glory is eclipsed; on the other, this is clearly under duress and has the effect of sending a contrary signal.

In fact, the idea of a substitute-in-waiting is briefly attached to Troilus by Shakespeare’s Ulysses himself (Tro., IV.v.97-113), when the latter, with an uncharacteristic suspension of scepticism, repeats the eulogistic character reference he has received from Aeneas, which does not necessarily accord with our direct observation. In this conspicuously idealised
portrait, it is as if the prudence and recklessness that Montchrestien’s Hector cannot finally reconcile are blended into a perfect heroic harmony. Troilus’ supposed self-mastery, measured by the modesty and judgement accompanying his valiant deeds, is made to coexist with a disposition to greater violent rage on the battlefield than Hector himself displays, and which makes him “more dangerous” (105). The upshot is that the Trojans “on him erect / A second hope, as fairly built as Hector” (109-10). The passage has been seen as drawing on Lydgate’s encomium of Troilus as “[t]he seconde Ector for his wor-thynesse”. More dynamically pertinent may be the account found in Caxton of the Greek debate, following the death of Hector and a two months’ truce, about pursuing the war. There Menelaus argues that with Hector (and Deiphobus) gone, “the troyans repute them as vainquisshed”; Ulysses and Nestor counter that

troye was not so disgarnisshed but that they had a newe Hector, that was Troyllus, that was a litle lasse stronge & worthye than Hector.45

Such intertexts help set the stage for the precarious assumption by Shakespeare’s Troilus—in the ironic context of the catastrophes universally known to be looming both for himself and for Troy—of his role of “second hope”, hope which is palpably inseparable from despair:

Frown on, you heavens, effect your rage with speed!  
Sit, gods, upon your thrones and smite at Troy!  
I say at once, let your brief plagues be mercy,  
And linger not our sure destructions on!  
(Tro., V.xi.6-9).

This is the authentic note of Montchrestien’s Hecuba, who explicitly affirms that no hope remains:

Hector, our champion, is dead: nothing defends us.  
Let us therefore be agreed that death-dealing Fate  
Ourselves with Hector the infernal boat should freight,

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45 Le Fèvre, trans. Caxton, bk. III, fols xxxiii'-xxxv'. Behind this appears to lie Benoit’s Roman, where Diomedes, in the same circumstances, presents Troilus as taking Hector’s place (“N’est pas moins forz d’Ector son frere [He is no less strong than Hector his brother]”) and lacking in no knightly quality (l. 19911). The general idea was widespread; hence Cassandra, in Milet’s mystery play, laments the death of Troilus, “le thresor / De Troye, le second Hector” (fol. 120v).
And not wait for the swords of Greek malignity.
For since he has been killed, what better hope have we?

[Le preux Hector est mort, rien plus ne nous defend.
Faison donc d’un accord que la fatale Parque
Nous charge quand et lay dans l’infernale barque,
Sans attendre les fers des Grec injurieux;
Car puis qu’il est occis qu’esperon nous de mieux?]
(ll. 2280-84 [Act V]; p. 66)

And if Troilus at once, rebuked by Aeneas (“My lord, you do discomfort all the host” [Tro., V.xi.10]), ostentatiously rechannels despair into a fore-doomed “[h]ope of revenge” that “shall hide our inward woe” (31), he effectively traces the mental trajectory of the French playwright’s Andromache, who prays to the gods for vengeance, so she may quickly pass below and communicate the good news to her husband’s shade. (Here, too, the contrary fate of the “historical” Andromache is left ironically hanging in the dramatic air.46) The object of vengeance in both cases is, of course, Achilles—similarly apostrophised: “thou great-sized coward...” (Tro., V.xi.26); “O cowardly foe of the bravest man of war / Who ever the proud laurel on his forehead wore [O coüard ennemy du plus braue Guerrier, / Qui iamais sur la teste ait porté le Laurier]” (Montchrestien, ll. 2351-52 [Act V]; p. 67).

All in all, Troilus’ concluding speeches intertextually pre-empt the Messenger’s report and sequence of laments that conclude Hector. So much is virtually signalled by a praeteritio, which closely corresponds to the Messenger’s initial words (ll. 2065-76 [Act V]):

Hector is gone.
Who shall tell Priam so, or Hecuba?
Let him that will a screech-owl aye be called
Go into Troy, and say their Hector’s dead.
There is a word will Priam turn to stone,
Make wells and Niobes of the maids and wives,
Cold statues of the youth, and, in a word,
Scare Troy out of itself.
(Tro., V.xi.14-21)

In Hector, the Trojan population is indeed portrayed as transfixed with terror. Montchrestien’s Priam might as well, moreover, be turned to stone, speaking only two lines when the Messenger has told the worst: “The infinite suffering that lays my soul waste / So presses on my heart that words far off are chased [Le torment infini qui mon

46 Cf. the translation, ll. 322 ff. (Act I), and l. 324, n. 51.
ame désole / M’estraint si fort le cœur qu’il m’oste la parole” (ll. 2253-54 [Act V]; p. 65). Hecuba supplies the gap with thirty-three lines of eloquent despair, in keeping with that character’s traditional function. But it is Andromache whose nearly two hundred lines of lamentation comprehensively record twists and turns of feeling, conflicts and contradictions, a sense of what is inexorable and what might not be, in a way that delineates the tragic in profound, quasi-Shakespearean, terms. Such a response remains beyond the reach of a Troilus whose capacity to fathom the devastation of another, beginning with his beloved Cressida, is circumscribed within egocentric limits, and who rides roughshod over human complexities: “I with great truth catch mere simplicity” (Tro., IV.iv.103). For someone who knows both plays—by whatever means such knowledge might have been acquired in the first years of the seventeenth century—Montchrestien’s heroine hovers intertextually at the margins of Troilus’ praeteritio in a way that might prompt the reader/spectator to intervene with “come to Andromache”.

III

Enough has been said to confirm that, despite its highly rhetorical and “actionless” quality—and even setting aside the claims for performance—Hector, like Montchrestien’s other tragedies (and indeed French Humanist drama generally, as is now generally accepted), was written with representation in mind. The printed text is completely lacking in stage directions, however, as is the case with all Montchrestien’s tragedies in both the 1601 and 1604 collections, and indeed with many early dramatic publications. Moreover, the acts, which are normally (if irregularly) prefaced by a list of the participants in each, are not divided into scenes, so that points of entrance and exit are occasionally hard to identify. Besides these, which sometimes seem to call for editorial intervention, as the translation records, there are a few moments when issues of staging may benefit from commentary.

I have already mentioned Hector’s tender encounter with his infant son (ll. 281-301 [Act I]), who is not included among the “Speakers [Entreparleurs]” (trans., p. 5; Petit de Julleville, ed., p. 2). Apart from the obvious fact that he does not speak, this might also reflect the fact that he was represented, not by a person, but by a doll. That so much was part of theatrical convention is supported, for instance, by the representation of the title character’s infant son in Coriolan (c. 1607), by Alexandre Hardy.47 In that play, however, 

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47 See Alexandre Hardy, Coriolan, ed. with introd. by Fabien Cavaillé, English trans. with introd. by Richard Hillman, 2nd ed., online publication, Scène Européenne—Traductions Introuvables,
the baby is merely displayed passively on two occasions (V.iii, iv), whereas the active interplay in Montchrestien's scene, closely modelled on its Homeric original, might be seen as stretching the convention to the limit, requiring especially adroit responses from the actor and increased “suspension of disbelief” from the audience. It can be argued, I think, that Montchrestien takes the risk as part of a sustained and ironic evocation, across the presentation of Hector's arming, of the equivocal symbolism widely associated in the Renaissance with women's arming of heroes. The archetypal pattern is reproduced in numerous illustrations of Venus helping to arm Mars, sometimes with the assistance of their child Cupid, a figure suggested here by the infant, at once loving and fearful. We know from l. 585 (Act II) that it was Andromache’s custom to help Hector put on his armour. Her refusal on this occasion is thus thrown visibly into relief; so are his ostentatious disarming at his father’s command (ll. 836-37 [Act II]) and his hasty seizing of arms as described at ll. 1621-25 (Act IV). Montchrestien employs, then, the unusual onstage animation centred on an inanimate doll in active support of the play’s central thematic duality—the glories of heroism versus its costs—and reinforces a differentiation between masculine and feminine perspectives.

The differentiation, it should be stipulated, is not absolute or stable. That might imply a more subversive treatment of heroic glory than would be consistent with the play’s ideological premises, broadly endorsed by the Choruses—or, presumptively, those of its author. But female endorsement of those premises is conspicuously made contingent on circumstances. A striking instance comes in the highly ironic opening of Act V, as Priam and Hecuba, almost convinced that their son has escaped the threat hanging over him, engage in a joint paean to martial glory. Hecuba regrets that this ultimate masculine experience was not directly accessible to her but reports that she has experienced it vicariously, privileging it over what she presents as the ultimate feminine one:

... when I perceive him to his house coming back,  
Soaked with sweat mingled with dust from the battlefield,  
I feel more pleasure than the wedding rites would yield

Centre d’Études Supérieures de la Renaissance, Tours, 2018: <https://sceneeuropeenne.univ-tours.fr/traductions/coriolan> (accessed 12 September 2018), Cavaillé, ed., n. 134; translation, n. 56.


49 Here, as on other occasions in the play, the future weighs ironically, since an audience is bound to think of the grim fate of her daughter Polyxena, familiar from the Trojan tragedies of Euripides and Seneca.
Of my dearest daughter, were happy fate to grant 
Her marriage with a prince agreeable and valiant.

 [... quand je l’appercoy regagner sa maison 
  Trempé d’une sueur meslée à la poussiere, 
  Je sen plus de plaisir qu’à la pompe noptiere 
  De ma plus chere fille, à qui le sort heureux 
  Accoupleroit un Prince aimable et valeureux.]
(ll. 1956-60 [Act V]; p. 57)

The element of blood is missing, but even so one can hardly keep from wondering whether Shakespeare recalled these lines in having Volumnia in Coriolanus employ this comparison to justify her own delight in her son’s heroic exploits:

The breasts of Hecuba, 
When she did suckle Hector look’d not lovelier
Than Hector’s forehead when it spit forth blood
At Grecian sword, contemning. (Coriolanus, Lii.40-43)

Hecuba’s discursive mode shifts abruptly, of course, when the truth dawns concerning Hector’s fate.

That discovery, invested with great poignancy, is made through disclosure of the true reason for the uproar in the public streets, which they have wished to assimilate to Hector’s triumphant return, promising reunion with their heroic son: “Listen to that tumult of confusion in the street—/ It’s the applause with which his arrival they greet [Oyez le bruit confus qui tonne par la ruë:/ C’est l’applaudissement qu’on fait à sa venü]” (ll. 2041-42 [Act V]; p. 59). And prior to the Messenger’s appearance, it is, fittingly, through the prescient Andromache that the discovery is made. Her role as harbinger, previously on the level of the imaginary, now takes concrete form on stage, although she still, at first, both poses and faces the challenge of interpretation. It is by noting her physical reaction at a distance that Priam and Hecuba first begin to interpret correctly. When she enters, she replies to questions by affirming ignorance of the details but certainty of some disaster. And at the Messenger’s first announcement, she faints.

An internal stage-direction at this point (l. 2080) makes the action clear: she is carried offstage by the women of the Chorus (an easier feat to manage gracefully if they, too, were played by men). Yet it is not clear at what point she returns. Logic may not be the chief consideration, but she later shows herself fully conscious of Achilles’ treachery, and this may imply her silent presence on stage through a part of the Messenger’s narration. (I have tentatively made her re-enter at l. 2182, but this is nearly arbitrary.) In any case, she stays silent until Priam and Hecuba have both exhausted their capacities for lamentation, and it is only
when Hecuba remarks on that silence (ll. 2285-86) that she breaks it. The silence is thus revealed, partly through staging, as a register of all the delusive hopes and inexorable disillusions that have culminated in Act III. As these now gush forth in distracted form, they carry with them a multi-vocal mixture of successive attitudes, from the seductive attraction of a hero's glory to the brutal realisation of his loss, to thirst for revenge, and ultimately to the vanity of all human experience in the face, or the shadow, of death. The rhetorical force with which these “natural” attitudes are presented implicitly imparts a legitimacy to them as constituting a tragic experience not simply invalidated by the Stoic ideal.

IV

Finally, the problematic question of the play’s choruses (listed merely as “Chorus” among the “Speakers”, and sometimes omitted in the list at the beginning of an act) needs to be addressed. As in The Scottish Queen, Montchrestien uses choruses both to intervene in the dramatic situation and to provide the usual sort of philosophical and moral commentary—the latter at the end of each act and crafted in various verse forms. While in that play, however, it is fairly easy to distinguish three distinct choruses, and while one of them, consisting of the Queen of Scotland’s waiting-women, is unequivocally female (even if intended for male actors), the situation is not so clear-cut in Hector. Charpentier, although she has reservations about the size of troupe required to stage both a masculine and a feminine chorus (assuming that the former modulates into the mode of lyric commentary when called for), must nevertheless allow that a chorus of women is required in Act V to tend Andromache, since they refer to themselves as “sisters [sœurs]” (l. 2080 [Act V]; p. 61). Similarly decisive, surely, is Priam’s address to the chorus that has been trying to comfort and reassure Andromache in Act IV as a “chaste flock [chaste troupeau]” (l. 1597 [Act IV]; p. 47). Otherwise, there seems no reason to doubt that the Chorus which engages characters (including Cassandra) in dialogue is comprised of wise old counsellors, as might be expected. But there remains one point of uncertainty, which is especially revealing about Montchrestien’s adaptation of his material.

Nevertheless, Charpentier (p. 438) is perhaps overhasty in assuming that Hector’s reference to the “grave counsels old reverend men provide [graues conseils des vieillards reuerez]” (l. 1051 [Act III]; p. 33) refers to the chorus, which are not notable for urging restraint of the heroic impulse such as Hector complains of; more immediately evoked, I propose, is Antenor, who has just been presenting this point of view in conversation with him.
At the end of Act III, beginning at l. 1274, there is an unusual sequence involving shifts of choric mode at least, if nothing more. Left alone on stage, the Chorus that has been discussing events with the Messenger appears to modulate into a commentator-moraliser, delivering the commonplace lesson of mortal uncertainty in all things, except the fact of mortality itself. He then, however, announces the entrance of Helen, whom he identifies, in a neutral way, as the source of all their ills, then proposes, “Let us listen to these sighs: it brings some content / In one’s unhappiness to hear a sweet lament [Entendons ces soupirs: c’est un contentement / D’ôïr en son malheur lamerter doucement]” (ll. 1294-96 [Act III]; p. 39). Indeed, Helen then launches into ninety or so lines of sorrowful self-blame, culminating in a desire for death, whereupon the Chorus—or some Chorus—responds to her with consoling sympathy in three octosyllabic quatrains (ll. 1365-76). Finally, a choric commentator concludes the act with the typical reaffirmation of reputation and glory as the ultimate masculine virtues.

A strong case can be made, I believe, given the feminine choruses elsewhere, that the one consoling Helen is also made up of women, in which case it would presumably accompany her entrance and exit. Charpentier (p. 438, n. 27) is sceptical about this possibility on the grounds of the episode’s derivation from a celebrated Homeric episode (Iliad, III.139 ff.), in which a sadly reflective Helen is observed by old men, including Priam, although she delivers no lament as such. That episode is indeed doubly recalled in Montchrestien’s scene—first by the Chorus introducing her, which echoes Homer’s elders (III.156-57) in admitting that “Such beauty of an age’s wars might be the ground [On debatroit mille ans vne beauté pareille]” (l. 1294 [Act III]; p. 39), then by the second Chorus’s reassurance that she is blameless, which echoes Priam’s own words to Helen in the Iliad (III.164-65). Conspicuously absent is the old men’s comment in Homer that she should be given up to the Greeks for the sake of peace (III.159-60). (That is itself milder, moreover, than the wish of Montchrestien’s first-act Chorus as expressed to Cassandra: “Great gods, to dampen the ardour of our long fight, / Extinguish, in the lasting night of death, her light! [Grands Dieux, pour amortir l’ardeur de nos combats / Esteignez sa lumière en la nuit du trespass]” [ll. 145-46] (Act I); p. 7]).

Evidently, Montchrestien has rearranged his inherited material so as to set off Helen’s regrets and the consolation she receives, and it makes sense that the latter should be offered in a feminine voice, contrasting with a framework of masculine choruses. For this idea too, indeed, he may have taken his hint from Homer, who stipulates that when Helen walked out in her pensive sadness,

… wrapping herself about in shimmering garments,
she went forth from the chamber, letting fall a light tear;
not by herself, since two handmaidens went to attend her.

(Iliad, III.141-43)

After reflection, then, I have taken the risk of specifying a “Chorus of Women” in this case, as in the two unambiguous instances, while designating simply as “Chorus” the other choric figures, evidently masculine, who appear to shift between engagement in the dialogue and external commentary.

As a final note to the pathetic solitary appearance of Helen in Hector, which comes, appropriately enough, virtually at the centre of the tragedy and serves as a highly concentrated illustration of the human costs of heroism, it is worth adding that the contrast is striking with Shakespeare’s Helen in the single scene where that character figures—again virtually at the play’s centre (Tro., III.i). Far from alone or introspective, she is seamlessly integrated into bawdy dialogue with Pandarus and Paris, eager to keep “melancholy” (III.i.67) at bay with the song, “This love will undo us all” (104), and sighing, with mock complaint, “O Cupid, Cupid, Cupid!” (105). The scene ends with her gratefully accepting the honour, presented in sensuous terms by Paris, of disarming Hector (142-53)—a radical displacement of the motif invested with such tragic overtones by Montchrestien. Again, if one posits influence, as opposed to pure coincidence, it is inconceivable that the French playwright would have recast in high tragic terms such a radically contrary Shakespearean element. On the other hand, the latter might plausibly stand as a characteristic bitter-sweet parody of a precursor’s subtle dramatic development of the Homeric original. Thus the personage who, for Shakespeare’s idealising Troilus, as for Montchrestien, is “a theme of honour and renown” (Tro., II.ii.199), effectively becomes grist to the relentlessly reductive mill of Thersites: “All the argument is a whore and a cuckold” (II.iii.69-70). Shakespeare’s sequence of scenes, in a sense, resolves these alternatives by suddenly, in a unique appearance, presenting Helen “herself”, or, at least, as she has been constructed by her society and circumstances. And in the light of the intertexts, including—perhaps most immediately—Montchrestien’s adaptation of Homer, she appears, beneath her ostentatious frivolity and lightness of heart, inexorably haunted by melancholy.
Hector: Tragedy
by Antoine de Montchrestien

Translated, with Introduction and Notes,
by Richard Hillman
Référence électronique

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Translation

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HECTOR: TRAGEDY (c. 1601-1604)

By
Antoine de Montchrestien
Note on the Translation

The translation is based on the edition of Louis Petit de Julleville, which is still the only modern edition of the complete tragedies.¹

As with my previous translations of French Renaissance tragedy, I employ hexameter couplets, which, however less at home in English than iambic pentameter, provide a more faithful impression of the original Alexandrines. That is the form consistently used by Montchrestien, except in certain choruses, which present variations in line-length and rhyme-scheme. These I have attempted to reproduce. I give the name “Andromache” its common English pronunciation (four syllables, with primary stress on the second), although Montchrestien’s verse, while employing the same spelling, which approximates the Greek, anticipates the three-syllable pronunciation mandated by the later spelling “Andromaque” (as in the tragedy of Racine [1667]).

There are no stage directions in the early text, and I have occasionally supplied the lack where this seemed useful, at the risk of sometimes intervening arbitrarily. I have also attempted to distinguish the different choruses where appropriate.² All additions to the text of reference are in square brackets.

A single setting serves throughout the play (which also strictly respects the “unities” of time and action) of a flexible kind common in contemporary stagings. The dialogue all takes place within an outer chamber in the palace of Priam, from which entrances lead to other parts of the palace and from which, through a window or gallery, sections of the city may be seen by the characters (as is necessary when, in ll. 2045-48 [Act V], Andromache is described returning from her encounter with the distraught populace).³

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¹ Antoine de Montchrestien, Les tragédies, ed. Louis Petit de Julleville, new ed. (Paris: E. Plot, Norrit et Cie., 1891), from which page numbers are given for quotations in the original. The edition by Christopher Norman Smith of Two Tragedies: Hector and La Reine d’Escosse, by Antoine de Montchrestien, Athlone Renaissance Library (London: Athlone Press, 1972) is less readily available and presents no significant variants.
² See below, n. 5.
³ I have doubts concerning the opinion of Tiphaine Karsenti, Le mythe de Troie dans le théâtre français (1562-1715), Lumiére Classique (Paris: H. Champion, 2012), p. 325, n. 2, that the meeting of the Nurse and Andromache with Priam (ll. 579-82 [Act II]) requires a division into two distinct playing spaces. It is possible to envisage variant stagings here, and in general the imaginary division of a single space into multiple centres of action is an established convention. Cf. the possible placements and movements implied by l. 1561 and ll. 1578-80 (Act IV).
Speakers

1. Priam
2. Hector
3. Hecuba
4. Andromache
5. Cassandra
6. Antenor
7. Chorus
8. [Chorus of Women]¹
9. Messenger
10. [Nurse]
11. [Helen]
[Non-speaking: infant son of Hector and Andromache, several Trojan princes]

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⁴ Orig. “Entreparleurs” (p. 2). The reason for the order given is not clear, as noted by Françoise Charpentier, *Les débuts de la tragédie héroïque: Antoine de Montchrestien (1575-1621)* (Lille: Service de Reproduction des Thèses, Université de Lille III, 1981), p. 437, who also proposes that the two female parts omitted (the Nurse and Helen) were doubled by the actors (probably male) playing Hecuba and Cassandra—a hypothesis suggesting the text’s at least partially theatrical origins. “Speakers” would then be equivalent to “actors”. See also below, n. 106.

⁵ For a Chorus (or choruses) of Women in the context of the choric functions generally, see the Introduction, pp. 25-27.
Act I

[Cassandra, Chorus, Andromache, Hector, Nurse,
Infant son of Hector and Andromache] 6

CASSANDRA

What fatal undertow is sweeping you to sea,
Where many a boiling gulf gapes destructively?
O vessel, stay at anchor, see your lines are sure,
Which now to this tranquil shore tie you up secure.
So many treacherous straits traversed at great peril,
So many rocks avoided, using strength and skill,
By your wise ancestors, who with both head and hand
With difficulty could the first tempest withstand—
These should have been your lesson that your risky course
Is guided by these seas ruled by a fatal force.
With no lighthouse on land and a pole star that fails,
Do you really dare once again to set your sails?
Do you foresee at all what is bound to occur
If you embark in the depth of such a dread winter?
There no further Halcyon days for you remain,
And the sceptre of Aeolus’ decrees free rein
To those rebel spirits who, as they fiercely blow,
Cause to tremble and groan the elements below,
And even have the heavens in their fury sharing:
Where but to shipwreck is now destined your sea-faring?
I’m speaking all in vain: Trojans, you do not hear—
No more than the breeze where these speeches disappear.
No, I can urge without cease your coming distress:
You never will believe Cassandra, prophetess.

O senseless warriors, what sort of ardent furor,
Blinded to the harm it does, engenders this error?
What good are all your combats? O vain arrogance
To think you can surmount the supreme ordinance—
With a mere mortal arm, by mere human designs,

6 There is no list of characters in the original text.
7 Aeolus, keeper of the winds, retrained them for seven days in the year so that Alcyone, transformed into a seabird, could lay her eggs.
To think that you can breach the high decrees’ confines,
Since the god of gods who is father of us all,
To whom the earth, the sea and heaven are in thrall,
Takes the part of those strict laws of Fatality
He carved in adamant of his Eternity.

I sense that the Demon maddens me more and more:
Note well that voice he causes from my mouth to pour;
Lodge it within your hearts; it carries less deceit
Than you in Phoebus’ tripod oracles will meet.
You run all full of furor fresh quarrel to seek,
But your towers are topped by the treacherous Greek;
A sombre mist troubles the quiet of your day,
And your destiny turns its kindest face away.

The lion, overthrown upon a field soaked through
With tears and blood, and now by the timorous crew
Of hares assailed, as they assemble without fear,
Shows that with his failing life hope must disappear.
We must flee—I see the flames. Haughty Pergamum,
Swallowed by fire as it falls, to ruin is come,
And in thick swirls sweeping along, the heavy smoke
Clouds the gilded temples, triumphing at the joke.

But what direction can we give our rapid course
In trying to take cover from the foreign force,
If our trembling foot, though transported here and there,
Stumbles on death or captivity everywhere—

---

8 Orig. “Démon” (p. 4), that is, the spirit of prophecy that possesses her.
9 The reference is to the famous Oracle of Apollo at Delphi, who spoke from a tripod.
10 The second-person pronoun shifts here from the plural to the singular, as if she were now addressing Troy as such, rather than the Trojans. This may reflect her increasing oracular frenzy.
11 Orig.: “Mais ton Fort est vaincu par la fraude Gregoise” (p. 4). “Fort” seems to refer most immediately to the walled city, but also implied is the familiar contrast between Trojan strength and Greek guile. The translation attempts to convey a sense of distraction.
12 “Haughty Pergamum”: orig. “Les orgueilleux Pergames” (p. 4)—presumably, the citadel of Troy, imagined, as often, with multiple towers; it is clear from what follows that the structure is meant.
13 The obvious “joke” (“en se joüant” [p. 4]) would be destiny’s “last laugh” at Trojan arrogance. More specifically implied, perhaps, are the fouling of the rich decor and the inversion of the normal function of temples, that is, to send the smoke of sacrifices upward.
14 An audience might have recognised the ironic adumbration of Cassandra’s own fate: she will become the captive mistress of Agamemnon, then be murdered with him by Clytemnestra and Aegisthus; this is the subject of Aeschylus’ Agamemnon.
If a gulf gapes equally for the innocent
As for the causers of this criminal event
Consuming Priam, his house with him burning quite
In the flames that his fatal brand had set alight?
Would, as his father prayed, at his birth he had died!
But you, O iron Fate, did otherwise decide.

CHORUS
Mouth too truthful in predicting unhappiness,
You never open but to make us feel distress:
Yet, for the mortal race, it is a worthy thing
To be advised in time of heaven’s threatening,
So that what is foreseen may be provided for.
The blow that strikes one unprepared harms all the more,
But that which one expects has so little effect
That its true evil is less than the fearful prospect.

Cassandra
It is not for no reason I make you afraid.
If ever my oracle the truth so betrayed
As it seems to these Trojans who lack all belief,
Even now in these ills, I’d feel hopeful relief.
But what? Can I blind that inner sight by negation
Which espies in the future a sad conflagration?

CHORUS
O Cassandra divine, no such presage display!

Cassandra
What use pretending? Troy will be ashes one day,
And all its high palaces, tumbled to the ground,
Will be stony heaps where a little grass is found.

The reference is to Priam’s son Paris, whose mother Hecuba dreamt she would be delivered of a firebrand that would cause the city’s destruction. He was exposed at birth but rescued and nurtured by a shepherd. Eventually, his ravishing of Helen triggered the Trojan war. See William Smith, The Smaller Classical Dictionary, rev. E. H. Blakeney and John Warrington (New York: Dutton, 1958), s.v. “Paris”.

“[I]ron Fate”: orig. “Destin de fer” (p. 4). I reserve capitals in such abstractions for clear cases of personification.

Ll. 62-68 are marked for emphasis.
You do not believe me; that’s your old custom still—
And of that god who animates my mind, the will;\(^\text{18}\)
All you’ll gain in the end—here my sorrow is great—
Is that it will be said of you, “Wise\(^\text{19}\) but too late”.

**CHORUS**

So many good citizens hope for the contrary.

**CASSANDRA**

The best judgement is blind to its own misery.

**CHORUS**

They say that the Greeks are meeting with small success.

**CASSANDRA**

If I spoke of human things, I would say no less.

**CHORUS**

And that they are intending to embark their army.

**CASSANDRA**

Can you still ignore their accustomed trickery?\(^\text{20}\)

**CHORUS**

That if we just hold out this is their final effort.

**CASSANDRA**

Often the final blow is the most deadly sort.\(^\text{21}\)

**CHORUS**

That to the winds we’ll send their fortune and their sails.

---

\(^{18}\) “[A]nimates my mind”: orig. “m’allume” (p. 5). Responsible for both the prophetic gift and the disbelief was Apollo, supposed to have punished her thus because she refused him.

\(^{19}\) “Wise”: orig. “Sages” (p. 5). The plural form matches most immediately the collective nature of the Chorus, more largely the Trojans generally.

\(^{20}\) Obviously evoked is the climactic sleight of the Trojan horse, but more subtly foreshadowed is Achilles’ treacherous killing of Hector.

\(^{21}\) The line is marked for emphasis.
CASSANDRA
So to dupe the common people one forges tales.\textsuperscript{11}
That hope within our hearts has long since been sustained,
And yet their siege is still as stubbornly maintained.

CHORUS
What have we to fear, protected by Hector’s arm?

CASSANDRA
His death at last, while exposing himself to harm.\textsuperscript{15}

CHORUS
None of the Argive leaders in valour can match him.

CASSANDRA
I fear only that his own misfortune may catch him.

CHORUS
He is cherished by the gods and by men respected.

CASSANDRA
But like the rest of us, he is to Fate subjected.

CHORUS
God, who gave him to us, can cause his preservation.

CASSANDRA
God, who gave him to us, could cause our deprivation.

CHORUS
For the public welfare, he keeps in place good princes.\textsuperscript{14}

CASSANDRA
Some he removes himself from hated provinces.

\textsuperscript{11} Another single line marked for emphasis.
\textsuperscript{15} This line is marked for emphasis.
\textsuperscript{14} Ll. 103 and 104 are marked for emphasis.
CHORUS
Our destinies, when justly weighed in heaven’s scale,
Against those of the Greeks sufficiently avail.

CASSANDRA
The monarch whose hand holds that scale up in the sky,45
Just as it pleases him, hurtles them low or high.

CHORUS
He makes himself the saviour of peoples oppressed:
By the good that follows his favour is expressed.

CASSANDRA
Those most favoured he comes finally to despise,
When they lend their hands to an unjust enterprise.

CHORUS
To arm for one’s country and the gods’ sacredness
Is an action that both God and all mortals bless.

CASSANDRA
Oh, too gross error: in thinking one does no ill,
One gives the enemy equal reason to kill.16

CHORUS
The outraged Trojans still have vivid memories
Of how they were sacked by the tyrant Hercules.27

25 Ll. 107-16 are marked for emphasis.
26 Orig. of ll 115-16: “O trop grosse erreur si l’on ne croit mal faire, / Par en donner subiet à son propre aduersaire” (p. 6). The expression is elliptical, but the gist seems to be that anyone can claim to be on the side of right—a fairly unusual perspective in the period.
27 This occurred twice, initially after the hero rescued Hesione from a monster and obtained from her father Laomedon the promise of horses received from Zeus; Laomedon’s failure to keep his promise provoked Hercules’ war against Troy. See Smith, s.v. “Heracles” (p. 145). Versions of this became a standard part of the medieval Troy stories. See, e.g., Guido de Colomnis [Guido delle Colonne], Historia destructionis Troiae, ed. Nathaniel Edward Griffin, Mediaeval Academy of America Publication 26 (Cambridge, MA: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1936); online at <https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.medievalacademy.org/resource/resmgr/maa_books_online/griffin_0026.htm> (accessed 6 September 2018), bk. IV (print ed. pp. 33-42). See also Raoul Le Fèvre, Recueil des histoires de Troye (c. 1474), trans. and first pub. William Caxton, The recuile of the histories of Troie, etc. (London: William Copland, 1555; STC 15578), bks. I and II.
Cassandra

Ilium was razed, a great and shameful offence:
But an evil was done, and war the consequence.

Chorus

And why this war? Surely, there was great need compelling
An errant thief\(^a\) to snatch her from her distant dwelling!

Cassandra

The fault is wholly ours, so we must bear the blame.

Chorus

Now the Greeks are at fault, armed in a women’s name.

Cassandra

Instead, your fellow-citizen should be accused.

Chorus

By what the Greek endures, the Trojan’s been abused:
What is a fault for us, for him is privilege.\(^b\)

Cassandra

He never committed rapine or sacrilege.

Chorus

Let one woman count like the other: that is reason.

Cassandra

One was taken in war, but the other by treason.

\(\text{\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{28}}\text{An errant thief\(\): orig. “vn voleur vagabond” (p. 6)—again, a less than complimentary reference to Paris. The Chorus’s expression here is mordantly ironic.}}\)

\(\text{\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{29}}\text{Doubtless a reference to the legend that the Greeks were dishonest first in detaining Exione (Hesione), sister of Priam. This element figures throughout the sources: see Guido, bk. IV (p. 42) and bk. V (pp. 50 ff.); Le Fèvre, trans. Caxton, bk. III, fol. vi\(^a\); and Jacques Milet, \textit{La destruction de Troye la grande, etc.} (Lyons: Denys de Harsy, 1544), fol. 4\(^e\) (La Première Journée).}}\)
Chorus
One came of free will; the other left by constraint.

Cassandra
One case did sacred hospitality attain.

Chorus
The other affronted all righteous honesty.

Cassandra
Victory brings with it such ranging liberty.

Chorus
Among the spoils of war, women do not belong.

Cassandra
Yes, great ladies do—only not the common throng.

Chorus
Whose behaviour but the Greeks’ manifests such flaws?

Cassandra
No people can be found that lives wholly by laws.\(^{10}\)

Chorus
We should even less, for against an adversary,
All defences are just when they are necessary.

Cassandra
In a quarrel, he is always more highly prized
Who seeks out his revenge through valour exercised.\(^{11}\)

Chorus
So they do pretend. But if, for this Helen’s sake,
Upon us still more painful hardship we must take,

\(^{30}\) Ll. 138–42 are marked for emphasis.
\(^{31}\) It is difficult not to think here of Montchrestien’s seeming personal penchant for affairs of "honour".
Great gods, to dampen the ardour of our long fight,
Extinguish, in the lasting night of death, her light!
But is this not Hector? He himself, without fail,
Followed by Andromache, dishevelled and pale.

**Andromache**

Oh please, dear husband, will you do nothing for me?
Will your death, then, recompense my fidelity?

**Hector**

Honour once safe, Andromache, I grant you all,
For I consider that no person is your equal.
But just for a vain dream one’s duty to neglect—
Such an extreme request, dear heart, I must reject.

**Andromache**

Ah, my own faithful Hector, my dear life, my all,
Go freely, for my part, where you hear honour call,
But since to go forth today you are not compelled,
Let this mortal anguish from my mind be dispelled.
This dream is not vain at all, as you must agree
If past ones of mine you recall to memory,
Some of them, alas, confirmed at our dear expense:
Not otherwise do men God’s voice experience.\(^\text{14}\)

**Hector**

If we found a motive for doing well or ill
In these impressions that would trouble common people,
All the high designs of a spirit without defect
Would perish at their birth or live to no effect.
No, the hardy man who will as his guide prefer
That duty which serves us as bridle and as spur,
Will always follow its course and, ever the same,
Will seek to compass what he first set as his aim,
While nothing that follows, with accidents combined,
Will be able to make him change a doubtful mind.

---

\(^{14}\) Ll. 162-84 are marked for emphasis.
Andromache

173 Because our reasoning is liable to error,
174 It constitutes impiety, conjoined with furor,
175 Which moves the gods to turn on us their fiercest ire,
176 If in contempt we hold them, counting ourselves higher—
177 We blind mortals, whose mind has such limited scope
178 That even with human cases it cannot cope.

Hector

179 That which we experience by natural cause
180 We should not lend the stature of eternal laws,
181 And it is true furor, not just impiety,
182 To impute to the gods our mere frivolity,
183 Which holds the soul fast, in the grip of fear and pain,
184 For monstrous forgeries of a fantastic brain.

Andromache

185 Whatever the case, you will soon see pass one day.

Hector

186 Occasion is all; once the moment slips away,
187 No longer her encouraging laughter do we find:
188 One must seize her forelock, for she is bald behind.

Andromache

189 Nearly twice five years have circled above our head
190 Since that great host has its obstinate strength exerted
191 In combatting our fortune, and the confluence
192 Of all proud Asia’s forces come to its defence
193 Has not managed from these towers to push it back.

Hector

194 When I hear of that slowness, all patience I lack.
195 Before night I want, with that army at my feet,
196 To see going up in smoke its hope and its fleet.

33 Ll. 186-88 are marked for emphasis.
34 The iconography and moral are widespread, notably in early modern emblem books.
Andromache
O heaven! Gods in your eternal dwelling-place!
What ten years could not do can be in one day’s space?

Hector
What ten years could not do, a single moment may.

Andromache
And what if that moment runs the enemy’s way?
For that is up to heaven; and then, doubtful chance,
Courted by each side, cannot wed both supplicants;
But right until the very end one cannot know
To whom the favour of happy fortune will go.

Hector
I agree with that reasoning, endorse it quite.
Thus I must either vanquish or die in the fight,
Fully content if I to my dear homeland bring,
To gain its safety, my life as an offering.

Andromache
But since it is your life that keeps alive its grandeur,
Make sure your death does not eradicate its splendour.

Hector
It’s given me so much, I can’t render its due.

Andromache
The welfare of all here seems to depend on you.

Hector
As if thanks just to me the Trojans hold out now.

Andromache
And what would they do without you? Without you how
Would they defend these walls from those Greeks merciless?

35 Ll. 201-4 are marked for emphasis.
With no shepherd what use the feeble shepherdess?
The driver-less wagon, the ship no pilot steers?

**Hector**

Many another leader could comfort their fears.
For thanks to our gods, this city impregnable
Bears a rich harvest of warriors redoubtable.

**Andromache**

You show above them all—you are their paragon.

**Hector**

Love makes you think so: no one has so brightly shone\(^{16}\)
That he has no equal, or none that him exceeds.

**Andromache**

I base it on your far-and-wide admired deeds,
Which your brothers, your father and those fighters praise
Whom merit amongst our loftiest ranks arrays.

**Hector**

Is not Aeneas there? And Troilus? Deiphobus?
Polidamas? Menon,\(^{37}\) whose souls and bodies grace us?
Not to mention thousands more, allies and relations,
Who for the prize of honour would take up their stations?

**Andromache**

You also forget that our adversaries’ host
Great chiefs in number, skilled in doing well, can boast,
Such that their actions beyond their high names have gone:

---

\(^{36}\) Ll. 222-23 are marked for emphasis.

\(^{37}\) Polidamas (thus in most analogues; orig. “Polidame” [p. 10], properly “Poulydamas”): in Homer a voice of prudence, sometimes in conflict with Hector (see *The Iliad of Homer*, trans. Richmond Lattimore [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Phoenix Books, 1951], XII.210-29), figuring also in the tradition from Guido to Le Fèvre and Milet. “Menon” (orig. “Memnon” [p. 10]): a Trojan by this name figures passingly in *Iliad*, XII.93; his role is developed in Le Fèvre, where, as below (ll. 2106), he intervenes after Achilles’ killing of Hector (Le Fèvre, trans. Caxton, bk. III, fol. xxxv); in Guido (bk. XXI, p. 175), he deals a fatal wound to Achilles; Milet (fol. 113v) has him killed by Achilles’ Myrmidons in the same disloyal fashion as Troilus. See also below, ll. 2244-46 (Act V).
Brave Diomedes, Ajax, son of Telamon
(Ajax, crafty forger of frauds and subtle lies);
Then old Nestor of Pylos, admirably wise,
The just Idomeneus and strong Meriones,
Courageous instigator of hostilities;¹⁸
The king of many kings, who makes the plans for battles,
Presides among the Argives over their war-councils;¹⁹
At last, he whom pride of place I should have allowed:
That great son of Peleus, as valiant as proud.⁴⁰
For ever since Patroclus fell beneath your sword,
With no endeavour can his grieving soul accord
But to revenge his death, whose bitter memory
Causes Patroclus’ shade to haunt him visibly,
Which, in plaintive accents, urges him to the fight,
Both by the dear respect his own worth should excite
And by the sacred love, like adamantine chain,
That seemed their destinies together to maintain.

Hector

Now you¹⁴ bring it fresh to mind—My arms! My arms, here!¹⁴¹
No, I see him amidst his armed troop disappear,
Where, without glory and distinction he’ll lie low;
Soiled with shame, may his name forever that stain show
For not appearing at the place I designated
By my bloody challenge, which fixed the moment fate

---

³⁸ Orig.: “Le courageux autheur des combats d’Ilion” (p. 10). This implies a more significant role in the larger scheme than is warranted by Homer, although Meriones, in association with Idonomeus, displays notable initiative in one battle-scene (Il. XIII.1.46-338). It may be pertinent that in Guido, bk. XV (p. 134), Meriones prevents Hector from taking the body of the slain Patroclus.
³⁹ I.e., Agamemnon.
⁴⁰ The culminating presentation of Achilles, and the emphasis on his valour and pride, are ironic, given the sequel.
⁴¹ The first tutoiement on his part, presumably a mark of excitement. Andromache uses “tu” to him only in pleading with him to think of their son (ll. 273 ff.). It is ironic that her mention of Achilles inadvertently rouses Hector to action.
⁴² I have not presumed to impose a staging here by adding directions, but I take it that he gives an order to an on- or offstage servant or servants, at least the “page” of l. 287, who appear with armour over the following lines; the lance of l. 260 might be one of the items carried on (presumably more than one servant would be needed for all), or Hector might find it missing and call for it.
To grant to the better man, to both camps made known,
The palm contested by his valour and my own.
Yes, now I hear my horse neighing, thirsting for combat—
That’s a good sign. Oh, my lance!—I’ll down him with that!

**Andromache**

These whirling motions, my Hector, must be withstood.
Warriors may well be too brave for their own good.\(^{44}\)
Didn’t you once say that if a man is not wise,
His very courage will be the cause of his demise?
That to seek out the foe and misfortune produce
Is to put the best valour to very poor use?
Be wise, then, in yourself and for yourself at once:
He who is so for others is a kind of dunce.

**Hector**
The question has been decided—lace up the harness.\(^{44}\)
This time that presumptuous Greek’s flesh will bear witness,
If he stays to meet me and the shock of my lance,
That I have more manhood\(^{45}\) than he has arrogance.

[Enter the Nurse with Hector’s infant son.]\(^{46}\)

**Andromache**

Hector, here’s your son. Ah, where are you going to
Before you have put him upon the path of virtue?
Reject all my prayers, your way to destruction take,
So that him, by your death, an orphan you may make
And I may in your tomb without delay arrive.

---

\(^{43}\) Ll. 262-68 are marked for emphasis.

\(^{44}\) Orig.: “lacez moy le harnois” (p. 11). This is surely addressed to the servant who has been arming him, no doubt the “page” of l. 287, not to Andromache, who has refused. Cf. l. 585 below. On the symbolism, see the Introduction, p. 23.

\(^{45}\) “[M]anhood”: orig. “vertu” (p. 11). The word (from Lat. “vir”, “virtus”) carried two distinct (if imbricated) meanings: “manly strength”, clearly intended here, and “moral strength”. When Andromache uses it in l. 274 (“virtue”/“virtu” [p. 11]), she is effectively broadening the meaning.

\(^{46}\) See below, ll. 285-86.
Could I see myself a widow and stay alive?
No, no, I have so joined my spirit with your soul
That the same fatal blow needs must sever the whole.

HECTOR [taking the child]

Come here, dear little child, sweetest burden to hold,
My rough armoured neck with your tender arms enfold.
What, you’re afraid, my son? You turn your face aside?
He fears this fierce helmet, which serves my head to hide.

See, see how with his tiny hand he clings so tight
To his nurse’s arm, presses to her breast in fright.
Here, page, hold my headgear—I must give him a kiss.
Now that he knows me, how he fidgets, filled with bliss!

Grant me, great gods, that this offspring of royalty
May become just in peace, in war gain victory;
That he may ever seek to win glory eternal,
Pardoning the subject, overcoming the rebel;
Make him the governor of Troy’s nobility,
And to his people a star of prosperity.
Grant to his virtue fortune that so greatly swells
They’ll say with a boast the son the father excels.
When one day, if it happens, his conquering arm
A foe’s spoils consecrates as tokens of their harm,
His mother to console and fill with happiness,
Gods I have so reverenced, cause her to be the witness.
Nurse, take back your charge now; and you, my precious care,

Come, sweet Andromache, yourself such sorrow spare.

---

47 This sequence involving Hector’s infant son is closely modelled on Iliad, VI.466-81. The child’s fear of the helmet seems to have posed a minor problem for Montchrestien, since in Homer it is explicitly the waving horse-hair crest that frightens the child, as would not be in keeping with the early modern armour evoked in l. 287 (see below, n. 48) and obviously envisaged for performance. Montchrestien’s solution is to make the helmet more generally fierce-looking (“fier”), and the translation follows suit.

48 “[H]eadgear”: orig. “salade” (p. 11), a helmet (15th-16th cent.) that included a neck-covering, thus probably accounting also for l. 282, “rough-armoured neck [col armé]”. See Le trésor de la langue française informatisée, s.v. “salade” (online at <http://atilf.atilf.fr/> [accessed 29 August 2018]).

49 At this tender moment he begins again to tutoyer Andromache.
Whether I’m at Troy or fighting strenuously,
The thought of my son and you accompanies me,
To lead me from the dense blows the enemy aims,
And softens me with a father’s and husband’s names.
But I fear shame, which must always reproach attract;
I fear to be by a false people’s darts attacked—
Fickle, presumptuous, without respect or law,
Which, deploying its tongue to fabricate a flaw,
Into base cowardice would turn my careful prudence:
Soon lost is glory gained at great labour’s expense.
Then, my heart, seen always as dauntless when I fought,
Declines to forfeit the stature my arm has brought,
My sweat and travail, as I forged for it a trophy
No length of time will see expunged from memory.

The day will come at last—to my grief, I am sure—
That will see the conniving Greeks our city capture,
And cousins and brothers, good old Priam my sire,
Will fall before the furor of the Argive ire,
And deeply their poor sufferings my feelings touch.
But I swear by heaven, I do not feel as much
For them all as for you, Andromache, my dear:
My mind’s eye can see some youthful braggart appear,
Haughtily leading you, as his share of the booty,
To his father’s lodging, where it will be your duty
To work the loom for weaving cloth, his wool to spin,
Bright-sparkling water from his fountain to bring in,
To sweep the place, while bearing with their signs of
corn—
Mean occupations for a woman so well born;
Perhaps some passer-by, touched to the inmost life,
Will say: of valiant Hector she was the wife.
Then what rancour will flow in your heart full of care,
Hearing my name so glorious remembered there,
While yourself stripped of rank and possessions remained,
Forever in that dismal servitude retained.

\[51\] In Euripides’ *Andromache*, she has become the slave and concubine of Neoptolemos.
337  If so the fates decree, surely I would prefer,
338  So as not to see you, that death my eyes should cover
339  With an eternal blindfold, that the grave should keep me
340  From hearing the sighs of your soul’s captivity.

**Andromache**

341  Well, then, my dear Hector, hold out your hand to me.
342  Only on our couple does your heart show no pity:
343  Alas, your valour destroys us! Its heritage is a hard death met in the flower of your age.
344  Say, what will you do? Would not marble pitiless
345  Soften at all, my loving sentiments to witness?
346  Think at least, I beg you, of that death full of pain
347  Which you yourself will make your wretched wife sustain,
348  If she becomes your widow by a hostile sword,
349  And your ardour with my faith will perhaps accord.
350  Alas, it is against your head their arms conspire;
351  It is your noble blood their deadly points desire;
352  This aim seems even vulgar darts to animate,
353  And you’ll run blindly into dangers that await!
354  No, before fate makes me abandon your embrace
355  Let the earth swallow me; myself for all I brace:
356  For so much pain would it cause me the sun to spy,
357  If it saw me but not the brilliance of your eye.
358  If I remain behind—oh, wretched woman!—sole,
359  Who will be able my heart’s anguish to console?
360  Go to my relations? Alas, they are all dead:
361  At long last Peleus’ barbarous son succeeded
362  In razing my fair Thebes, teeming with families,
363  Whose top rose up over the loftiest of cities—
364  A pine to a briar; his hands in that dear flood
365  He bathed of my father’s and seven brothers’ blood.

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53 “[A]bandon your embrace”: orig. “de ton col me separe [separate me from your neck]” (p. 13). She seems likely to be embracing him here.
54 “[B]rothers”: orig. “germaines” (p. 13), seemingly based on the 1545 translation by Hugues Salel, “freres germains”. The Greek word (“κασίγνητος”) can mean “cousin” as well as “brother”, but that sense is not indicated for this occurrence (*Iliad*, VI.421), and I follow standard modern translation practice; see Georg Autenrieth, *A Homeric Dictionary*, trans. Robert P. Keep, rev. Isaac Glagg (Nor-
My mother he confined, with cruelty not sated,
Her miseries with austere treatment aggravated
Unworthy of her sex and of her lofty station.
There her growing troubles by no means found cessation:
Fortune when contrary is never solitary:"
For Diana, become her vengeful adversary,
After so many torments deprived us of her,
And only to satisfy her rancorous anger.
So that is why without relations I remain—
Without father, mother, brother, assailed with pain
At every moment for their deaths. O my dear spouse,
In future, take their places: you are my all house.
Remain, my sweet soul; cease resisting, my life’s light;
Give more weight to my love than to your thirst for fight.
I ask very little; you wouldn’t have the heart
To crush my wishes with your rigour and depart.

Hector
Hope for my triumph, O my dear and sweet companion,
And take off this mourning, not fitting to put on.
If I die in the midst of combat, bear the blow:
We are all destined to perish, as you well know.
Surely of no immortal seed was I engendered;
And if the sons of gods that vessel have encumbered
With which the vile ferryman the Acheron plies,"
If we others come to die, why should that surprise?
It is the self-same law that dictates death and birth;"
Since fleeing to the right or left is of no worth,
Far better to advance while marching straight ahead,
Seek what one should, though wanting something else instead;
Just so reigns destiny, invincible and firm:
It does not shorten, nor does it prolong our term.

55 The line is marked for emphasis.
56 Charon, who ferried souls across the Acheron, or Styx, was supposed to be physically repulsive as well as foul-tempered.
57 Ll. 391-96 are marked for emphasis.
Embrace me. The future is heaven's to produce.
I tell you again, this weeping is of no use.
To beguile your distress, your household tasks resume:
Summon up your spirits to ply distaff and loom.
For those of us Troy summons to serve otherwise,
We will lend our swords—and our lives, if need arise.
Adieu, my sweet love. Ardour is kindling within me,
A courage that boils up more than usually:
Mars's vehement ardour. Those brave deeds we do
Of noble and vigorous transports are the issue,
Which are awakened in the soul when it is spurred
By high desires for honour, raised up and stirred,
As a fire arranged around a cauldron urges
Water within to flow upward in boiling surges.
The man who these daring impulsions does not know
Always has his hands in striking sluggish and slow,
As when a ship across a dead-calm sea is going,
Served little by the strength, less by the art of rowing.
But if the sudden stroke of courage his spirit shakes,
Across a thousand deaths a bold passage he makes,
And for that his strong arms can such distinction boast
He enters the ranks of heroes among the foremost.

Chorus
Let the expert mariner pronounce on the storm-cloud,
The ploughman on what soil is fitting to be ploughed,
The shepherd upon flocks, and upon dogs the hunter,
The merchant upon trade, on value the usurer:
But the bold discourses which deal with bravery
Are suitable for spirits whose sage certainty
Unites what is discussed with that which is effected:
For it is by action that manhood is perfected.

58 Ll. 403-17 are marked for emphasis (with l. 418, it seems, omitted inadvertently).
59 All the lines of the following double chorus are marked for emphasis.
Giving her gifts to all,\(^{61}\)
Nature employs no even hand,
Denies it should befall
Her favours equally should stand
In men who greatly differ
In rank just as in manner.

One has a heart that trembles
When dangers in his sight appear;
A woman he resembles
Whom everything torments with fear.
Another, never afraid,
Is always calm and staid.

The anger of the sea,
Having a tempest bred,
May threaten soon to bury
In the watery depths his head;
Still his forehead will fail
To become deathly pale.

The collapse he will outface
Of the world’s roof upon his head,
Before he will displace
The foot on which his stance is founded:
It’s steady as a rock
Not to be moved by shock.

Pikes and darts in their swarms
His boldness will never efface;
To Mars’s fiercest storms
He proudly will hold up his face;
Should he be overcome,
His heart will not succumb.

\(^{61}\) The original text provides a second heading of “Chœvr” (p. 14), typographically more prominent, for the lyrical, as opposed to sententious, passage running from this point to the end of the act. Presuming that the same chorus is involved, this would seem to mark a shift in mode from chorus-as-participant to chorus-as-commentator, although the contrast here is more in form than in content.
His knee always steadfast
In the breach will not buckle under,
If knocked down by the blast
When a lighted fuse sets off thunder.\(^{61}\)
Sooner than rank to lose
Loss of all blood he’ll choose.

The good he will instate
As what he most dearly desires;
His soul in constant state
Whatever change life requires.
At work or in repose,
The same heart’s ease he knows.

Happy or not his part,
His lifetime will be free of anguish,
And his vigorous heart
Will not ever have cause to languish;
For a good or a bad thing
To him will be less than nothing.

That mutability
Which rules all things beneath the moon\(^{61}\)
He’ll meet with cold sagacity
Mocking the might of adverse Fortune,
Those darts of hers deflected\(^{64}\)
That were at him directed.

Should one seek to defile him,
Mingling him with the multitude,
Or far off to exile him
In some bare desert’s solitude,
To him in every place
The same is the sun’s face.

Seeing himself created
A simple soldier or a captain,
His duty estimated
By virtue’s rule (the only certain),
All things he will effect
Cannot be less than perfect.

He whom heavenly dictate
Has furnished with such quality
As darling of the gods must rate;
He can be dealt no injury,
Since stronger far is he
Than man or Fate can be.
Act II

Andromache, Nurse, Priam, Hector, [Chorus]

[Enter Andromache and Nurse.]

**ANDROMACHE**

499 Although my soul is trying itself to distract
500 From thinking of its woe, the thought remains intact;
501 Amid this misery, all efforts still are vain:
502 All within me weakens except only my pain.
503 Wherever I may turn, I can take no delight;
504 Then, if anywhere I remain, my mind takes flight
505 And, spinning fantasies, does nothing but collect
506 Disturbing presages that I cannot neglect.
507 If only you could see how many cruel cares
508 Your Andromache hidden in her bosom bears,
509 Your spirit, Hector, would less obstinacy show!

**NURSE**

510 But let him go out if he has determined so.

**ANDROMACHE**

511 If he goes out, it's the end of him, Nurse—he'll die.

**NURSE**

512 What vain fear has managed your soul to occupy?
513 After combats galore, is it a novelty
514 To see Hector trading blows? One who goes to sea
515 Need not drown; to put oneself in the way of harms,
516 Judging the risks wisely, wins one respect in arms:
517 There if some coward by running escapes today,
518 Tomorrow unawares he'll be caught in the fray.
519 You do him great wrong to question his manly virtue.

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65 Ll. 514-18 are marked for emphasis.
66 Orig.: "Demain sans y penser l'escart tombe sus luy" (p. 17), "l'escart" referring, it seems, to his previous cowardly withdrawal.
Andromache

520 Ah, that's just what will make my sad presage come true!

Nurse

521 Who has ever seen in you such fears multiplying?

Andromache

522 Oh, my evil fortune approaches, Nurse—I'm dying!

Nurse

523 Madam, what seizes you? Tell me, by heaven's grace,
524 Where this strange sorrow comes from that darkens your face?

Andromache

525 Alas, it's a dream portending horror and grief.

Nurse

526 A dream is mere wind—you need lend it no belief.

Andromache

527 Now that my eyes again with that dread vision fill,
528 I feel my spirits freezing with an icy chill;
529 My whole body commences slowly to perspire,
530 And my slackened nerves languish, threaten to expire.
531 Lend your hand quickly, Nurse, or I'll be on the ground.

Nurse

532 Never does fear master a body that is sound. 67
533 The anguish that carries you along like a torrent
534 Has a hidden source, though an effect too apparent.
535 But tell me—let me know of that distress the cause
536 Which is crushing your desolate heart in its claws;
537 Speak out boldly, Madam, with urgency I pray:
538 No dream of any kind can frighten in this way.

67 A line marked for emphasis.
Andromache

Moreover, it is not alone: other ill portents
Tell us loudly and clearly of dire events.

Nurse

It is a grave error to trust implicitly in one who can for us, but not himself, foresee.

Andromache

It is the most flagrant madness to close one’s ears,
When heaven speaking through the marvellous one hears.

Nurse

Tell me your troubles—they’ll be easier to bear:
Sorrow becomes lighter when exposed to the air.

Andromache

The sun had no sooner given light to the day
Than I rose up from my bed and, turning his way,
Told him my dream and begged him in humility
To keep far off all sad eventuality.

Nurse

That was well done. When heaven shows a frowning face,
Let us have timely recourse to its divine grace,
To obtain by our prayers some assurance of rescue
From the imminent evil that to us is due.

Andromache

Phoebus grew dark then, shedding light upon my sorrow,
And, shining uncertainly on my certain woe,
Showed himself sometimes red and again sometimes pale,
The same as my dream, with regret announcing bale.
But let’s cease to talk more of the frightening portent
Which forms within my grieving heart such fearful torment,
And run to Priam as a last resort to see
If Hector can be stopped by his authority.
Prayers can do much; but only to one who takes action\textsuperscript{71}
Does the power of good supreme grant satisfaction.

Nurse
I approve your judgement. If Priam once forbade,
Even if he were then in armour fully clad,
There is no doubt that he would readily comply:
Never does an upright man his father defy.\textsuperscript{72}

Andromache
Let’s go and supplicate him—quick now, not so slow!
He might be already where he may take a blow.

Nurse
Cease to be afraid, for here and there I’ve caught sight
Of warriors of ours arming for the fight,
And the hollow trumpet with its boisterous call
Has not sounded the third order to cross the wall.

Andromache
No more delay! In a matter of urgent need,\textsuperscript{73}
If one acts too late, the business is dead indeed.
And then, if he has plunged into the combat’s heat,
I’ll never believe he’ll be induced to retreat.

[As they go, they meet with Priam, accompanied.]

Nurse
Here’s Priam, two of your brothers,\textsuperscript{74} in timely fashion.

\textsuperscript{71} Ll. 563-64 are marked for emphasis.
\textsuperscript{72} This line is marked for emphasis.
\textsuperscript{73} Ll. 575-76 are marked for emphasis. “In a matter ... dead indeed”: orig. “La chose necessaire / Trop tard executée est la mort d’vn affaire” (p. 19). The figurative use of “mort” carries particular weight in the context.
\textsuperscript{74} Unidentified, non-speaking.
Andromache

580 Good tutelary gods, I invoke your compassion!

Priam

581 Andromache, daughter, I’m surprised to see you.

Andromache

582 I wanted to come see you, and my brothers, too.

Priam

583 Just as for everything else, I praise you for that.
584 But since your Hector is getting ready for combat,
585 Why don’t you help arm him as you did formerly?

Andromache

586 The moment that the sun rose up out of the sea,
587 He cried out three times, his armour at once desired.

Priam

588 Just such diligence of warriors is required.

Andromache

589 Never did I see his heart so burn for the fight.

Priam

590 That’s where the noble prince places his whole delight.

Andromache

591 But such eagerness I have good cause to suspect.

Priam

592 Andromache, a leader who covets respect,\textsuperscript{75}
593 In action everywhere, all chances prompt to meet,
594 Does not sleep through the night, and must die on his feet.

\textsuperscript{75} Ll. 592–94 are marked for emphasis.
Andromache

595 What unhappy words! How you my spirit appal,
596 Consenting to my loss, and to his funeral.

Priam

597 What's the cause, I pray you, of her outburst of sorrow?
598 What's the source of those tears which her eyes overflow?

Andromache

599 Henceforth may you despise, O proud Hector, despise
600 A vision that the heavens grimly authorise!

Priam

601 I cannot judge, but I see in her countenance
602 Her heart is affected by grievous sufferance.

Andromache

603 Neglect, wretched man, neglect till the harm you find,
604 The omen of death that your father stands behind! 76

Priam

605 Chaste spouse of Hector, tell me of that suffering
606 Which causes your eyes to pour forth this tearful spring.

Andromache

607 O reverend father, so your goodness invites me,
608 But to solace the torment that with such force smites me,
609 Command for my sake that they go right now and try
610 To find your wretched Hector, determined to die.

Priam

611 To die! Go on, my sons, bring your brother to me;
612 Let him come; invoke a father's authority.

[Exeunt the sons.]

76 “[T]hat your father stands behind”: orig. “dont ton Pere t’asseure” (p. 20). She is evidently being sarcastic in her distraction, but the phrase remains ambiguous: she might be stating either that Priam is protecting Hector from the omen or that he is ensuring it will be fulfilled. The translation opts for the latter.
[to Andromache] Yet lift me out of that profound abyss of doubt
Where troubled thoughts by feelings are stirred all about.

**Andromache**

Although my torment is increased by your behest,
How can I ever refuse such a just request?
I dreamt last night, at the very moment when slumber
Comes most soothingly the pupils to disencumber,
That I was embracing Hector—pale, cold and lifeless;
I embraced him—alas, I will lose consciousness!—
With his wounds’ blood all sullied, and with dusty grime:
I sensed my knees begin to shake at the same time,
The spirits lapsed that my arteries animated,
And my nerves from their ordinary force abated.
With difficulty waking, I felt strength subside,
Such that a long time after all aloud I sighed.
Yet in my arms my Hector I hastened to press,
Asked him to hold me tight, to kiss me and caress,
And not rebuke me, and my voice for a long moment
With sobbing only gave his speech acknowledgement,
For the object that filled my soul with thoughts of death
Within the hollow of my lungs retained my breath.

One further time thereafter that unlucky dream
Reiterated to my mind its dismal theme;
Alas, and I still seem to see its wretched shape
Fly before my eyes beneath a shadowy drape.

**Priam**

If with spirit devout your altar-flames I kindle,
Vouchsafe to hear my prayer, O great gods immortal;
Hear, of Ilium and Troy, O patrons divine,
The humble accent of the prayer that is mine.

If the mortal dream that I have just heard narrated
From heaven was sent down to see communicated
My son’s impending death, then do such grace instead
As to deflect the blow that menaces his head.
Or if the god of sleep, abuser of the mind,
Has gone a fickle phantom in his cave to find
To trouble Andromache and fill me with pain,
Efface her fear, for both of us render it vain.

**Andromache**

May it please cruel heaven to grant its consent—
But I don’t believe it: that is not its intent.
The morning light of bright Phoebus I saw concealed,
When my dream, with my prayer, to him I revealed.
Running to the altar, a sacred flame I lit,
But the gods, heads averted, did not favour it:
At once it went out, and the sacrifice proposed
Seethed beneath the coals in which it became enclosed,
And nothing came of the efforts I made by blowing
To excite a bit of bright flame from sluggish glowing:
Consumed on the altar, my offering did choke,
And, like all of my vows, converted into smoke.

**Priam**

What is our destiny? Gods, be less rigorous
And preserve Hector safe for himself and for us:
For since your grace as yet does not us so disdain
But that by such messengers you herald our pain,
Permit us to hope that if you show us such care,
Some mercy for the Trojans you still may prepare.

**Andromache**

Well to know one’s evil, but not the remedy,
Is the worst form, Priam, of infelicity.

**Priam**

It is to the gods that we must have recourse now,
Injury or cure to work—only they know how.

**Andromache**

Their righteous wills reflect their power’s privilege;

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77 Orig.: “De sorte qu’elle reste à l’autel consommée” (p. 21)—that is, to judge from the context, the flesh merely shrivelled and fumed in place, failing to burn clearly and vigorously as a token of acceptance.
78 Ll. 667-84 are marked for emphasis.
Nothing that is can escape their sovereign knowledge.
But to reveal events to humankind so they
May be protected—that is by no means their way.

Priam
The nature of the gods is to do all men good,
And they would not leave us in dangers where we stood,
If with a suppliant heart we implored their rescue;
But when they are disdained, the contrary they do.

Andromache
It is indeed to disdain them not to give weight
To the foreboding, faithful and legitimate,
That comes to us from them, but by excess of pride
To have as steadfast law our own will dignified.

Priam
He who ignores the gods because of self-belief
Rushes blind to utter ruin and extreme grief.

Andromache
Soon we will know; we will see today discomfited
This stubborn man, who'll come to feel it on his head. \(^79\)
Restrain his ardour, for if on the field he's found,
A Greek lance will see to his measuring the ground.

Priam
It is not up to him to decide anything:
It's I who am his father and, what's more, his king,
And I can, if I please, prevent his going there.
But I wish by reason to manage the affair.

[Enter Hector, with Trojan warriors. \(^80\)]

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\(^79\) The precise moment of Hector’s entrance is open to stage interpretation, but it obviously occurs before he is addressed at l. 694. It seems likely that Andromache and Priam see him approaching from l. 686 and finish their conversation in anticipation.

\(^80\) It is not clear where else the other warriors might enter who figure explicitly in ll. 819 ff., and it would be logical to have them accompany Hector. Again, alternative stagings are possible.
[to Hector] O my staunchest support, so your armour is on.

**Hector**

My lord, too weary a delay I’ve undergone.

**Priam**

The enemy camp thirsts the fight to be renewing.

**Hector**

If our camp is backward, it will not be my doing.

**Priam**

I’m fearful that good fortune your blows will not second.

**Hector**

At least, to combat and die well we will be reckoned.$^8$

**Priam**

How can man advance if heaven will him impede?

**Hector**

Heaven favours someone who attempts to succeed.

**Priam**

Many a battle is lost for some secret cause,

When valour, with wise counsel joined, deserves applause.

**Hector**

One who for good reason has armed his hand for war

Must march straight into combat, look only before.

**Priam**

When a righteous cause is not properly defended.

It is greatly at risk, and all hope may be ended.

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$Ll. \, 698-726 \, \text{are marked for emphasis, with the exception (erroneously?) of l. \, 721.}$
Hector

When one defends it by manifest force of arms,
The gain cannot come without suffering some harms.

Priam

One assures it with less danger by being prudent,
And not the smallest part is choosing the right moment.

Hector

When some event occurs that our knowledge exceeds,
Then must reason seek the cause from which it proceeds;
And if we are convinced, let us without delay
As far as the Greek ships our valour’s flames display.

Priam

That hollow chimera, which with false shows deludes,
Like another Proteus our grasping eludes;
Then, when suddenly its form changes in our sight,
Our judgement clouds over when danger’s at its height![^]

Hector

The spirit of our soldiers, enkindled to glory,
Assures us now or never of the victory.

Priam

With valiant ardour they have combatted indeed,
But to win, more good luck than manly strength[^] they need.

Hector

A courage resolute good luck hardly deserts.

Priam

When it flatters us the most, its face it averts.

Hector

It is the gods’ custom the best to recompense.

[^]: Proteus, the sea-dwelling herdsman and prophet, could be forced to tell the future only when held firmly until he ceased to change his shape; see Smith, s.v.
[^]: “[M]anly strength”: orig. “vertu” (p. 23), as elsewhere.
Priam

726  To all the good and bad some evils they dispense.

Hector

727  Let us do as we must and leave to them the rest.

Priam

728  But let us not tempt either their wrath manifest.

Hector

729  We need not fear their wrath when duty we fulfil.\textsuperscript{*}

Priam

730  It is to be feared in failing to do their will.

Hector

731  From them comes the heat that boils in our men-at-arms.

Priam

732  From them comes, too, the fear that mingles with alarms.

Hector

733  Of their secrets we mortals must not seek the sense.

Priam

734  They make them known all too well—and at my expense.

Hector

735  There is nothing our mishap to prognosticate.

Priam

736  Yet all, if you see clearly, augurs an ill fate.

Hector

737  To defend one's country is in itself auspicious.\textsuperscript{*}

\textsuperscript{*} Ll. 29-33 are marked for emphasis.

\textsuperscript{84} Petit de Julleville, ed., p. 282, n. to p. 24, points out the close echo of the \textit{Iliad} (correct ref. XII.243), where Hector is likewise arguing (though not with Priam) against not fighting because of negative
Priam
738 And to ruin it an act lamentable and vicious.\footnote{[L]amentable and vicious”: orig. “infame et douloureux” (p. 24).}

Hector
739 Does he not serve it well who risks himself therefor?

Priam
740 Badly he serves indeed when he can do much more.

Hector
741 And what more can a man of valour ever do?

Priam
742 Live for love of it, and see its ill-fortune through.

Hector
743 And is it not my arm that renders me of use?

Priam
744 Prudence can do more a town’s safety to produce.\footnote{Ll. 744-46 are marked for emphasis.}

Hector
745 Counsel without the hand is a bodyless soul.

Priam
746 Uncounseled, the hand’s efforts fly out of control.

Hector
747 Have I not put the army in an ordered state?

Priam
748 Order on ill-starred days like smoke will dissipate.

Hector
749 If I am to do well, then, what course shall I take?

auguries. Ll. 737-40 are marked for emphasis.
Priam
Simply remain in place and nothing undertake.

Hector
All our men with one voice are spoiling for a fight.

Priam
The leader who lends too much credence does not right.\textsuperscript{88}

Hector
And what will the Greeks say, when they see him go back?

Priam
Just look out for yourself—let them with words attack.

Hector
What vulgar insults will their mocking gullets vent?

Priam
Such blame counts for little, if only we stay prudent.

Hector
Their ridicule will cause our hearts' ardour to dwindle.

Priam
Their futile bitterness your anger will rekindle.

Hector
A noble soul's reduced to bastardy by shame\textsuperscript{89}—

Priam
Which rouses it to vengeance and a fiercer flame.

Hector
So shall we thus huddled beneath these ramparts live?

\textsuperscript{88} The line is marked for emphasis.
\textsuperscript{89} Ll. 759-60 are marked for emphasis.
Priam

762 Don't underrate the shelter from dangers they give.\textsuperscript{90}

Hector

763 Good advice for a coward's heart, afraid to dare.

Priam

764 Better for a mind that proceeds with prudent care.

Hector

765 Will so long a pause not make our absence a fault?

Priam

766 To defend onself rarely requires assault.\textsuperscript{91}

Hector

767 It's as if the besiegers' hope we reinforce.

Priam

768 It's as if the besieged resist with greater force.

Hector

769 Can you endure in your own home yourself to find
770 As in a prison by such cowardice confined?

Priam

771 When Troy no longer can by combat be preserved,
772 By means of its strong walls must its interests be served.

Hector

773 A valiant knight, a soldier whose bold spirits press,\textsuperscript{92}
774 Cannot agree to live enclosed within a fortress.

Priam

775 The governor rich in wisdom, the prudent captain,
Makes no use of his hand when he knows its strength vain.

Hector
Fine, give over the campaign, and you will soon see,
Pouring over our walls, the Greeks with their whole army.

Priam
Well said, my son, and so spread out in their attack,
Our towering ramparts will send them pouring back—
No more nor less than seem the efforts of the sea,
Foaming against the shores in sheer futility:
The surges may swell to double their roaring strength—
It all becomes silent and languorous at length;
For the rocks in their place always upright remain,
The fury that boils in the wild waves to contain.

Hector
I would hardly that cheerful hope discountenance,
But for as long as Hector lives, beneath this lance,
Not behind bulwarks, he will choose to stand his ground:
The hope of a valiant heart in itself is found.

[Enter Hecuba, behind.]

Priam
My dear son, my Hector, sweet centre of my thought,
Do not by the lure of senseless ardour be caught,
Which guides you to your death with a glorious face:
You don’t here occupy a simple soldier’s place,
One who must seek in combat, for lack of renown,
Some vulgar laurel his virtue in arms to crown;
Your glory has now climbed to such a noble height,
You are a demi-god in all the Trojans’ sight;
Yet please you still respect, with fitting courtesy,

---

93 This line is marked for emphasis.
94 The placement of this stage direction is especially uncertain; Hecuba’s presence would surely have been acknowledged at the meeting of Andromache and Priam, yet she must be on stage by l. 800; arbitrarily, I suggest that she enters in time to hear Priam’s more personal plea.
Your white-haired father, your mother reverend to see,
Who urge you strongly not today to let the sun
Glimpse you in combat. O hero second to none,
Yield to our will: he is doubly esteemed a treasure
Who can do his family service, also pleasure.

HECUBA [coming forward]
If some little part, my son, within you remains
Of the natural respect that a man retains
Who is born for honour and the good of his race,
I am sure that I, as well, could obtain that grace;
But your father’s wishes carry such weight with you,
They have no need of seconding by my voice, too.

HECTOR
The gods have not formed me with such a wretched* nature—
I have not been given by you so little nurture—
That I do not know at least all that should be known
To have my duty to you quite properly shown:
But permit that rather in fortune’s hands I place me,
Than that any stain on my honour should disgrace me.
What will the Greek declare, to mockery so prone,
If, from concern for myself, we leave him alone?

PRIAM
These brave men here, all well brought up in arms and young,
Will check the chattering of his impudent tongue:
For though it is my wish that we do not allow
You to try the vicissitudes of combat now,
You—Aeneas and Paris, Deiphobus, Troilus,
Menon, Polidamas—lead out the troops for us
And bring them to the fields. Myself I’ll give the task
Of sending you support if you have need to ask.
But for you, my Hector, my one and only hope,

---

95 Ll. 803-4 are marked for emphasis.
97 “You to try”: Petit de Julleville, ed., maintains the original’s “D’esprouuer” (p. 27), but it seems rather a simple error for “T’esprouuer.”
Sole sacred anchor to give our assurance scope,
Remove that armour and withdraw, within remaining:
I wish it as your father, order it as king.

Hector

O sacred law, which as holy I always prize—
I could not disobey, while you I recognise;
I fear the celestial wrath on me will fall,
If, to please myself alone, I should displease all!
Let then, O my heart, your burning for battle fail:
Since it pleases you, friends, I shed this coat of mail,
This helmet and this shield, with arm-guard and with greave,
And as a sacrifice, of Mars I take my leave.
Strive, then, all of you, for me. You of noble race,
Who the honour of the lance amorously chase,
Prevent the Greeks from being able to suppose
That Hector, instead of arming, bleeds from the nose.\(^{98}\)
You see what the cause is that I hang up my arms
And cannot sally forth: run, follow the alarms,
And if of tomorrow I gain the happy sight,
You will know my hand in the fiercest of the fight.
Go now, my companions, march forward, seize the moment,
And do not return till you have made Greece lament
Many of their great leaders by the sword laid low,
On Mars's altar offered to the gods below.

Chorus

May kind heaven its aid in this fight not refuse,
Which after myriad combats our camp renews,
But so well reinforce its sinews and its strength
That the Greek army returns defeated at length,
Vanquished, in despair at having wasted its pains,
Pursuing for ten years an effort with no gains,
Whose fruit is the shame and perpetual remorse

\(^{98}\) Presumably as a claim to be wounded or as a sign of impending ill-luck, which would obviously not deter someone courageous.
Born of letting a rash oath determine their course.\(^99\)

**Hector**

That is just how we should the battle-plan first draw:\(^100\)

Ardour without the gods is mere fire in straw.\(^101\)

But reflect, as well, on the perils we sustain

When order is not kept and a strong arm is vain.\(^102\)

Let him command who ought, and him who should obey:

No little honour lies in serving in that way.

Multiple commands are naturally confused;

But as one sole spirit through the body diffused

Various moves it, so your men, motivated

By a single will, find their forces animated.

Great warriors, in passing I address you thus,

For if destiny, which in all things governs us,

Conjoins its favour to your conduct in the fight,

Today the sun will look down upon Greece in flight

And you safe-returned, honoured to your hearts' contents

By the populace and your worthy aged parents.

For myself, who stay within these two walls confined,

A secret fire burning inwardly I find

That by this coming benefit I can't be blest,

Which promises you all of honour a great harvest.

**Priam**

You must be, Hector, one those trophies satiate

Which may be seen gleaming on your well-garnished gate.

When the thirst for glory is excessively strong.\(^105\)

The soundest judgement becomes altered and goes wrong.

To wish to do all is to wish the impossible;

Indeed, it is still more harmful than it is painful.

---

\(^99\) The Greek leaders had sworn to avenge the dishonour suffered by Menelaus on account of Helen—see Guido, bk. VIII (pp. 80-81), and Le Fèvre, trans. Caxton, bk. III, fol. ix'.

\(^100\) I.e., by imploring the gods' favour, as the Chorus has just done.

\(^101\) Ll. 860-65 are marked for emphasis.

\(^102\) Hector rather abruptly introduces the theme of his previous exchange with his father (ll. 743-48), in which he took the side of his own "strong arm". See the Introduction, pp. 18-19.

\(^103\) Ll. 881-84 are marked for emphasis.
Andromache

885 My spirit begins to breathe, if ever so slightly,
886 Since Hector, won over, will remain enclosed tightly
887 Today, and will not the risks of combat endure.
888 The sacred knot of respect that keeps him secure
889 Anchors my heart in the midst of those tossing seas
890 That seem to conspire against our future ease.
891 It is no small feat, when faced with a stubborn soul,\(^{104}\)
892 For a single day to bring it under control.
893 For it may be that the fatal moment which bears
894 A danger within it flows past us unawares,
895 Never to return: ill-luck neither stays in place
896 Nor does it, as the saying goes, its steps retrace.

Chorus\(^{105}\)

897 One tires of all things, except of doing well.
898 Who love of glory knows
899 Takes pleasure in such deeds, which for him are usual;
900 The greatest work he finds is also his repose.
901 The more the soul tastes of glory the luscious fruit,
902 The greater its desire,
903 A philtre so pleasant, to drink it spurs pursuit,
904 And the pleasure, the more one drinks it, mounts the higher.
905 If anything to noble manhood can excite
906 It is brilliance of name,
907 Which pierces all shadowy cloud with rays of light
908 And speaks itself through the sky on the wing of fame.
909 The pomp that goes with greatness gives our senses joy;
910 Gold always charms our eyes;
911 Pleasure tempts us laughingly; good cheer we enjoy;
912 But desire for honour more deeply we prize.

\(^{104}\) Ll. 891-96 are marked for emphasis.
\(^{105}\) The Chorus’s entire speech is marked for emphasis.
Desirable nectar, delicious source of health,
Who from true good ensue,
Do not before those vulgar souls profane your wealth
Who of themselves think highly, yet possess no value.

What valour newly gains you at the battle’s height—
From there the laurels spring.
What use to dust off medals from an ancient fight,
Or triumphs of famous old precursors to sing?

For virtue’s own sake our efforts we must esteem,
Endure both heat and cold,
Spurn shame underfoot, as well as danger extreme,
And courage maintain as constant as it is bold.

When glory fits itself with sturdy feathered wings,
In every place it flies;
It raises itself then far above mortal things
And with rays of divinity inflames the skies.

He who amidst a coward’s softness falls asleep,
Lulled by idleness,
To earth a burden, noble rank not fit to keep—
That he has ever lived at all, how can he witness?

Hidden within his life, just as within a tomb,
Never would he be known;
All but his indistinct effigy would consume,
Melting into the nothing from which it had grown.

It goes against all reason that vice should constrain
One who is virtuous—
Who never sold himself, whether from greed for gain
Or for the empty pride of those presumptuous.
Act III
Hector, Antenor, Messenger, Chorus, Hecuba, Priam, Andromache, [Helen],106 [Chorus of Women]

[Enter Hector and Antenor.]

HECTOR

All of the arts, in truth, are hard to exercise,107
But this to a noble captain's proud role applies
By so much more than to the others we recall
That it should be granted honour108 beyond them all.
When the craftsman goes wrong in something he is making,
Guided by experience and rules, his mistaking
He corrects, restores the object he had prepared.
But the faults of honour cannot be so repaired:
One error, however slight, one detail untold,
One consequence neglected, puts him in the hold
Of crowds of cowardly carpers by envy stirred,109
Whose eyes and soul by his splendour have wounds incurred:
Such flies,110 who never are attached to brilliant things,
With wanton impudence discharge their sharpened stings
Against an innocent heart, and to multiply
The hurt prefer themselves within its wound to die.
Slanderous tongues already seem to fill my ears,
Pricking my honour with a hundred little spears;
And I see already the Greeks with insolence
Joining to their blows words of blasphemous offence
Against the glory I, at their lives’ cost, acquire:

106 In the place of Helen, the original text (p. 30) lists Cassandra, who does not speak; Charpentier, p. 437, plausibly suggests that the reference is to the actor who doubled the roles—indirect evidence, in that case, of performance prior to printing. The issue bears on the dating of the play and thus on its possible relation to Shakespeare’s Troilus and Cressida: see the Introduction, pp. 14-16.
107 Ll. 941-56 are marked for emphasis.
108 I retain the original’s term “honour”/“honneur” (p. 30) here and in l. 948 below, although in the first case it evidently means something like “distinction”, in the second “reputation”.
109 “[C]owardly carpers by envy stirred”: orig. “plus lasches qu’ennieux” (p. 30)—but envy dominates in the following lines.
110 “[F]lies”: orig. “mouches”, a term which could historically apply to various stinging insects, as is the case here; see Trésor de la langue française informatisé s.v. “mouche”.

49
But if tomorrow comes, I’ll uproot their desire
To slight my courage, or ever again to blame
This arm of mine, which fear has never put to shame.

**Antenor**

Although our men prevail and keep them occupied,
Pretend it is so: no shame, I think, can betide
The man who remains in his deeds quite innocent,
If someone cuts him to pieces when he is absent.
So duty dictates, the sole rule infallible
That measures honour, except the impossible.
And from this I conclude, O knight beyond compare,
The offence does not touch one who is unaware,
And he alone we take to swallow the affront
Who hears and says nothing, knows it and bears the brunt.

**Hector**

He’ll die without renown who no care for it shows.

**Antenor**

He who torments himself will live without repose.

**Hector**

He deserves abuse who stays silent out of fear.

**Antenor**

And blame, who speaks ill when his foe does not appear.

**Hector**

Aspersions against us we should never abide.

**Antenor**

One may do all well—some will not be satisfied.

---

111 Ll. 966-96 are marked for emphasis, with the exception of ll. 981 and 994.
112 “[C]uts him to pieces”: orig. “decoupe” (p. 31); here figurative but with irony deriving from the sense of “massacre”, especially on the battlefield. See *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français [1330-1500]*, s.v.; online at <http://www.atilf.fr/dmf/definition/découper> (accessed 14 June 2018).
113 “[S]wallow”: orig. “boire” (p. 31).
Hector

981 Just let them keep quiet, whether or not they’re pleased.

Antenor

982 The boisterous winds are sooner than tongues appeased.

Hector

983 The valour of a mighty prince intimidates.

Antenor

984 Such a one speaks out, though fear his heart agitates.

Hector

985 But one’s glory languishes if injured it feels.

Antenor

986 A wound that is so inflicted soon enough heals.\footnote{“[H]eals”: orig. “est ... passée” (p. 31); Petit de Julleville, ed., (p. 282, n. to p. 31) proposes to read “pansée” (“bandaged”). The translation is not affected.}

Hector

987 A scar on the forehead is always there to see.

Antenor

988 It may appear, but not tell how it came to be.
989 Thus a great warrior, whom honour deifies,
990 Himself for his comrades by his scars glorifies.

Hector

991 Because it is a token that he has fought well.

Antenor

992 And, besides that, his store of virtue one can tell,
993 Which may be flawless yet never from blame is free.

Hector

994 What then can be considered a noble soul's duty?
Antenor

995 To show his courage entire and wholly perfect,
996 Whether it must be used in word or in effect:
997 In sum, such that it shines in a valour so ample
998 As to serve beyond all doubt as its own example.

Hector

999 Not knowing in myself that degree of perfection,
1000 I prefer to suppose that to your own affection,
1001 Not my desert, your praise of my honour is due:
1002 If sometimes I do well, in that I follow you.
1003 But let us break off there, father, and rather see
1004 What fortune, good or ill, has befallen our army.

Antenor

1005 I learnt from the wounded who made it back to us
1006 That Alexander, Menon, Deiphobus, Troilus
1007 In emulation strive each other to outdo,
1008 While on the other side, the Greeks, audacious too,
1009 Rudely assailed them, rudely their effort deterred.
1010 As one views the sea by two winds to fury stirred,
1011 With their contrary force upraising swells by turns,
1012 As wave against foaming wave in violence churns,
1013 In just this way one may perceive the two strong armies,
1014 Each driven by the will to charge their enemies,
1015 Compelled now to draw back, now once again advanced:
1016 Victory above them in the air hovers balanced,
1017 And there is no telling from her wavering flight
1018 On which side her casual favour will alight.

Hector

1019 Look kindly upon Troy, O gods, and her flight guide
1020 To take up a constant station above our side,

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115 “[F]ather” (orig. “mon Pere”): in deference to Antenor’s age, which is what keeps him from the battlefield (and implicitly lends him his wisdom).
116 Alexander: the other name of Paris.
117 “[C]asual favour”: orig. “faveur paresseuse” (p. 32). Evoked is the traditional notion of the winged goddess Victory flitting over the battlefield and making her choice arbitrarily.
After fierce Mars has intervened with a sharp thrust—
For your just will provides the determining gust. 118

**Antenor**

I will go out and discover with my own eyes
Which of the hostile camps will bear away the prize;
Then, when from the top of our massive ramparts' height,
Of the combatants’ ranks I have had a good sight,
I will report to you, so that, by your good sense,
Of your unequalled arm you may avenge the absence.

**Hector**

Go, my dear Antenor, and instantly devise
The best means of advancing our just enterprise;
For the sage discourses forged by your mind so prudent
Have thwarted many times some dire accident.

[Exit Antenor.]

How a noble heart its condition will deplore,
Which burns for greater glory and cherishes more
Exacting labour than desolate empty days,
When his high manliness, all amorous of praise,
Rests in the coward bosom of soft idleness,
Whose chilling languor puts a damper on its prowess.
True manhood on the action it engenders thrives,
And the audacious soul, in which ambition strives
To spread its reputation universally,
Assaults the basis of our thinking secretly,
Believes that failing of one’s valour to make use
Must to reproach or extreme misfortune conduce.
Oh, him thrice-happy over others I esteem
Who pursues as he will a magnanimous dream,
And neither the disturbing exhortations faces

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118 With this line, marked for emphasis, I take it that Hector shifts to addressing Mars directly (“your just will”/”vostre vouloir juste”). The controlling image remains the flight of Victory, subject to the winds—hence “the determining gust”/”le vent qui le pousse”.
119 Antenor’s promised report is pre-empted by that of the Messenger; his observatory function is deferred to his account in Act IV, ll. 1747 ff.
120 Ll. 1033-52 are marked for emphasis.
121 Orig.: “Assaut tous les pensers d’vne secrete guerre” (p. 33).
1048 Of an apprehensive father, nor the embraces
1049 Of a fair woman mingling kisses and caresses,
1050 Nor the wishes a respected mother expresses,
1051 Nor the grave counsels old reverend men provide—
1052 When to virtue, then, all his efforts are applied;
1053 While I, by these bonds forced in the town to remain,
1054 Am at home with unhappiness, exist in vain.
1055 I may believe my best course lies in staying here,
1056 But in staying, great ill I also do, I fear.
1057 Brilliance is not brilliance unless it’s clearly shown;
1058 To be good is very well—better if it’s known:122
1059 For from that the heart derives so constant a pleasure
1060 It continues in itself its own happy measure.
1061 If good men have always found by experience
1062 That there exists no rampart more secure than conscience,
1063 My spirit without qualms, my heart with no remorse,
1064 Are ready and disposed outside to set my course.

CHORUS
1065 One who would blame you, knight, who no reproach has known,
1066 Beneath a brow of steel he’d bear a heart of stone.
1067 Your glorious renown shines on us with such light
1068 It pierces like the sun’s bright rays the darkest night.
1069 Mycenae’s123 great leaders have felt your valour’s strength:
1070 Many beneath your lance have measured out their length,
1071 Whose names are testimony of your dazzling virtue;
1072 It is, though, greater honour to have fought with you
1073 And be deprived forever of life and of glory
1074 Than over any other to gain victory.
1075 For it argues a heart that won’t easily quail124

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123 Mycenae: according to legend, the Greek state associated with the House of Atreus, which included Agamemnon and Menelaus; here, metonymic for Greece more generally.
124 Ll. 1075-84 are marked for emphasis.
To dare a man renowned for valour to assail.

Bold lions of Africa, under the fierce sun,
Against a bull as enemy joyfully run
And of chasing flitting butterflies have no notions.
One whose spirits are exalted by lofty motions
A thousand pangs of scorn within his bosom knows
When a base lowly person wishes to trade blows.\(^{135}\)
But if some great warrior proposes to fight,
Sprightliness and zeal raise his mettle to its height.

O warrior-thunderbolt, dread of the most daring,
If to a single mortal you merit comparing,
Ajax could tell us—that Ajax whose strong arm holds
A broad shield covered with ox-hide in seven folds;
Teucer\(^{126}\) will speak of it, who with potent force throws,
And just aim, the flying spear, and shoots true-made arrows;

By great Agamemnon one will be told the same,
Who all the Greeks surpasses in rank and in name;
Tydeus’ courageous son\(^{127}\) will likewise bear witness,
Whose man-killing arm caused the gods themselves distress;
Corroborated by prince Nestor wise and old,
Whose speeches in council pour forth rivers of gold;
Reported by Ulysses, sly-minded and clever,
Whose craft one fears more than his battlefield endeavour;

And even by Achilles confirmed, though his view
Is blurred by jealous hatred when it comes to you.
Also, it is said, wherever the news is brought
Of those combats which for Helen the fair are fought,
That you are to the Trojans as a brazen wall,
Behind which from assaults they are protected all.
Not men alone, but even things insensible

---

\(^{125}\) The same point is satirically illustrated by Hector’s encounter with Thersites in *Tro.* V.iv.25-29.

\(^{126}\) Orig. “Thener” (p. 34), probably the compositors’ error. Teucer (Τεύκρος) was the half-brother of Ajax who specialised in shooting arrows from behind the latter’s enormous shield. He was seriously wounded by Hector. See *Iliad*, VIII.266-324. Petit de Jullieville, ed., comes to the same conclusion (p. 283, n. to p. 34).

\(^{127}\) I.e., Diomedes. In *Iliad*, bk. V, Diomedes attacks (with Athena’s assistance) Aphrodite (327-51) and Ares (825-63).
Hold in admiration your forces invincible:
How many times has great Cybele’s sacred mount,
Seeing beneath it people slaughtered without count
Who only of your killing complained as they died,
Trembled awestruck, with fear and wonder horrified?
How many times have the fields it looks on below
Been shaken by your arms dealing many a blow?
How often have Simois and Scamandre, what’s more,
Seeing in ample torrents the blood of Greeks pour
Into their waters—at their colour’s change astounded,
In their deep palaces by angry grief confounded—
Feared that the dead with which the waves you populate
Might block their vagabond Nymphs in a stagnant state?
Amid these rival testimonies, mute and spoken,
Which of your manhood furnish such a brilliant token,
Lively Fame with a spring into the air upsurges,
And with a mouth that the truth unceasingly urges
Proclaims to all comers that in valour and counsel,
Beneath the whole course of the sun you have no equal.

Hector
If, then, my exploits some marks in memory leave,
Honour the gods for that! For I could not believe
That success in combat is due to our own hand:
Without Heaven’s blessing, man’s works can never stand.\(^{129}\)

Chorus
The greatness of men most shows its divinity
When glory mingles with wisdom and modesty.

Hector
He who knows himself, of God is surely aware,
Who disposes of all and presides everywhere.

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\(^{128}\) Simois and Scamander: as the imagery develops, the qualities of the rivers are conflated with their respective divinities.

\(^{129}\) Ll. 1128–78 are marked for emphasis.
Chorus

1133  One may without offence, although that may be true,
      Honour, with the maker, work and instrument, too.
      When someone has received divine collaboration,
      He should not forfeit a glorious reputation:
      For sweet praise gives incentive and causes to swell
      Every excellent soul's desire to do well.

Hector

1139  He who does good service deserves a decent wage;\(^\text{130}\)
      Otherwise he'll prove more reluctant to engage.

Chorus

1141  The only true and proper payment is renown,
      Which praiseworthy deeds in men can fittingly crown.

Hector

1143  All those other treasures one hungers to possess,
      Compared to Fame's report, are futile emptiness.

Chorus

1145  And it is on that same wing that warriors glide
      For all the time they live all round the world so wide.

Hector

1147  And more, one can say that, as their valour is known,
      It gives them another life in losing their own.

Chorus

1149  For if just to gain a few days, sad and unsure,
      Their bodies so suffered, their lot we must call poor.

Hector

1151  Far better never to have here below descended
      Than still to be quite unknown when the play has ended.\(^\text{131}\)

---

\(^{130}\) "[W]age": orig. "loyer" (p. 35). The language is monetary, even if the payment envisaged is intangible.

\(^{131}\) Orig.: "Que sortir du Theatre et n'estre point connu" (p. 36)—a rare metadramatic touch.
Chorus

1153 That desire which Nature on fair souls bestows,"[^36] To admonish us their immortality shows.

1154

Hector

1155 It is from that high hope that our integrity
1156 Assumes in all our projects chief authority.

1157

Chorus

1158 You see everyone attempting to live again
1159 In lifeless bronze and copper images of men.

1157

Hector

1159 Let him who pleases live in portraits inanimate—
1160 I choose instead by deeds my life to animate.

1159

Chorus

1161 It is they that preserve the features of our glory
1162 Much longer than can promise brass or ivory.

1161

Hector

1163 If to show the body takes such effort of art,
1164 How much is needed to make visible the heart?

1163

Chorus

1165 Life for death we exchange—that is the simple bargain,
1166 When once in that way we determine praise to gain.

1165

Hector

1167 I have always resolved, when such things have been said,
1168 One should do much, though it means being sooner dead.

1167

Chorus

1169 Even the length of life does not merely amount
1170 To the years that nature assigns us as our count.

[^36]: "estows": orig. "ente" (p. 36), lit. "grafts".
TRANSLATION

HECTOR
1171 Far better it is to live well one single day
1172 Than last many years and in idleness decay.

CHORUS
1173 By laziness weak and wilting\textsuperscript{133} of any kind
1174 Is a living man in a dead one’s tomb confined.

HECTOR
1175 He who, by Heaven’s favour, in good is sustained,
1176 Within those unhappy bonds is never enchained.

CHORUS
1177 Also, when that poison comes our soul to entice,
1178 It charms and lulls it to sleep in the filth of vice.

HECTOR
1179 May it never come close to the walls of a city
1180 Whose morals conform to the rules of equity.
1181 —But what tumultuous noises my ears confuse?
1182 Are those new reinforcements Priam plans to use
1183 For our men’s aid? What distress to my hearing draws?
1184 No, of such commotion soldiers can’t be the cause:
1185 They are most frightful voices and pitiful cries,
1186 Shrieks of lamentation, intermingled with sighs,
1187 Whose roaring resembles the sound of those wild raves
1188 Screamed by the mutinous wind at the white-tossed waves,
1189 Which, as they fight each other, foretell the dread shock
1190 Of a ship doomed to shatter on the shore’s hard rock.
1191 Let us go and find out.

CHORUS
1192 Advance no further—stay:

133 “[W]ilting”: orig. “langarde” (p. 36). The word seem to be attested only as a derivative from “langue”, meaning talkative in an unpleasant manner. This hardly matches the context here, however, and I posit a derivation from “languir” (“languish”, “droop”), again with the negative connotation of the suffix “ard”.
[Enter Messenger.]

HECTOR

1193  What tumults are those that with such violence seethe?
1194  Tell us, my friend—it seems that you can hardly breathe.

MESSENGER

1195  O great-minded Hector, I’ve run from far away
1196  To beg you in great need your valour to display.

HECTOR

1197  What, then, has happened? For our fortune to revive
1198  Must a further pledge assist our army to thrive?

MESSENGER

1199  Your camp barely survives—the Greek warrior-bands
1200  Pursue what’s left to Troy with both voices and hands.

HECTOR

1201  Do your friends, your captains, not strive with might and main?

MESSENGER

1202  They make a great effort, but they combat in vain.

HECTOR

1203  And the Trojan princes, are they not in the press?

MESSENGER

1204  Each one would acquire the palm or else the cypress.  

HECTOR

1205  It takes just one coward disorder to instil.

MESSENGER

1206  Alas, it was ill luck, not a failure of will.
1207  Troy in arms to the combat ran with eager pace,

---

134  I.e., either the palm of victory or the cypress as token of mourning.
There where the Argive host remained arrayed in place
On the outspread fields, from which a thunderous sound
Seemed to come of itself and roll across the ground:
All Olympus\textsuperscript{135} trembled at it, and the earth, swaying,
Lurchèd violently beneath our feet; the frenzied neighing
Of the foaming horses resounded in the air,
And Xanthus\textsuperscript{136} hid in his watery palace lair.

No sooner had we passed through that horrible moment
Than the enemy camps with a violent movement
Rushed upon each other, and by ferocious outrage
Of tongues as well as blows give venom to their rage.
One at times repulsed, at others pressed the attack;
The other twice the blows that he received gave back.
Soldier to soldier, each man to another flying,
Fiercely grappled himself, and not a tear in dying
From his eye he shed, but, as he fell, the same death
Threatened to those who had just robbed him of his breath.
The chief men on both sides went searching through the crowd
For some famous champion, of prowess allowed,
For they were not willing to pluck on honour’s field
A victor’s palm worth less than their valour would yield,
So that in a thousand places, by sword and lance,
Duels pushing to the utmost made their appearance.

But when certain Greeks greater in strength and in pride
Had marked successes because three or four had died,
And no longer found anyone apt for a contest,
They rolled through the army as if they were a tempest,
And, nowhere perceiving in our battle array
Your helmet gleaming, to most savage rage gave way—
As wolves attack cattle\textsuperscript{137} left to graze themselves fat
By the shepherd in the village having a chat.\textsuperscript{138}

“What?” they started shouting with an arrogant sneer,

\textsuperscript{135} Olympus: here metonymic, evidently, of the heavens and the gods dwelling there.
\textsuperscript{136} Xanthus: a name for the god of Scamander, the river of Troy.
\textsuperscript{137} “[C]attle”: orig. “bœufs” (p. 38), despite “shepherd”/“Pasteur” in l. 1238.
\textsuperscript{138} “[I]n the village having a chat”: the deflationary tone is there in the original: “cause au proche village” (p. 38).
“Wherever is that Hector, that prince without peer?"  
That potent champion? That bragging man-at-arms?  
When it comes to close combat he stays clear of harms.  
Is that the bold intent he promised formerly?  
Think! Andromache keeps him at home cosily;"  
While these soldiers, lacking a leader, without courage,  
Victims of our own hands, are swallowed in this carnage.”  
How these taunts of the Greeks, in terms so virulent,  
In the hearts of the Trojans caused astonishment!  
And although our leaders, whom this discourse appalled,  
By example and speech their duty soon recalled—  
Running to the foremost ranks, the good men to praise  
And loudly rebuke any cowardly displays—  
By a fatal design (for thus it seems to me),  
Our camp, enfeebled, is in dire difficulty;  
And if it does not soon see your bright star appear,  
It is planning its route, and will flee to the rear.  
What a pity it is to see our squadrons lessened  
By Dolopian warriors, whose hands are reddened  
By the blood of Phrygians flowing forth in streams;  
How horribly the field with heaps of soldiers teems,  
One piled on another, and those of highest rate  
Captive beneath their horses and their armour's weight.  
Yet that is little compared with the drawn-out groans,  
The shrilling outcries and the dismal sighing moans  
Which at the many funerals are heard from those  
Whose age or sex exempts them from the battle's throes.  
With these the town is shaken, and the population,  
Gathered in anguished groups, await their ruination.  
[Exit Hector.]  
Where is Hector running now with an angry air?

---

140 “[K]eeps him at home cosily”: orig. “le mignarde en son sein” (p. 38).
141 I.e., from the Greek region of Dolopia, but here simply metonymic for Greek.
142 The Phrygians, from a region of Anatolia, were, strictly speaking, allies of the Trojans, but the name is used interchangeably with Trojans by Montchrestien, as in the sources and analogues (including Tro.)
CHORUS

After learning the wretched state of our affair,

He goes to have some rescue put in preparation.

MESSANGER

Go then and help him, for back to the camp I'll run

To bring our men that hope and that encouraging word.

[Exit Messenger.]

CHORUS

O Fortune—inconstant, unruly and absurd!

How far will this misery go? Is hope in vain

That these combats may honour for our side obtain?

Does this mean the heavens have turned in Greece's

favour?

At this blow, then, O Troy, increase your sad behaviour:

Double your sighs; harsh and relentless Destiny

Hastens the approach of your promised misery;

These inhumane thieves are bound to make us their prey,

It seems, one day. Here was Troy once, someone will say;

There its great Ilium,\(^{143}\) with more towers enclosed

Than of days a year's entire span is composed.

All things must perish here below: men, families,\(^{144}\)

Houses, grand palaces, strong castles, likewise cities;

And even empires within fixed bounds endure:

The only thing that for eternity is sure

Eternity is, its days the seasons that follow

With their changes, which each new day in turn will

swallow.\(^{145}\)

---

\(^{143}\) As if Ilium were the actual citadel (also possibly the sense at l. 119), although there does not seem to

be warrant for the distinction.

\(^{144}\) Ll. 1285-90 are marked for emphasis. The essential moral, with attendant imagery, is commonplace,

as English parallels also attest, but the example of Troy was well established, and, in combination

with Cassandra's vision in ll. 76-78 (Act I), the passage might suggest a particular reminiscence of

Pierre Matthieu, La Guisiade, in which Henri III threatens rebellious Paris with reduction to ruins. See

Pierre Matthieu, La Guisiade, Louis Lobbes, ed., Théâtre complet, Textes de la Renaissance, 121

(Paris: H. Champion, 2007), and The Guisiade, The Tragedy of the Late Gaspard de Coligny [by

François de Chanteloue] and The Guisiade, trans. and ed. Richard Hillman, Carleton Renaissance

Plays in Translation, 40 (Ottawa: Dovehouse Editions, 2005), II.i.205-32; the king presents his

court as the city's "Ilion [Ilium]" (226).

\(^{145}\) Orig. of ll. 1288-90:
—But is this not Helen? She is coming our way.
O sole reason why all of us are cast away,
You bring about great harms, and that should not astound:
Such beauty of an age’s wars might be the ground.
Let us listen to these sighs—it brings some content\textsuperscript{146}
In one’s unhappiness to hear a sweet lament.

HELEN [entering, with Chorus of Women]

O wretched Helen, O lady unfortunate!
You have good right to weep, since it has been your fate
Merely to cause the death of many a brave man
Battling before the walls of Troy as best he can.
This flower of beauty, bound in few years to fall,
These lilies quickly past, with roses faded all,
This eye to be with darkness covered in a trice—
Did this need to be, O gods, purchased at such price?
So many stellar princes and lords of renown,
Equally made enemies, equally cast down,
All slain for my sake—do they count for less than I,
I who neither honour nor faith exemplify?
My soul to a strange confusion cannot but yield
At the sight of Europe and Asia in one field
In combat for me alone, wounding one another
At my rivals’ behest, each jealous of the other.
How can I with assurance live among these widows
Detesting Greece, who curse the swords that gave the blows
By which their dear husbands, caused to fall in the fight,
In the midst of combat have been lost to their sight?
What glances, O gods, can I hope to be allowed
By the faithful fiancée to her lover vowed,
Who, succumbing to death when harsh destiny calls,
Still sighs aloud for her, and names her as he falls?

\textsuperscript{146} Ll. 1295-96 are marked for emphasis.
What face to those desolate fathers can I show,
Whom sorrow for their sons’ death has made older grow,
When their eye brimming with rage they cast upon me,
Which insists I am the cause of their misery?

How many bitter torments and painful afflictions
Will I endure in hearing the harsh maledictions
The family will direct at me, brothers and friends
Of those that into the tomb the Grecian sword sends?

O three and four times buried in unhappiness!
The honour lost that woman glories to possess—
Should I still desire life to perpetuate,
To be an object at once of love and of hate?

Rather, alas, let me hide in the earth’s deep core
Than serve to be the torch of an eternal war:
Since I by my life these hostile flames set ablaze,
Let me quickly douse them by the end of my days.

O warrior enemies, pacify your feud,
Since your mutual hatreds from my case ensued;
Run here, all of you, to seize me with one accord,
And before both your camps let death be my reward.

Of your long sufferings I bear the guilt alone;
Let me, as reason will, by punishment atone:
By that means on both sides content we will remain—
I in enduring, and you in escaping, pain.

Above all your combats let this advice prevail:
O Greeks, O Trojans, your fierce anger countervail,
And if it is not from hate, at least out of kindness,
Accord me death, so pitying your own distress.

Eyes, for my own good too bright, seek obscurity:
The days you render sepulchral no longer see;
Alas, no more to gaze on fair green fields be led,
Which for your sake with blood and death are overspread.

Mouth, you who consented to the loving attention
Of the handsomest shepherd, by whom I was won,47
Now be closed, cease to breathe—the time has come for
dying;

47 Paris had been brought up as a shepherd.
Wretched as you are, are you not weary of sighing?

Ear, you who formerly the charming speeches heard
By which I felt my amorous thoughts being stirred,
Shut out the sound of voices, no longer disbursing
To my tormented soul the agony of cursing.

Let me lose love, with it all other consciousness,
And show it was my destiny’s unhappiness
And not my own will from which these miseries came:
A sin compelled by force must be exempt from blame.

**Chorus [of Women]**

No further, Helen, should you grieve,
Even if there is ample woe:
When Heaven will in pain us leave,
In vain one seeks the cause to know.
Someone who has the best intents
May well the greatest harm create,
But he is free from all offence
In case of accident of Fate.
O beauty, no constraint compels you
To vex your heart with care this way;
Compassion rather is your due,
Whatever words of guilt you say.

[Exit Helen with Chorus of Women]

**Chorus**

The soul that prompt virtue can claim
Is daunted by nothing but shame.
Shame has power to motivate:
All other passions that pass by,
When on duty one keeps one’s eye,
A spirit cannot penetrate.
The man not puffed with arrogance
Has tender heart and countenance;
The wicked flaunts a brow of steel,

---

148 On the probable intervention of a sympathetic female chorus here, see the Introduction, pp. 26-27.
149 This entire chorus is marked for emphasis. Again, the text typographically marks a shift from one sort of chorus to another.
And far from being put to silence,

His boastful mouth gives evidence,

Refusing his crime’s shameful seal.

Of vice the slightest imputation

Which comes to tarnish reputation

By the deceit of others’ judgement,

With grief afflicts the noble soul

In love with glory as its goal,

And is to him a secret torment.

He who for his renown lacks care,

Better or worse spread everywhere,

Is not by honour animated:

What other reward—can you tell?—

May one expect for doing well

Than to be well appreciated?

Why are so many worthy pains

Expended freely by great captains?

Why do men with audacity

Rush in at the sound of alarms,

Except for the glory of arms,

Which promises celebrity.

Is there any who does not long

To be seen apart from the throng

On the Theatre of Honour’s stage?

Who, drinking in the sweet ovations

Served by his own and foreign nations,

Does not enjoy that heritage?

Not that a laudable soul must

Stir at every accusing gust

Which by others’ envy is blown:

The man whom constancy assures

Forever like a cube\(^{150}\) endures,

---

\(^{150}\) Orig. “cube”, which could already convey the metaphorical sense of completeness and resistance to fortune documented from the nineteenth century by *Le trésor de la langue française informatisé* (see s.v.). Another example occurs in Simon Belyard, *Le Guygien ou perfidie tyrannique commise par Henry de Valois es personnes des illustres, reverdiss. & tregenereux Princes Loys de Loraine Cardinal, & Archeuesque de Rheims, & Henry de Loraine Duc de Guyse, grand Maistre de France* (Troyes: Jean Moreau, 1592), p. 16 (Act II).
Firm in his gravity alone.\textsuperscript{151} 
A man who too much feared that tempest
With pain would have his head oppressed,
And his heart would be agitated—
Like the bark that, being too light,
The north wind’s anger puts to flight,
To the salt billows relegated.

Never did one make a good life
Exempt from hate and envy’s strife:
The sun without shade\textsuperscript{152} does not glow;
To race is to stir up the dust;
But always the true light robust
After the night more clear will show.

However dark is slander’s stain,
The power it cannot obtain
To obscure a glory deserved:
Though it arises from the fumes
Of a flame that with force consumes,\textsuperscript{153}
The brilliance will still be preserved.

The high spirit\textsuperscript{154} of reputation,
Become a star by transformation,
Like a fair sun illuminates
From age to age with greater glow,
And never the hint of a shadow
Our sight of that flame obfuscates.

Though Nature by its proper process
Transforms mankind to rottenness
Within the dark depth of his tomb,
If he survives by memory
And the radiance of his glory,
His name will age and also bloom.

\textsuperscript{151} Orig.: “Ferme en sa propre grauité” (p. 42).
\textsuperscript{152} “[W]ithout shade”: orig. “sans ombre” (p. 42), convincingly proposed by Petit de Julleville, ed. (p. 28s, n. to p. 42) as an emendation of the text’s obscure “sous ombre”.
\textsuperscript{153} Orig.: “D’vne flamme bien allumée” (p. 43).
\textsuperscript{154} “[S]pirit”: orig. “vapeur” (p. 43).
Act IV

Andromache, Cassandra, Priam, Hecuba,
[Chorus of Women,69 [Chorus], [Antenor]

[Enter Andromache, Cassandra, Chorus of Women, Chorus156]

**Andromache**

1449 So, then, the cruel villain has abandoned me!
1450 Implacable Fate! And you, day of infamy,
1451 Could you have passed without accomplishing an evil—
1452 One that never had its equal, and never will?
1453 Thus do your157 strokes become impossible to shun?
1454 Turn, O wretched mortals, in every direction;
1455 Come try, if you can, to avoid its mortal blow.
1456 Alas, to whom can I turn, on whose mercy throw
1457 Myself? To what god must you pray in lamentation,
1458 Poor woman, your soul now stricken with devastation,
1459 All sad and grieving—rather, nothing else but grief?
1460 Only the final misery will bring relief.
1461 Withdraw your sweet lights, O heavens, into the air,
1462 Which deceive our desires, make light159 of our prayer.
1463 Will you thus cheat our hope? The brightness that you show—
1464 Must it serve no end but your cruelty to shadow?
1465 But must I only of your cruelty complain?
1466 No, but also of his who seems you to constrain,
1467 By the mad audacity with which his heart fills,
1468 To pour on him the harshest of your deadly ills.
1469 O wretched Hector! The furor, for vengeance pressing,
1470 Of some great Demon drives you, to our sad distressing,

---

155 Any doubt as to the sex of the Chorus that attempts to counsel and console Andromache is removed by Priam's addressing them as “chaste flock”/“chaste troupeau” (l. 1597; p. 47).
156 This Chorus, which I take to be distinct, is presumably that which witnessed Hector’s reaction to the Messenger in the previous act (see ll. 1191-92, 1270-72) and informed Andromache. It is thus in a position to intervene below at ll. 1620 ff.
157 The reference is logically to “Fate” (l. 1450; orig. “Destin” [p. 43]), looking forward also to l. 1455.
158 Ll. 1453-35 are marked for emphasis.
159 The pun is not in the original (“moquer” [p. 43]) but seems worth risking as aptly bitter.
Willingly or not, with the enemy to brawl,
To sacrifice yourself, and in their midst to fall.

Is this how you have rendered your promise performed?
Why, you broke it in the same instant it was formed.

No sooner did the oath out of your mouth proceed
Than it was proved a lie by a contrary deed.

A reverend father’s sacred and firm direction,
An honourable mother’s most tender affection,
The wishes of your relations with friendship burning,
The weeping and sighs of a chaste spouse in her yearning—
In short, a country’s prayers presaging storms ahead:
Are these then merely toys for the wind in your head?

Nothing, it’s clear, the furor of your course abates:
You run towards the precipice where death awaits.

A hard destiny indeed, which against your nature,
Against your gentle temperament, against your nurture,
Makes you presumptuous, prejudiced, obstinate
To accomplish on your own a predestined fate!

When the dread dart of death comes to threaten our head,^{160}

We find that all at once our simple grace has fled,
Our pleasing manners, the native charm we possessed,
To make us rude, distant, furiously obsessed.

O Cassandra, sister, our ruin is close at hand!
You say it loud and clear, with a voice of command,
Making tremble the laurel which adorns your brow.
What was our profit, you as prophet to endow?^{161}

To incredulous Troy you would constantly say
That a single man’s loss would render it a prey.

Your speech will take effect today, and it is grim:

Hector goes off to die, and all will die with him.

^{160} Ll. 1489-92 are marked for emphasis.
^{161} Again, she does not play on words in the original ("l’Oracle en vain pour nous te fut donné" [p. 44]), but this seems in keeping with her distraction.
CASSANDRA

1501 Andromache, cease: if the gods’ own potencies⁶¹
1502 Lack power to prevent the sovereign destinies
1503 Of men born to mortality in their due season⁶³
1504 From their accomplishment, we weep for no good reason.
1505 But tell yourself that the storm which thunders and lightens
1506 Is not yet ready to break out when most it frightens.

ANDROMACHE

1507 Do you expect me with fancies to be consoled?
1508 Too well I retain in my heart what you foretold
1509 To nurture myself still with a foolish vain hope—
1510 As the criminal whom soothing speeches give scope
1511 For folly will not look his verdict in the face,
1512 While a judge is earnestly working on his case.
1513 Oh, mourning we all share! Oh, pain beyond belief!
1514 Oh, courage too rigid! Oh, fortune cursed with grief!
1515 Oh, fond hope that our gods would offer us their aid!
1516 Oh, evil too certain for the Trojans arrayed!
1517 Weep, weep, for your husbands and brothers, O you ladies;
1518 Weep for Troy in fetters, and your own miseries.

CHORUS [OF WOMEN]

1519 Now to your passion you are giving too free rein,
1520 Chaste spouse of Hector, in this excess of your pain,⁶⁴
1521 And render more bitter the wrath, by this vain transport,
1522 Of gods from whom we seek their succour and support.

ANDROMACHE

1523 No more with hopeful charms impede my misery:
1524 All is lost for me; I never again will see
1525 Poor Hector, for whom my soul is seized with distress—
1526 Or if I’m fated to see him, he must be lifeless.
1527 Within me sorrows break like waves successively;

⁶¹ Ll. 1501-6 are marked for emphasis.
⁶³ “[I]n their due season”: orig. “du soir au lendemain” (p. 44).
⁶⁴ Ll. 1520-22 are marked for emphasis.
Within me pains enter like arrows piercingly;
Like tempests within me wild griefs go whirling round;
My heart is perfect hell: all rages there are found.

Chorus [of Women]
Bring these unruly transports into government;
Return to yourself, get free of the violent torment
Plaguing your spirit; when furor thus overflows,
It is like a wild torrent which no pity knows,
Sweeps off all before it, and never stops its course
Until it has vanquished reason by dint of force.

Andromache
If as far as the tomb I’m carried by despair,
That cruel rigour will prove sweet indeed to bear:
For I am fully resolute to die before
Hector—my treasure, my all—is living no more.

Chorus [of Women]
Although that desire your soul may dominate,
Do not act now, O lady magnanimous—wait
To profit from the joy with which your eyes will thrill
When soon, glorious in a chariot, he will,
As the crowd acclaims him with warlike pomp, appear.

Andromache
Rather, he’ll be stretched out upon a long-planked bier,
Ready for the tomb, where he will forever lie.
So have I not good reason if I wish to die?

Chorus [of Women]
Your great apprehension, in which you still persist,
Casts over your spirit a dense and obscure mist
Through which a peril that is trivial and slight
Looms up as a terrible danger in your sight.

Andromache
The soul is not always ignorant of its fate.
CHORUS [of Women]
Such a one knows how to bring on a wretched state.

ANDROMACHE
Mine is of that order, for, to hold nothing back,
Clearer sight of good than evil matters I lack.

CHORUS [of Women]
You need hope to moderate such trepidation;
Therefore, if reason still in you maintains some station,
Gather up all your hope and make those fears depart:
Better to suffer ill than to be faint of heart.\(^{165}\)

ANDROMACHE
Here I see Priam come. O father full of woe,
What strength you have still that grief does not lay you low!

[Enter Priam with Hecuba.]

PRIAM
Hecuba, our Hector chooses us to forsake.

HECUBA
So they have informed me, and with anger I quake.

PRIAM
I’m wary of this day, for setbacks we’ve incurred.

HECUBA
What a great pity that he could not be deterred!

PRIAM
That is also the point that preys most on my mind.

\(^{165}\) The line is marked for emphasis.
HECTOR

O good gods! Turn aside this threat of Fate unkind!

PRIAM

What can keep a noble spirit behind a fence?\(^{166}\)

HECUBA

And yet at other times he seemed to have good sense.

PRIAM

He still does; it’s only that for honour he burns.

HECUBA

It’s by use of reason well-being one discerns.\(^{167}\)

PRIAM

He always holds out hope that Mars will be his friend.

HECUBA

Many in that hope come to a pitiful end.

PRIAM

Great author of combats, may it please you stand by him!

HECUBA

And may you, saviour Jupiter, your aid supply him!

PRIAM

Let us see if someone can surer news provide.

HECUBA

There’s his Andromache, Cassandra at her side.

PRIAM

You’re right, Hecuba, let’s approach—they are well met.

\(^{166}\) This line is marked for emphasis.

\(^{167}\) This line is marked for emphasis.
HECUBA
1580 My daughters, come and tell us: why are you upset?

ANDROMACHE
1581 We mourn, O venerable queen, what we foresee:
1582 Our noble Hector’s lamentable misery.

HECUBA
1583 Why do you weep at the height of his happiness?

PRIAM
1584 No one who lives with honour can be in distress.168

ANDROMACHE
1585 There is no greater misfortune than life to lose.

PRIAM
1586 Still greater is to have a life that shame pursues.
1587 But what makes you conclude that this must be in store?

ANDROMACHE
1588 I’m surer of it than I ever was before.

PRIAM
1589 The hands of heaven the web of his fate control.

ANDROMACHE
1590 You’ll never see him again—or just without soul.

HECUBA
1591 O gods, what do I hear? Is he already dead?

ANDROMACHE
1592 No, but to bring relief to our camp he has sped.

168 Ll. 1584-86 are marked for emphasis.
HECUBA

1593 In this danger extreme, as extreme was the folly
1594 To have left him alone, replete with melancholy,
1595 Eating out his heart with regret and bitter envy.

PRIAM

1596 No one is to blame: in himself the fault we see.
1597 But you, chaste flock, change to prayers your tears of
   fright:
1598 It’s hardly just now he finds himself in the fight.
1599 Then, those whom the gods have taken into their care
1600 Have not lacked support truly needed for their welfare.
1601 But how did he get out? Do you know what occurred?

ANDROMACHE

1602 I went down to the temple; scarcely had I entered,
1603 To enquire of the gods if their bitter ire
1604 Toward Hector, and ourselves, continued still so dire,
1605 When suddenly my ears met with a roaring sound.
1606 I left, and the people in a frenzy I found
1607 As never before: their breasts\footnote{169} they beat, beards they
tear;
1608 Women, girls, and children petrified here and there,
1609 Imprinted with terrors, lamenting beyond bournes,
1610 Dashing wildly to touch the sacred altar-horns,
1611 Kissing the feet of the gods, soaking them with tears.
1612 I, whom a fresh inkling about these novel fears
1613 Struck on the instant, as soon as I heard some say
1614 That the Trojan camp was fleeing in disarray
1615 And, failing my Hector’s aid, was sure to be crushed,
1616 Guessing he would likely leave, to our lodging rushed,
1617 So that, if anger risked carrying him away,
1618 He might by my tears be distracted from the fray.
1619 I arrived, but too late; he had already gone.
1620 Alas, I can speak no longer; please, you go on.\footnote{170}

\footnote{169} “[B]reasts”: orig. “l’estomach” (p. 48), which gives as ridiculous an effect in modern French as it
\footnote{170} She presumably calls on the second Chorus; see above, n. 156.
Chorus

1621 No sooner had your Hector heard the dismal message
1622 Of his men’s rout than he boiled with violent rage
1623 And, speaking not a word, ran to the nearby rack
1624 Quickly and eagerly, then put upon his back
1625 Bright-glittering armour, in his hand took a spear.

Hecuba

1626 You should have restrained his valour’s fatal career.”

Chorus

1627 He appeared so formidable in that array
1628 That no one gave a thought to standing in his way.
1629 He ran straight to the stable, with his own hands deigned
1630 To equip his horse, then the open country gained.

Priam

1631 What we can do, rather than stay lamenting here,
1632 Is to invoke for him the gods whom we revere.

Andromache

1633 Priam, it is not enough when misfortunes press*
1634 To implore their favour and sleep in idleness,
1635 Head on a feather-pillow; they are deaf and mute
1636 To those who don’t help themselves but to them make suit.

Priam

1637 But in this situation, what more can I do?

Andromache

1638 Make use of your sceptre, and his wisdom renew.

Priam

1639 Have we not already that means employed in vain?

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* “[V]alour’s fatal career”: orig. “nuisible vaillance” (p. 48), which, translated literally (“harmful valour”), would not carry the same ominous charge.

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** Ll. 1633-36 are marked for emphasis.
Andromache

1640  At least, he had agreed with us here to remain.

Priam

1641  His feeble promise has brought us what benefit?

Andromache

1642  His loss of control, not himself, transgresses it.

Priam

1643  By my authority I could not hold him back.

Andromache

1644  By your authority, countermand his attack.

Priam

1645  Reason’s voice is drowned out by the clamour of arms.\textsuperscript{173}

Andromache

1646  The soul is chilled with fear at the sound of alarms.

Priam

1647  Spirits strong and active to furor they enkindle.

Andromache

1648  Danger makes the greatest boldness with wisdom dwindle.

Priam

1649  He is always the last to withdraw in retreat.

Andromache

1650  But see that he does not initiate defeat.

Priam

1651  I hope Fate will not deal to me such grievous woe.

\textsuperscript{173}  Ll. 1645-48 are marked for emphasis.
Andromache
Then hasten, Priam, to prevent his overthrow.

Priam
I fear I will be causing him eternal shame.

Andromache
Must his safety, I pray you, be called by that name?

Priam
Now that they’ve seen him appear, what will the Greeks say—?

Andromache
That they can see him again, and he’ll make them pay.

Priam
—Then vanish at once, as a lightning flash is gone?

Andromache
That he reserves himself to fight them later on.

Priam
An act of cowardice it may well be esteemed.

Andromache
Whatever the price to pay, let him be redeemed!

Priam
But what constant spirit would consent to commit
A real fault for a scarce-imagined benefit?

Andromache
All possible means we may certainly condone:
His life is at stake, and the safety of his own.
Priam
1665 One must maintain one’s honour as a sacred thing.174

Andromache
1666 The enemy’s blows no disgrace to it can bring.

Priam
1667 But someone who aspires thoroughly to please
1668 Cannot afford the blame of friends or enemies.

Andromache
1669 The ardour to please all that glory gives someone
1670 Is often a reason he ends by pleasing none.

Priam
1671 The wicked man has nothing but his self-contempt;
1672 The good man at all times remains from change exempt.

Andromache
1673 A sound judgement does not consider it does ill
1674 In avoiding adroitly an imminent peril.

Priam
1675 When judgement of many an action is proclaimed,
1676 Not knowing what the cause is, the effect is blamed.

Andromache
1677 No commander to general scrutiny needs
1678 Disclose the inward reasons that govern his deeds.

Priam
1679 Yes, for honour’s sake: he who of that takes no care
1680 Must of sowing doubts in suspicious minds beware.

Andromache
1681 Everyone knows Hector has too lofty a soul.

---

174 Ll. 1165-80 are marked for emphasis.
His retreat as a culpable fault to enrol.

Priam

1683 The more a man for his perfections garners praises,
1684 The more his actions attract penetrating gazes.

Andromache

1685 Then they’ll learn that to Destiny invincible
1686 He wisely yields: is this a fact so terrible?

Priam

1687 Rather, they’ll judge that his spirit, feeble and
trembling,
1688 Basely gives way to fear, its true motive dissembling.

Andromache

1689 Unbelieving Priam! Is that how you refer
1690 To that form divine who deigns with men to confer,
1691 That genuine hero to whom the sun bears witness?
1692 All right, so much for Hector: let my eye caress
1693 That face of his never again. Not me alone
1694 Does his life concern, but his father hard as stone,
1695 His mother, his relations, his obstinate friends,
1696 For their disdain of him will meet with wretched ends.
1697 And yet, O good gods, since his own father, no less,
1698 His mother and family, blind to their distress,
1699 Seem to outdo themselves in countering his welfare,
1700 Let my death precede his own—that is all my prayer!

Priam

1701 I attribute these words to your tender intent,
1702 Which rate, however, as foolish and impudent;
1703 My love for your husband by all is recognised,
1704 That by Hecuba and his kin he is all-prized;
1705 My court respects, admires him, proud to embrace
The mainstay of Troy and the honour of his race.

But consider a little what makes him so deemed,

Sought out by the nobles, by the people esteemed:

It is neither his beauty nor his grandeur royal;

It is his rare virtue which marches without equal.

So, spoiling the fruit from which his happiness springs,

He would not reap that harvest of honour it brings.

But, notwithstanding, let all be done as she would:

I do not wish to spare anything for his good.

Idaeus, run to the field where our bloody frays

Spill lives, as fortune the hazard of combat sways,

And there find Hector for me, who seeks by his prowess

To renew the Trojans' will the Greeks back to press.

When you have located him, summon him from me

To try nothing further; cite the fell destiny

With which this day threatens him; his wife to mind call,

Who, with his mother and friends, foreseeing their downfall,

Laments his departure, and all unite to conjure

Him with thousands of prayers the combat to abjure.

Afterwards, counsel him the army to revoke:

Say that his effort might as well go up in smoke,

And that in losing our men we would nothing earn

Excepting our misfortune. Go, then, and return.

Chorus

It will take a stroke of luck to make him depart.

When the spur of honour works on a valiant heart,

Nothing can tear it from the combat's bloody throes,

In case victory's palm to his enemy goes.

177 "Idaeus" (orig. "Ide") is the chief herald of Priam; see esp. Iliad, VII.381 ff.; he figures as well in bk. XXIV with regard to Hector's funeral arrangements, but without being named.

178 "[T]o the field": orig. "sur le champ" (p. 51); the expression may simply mean "right away" — a usage that Le trésor de la langue française informatisé dates from 1538 (see s.v. "champ") — although the context suggests otherwise.

179 "Spill lives": orig. "se vuident" (p. 51), which can be used of profuse bleeding (see Le trésor de la langue française informatisé, s.v. "vider").

180 "[S]pur": orig. "aguillon [sic]" (p. 51)/"goad".

181 Ll. 1730-32 are marked for emphasis.
Priam

1733 Do I not see Antenor making his approach?

Hecuba

1734 There he is indeed.

[Enter Antenor.]

Priam

1735 O old man without reproach,
1736 Where have you come from, I pray? Do you know her spouse,
1737 To risk harm in combat, has slipped out of the house?

Antenor

1737 No one informed me, but I knew by circumstance:
1738 I quickly recognised the shaking of his lance
1739 And the terrible feathered crest his helmet bore,
1740 Which served at once our Trojans' courage to restore.

Priam

1741 What, have you seen him already, there in the throng?

Antenor

1742 No—plunging like lightning among the Greeks headlong.

Andromache

1743 I fear that in the end, by such a lightning blow,
1744 He also will be despatched to the shades below.

Antenor

1745 Without him all is lost: it would be Troy's last day.

Priam

1746 How did he appear to you? Tell us that, I pray.

Antenor

1747 I was separated from him, slightly ahead;
1748 To go out today was the last thing in my head,
1749 But I wanted to see the fortune of our army,
And how the bravest warriors performed their duty.
A tower’s height gave me an observation post:
At once I sensed general stirring in our host;
All was giving way in every place; I felt doubt,
Fearing to see the Trojans in a shameful rout,
Within myself swayed by something like the same movement
As wafted our army in its astonishment—
Then suddenly your magnanimous Hector spied,
On a warhorse mounted with the spur well applied,
Raising dust in the field and heading for the fray,
With horror, fear and death companions on his way.
Through our army with energy he thrust a passage,
And they, inflamed instantly with rekindled courage,
Repulsed the enemy, giving active pursuit.
In the blink of an eye, in front I saw him shoot,
Above all the Trojans, by head and shoulders highest,
Streaking like lightning, likewise followed by a tempest—
Or rather, a thunderbolt striking all with fears,
And with his blows shattering lances, pikes and spears.\(^{182}\)
With strong Ajax and Diomedes, known for prowess,
He fought hand-to-hand, but the skill of both proved less;
Nestor and Meriones sought to block his blows:
That was a weak rampart his fury to oppose.
Against him then came the elder Atreides,\(^{183}\)
Whom he passed over like the wind upon the seas.
Then he thrust himself in among the common sort:
His mere looks made them scatter and to flight resort,
As when a lion, driven by hunger and rage,
Comes upon flocks that have been left to pasturage,
Then drives them dashing off in terrified surprise,
The moment their faces meet his furious eyes.
Our men went with him, to their true valour restored,
And through the field like a ravaging torrent poured.

\(^{182}\) “[L]ances, pikes and spears”: orig. “lances, piques et dars” (p. 53). As is confirmed by ll. 1791 ff., the “lance” imagined is that of medieval warfare and jousting, in keeping with the recycling of Homeric material generally.

\(^{183}\) I.e., Agamemnon, the younger son of Atreus being Menelaus.
When that transcendent star of war gleams in his eye.

After Hector had run a long while through the press,

He perceived Achilles, whom he moved to address,

Prepared his lance; Achilles, on the other hand,

With half the field, as it happened, at his command,

Ashamed to refuse terrain so apt for their fight,

Sought to keep his shame hidden by seeming upright

And took up his position. They both rode direct

To clash together, but it was to no effect:

The wood flew up in splinters, and the stout grips broke,

Left all alone in their hands, stunned by the great stroke.

They tossed them in the air, urged their keen horses’ pace,

Turned short towards each other and finished face to face,

Brandishing fearful swords already, firmly clenched,

Which a thousand times an enemy’s blood had drenched.

Each goes at the other; at their resounding blows,

A terrible clamour throughout the air then echoes.

Four naked Cyclops hammering an iron bar

With huge repeated strokes would not make such a jar.

As one perceives two powerful bulls in the spring,

Which want a heifer, outdo each other in roaring

With anger, desire and ardent jealousy—

One comes to claim possession, snorting raucously,

The other opposes, but after a few blows,

To the first the right of sole mate and master goes—

So the great Hector, who was boiling hot with rage,

At last stood victor, saw Achilles disengage,

To his rival the field and the honour concede,

And return to his troop at his horse’s best speed.

And unless he bore a wound, my eye was deceived,

In either the lower belly or thigh received.

Hector pursued, cried, “Achilles, where are you off to?

So, turning away your face is an act of virtue?

---

184 The imputation of “shame” (orig. “honte” [p. 53]) is evidently anticipatory.
185 According to a common legend, the Cyclops were the monstrous giants who assisted Hephaestus (or Vulcan) in his smithy, often imagined as located within Mt Aetna.
At least avenge Menoitius’ dear son—or try!—
Who breaks the shades’ silence with his complaining cry.”
Those were his words. Now everywhere his steps he bends,
Then retraces them, so traversing from both ends
The enemy and, not pausing in any place,
Drives forth the fierce Myrmidons flight or death to face.
From that comes my hope that, with aid the gods provide,
Today will see the victory fall to our side.

**PRIAM**

O honourable old man, pray heaven may hear you,
Lending its right arm to what we ourselves can do!
As your sure report has never led me astray,
So may my son have escaped from his fate today.

**CHORUS**

God with an obscure mist conceals
All that is destined to occur.
A fine day falls in dead of winter;
A storm the summer’s calm repeals.
One cannot point at with one’s finger
That which within Time’s womb may linger.
The soul, at sudden moments struck
With lively joy or trepidation,
Always with fickle vacillation
In between hope and fear is stuck,
As the vessel rocked by the seas
The anchor cannot put at ease.
Sometimes its strength gives way to weakness;
Sometimes too much vigour it shows;
Sometimes the heart with its help grows;
Sometimes it quite forgets its boldness,
As a wind that favours, or not,
Forward or back assigns its lot.

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186 I.e., Achilles’ favourite, Patroclus, killed by Hector.
187 The entire Chorus is marked for emphasis.
1847 O happy is the state of mind
1848 That hope eschews along with care,
1849 And likewise which avoids despair,
1850 Unable to be undermined
1851 When human chance seems to conspire
1852 From its hands to snatch its desire.
1853 For such, disaster makes no sense,
1854 Nor a rebel in mutiny,
1855 Nor diverse strokes of Destiny,
1856 Nor any ill star's influence:
1857 Although one may attempt to spite him
1858 To his own good all things invite him.
1859 His speeches, dictated by prudence,
1860 Pay attention to high and low,
1861 Though he can hardly fail to know
1862 The limited intelligence
1863 Of those whose knowledge and whose age
1864 May cause them to appear more sage.
1865 If a result thwarts his intent,
1866 That does not his conviction dull,
1867 Or unawares his spirit lull
1868 To match the evil newly present;
1869 But, never by surprise beguiled,
1870 To what he sees is reconciled.
1871 By stark contrast, a feeble soul
1872 At the first gust may be affected,
1873 And though he nothing has neglected,
1874 In his despair may lose control,
1875 As if the cleverest of men
1876 Of his fate could be sovereign.
1877 Blind in his knowledge's pretence,
1878 His inner peace perturbed by passion,
1879 He holds forth in digressive fashion
1880 On the bizarre experience,
1881 Thinking to some fixed law to bend
1882 What on himself does not depend.
1883 Thus locked in his vain stubbornness,
1884 Should it happen that his emotion
1885 Deceives him in his newfound notion,
Now plunged into double distress,
To all pressures he opens wide,
Both those within and from outside.

Truly man's is a wretched state,
Man is the object of all sorrows,
If he anticipates those woes
He should with stable stance await,
To suffer with no word opposed
Whatever is on him imposed.
Act V

Priam, Hecuba, [Andromache], [Messenger],
[Chorus of Women], [Chorus]

[Enter Priam and Hecuba.]

PRIAM

1895 The end of our troubles, Hecuba, we can see:
1896 Hector by valour has escaped from Destiny;
1897 His arm meets no more obstacles; with ease it sped
1898 Through the Greek ranks, which it filled with masses of
dead.
1899 Though this combat gave me many anxieties,
1900 My spirits now rejoice, thanks to hope’s gentle breeze.

HECUBA

1901 Our heart is very often prone to false alarms,\textsuperscript{188}
1902 And our eyes pour forth tears at the mere thought of
harms;
1903 When it seizes our feelings, a fear based on fiction
1904 Is equal in its torments to a true affliction.

PRIAM

1905 I have the proof today, for that imagined ill,
1906 From which my spirit frees itself little by little,
1907 More than any other trouble has caused me woe:
1908 It is just when one loves dearly that one fears so.\textsuperscript{189}

HECUBA

1909 When all is going well there is reason to fear.
1910 If rigorous Fate caused Hector to disappear,
1911 Either by the sword or grief our lot would be death,
1912 For as he has life from us, from him we have breath.

\textsuperscript{188} Ll. 1901-4 are marked for emphasis.
\textsuperscript{189} The line is marked for emphasis.
Priam

1913 Good fortune and glory justly measure your worth
1914 Because to that great-minded hero you gave birth,
1915 Whose immortal name, carried to places far-flung,
1916 From one age to the next by mortals shall be sung.

Hecuba

1917 Your fortune mine exceeds: the son by everyone
1918 Is judged by the father, the father by the son;
1919 One never thinks a man of noble quality
1920 Might be engendered by blood weak and cowardly.

Priam

1921 Destiny him to us for all our safety sends:
1922 Ours is the honour, but to all Troy it extends;
1923 For not just his parents in his fortunes take part,
1924 But honour to the country at large they impart.

Hecuba

1925 However would it manage without that great captain,
1926 Who only for its restful peace endures such pain?
1927 And ourselves, Priam, what disaster would we court
1928 Without invincible Hector’s faithful support?

Priam

1929 I count my Troy truly fortunate among cities,
1930 Not for its many illustrious families,
1931 Nor its walls, which the gods’ hands deigned to edify,
1932 Nor its lofty towers, which reach up to the sky,
1933 Nor its expanse of lands, nor treasures in great store,
1934 But for harbouring in it that great man of war,
1935 Who always as a blessèd flame will cheer the gloom,
1936 When Troy entire must be nothing but a tomb.

Hecuba

1937 It gives extreme pleasure to fathers in old age\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{190}}

\textsuperscript{190} “[F]athers in old age”: orig. “bonnes gens de Peres” (p. 57), in which Petit de Julleville, ed., p. 285,
That vigorous sons pursuing their heritage
Should constantly the toilsome steps of duty trace,
When, weak and infirm, they cannot keep up the pace.
And I think the glory so many combats yield
To your son, who best of all his weapons can wield,
Tickles your heart as much as those great honours do
That your strong victorious arm once brought to you.

PRIAM
No, never so much pleasure my spirit obtained
By having in open field advantages gained
(Though from warriors well skilled, I took in my day
A great number of laurels with my sword away),
As when my dear Hector after some victory
Returns within the walls filled with honour and glory,
As in triumph, and after him are seen to trail
A hundred captive men-at-arms with fear still pale.

HECUBA
I, who have never known what precious happiness
Fills the soul’s senses after victory’s success,
The means of such comparison am bound to lack;
But when I perceive him to his house coming back,
Soaked with sweat mingled with dust from the battlefield,
I feel more pleasure than the wedding rites would yield
Of my dearest daughter, were happy fate to grant
Her marriage with a prince agreeable and valiant.

PRIAM
Sometimes a misfortune may prove profitable:
If the harsh hand of Destiny inevitable
Had not poured so many troubles upon our head,
Hector’s full worth we would not have appreciated.

Hecuba

The pilot one neglects in weather fair and calm,\(^{194}\)
And the warrior in peacetime garners no palm;
By contrast, we reckon his strength and value just
In a hard-fought field, his harvest of honour trust.

Priam

That life is truly fairer and more glorious
Which divers accidents render laborious:
For the torch of glory, though in the air raised higher,
Unless strongly shaken, will never catch on fire.

Hecuba

A life that is lived in tempests of human stress,
Amidst the fatal storms of manifold distress,
Gives reason to be talked of more extensively
Than another from such torment exempt and free.
But my own desire rather my choice directs
To fulfil an equable life in all respects,
Than to travel a road rugged and tortuous,
As is feigned to be the path of the virtuous:
For man with a portion of grace divine is born,
Which plucks, without being pricked, the rose on the thorn.

Priam

Subjected to corruption would be the great ocean
If it were always sleeping without any motion;
Thus the soul languishes, by idleness infected,
If by cares and exertion it is not affected.

Hecuba

As a little exercise to health is conducive,
While too much the body senses to be abusive,

\(^{194}\) Ll. 1965-94 are marked for emphasis.
A little ill benefits our experience,
But to suffer too greatly overtaxes patience.

**Priam**

If the heart of mortals were not somewhat inured
To the nature of the evils they here endured,
To still more violent pains they would be exposed
By their thoughts with the evils themselves juxtaposed.
Examples abound—we offer one plain to see:
The wrath implacable of adverse Destiny
Has pursued us so doggedly for many years
That to our miseries no hopeful end appears.

Of a good many sons, my own glorious offspring,
Whose promise seemed to the heavens it would them bring,
The greater part, by the Grecian thunderbolts felled,
In the dust before Troy before my eyes were quelled.
My sons-in-law, whom my cause to the fight enticed,
Their souls at the foot of Mount Ida sacrificed.
The allied princes come my defence to assume
Possess, almost all, Scamander's waves for a tomb,
And of those brave captains, those soldiers admirable,
Who once within our ramparts swarmed innumerable,
There remain to us only the ones whom blind Fortune,
By her favour, from the common loss kept immune—
And possibly the urn by which Destiny chooses
Reserves for evening those it earlier excuses.

Of all vanities, the vainest of all is man:
His glory is a phantom, his life a short span.

**Hecuba**

O luminous fair eye of the vagabond sun,
Have you even seen a fate equal to this one?
But Priam, do not refresh my sad memory
With our long sufferings' pitiful history.
Allow me to savour a moment of repose,
Since the Greek army to my Hector its back shows.

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195 L. 2013-14 are marked for emphasis.
Enough by far we've had of other confrontations,
Causes for sighing and for weeping lamentations,
And since with this one a flower or two appears
Of hope and pleasure, let us not drown them with tears.
More evil than good by heaven to man is sent:”\(^{196}\)
Let us never cut back on our passing enjoyment
And foolishly add to sorrows of too long season;
That would be to torment oneself without a reason.

**Priam**

Well, then, let us drive these sorrowful thoughts away,
Which only serve the ulcer in our souls as prey:
It is wise for man by such means to seek relief,”\(^{97}\)
If not from his misfortune, at least from his grief.

**Hecuba**

I feel a trembling still in my mistrustful soul,
Recalling that war’s outcome is beyond control,
And that danger still menaces my precious son:
O gods, from such concern, come grant me liberation!

**Priam**

In my heart an ardent impulse again you've fanned
To go and welcome him, to extend my right hand,
To enfold him in these arms, to accord him honour
For vanquishing Achilles in this last encounter.

**Hecuba**

Hear that tumultuous confusion in the street—
It's the applause with which his arrival they greet.
Now let us run forward, Priam, no longer stay.

**Priam**

But wait, there is Andromache, coming our way.

\(^{196}\) Ll. 2025-28 are marked for emphasis.
\(^{197}\) Ll. 2031-32 are marked for emphasis.
Hecuba

2045 Oh, her quick paces show how the poor thing is pressed!

Priam

2046 Good gods! She begins to lament and beat her breast!

Hecuba

2047 Could the fortunes of Troy have done an about-face?

Priam

2048 Her features are a certain sign that is the case.

[Enter Andromache.]

Andromache

2049 You, tumult, are the harbinger of some mischance!

Hecuba

2050 Fortune has turned—it’s in Andromache’s appearance.

Andromache

2051 Some evil from this sign of yours must be inferred.¹⁹⁸

Priam

2052 Alas, what new fatal disaster has occurred?

Andromache

2053 But I cannot know whom it most closely concerns.

Hecuba

2054 Daughter, what trouble so your temper overturns?

Andromache

2055 Madam, the people in disorder one can spy,
2056 Scurrying here and there, with “All is lost!” their cry.

¹⁹⁸ Orig.: “Vn malheur incertain par toy nous est connu” (p. 60). She is continuing to apostrophise the “Tumult”/”Tumulte” (p. 60). Arguably, she speaks ll. 2049, 2051 and 2053 aside.
Priam

Have you not enquired the cause of this dismay?

Andromache

Enough, but all in vain; for each one shrinks away.

Priam

This may amount to nothing but a baseless terror:
False news can put the people in a state of furor.\textsuperscript{199}

Andromache

Such noisy sighing throughout the heavens resounds
That one cannot suppose they lament on no grounds.

[Enter Messenger.]

Hecuba

This man coming here the turmoil will clarify.

Priam

Listen, he’s about to speak.

Andromache

Ah, Madam, I die!

Messenger

What stroke of bitter anguish transfixes my heart!
I am wretched indeed the message to impart
Of your new disaster, O—Troy no more I say,
But of these cursed Greeks the booty and the prey!
O aged good King Priam, alas, with what ear
Word of your loss incomparable could you hear?
O honoured Hecuba, where will your spirits flee
When you come to know him taken by Destiny?
Woeful Andromache, when of his death you know,
As I tell it, what will you be? Trojans, let go,
From this moment let go the sinews of your strength:\textsuperscript{200}
Their life-source\textsuperscript{201} lies stretched out on the ground at full length.

HECUBA

Ah, I have no more son—O mother miserable!

PRIAM

What tremor freezes me, O father lamentable!

[Andromache faints.]

CHORUS [of Women]

Andromache, Andromache!—her force gives way;
Let us take her inside, sisters, without delay.
It is just as well: in this way she need not hear
This message of death of which she has had such fear.

[Andromache is carried off by the Chorus of Women]

PRIAM

At this instant, by sheer amazement staggered quite,
I suddenly feel all my spirits taking flight!

MESSENGER

How is Andromache? Fainted, carried inside?
Oh, three, four times happier for her to have died,
That most prudent princess, before her mind was filled
With dismal knowledge of how her dear spouse was killed!

HECUBA

O cruel report, by which I too feel struck down!
Have the Greeks, then, not seized and occupied this town,
After its strongest rampart they have overthrown,
While he sighs out his wounded life somewhere unknown?

\textsuperscript{200} “[S]inews of your strength”: orig. “nerfs de ta vertu” (p. 61), where the physicality of the image inclines “vertu”, as often, toward the sense of “manly strength”.

\textsuperscript{201} “[L]ife-source”: orig. “Celui qui l’animoit” (p. 61).
HECTOR: TRAGEDY

2093 Messenger
What good would it do to grant your vain hope a chance?
Hector is dead, the only source of Troy’s assurance.

2095 Priam
Into what abyss of cares has my heart been tossed!
My son, my belovèd Hector, have I then lost?—
My glory and support, security and joy,
He who alone was the sword and buckler of Troy?
Surely, the grief of mourning my heart finds so strong
Must count as my reproach for having lived too long.

2101 Hecuba
Priam, poor Priam, what more is left for us two?
We are ruined—only despair for me can ensue.
Having laid in the tomb many a valiant son,
Finally to lose the greatest, most able one
Who ever wielded sword! O sorrow without end.
Hector, dear Hector—but in vain my voice I send.
You can hear me no longer; your ear and your eye
An eternal sleep has come now to stupify.
I suffocate with pain, and my soul’s weakened state
Its bodily ties begins to attenuate.

2111 Priam
Messenger, let not your view of our dreadful pain
Keep you from going on to tell how he was slain.

2113 Messenger
Hector had already driven off the Greek forces,
Which back to their ships were bending their fleeing courses,
And even the strongest the boastful Greeks could claim
Withdrew, without courage and without voice, in shame,
Wounded in the thigh. Great numbers of men-at-arms,
Trembling with cold fear, to the ground threw down their arms,\(^\text{202}\)

\(^{202}\) Ll. 2017-18: the rhyme in the original is on “Gendarmes”/“armes” (p. 62).
Preferring by their flight survival to assure,
Than to stand fast and then a sudden fall procure,
When to the Phrygians these words he paused to state:
“Summon up your courage, my friends: your ancient hate
Itself must perish here; conclude, if you’re unwilling,
By a shameful rout, or else by the ruthless killing
Of these Greeks in flight, who wrongly, with brutal hand,
Already for twice five years have ravaged your land.
Let’s send these outlaws to shadowy Acheron
To load up the feeble skiff of the boatman Charon,
Till, as the masses pile on, his patience gives way,
And rudely with his long pole he shoves them away.
Lay on, strike and slaughter, courageous citizens,
Earn for yourselves today the distinction of Trojans.”
He finished speaking; then, with utmost courage unfurled,
Alone on the Achaians’ camp himself he hurled
And, with blows redoubled, dealt out a coffin’s place
To all that with his tongue or eye he could not chase.

As when a falcon, borne upon his wings in flight,
Finds a flock of feeble doves fixed within his sight,
Returning from the fields with a sure sweeping movement,
As they stir the waves of the windy element,
Down upon the timid flock he lets himself fall:
Most of them flee readily at their panic’s call,
Become prey to other birds, but those that he hits,
Using beak and claws, on the ground he tears to bits:
Just so, when Hector fell upon the Argive army,
On the field it was scattered here and there to see,
But those who encountered his steps as he swept by
Were sure, by either his sword’s edge or point, to die.

Now strong Diomedes203 and Hipponoos204 the brave

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203 If Diomedes (i.e., “Diomède”) is indeed the personage intended by the original’s “Diomène”, as reasonably supposed by Petit de Julleville, ed., p. 385, n. to p. 65, all accounts appear to have him outliving Hector. But as the editor indicates, several names in this passage are deformed or merely fanciful. The sequence itself is invented, but behind it may lie the account in Iliad, XI.284 ff. of a Trojan triumph including an exhortation by Hector, a simile comparing him to a destructive force of nature (a storm), and a list of those he killed. Diomedes also plays a prominent role.

204 Orig. “Hippide” (p. 65). I borrow from the list in Iliad, XI.299-303, which also includes Autonoos (l. 2151), orig. “Antonoe” (p. 65).
By his murderous arm had been sent to a grave;
Autonoos and Ienteus, both in jousts distinguished,
From the radiance of the heavens he had banished;
And the brave Sthenelus, struck by his sword, in turning,
A wound cut into his thigh felt painfully burning,
When the skilled Polybetes sought to interpose,
Showed himself, resolute, and wished to try his blows.

Then a fierce combat between them got underway,
And their arms began an incessant interplay.
Hector, by such a hindrance his wrath set alight,
Summoned up his strength, threw still more into the fight;
As for Polybetes, to vengeance self-ordained,
All dangers like a raging lion he disdained,
Leapt all around Hector, tried him, and again tried,
Probed where defects in his gleaming armour might hide,
Struck at the most noble places, but unaware
That in that fierce conflict he left himself too bare,
While Hector meanwhile did nothing else but consider
In what part the most mortal stroke he might deliver.
That done, at once his belly felt the blade applied,
There where the navel upon itself turns inside.
That instant he staggered, and nothing his fall broke,
But his body, careening, did as the split oak
When it hit the earth, provoking a greater jolt

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205 "Ienteus": orig. “Ientée” (p. 65); unidentified.
206 "Sthenelus" (orig. "Stenelle [p. 63]"), associated with Diomedes; see, e.g., Iliad, V.106 ff.
207 Orig. "Polybete" (p. 63), whom Petit de Julliéville, ed., p. 385, n. to p. 63, identifies as the son of Pirithoos. The correct form would then be Polyoipites, but no doubt Montchrestien simply took the name from other accounts of the episode. In Le Fèvre, trans. Caxton, the Greek “baron” is not named but "moche queynly and richely armed" (bk. III, fol. xxx'). In Benoît de Sainte-Maure, Le roman de Troie, ed. Léopold Constans, 4 vols (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1904-12), vol. III, ll. 16155 ff., Polybetès is a strong and valiant warrior from the Caucuses, arrayed in a fabulous armour which makes Hector "coveitos [covetous]" (l. 16178); Christine de Pizan, Epistre Othea, ed. Gabriella Parussa (Geneva: Droz, 1999), makes him a rich and powerful king and moralises covetousness as the cause of the death of Hector, as of many others (sect. 92 [pp. 329-30]). Dares the Phrygian does not mention the rich armour but specifies the perhaps pertinent physical detail of Polybete’s soldierly agility—see Dares Phrygius, L’histoire véritable de la guerre des Grecs et des Troyens, etc., trans. Charles de Bourgueville (Caen: B. Macé, 1572), p. 46: “Capitaine brusque, & vaillant”—cf. above, l. 2163. Montchrestien’s account of his fall to earth and his size seems to carry a trace of gigantic stature; he would have known that Polybotes was one of the giants who rebelled against Zeus and was duly punished.
Than a mountain spruce struck down by a thunderbolt.
Hector with a ravished eye measured out his height,
Brandished the feathered crest in the air clear and bright
That belonged to the shining helmet on the ground,
Which longed to have that star of war with it be
crowned.
He prodded several times the body stretched out dead
To see if spirit and voice had forever fled;
Then he had one of his soldiers recuperate
The gleaming armour in all its glorious weight;

[Andromache re-enters.]\(^2\)

But as he bent down and the helmet went to take,
Achilles loomed behind, a position to stake,
Watched his every movement with minute observation
And, spotting his body in an arching formation
Above the ground, such force to a thrust did impart
That the sword went through the side as far as the heart.
Hector turned on the instant, attempted a blow,
But through his wound he felt his soul already flow.

**Priam**

O disaster—calamity prepared by heaven!
O death devised by the gods, as well as by men!
O treason of the Greeks! Breech of the law of arms!
Was it Hector’s lot to incur his fatal harms,
Not in fair combat, but by the stroke perfidious
Of a brutal butcher less strong than treacherous?
Juno, let your fury now at last be assuaged!\(^3\)

**Messenger**

That is not all, Priam: so violently he raged,
He practised such great cruelty—can I declare it?
And as for you, grief-stricken father, can you bear it?—
That he performed a crime which would seem horrible

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\(^2\) The moment of Andromache’s re-entrance is not textually mandated. We know she is on stage at ll. 228s, but she seems to have assimilated the essentials of Achilles’ treachery—hence my conjecture.

\(^3\) The implacable hatred of Juno (Greek Hera) for the Trojans originated with the so-called Judgement of Paris, who gave the prize for beauty to Venus (Aphrodite). Cf. *Iliad*, XXIV.25-30.
To all that hell contains of the most terrible:
Savage abuse his arm deals the corpse of his prize,
Dishonouring the forehead, putting out the eyes—
Indeed, he’d have kept up his bloody strokes of rage,
Had knightly Menon not put a stop to that outrage.¹¹

PRIAM
What sense has honour now? The Manes violate!
Without respect or shame, cadavers mutilate!
To slaughter him, crush him and disfigure him so
That his features no longer as human we know!
Now you may truly say, O coward cruelty,
That you surpass yourself in inhumanity!
So, heinous felon!¹²³ Never did Thetis you bear,
Although the cruel waves remain always your lair;
Although by old Peleus as his son received,
In the heart of Caucasian rock you were conceived;
And then a tigress, forgetting her proper race,
Suckled you, not with milk, but with blood in its place.

MESSENGER
As a roaring torrent, spilling into the fields,
Flows less violently if one to the water yields
Than if villagers pile obstacles in its course;
In that case, its haughty flood flaunts its angry force,
Strikes, shocks and rages, as it attempts to exceed
The dike piled-up its wild career to impede—
So Achilles, formerly to us Trojans daunting,
Seems far more towering and more frightfully haunting
Since that great chief, for strength in heart and hand renowned,
Beneath the blows of his merciless arm was downed,
Blows that like a huge hammer on an anvil beat,
And beat incessantly: that Prince firm on his feet,
Unmoving like a high rock, seated at its ease,
Which mocks at the howling wind and the angry seas.215
Our army, which death more than shame now filled with
fright,
Abandoned all meanwhile, and gave themselves to flight,
With desperate hearts their weapons casting to the ground,
Lest death they should encounter while to safety bound.
One lies wholly still, with a mortal wound pierced
through;
Another, knocked down, gets up and would flee anew,
But he has taken only four or five steps more
Before he tumbles again, backwards or before,
Depending on where the enemy’s blow came from.
Troy has yielded everywhere, Greece victors become,
Regaining the field and so pursuing their own
Advantage that none fought still but Menon alone,
Who, when constrained by the numbers to turn his face,
Returned frustrated, not in cowardly disgrace.
Achilles, meanwhile, causer of great Hector’s
downfall,
But who to his heart’s fierce rage was himself in thrall,
Returned to where the corpse lay on the field in place,
Pierced the two heels, then bound them together with lace,
Attached his chariot with the baldrick he wore,
Then dragging him behind, around these walls he tore.

Priam
The infinite suffering that lays my soul waste
So presses on my heart that words far off are chased.

Hecuba
O heaven far too harsh! O hostile Destiny!
I have lost my dear son, and to this you agree!

215 Ll. 2227-32: puzzling lines, here translated literally. The “prince” recalls Hector as he was before receiving Achilles’ blows but might also suit Achilles’ new stature, however falsely acquired and at odds with his subsequent “rage” (l. 2248).
That Greek, blood-thirsty traitor, you brought here to feast,
That cowardly assassin, that merciless beast!
Well, then, henceforth let me witness complete commotion,
The floating air plunged into earth, earth into ocean;
Let all mix together, and let obscurest night
Cover, as in the beginning, nature from sight.
How it would please to see this world degenerate
Back to the confusion of chaos’s first state,
Since my son Hector, since my cherished Troy, today
Of Pluto and of the Greeks are the hapless prey.

O old man, assailed by every hostile blast,
Down from what great height of glory have you been cast!
And for me, poor mother now sorrowful and frail,
What oppression does Fortune, thus adverse, entail—
Cruel, ever-changing, but in one thing consistent:
In pouring on my heart fresh torment upon torment.
Gather, Trojans—citizens, soldiers, men-at-arms;[216]
Join your tears to my final ones mourning our harms;
Sigh out along with me the pain we all have felt:
Your heart is iron if this does not make it melt.
O wretched Hecuba! O Priam lamentable!
O poor Andromache! O people miserable—
Alas, what will become of us? What fate attends us?
Hector, our champion, is dead: nothing defends us.
Let us therefore be agreed that death-dealing Fate[217]
Ourselves with Hector the infernal boat should freight,
And not await the swords of Greek malignity:
For since he has been killed, what better hope have we?
Andromache, daughter, for good reason your silence
Betokens of our woes the cruel violence,
And since words lack likewise adequate to my pain,
Still to lament, except in sobs, for me is vain.

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[216] “[C]itizens, soldiers, men-at-arms”: orig. “peuple, soldats, Gensdarmes” (p. 65); the distinction between the latter two categories would doubtless have been clearer for Montchrestien’s public.

Andromache

2289 Let my sorrows, in turn, be openly expressed:
2290 Too long have I nurtured mourning within my breast.
2291 Permit me the capacity to speak, O sighs,
2292 And that in speaking my life may volatilise,
2293 Fortunate indeed in my bitter agony
2294 If I die in lamenting my hard destiny.
2295 It is you, O Heavens, I find I must accuse:
2296 With what equity could you with contempt refuse
2297 So many ardent vows, so many fervent prayers,
2298 Invoking your benevolence for our affairs?
2299 No, I know well Andromache does not deserve
2300 To have gods busy themselves her content to serve;
2301 But Hector, that Hector, whose rare qualities shone
2302 So that to barbarous nations he was well known—
2303 That famous magnanimity, courage so perfect,
2304 Should have made your harsh decrees my wishes respect.
2305 Virtue,\(^18\) you are useless if an idol, no more—
2306 Mere wind of opinion, breath of an orator!
2307 O ignorant mortals! Try hoping, when distressed,
2308 The gods will never fail to look out for the best,
2309 Now that Hector is dead, so ardently engaged
2310 In glory’s pursuit. For a man merely enraged—
2311 Or rather a tiger—having no effort spent,
2312 Cut down his vanquisher, subjects his corpse to torment.
2313 What new horror is this! With numbing chills I quake;
2314 My mind’s eye now seems an image of you to make:
2315 I see you, dear husband, legs upward from the ground,
2316 Downward the head, leaping with jerks from bound to bound,
2317 As Achilles directs and urges on his horses
2318 To ply round and round our ramparts their agile courses.
2319 O you despairing grief, my senses wild you render!
2320 O grievous despair,\(^19\) to which myself I surrender!
2321 At this point in the martyrdom in which I seethe,

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\(^{18}\) “Virtue”: orig. “vertu” (p. 66), here obviously in the broadest sense of manhood, integrating moral and physical qualities.

\(^{19}\) Ll. 2329-20: there is also a play on words in the original (“dueil desesperé”/“desespoir dolent” [p. 67]).
I expend in the winds the life-spirit I breathe,
So that with Hector below I may go accuse
The Greek insolence that can thus itself amuse.
Hector, sole author of my utter misery,
Was it not to kill, not only yourself, but me,
Your spirit to the evident presage to blind
Which in my heart this mortal accident designed?
Ah, I was sure indeed our destiny would wend
By this wandering way to its appointed end.
If you yourself sought to precipitate your death,
Soul and body being from combat out of breath
After ten years of fighting in front of our walls;
If you preferred to perish in the midst of battles,
Not in a bed richly wrought, with curtains adorned—
Well, then, you could have done: but my death to have scorned,
To have ruined your city and your own lineage,
Looking only to you, in this fierce storm of carnage—
What name can I come up with for such a gross error?
Hector, is it a crime, or else an act of furor?
If the names of country, of father and of mother,
Of friend, relation, ally, of sister and brother,
Like idols bodiless to you were empty names,
Did not your son and I on your thoughts have our claims?
Ah, poor wretch, where is your great pain carrying you?
His heart burned for us with an affection so true
That, putting to the side all thought of food and rest,
With ceaseless strife with Atropos he was obsessed,
Who, to bring him down, needed recourse to those arms
By which the traitorous Greeks surprise—and do harms.
O cowardly foe of the bravest man of war
Who ever the proud laurel on his forehead wore—
Without such trickery he was invincible!

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220 Atropos: the one of the three Moires (Roman Parcae) who cuts the thread of life; cf. below, l. 2384.
221 “O cowardly foe”: orig. “O coûard ennemy” (p. 67); cf. the apostrophe of Shakespeare’s Troilus: “thou great-sized coward” (Tro., V.xi.26).
His arm had proved it by its strength incredible,
Which often, falling like a flaming bolt of thunder,
The obstinate Greeks’ strong formations dashed asunder.
But your unjust deceit, from ambush perpetrated,
By a blow unforeseen his span of life truncated;
That arm of yours, which felled him without fight to earth,
Could not hope otherwise to overcome his worth.\(^{235}\)

Gods! If for their vices the wicked you chastise,
Some sharp strokes of justice, in your furor, devise
To make mortals see that the crime is always bound\(^{234}\)
On the head of its perpetrator to redound.
But hasten, if you please, your vengeance, all too slow,
So I may descend to the banks of hell below,
That glorious spirit the glad tidings to tell,
Who reviles this traitor, perhaps Heaven as well.
While I wait for the gods that last grace to deliver,
O eyes of mine, may you pour forth a double river
To weep for your Hector—my good and source of pains,
My comfort and torment, of whom to me remains
Nothing but the keen desire his shade to see,
Which of perished heroes now swells the company.

Chorus

By means of Hector’s right hand, Troy remained upright;
With his death, unhappily, it collapses quite.
Let fallen Troy the tribute of our tears receive;
With it the loss of victory and life we grieve.
The welfare of a state is feeble and unstable,\(^{235}\)
If it depends on one alone, though brave and able,
Who offers himself freely to all risks of dying.\(^{236}\)
Mortals, learn from this that, no more for being king.

\(^{223}\) “[W]orth”: orig. “vertu” (p. 67), here again clearly in the sense of strength and prowess.
\(^{224}\) Ll. 263-64 are marked for emphasis.
\(^{225}\) Ll. 2379-86 are marked for emphasis.
\(^{226}\) Orig.: “Qui s’offre à tous hazards sans crainte de la Parque” (p. 68). “La Parque” is used here, as often, to stand for the fact of mortality, and to retain the personification might interfere with the explicit reference to Atropos in ll. 2384-86.
Emperor or captain, can one live without fears
By thinking to escape the fatal sister’s shears—
She who without distinction to the grave sends down
The crook of the shepherd, the sceptre of a crown.

END