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Hector: Tragedy

by Antoine de Montchrestien

Translated, with Introduction and Notes,
by Richard Hillman

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by Antoine de Montchrestien
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Introduction

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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.[1] *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.[2] On the French side, the dramatic tradition dates back to the mid-fifteenth century

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1 See Antoine de Montchrestien, *The Queen of Scotland* (*La reine d'Escosse*), introd. and trans. Richard Hillman, online publication, Centre d'Études Supérieures de la Renaissance, Scène Européenne-Traductions Introuvables, Tours, 2018: <https://sceneeuropeenne.univ-tours.fr/traductions/queen-scotland> (accessed 28/01/2019).

2 For a summary, see Geoffrey Bullough, "Introduction to *Troilus and Cressida*", *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, ed. Geoffrey Bullough, 8 vols, vol. 6: Other "Classical" Plays: *Titus Andronicus*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Timon of Athens*, *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* (London: Routledge; New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), pp. 97-100. See also John S. P. Tatlock, "The Siege of Troy in Elizabethan Literature, Especially in Shakespeare and Heywood", *PMLA* 30.4 (1915): 673-770 *passim*.

For the French plays, the present overview is indebted to Françoise Charpentier, *Les débuts de la tragédie héroique: 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.[3] 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.[4]

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'Escosse*, 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.

(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.[5] 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'Anthoine de Montchrestien, sieur de Vasteville. ... Edition nouvelle augmentee par l'auteur* (Rouen: Jean Osmont, 1604); a second edition including *Hector* appeared two years later: *Les Tragédies d'Anthoine de Montchrestien, sieur de Vasteville. ... Dernière édition reveüe et augmentée par l'autheur* (Nyort: J. Vaultrier, 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 Julleville, 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:

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10 Charpentier, p. 471.

11 I retain as my edition of reference Antoine de Montchrestien, *Les tragédies*, ed. Louis Petit de Julleville, 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 Julleville, which is still more widely available.

> *Aussi remarquerez vous en luy cest air releué de courage et de gloire, non susceptible d'alteration, ains ferme et demeurant immuable en vn calme et serain perpetuel de constance.*
>
> [Thus you will observe in him that elevated quality of courage and glory, not subject to alteration but firm and remaining unchangeable in a perpetual calm and serenity of constancy.]
> (Épistre [1604], unpaginated)

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-

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12 Heraclitus, *Fragments: A Text and Translation*, ed. and trans. T. M. Robinson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), Fragment 119 (pp. 68-69), in which the Greek term for "fate (divinity)" is δαίμων.

13 Examples occur in ll. 311, 516, 709, 744, 756, 764, 775, 1031, 1130, 1638, 1648, 1859 and 1864.

14 Christine de Pizan, *Epistre Othea*, ed. Gabriella Parussa (Geneva: Droz, 1999), section 1 (texte 1, ll. 14-15 [p. 107]). (The structure of this work is complex, with three distinct parts comprised within each of one hundred sections; I will normally refer only to sections and the page numbers in

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.[15] 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.[16]

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.[17] 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 hystoires de Troye. Lepistre de Othea deesse de prudence envoyee a lesperit chevalereux Hector de Troye avec cent hystoires* (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 alteré*]." 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 fatality]" 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'élabore et se formule 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 vacillant, / S'il depend de la main d'vn 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;[18] 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

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l'*Hector* d'Antoine de Montchrestien", *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme* ns 7.3 (1983): 173-91.

18 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.[20] 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—

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19 "[*F*]*emineo praedae et spoliorum ardebat amore* [she was burning with a woman's love of booty and spoils]" (Virgil, *Aeneid*, XI.782).

20 Montchrestien's account has him first ordering a subordinate to remove the rest of the armour (ll. 2182-84 [Act V]), then turning his attention to the magnificent head-covering; in Shakespeare's version, he may well also be dealing with the helmet: he at least reveals enough to be struck by the "putrified core" (V.ix.1). References to *Troilus and Cressida* (as *Tro.*) are to David Bevington, ed., The Arden Shakespeare, 3rd ser. (London: Thomson Learning, 1998).

21 The absence of the horse from a version destined for staging, such as *Tro.*, explains itself (although horses are apparently admitted in Milet's mystery play); in the successive narratives employed by Montchrestien, the medievalised horse-back encounters initially reported by Antenor (ll. 1747 ff. [Act IV]) shift to neo-Homeric foot combats with the account of the Messenger (ll. 2113 ff. [Act V]), and the hero's vulnerability is thereby accentuated, as in Shakespeare.

22 For Lydgate, I cite the excerpts in Bullough, ed., pp. 157-86, and for Shakespeare's main "historical" source, 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, 1553; STC 15378). In Le Fèvre, trans. Caxton, Hector is said to have "coueyted" the arms of Patroclus after he had slain him, "for they were ryght queynte and ryche" (bk. III, fol. xxi^{r}); there he is prevented by Ydumeus (Idonomeus) and "the king Menon" (not Homeric, not to be confused with Agamenmon or with the Trojan Menon, on whom see the translation, l. 228 [Act I], n. 37).

23 Le Fèvre, trans. Caxton, speaks merely of a "moche noble baron of Grece moche queyntly and rychely armed" (bk III, fol. xxx^{r}). Lydgate is far more prolix (Bullough, ed., pp. 177-78 [esp. ll. 5334-72]). On this point, he is evidently indebted to Benoît de Sainte-Maure, *Le roman de Troie*, ed. Léopold Constans, 4 vols (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1904-12), vol. III, ll. 16155, who names the character, like Montchrestien (and Dares), "Polibetès"/"Polybete". Benoît also, like Lydgate but not Montchrestien, specifies that Hector was "*coveitos* [covetous]" (l. 16178), though he does not moralise the point. Finally, it is notable that the dramatisation by Milet, despite its indebtedness to Benoît, omits the encounter with the richly armoured knight, substituting Hector's non-violent

indeed, vaguely larger-than-life[24]—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'vn 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 *Troilus* 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 surrounded and rendered helpless by the Myrmidons, then at least partly slaughtered by them, according to Achilles' prior instructions.[25] 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.[26])

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:

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

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]).

26 Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd ed. (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[v].

> 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 alarmes*
> *Non par vn combat iuste, 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 element 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 kynge, that was so worthy and so hardye[!] Certes yf anye noblesse had ben in achilles he wold not haue done this vylony.][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 precipue quod dixeris Achillem ipsum in suis uiribus duos Hectores peremisse, ipsum uidelicet et Troilum, fratrem eius fortissimum? Sane si te induxit Grecorum affeccio ... verum non motus diceris racione sed pocius ex furore. Nonne Achilles fortissimum Hectorem, 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 fortissimum Troilum, quem non ipse in sua uirtute peremit sed ab aliis mille militibus expugnatum et victum interficere non erubuit, in quo resistenciam nullius defensionis inuenit et ideo non uiuum sed quasi mortuum hominem interfecit amplius. Nunquid Achilles dignus est laude, quem scripsisti 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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27 Raoul Le Fèvre, *Recueil des histoires de Troye* (Bruges: William Caxton, [*c.* 1474]), bk. III, unpaginated; trans. Caxton, bk. III, fol. xxxv^{v}.

> 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

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28 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), bk. XXVI, fols 99^{v}-100^{r}; pp. 204-5. I cite the version online at <https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.medievalacademy.org/resource/resmgr/maa_books_online/griffin_0026.htm> (accessed 6 September 2018) but also give the page numbers of the print edition as indicated there.

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.[30]

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[31] and reads as follows: *Hector,//Tragedie par A. Montchretien, representée 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 duodecimo 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

30 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.

31 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.[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.[33] Thanks to the censorship question, we have evidence that *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.[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 *Toilus 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.[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 *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 *Troilus and Cressida*. But then the tragic human costs

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32 The 1627 Rouen volume published by P. de La Motte, *Les Tragédies d'Anthoine de Montchrestien, sieur de Vasteville. ... Édition nouvelle, augmentée par l'autheur*, 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 *The Scottish Queen*, includiing its first title, *L'Escossoise, ou le disastre*, are taken over from *Les Tragédies* of 1601.)

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

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

35 I have developed this subject elsewhere from various angles. See especially Richard Hillman, *Shakespeare, Marlowe and the Politics of France* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2002); "*A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *La Diane* of Nicolas de Montreux", *Review of English Studies* 61.248 (2010): 34-54; and "Mercy Unjustified: A Reformation Intertext for *The Merchant of Venice*", *Shakespeare Jahrbuch* 154 (2018): 91-105.

of 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.501)[36]—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.[37] Chaucer's *Troilus 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.[38] 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.[39] 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*

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36 With the exception of *Troilus and Cressida*, I cite Shakespeare's plays from William Shakespeare, *The Riverside Shakespeare*, gen. eds G. Blakemore Evans and J. J. M. Tobin, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).

37 Among the many discussions of the Troy material lying behind Shakespeare's play, especially useful overviews are provided by Bullough, ed., pp. 82-111, and Bevington, "'Instructed by the Antiquary Times': Shakespeare's Sources", *Troilus and Cressida*, ed. Bevington, pp. 375-97.

38 See Bullough, ed., p. 87, and Bevington, p. 376.

39 Bevington, "Shakespeare's Sources", comes to a broadly sceptical conclusion (p. 392), but there is no critical consensus to deny some use of Lydgate, whose text, like Caxton's, was available in print.

of Hector,[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"[41]—then enriched by Elizabethan homilies on order and obedience, but it is Shakespeare who makes Ulysses begin by evoking the preeminent Trojan hero:[42] "Troy, yet upon his basis, had been down, / And the great Hector's sword had lacked a master… " (*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[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 (*Tro.*, I.iii.81-83):

> 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

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40 *The life and death of Hector* (London: Thomas Purfoot, 1614); STC 5581.5.

41 Homer, *The Seaven Bookes of Homers Iliads*, trans. George Chapman (1598), ed. Bullough, pp. 112-50, p. 120. The original is *Iliad*, II.204: "Lordship for many is no good thing. Let there be one ruler." (References are to *The Iliad of Homer*, trans. Richmond Lattimore [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Phoenix Books, 1951].)

42 On the homiletic elaborations, see Bevington, ed., *Tro*., Longer Note to I.iii.78-108.

43 On the composition of the play's choruses, see below, pp. 25-27.

Variously 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 agèd parents.

[*Mais au reste pensez gu'aux per11eux combats*
Où l'ordre n'a point lieu, peu sert l'effort du bras.
Commande qui le doit, qui le doit obeisse:
Ce n'est pas peu d'honneur de faire vn bon seruice.
L'Empire de plusieurs esf volontiers confus;
Mais comme vn seul esprit est par le corps diffus,
Qui le meut en tous sens, de mesme vostre armée
D'vne volonté seule ait la force animée.
Grands Guerriers, ie vous tien ce discours en passant,
Car si le sort fatal en nos faits tout puissant
Adiouste sa faueur àuec vostre conduite,
Auiourd'huy le Soleil verra la Grece en fuite,
Et vous reuenus sains, honorez à l'enui
De vos bons vieux parens et du peuple raui.]
(ll. 861-74 [Act II]; p. 28)

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 vnique 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 worthynesse".[44] 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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44 Bullough, ed., p. 160 (bk. II, chap. 15, l. 4871). Bullough, p. 93, suggests Shakespeare's general indebtedness to this passage.

45 Le Fèvre, trans. Caxton, bk. III, fols xxxiiii^{v}-xxxv^{r}. Behind this appears to lie Benoît's *Roman*, where Diomedes, in the same circumstances, presents Troilus as taking Hector's place ("*N'est pas meins 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. 120^{v}).

> 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 deffend.*
> *Faison donc d'vn accord que la fatale Parque*
> *Nous charge quand et luy dans l'infernale barque,*
> *Sans attendre les fers des Grec iniurieux;*
> *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*

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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 [*Entreparlevrs*]" (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,

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 Montchestien'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,[48] 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:[49]

> . . . 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.

48 On such symbolism, see Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*, rev. ed. (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1967), pp. 85-96. Shakespeare draws ironically on this symbolism in *Antony and Cleopatra*, IV.iv, when he shows Cleopatra awkwardly helping to arm Antony for his last deceptively successful combat.

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,
Ie sen plus de plaisir qu'à la pompe nopciere
De ma plus chere fille, à qui le sort heureux
Accoupleroit vn 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*, I.ii.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.[50] But there remains one point of uncertainty, which is especially revealing about Montchrestien's adaptation of his material.

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50 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 chorusus, 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 vn contentement / D'oüir en son malheur lamenter doucement*]" (ll. 1294-96 [Act III]; p. 39). Indeed, Helen then launches into ninety or so lines of sorrrowful 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 lumiere en la nuict du trespas]" [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.

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by Antoine de Montchrestien

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by Richard Hillman

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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)*, Lumière 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[4]

1. Priam
2. Hector
3. Hecuba
4. Andromache
5. Cassandra
6. Antenor
7. Chorus
8. [Chorus of Women][5]
9. Messenger
10. [Nurse]
11. [Helen]

[Non-speaking: infant son of Hector and Andromache, several Trojan princes]

---

4 Orig. "Entreparlevrs" (p. 2). The reason for the order given is not clear, as noted by Françoise Charpentier, *Les débuts de la tragédie héroique: 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[7] 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[8] 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[9] will meet.
You[10] run all full of furor fresh quarrel to seek,
But your towers are topped by the treacherous Greek;[11]
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,[12]
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.[13]
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[14]—

---

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?[15]
Would, as his father prayed, at his birth he had died!
But you, O iron Fate,[16] 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,[17]
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.

---

15 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".

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

17 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;[18]
All you'll gain in the end—here my sorrow is great—
Is that it will be said of you, "Wise[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?[20]

CHORUS

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

CASSANDRA

Often the final blow is the most deadly sort.[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.

CASSSANDRA

92 So to dupe the common people one forges tales.[22]
93 That hope within our hearts has long since been sustained,
94 And yet their siege is still as stubbornly maintained.

CHORUS

95 What have we to fear, protected by Hector's arm?

CASSANDRA

96 His death at last, while exposing himself to harm.[23]

CHORUS

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

CASSANDRA

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

CHORUS

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

CASSANDRA

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

CHORUS

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

CASSANDRA

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

CHORUS

103 For the public welfare, he keeps in place good princes.[24]

CASSANDRA

104 Some he removes himself from hated provinces.

---

22 Another single line marked for emphasis.
23 This line is marked for emphasis.
24 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,[25]
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.[26]

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, 1553; STC 15378), 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[28] 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.[29]

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.

---

28 "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.

29 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^{v}; and Jacques Milet, *La destruction de Troye la grande, etc.* (Lyons: Denys de Harsy, 1544), fol. 4^{v} (La Première Journée).

CHORUS

One came of free will; the other left by constraint.

CASSANDRA

One case did sacred hospitality attaint.

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.[30]

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.[31]

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.[32]

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.

---

32 Ll. 162-84 are marked for emphasis.

ANDROMACHE

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

HECTOR

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

ANDROMACHE

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

HECTOR

Occasion is all; once the moment slips away,[33]
No longer her encouraging laughter do we find:
One must seize her forelock, for she is bald behind.[34]

ANDROMACHE

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

HECTOR

When I hear of that slowness, all patience I lack.
Before night I want, with that army at my feet,
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,[35]
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[36]
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. xxx^{r}); in Guido (bk. XXI, p. 175), he deals a fatal wound to Achilles; Milet (fol. 113^{r-v}) 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;[38]
The king of many kings, who makes the plans for battles,
Presides among the Argives over their war-councils;[39]
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 you[41] bring it fresh to mind—My arms! My arms, here![42]
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 fated

---

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 (*Iliad*, XIII.246-338). 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.[43]
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,[47]
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[48]—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,[49] 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[2]» (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 –[50]
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,[51]
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 scorn—
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.

---

50 Ll. 317-40 closely follow *Iliad*, VI.447-65.

51 In Euripides' *Andromache*, she has become the slave and concubine of Neoptolemos.

If so the fates decree, surely I would prefer,
So as not to see you, that death my eyes should cover
With an eternal blindfold, that the grave should keep me
From hearing the sighs of your soul's captivity.

ANDROMACHE

Well, then, my dear Hector, hold out your hand to me.
Only on our couple does your heart show no pity:
Alas, your valour destroys us! Its heritage[52]
Is a hard death met in the flower of your age.
Say, what will you do? Would not marble pitiless
Soften at all, my loving sentiments to witness?
Think at least, I beg you, of that death full of pain
Which you yourself will make your wretched wife sustain,
If she becomes your widow by a hostile sword,
And your ardour with my faith will perhaps accord.
Alas, it is against your head their arms conspire;
It is your noble blood their deadly points desire;
This aim seems even vulgar darts to animate,
And you'll run blindly into dangers that await!
No, before fate makes me abandon your embrace,[53]
Let the earth swallow me; myself for all I brace:
For so much pain would it cause me the sun to spy,
If it saw me but not the brilliance of your eye.
If I remain behind—oh, wretched woman!—sole,
Who will be able my heart's anguish to console?
Go to my relations? Alas, they are all dead:
At long last Peleus' barbarous son succeeded
In razing my fair Thebes, teeming with families,
Whose top rose up over the loftiest of cities—
A pine to a briar; his hands in that dear flood
He bathed of my father's and seven brothers'[54] blood.

---

52 Ll. 343-77 adapt, sometimes quite closely, *Iliad*, VI.406-32.

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. "germains" (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:[55]
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,[56]
If we others come to die, why should that surprise?
It is the self-same law that dictates death and birth;[57]
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.

---

man: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958), s.v.

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,[58]
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[59]

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[60] 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.
60 "[M]anhood": orig. "vertu" (p. 14).

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.[62]
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[63]
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,

---

62 Other (equally anachronistic) scenarios are possible, but the likeliest is the explosion of a mine to make a breach in ramparts under siege. The anachronism is more flagrant than in the details of Hector's armour and definitively sets this choric commentary outside the play-world.

63 According to traditional cosmology, the realms above the sphere of the moon were immune to change.

64 "[D]eflected": orig. "rebouchez" (p. 16). The word is rare in this sense, but A. J. Greimas, *Dictionnaire de l'ancien français* (Paris: Larousse, 1999), s.v. "reboucher", cites a usage equivalent to "rebondir".

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

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

NURSE

But let him go out if he has determined so.

ANDROMACHE

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

NURSE

What vain fear has managed your soul to occupy?
After combats galore, is it a novelty
To see Hector trading blows? One who goes to sea[65]
Need not drown; to put oneself in the way of harms,
Judging the risks wisely, wins one respect in arms:
There if some coward by running escapes today,
Tomorrow unawares he'll be caught in the fray.[66]
You do him great wrong to question his manly virtue.

---

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

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

NURSE

Who has ever seen in you such fears multiplying?

ANDROMACHE

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

NURSE

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

ANDROMACHE

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

NURSE

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

ANDROMACHE

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

NURSE

Never does fear master a body that is sound.[67]
The anguish that carries you along like a torrent
Has a hidden source, though an effect too apparent.
But tell me—let me know of that distress the cause
Which is crushing your desolate heart in its claws;
Speak out boldly, Madam, with urgency I pray:
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[68]
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.[69]

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,[70]
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,

---

68 Ll. 541-42 are marked for emphasis.
69 A line marked for emphasis.
70 Ll. 551-52 are marked for emphasis.

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[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.[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,[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,[74] in timely fashion.

---

71 Ll. 563-64 are marked for emphasis.

72 This line is marked for emphasis.

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.

74 Unidentified, non-speaking.

ANDROMACHE

Good tutelary gods, I invoke your compassion!

PRIAM

Andromache, daughter, I'm surprised to see you.

ANDROMACHE

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

PRIAM

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

ANDROMACHE

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

PRIAM

Just such diligence of warriors is required.

ANDROMACHE

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

PRIAM

That's where the noble prince places his whole delight.

ANDROMACHE

But such eagerness I have good cause to suspect.

PRIAM

Andromache, a leader who covets respect,[75]
In action everywhere, all chances prompt to meet,
Does not sleep through the night, and must die on his feet.

---

75 Ll. 592-94 are marked for emphasis.

ANDROMACHE

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

PRIAM

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

ANDROMACHE

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

PRIAM

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

ANDROMACHE

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

PRIAM

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

ANDROMACHE

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

PRIAM

To die! Go on, my sons, bring your brother to me;
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,[77]
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,[78]
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;

---

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.

672 Nothing that is can escape their sovereign knowledge.
673 But to reveal events to humankind so they
674 May be protected—that is by no means their way.

PRIAM

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

ANDROMACHE

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

PRIAM

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

ANDROMACHE

685 Soon we will know; we will see today discomfited
686 This stubborn man, who'll come to feel it on his head.[79]
687 Restrain his ardour, for if on the field he's found,
688 A Greek lance will see to his measuring the ground.

PRIAM

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

[Enter Hector, with Trojan warriors.[80]]

---

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.

693 [to Hector] O my staunchest support, so your
armour is on.

HECTOR

694 My lord, too weary a delay I've undergone.

PRIAM

695 The enemy camp thirsts the fight to be renewing.

HECTOR

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

PRIAM

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

HECTOR

698 At least, to combat and die well we will be reckoned.[81]

PRIAM

699 How can man advance if heaven will him impede?

HECTOR

700 Heaven favours someone who attempts to succeed.

PRIAM

701 Many a battle is lost for some secret cause,
702 When valour, with wise counsel joined, deserves applause.

HECTOR

703 One who for good reason has armed his hand for war
704 Must march straight into combat, look only before.

PRIAM

705 When a righteous cause is not properly defended.
706 It is greatly at risk, and all hope may be ended.

---

81 Ll. 698-726 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![82]

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[83] 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.

---

82 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.

83 "[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.[84]

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.[85]

---

84 Ll. 29-33 are marked for emphasis.

85 Petit de Julleville, ed., p. 282, n. to p. 24, points out the close echo of the *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.[86]

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.[87]

HECTOR

745 Counsel without the hand is a bodyless soul.

PRIAM

746 Uncounselled, 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.

86 "[L]amentable and vicious": orig. "infame et douloureux" (p. 24).

87 Ll. 744-46 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.[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[89]—

PRIAM

Which rouses it to vengeance and a fiercer flame.

HECTOR

So shall we thus huddled beneath these ramparts live?

---

88 The line is marked for emphasis.

89 Ll. 759-60 are marked for emphasis.

PRIAM

762 Don't underrate the shelter from dangers they give.[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.[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,[92]
774 Cannot agree to live enclosed within a fortress.

PRIAM

775 The governor rich in wisdom, the prudent captain,

---

90 The line is marked for emphasis.
91 Ll. 766-68 are marked for emphasis.
92 Ll. 773-76 are marked for emphasis.

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.[93]

[Enter Hecuba, behind.][94]

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[95]
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[96] 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[97] 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.
96 "[W]retched": orig. "triste" (p. 26).
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
Variously 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 agèd 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,[103]
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^{v}.

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

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

CHORUS[105]

One tires of all things, except of doing well.
Who love of glory knows
Takes pleasure in such deeds, which for him are usual;
The greatest work he finds is also his repose.

The more the soul tastes of glory the luscious fruit,
The greater its desire,
A philtre so pleasant, to drink it spurs pursuit,
And the pleasure, the more one drinks it, mounts the higher.

If anything to noble manhood can excite
It is brilliance of name,
Which pierces all shadowy cloud with rays of light
And speaks itself through the sky on the wing of fame.

The pomp that goes with greatness gives our senses joy;
Gold always charms our eyes;
Pleasure tempts us laughingly; good cheer we enjoy;
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.

913 Desirable nectar, delicious source of health,
914 Who from true good ensue,
915 Do not before those vulgar souls profane your wealth
916 Who of themselves think highly, yet possess no value.

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

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

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

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

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

937 It goes against all reason that vice should constrain
938 One who is virtuous—
939 Who never sold himself, whether from greed for gain
940 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 honour[108] 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 Indroduction, 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'enuieux" (p. 30)—but envy dominates in the following lines.

110 "[F]ies": 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".

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

ANTENOR

965 Although our men prevail and keep them occupied,
966 Pretend it is so: no shame, I think, can betide[111]
967 The man who remains in his deeds quite innocent,
968 If someone cuts him to pieces[112] when he is absent.
969 So duty dictates, the sole rule infallible
970 That measures honour, except the impossible.
971 And from this I conclude, O knight beyond compare,
972 The offence does not touch one who is unaware,
973 And he alone we take to swallow[113] the affront
974 Who hears and says nothing, knows it and bears the brunt.

HECTOR

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

ANTENOR

976 He who torments himself will live without repose.

HECTOR

977 He deserves abuse who stays silent out of fear.

ANTENOR

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

HECTOR

979 Aspersions against us we should never abide.

ANTENOR

980 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

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

ANTENOR

The boisterous winds are sooner than tongues appeased.

HECTOR

The valour of a mighty prince intimidates.

ANTENOR

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

HECTOR

But one's glory languishes if injured it feels.

ANTENOR

A wound that is so inflicted soon enough heals.[114]

HECTOR

A scar on the forehead is always there to see.

ANTENOR

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

HECTOR

Because it is a token that he has fought well.

ANTENOR

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

HECTOR

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

---

114 "[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.

ANTENOR

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

HECTOR

Not knowing in myself that degree of perfection,
I prefer to suppose that to your own affection,
Not my desert, your praise of my honour is due:
If sometimes I do well, in that I follow you.
But let us break off there, father,[115] and rather see
What fortune, good or ill, has befallen our army.

ANTENOR

I learnt from the wounded who made it back to us
That Alexander,[116] Menon, Deiphobus, Troilus
In emulation strive each other to outdo,
While on the other side, the Greeks, audacious too,
Rudely assailed them, rudely their effort deterred.
As one views the sea by two winds to fury stirred,
With their contrary force upraising swells by turns,
As wave against foaming wave in violence churns,
In just this way one may perceive the two strong armies,
Each driven by the will to charge their enemies,
Compelled now to draw back, now once again advanced:
Victory above them in the air hovers balanced,
And there is no telling from her wavering flight
On which side her casual favour[117] will alight.

HECTOR

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

---

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.[119]]
How a noble heart its condition will deplore,[120]
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,[121]
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

---

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).

Of an apprehensive father, nor the embraces
Of a fair woman mingling kisses and caresses,
Nor the wishes a respected mother expresses,
Nor the grave counsels old reverend men provide—
When to virtue, then, all his efforts are applied;
While I, by these bonds forced in the town to remain,
Am at home with unhappiness, exist in vain.
I may believe my best course lies in staying here,
But in staying, great ill I also do, I fear.
Brilliance is not brilliance unless it's clearly shown;
To be good is very well—better if it's known:[122]
For from that the heart derives so constant a pleasure
It continues in itself its own happy measure.
If good men have always found by experience
That there exists no rampart more secure than conscience,
My spirit without qualms, my heart with no remorse,
Are ready and disposed outside to set my course.

CHORUS

One who would blame you, knight, who no reproach has known,
Beneath a brow of steel he'd bear a heart of stone.
Your glorious renown shines on us with such light
It pierces like the sun's bright rays the darkest night.
Mycenae's[123] great leaders have felt your valour's strength:
Many beneath your lance have measured out their length,
Whose names are testimony of your dazzling virtue;
It is, though, greater honour to have fought with you
And be deprived forever of life and of glory
Than over any other to gain victory.
For it argues a heart that won't easily quail[124]

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122 Cf. Ulysses' seductive exposition to Achilles in William Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, ed. David Bevington, The Arden Shakespeare, 3rd ser. (London: Thomson Learning, 1998). III.ii.96 ff.; hereafter cited as *Tro.*

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.[125]
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

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125 The same point is satirically illustrated by Hector's encounter with Thersites in *Tro*., V.iv.25-29.

126 Orig. "Thenere" (p. 34), probably the compositor's error. Teucer (Τεῦκρος)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 Julleville, 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,[128] 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.

---

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

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

He who does good service deserves a decent wage;[130]
Otherwise he'll prove more reluctant to engage.

CHORUS

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

HECTOR

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

CHORUS

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

HECTOR

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

CHORUS

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

HECTOR

Far better never to have here below descended
Than still to be quite unknown when the play has ended.[131]

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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

That desire which Nature on fair souls bestows,[132]
To admonish us their immortality shows.

HECTOR

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

CHORUS

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

HECTOR

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

CHORUS

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

HECTOR

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

CHORUS

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

HECTOR

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

CHORUS

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

---

132 "[B]estows": orig. "ente" (p. 36), lit. "grafts".

HECTOR

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

CHORUS

By laziness weak and wilting[133] of any kind
Is a living man in a dead one's tomb confined.

HECTOR

He who, by Heaven's favour, in good is sustained,
Within those unhappy bonds is never enchained.

CHORUS

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

HECTOR

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

CHORUS

Advance no further—stay:
Here is one of your own people coming our way.

---

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

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

MESSENGER

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

HECTOR

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

MESSENGER

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

HECTOR

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

MESSENGER

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

HECTOR

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

MESSENGER

Each one would acquire the palm or else the cypress.[134]

HECTOR

It takes just one coward disorder to instil.

MESSENGER

Alas, it was ill luck, not a failure of will.
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[135] trembled at it, and the earth, swaying,
Lurched violently beneath our feet; the frenzied neighing
Of the foaming horses resounded in the air,
And Xanthus[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[137] left to graze themselves fat
By the shepherd in the village having a chat.[138]
        "What?" they started shouting with an arrogant sneer,

---

135 Olympus: here metonymic, evidently, of the heavens and the gods dwelling there.
136 Xanthus: a name for the god of Scamander, the river of Troy.
137 "[C]attle": orig. "bœufs" (p. 38), despite "shepherd"/"Pasteur" in l. 1238.
138 "[I]n the village having a chat": the deflationary tone is there in the original: "cause au proche village" (p. 38).

1240 "Wherever is that Hector, that prince without peer?[139]
1241 That potent champion? That bragging man-at-arms?
1242 When it comes to close combat he stays clear of harms.
1243 Is that the bold intent he promised formerly?
1244 Think! Andromache keeps him at home cosily,[140]
1245 While these soldiers, lacking a leader, without courage,
1246 Victims of our own hands, are swallowed in this carnage."
1247 How these taunts of the Greeks, in terms so virulent,
1248 In the hearts of the Trojans caused astonishment!
1249 And although our leaders, whom this discourse appalled,
1250 By example and speech their duty soon recalled—
1251 Running to the foremost ranks, the good men to praise
1252 And loudly rebuke any cowardly displays—
1253 By a fatal design (for thus it seems to me),
1254 Our camp, enfeebled, is in dire difficulty;
1255 And if it does not soon see your bright star appear,
1256 It is planning its route, and will flee to the rear.
1257 What a pity it is to see our squadrons lessened
1258 By Dolopian[141] warriors, whose hands are reddened
1259 By the blood of Phrygians[142] flowing forth in streams;
1260 How horribly the field with heaps of soldiers teems,
1261 One piled on another, and those of highest rate
1262 Captive beneath their horses and their armour's weight.
1263 Yet that is little compared with the drawn-out groans,
1264 The shrilling outcries and the dismal sighing moans
1265 Which at the many funerals are heard from those
1266 Whose age or sex exempts them from the battle's throes.
1267 With these the town is shaken, and the population,
1268 Gathered in anguished groups, await their ruination.
[Exit Hector.]
1269 Where is Hector running now with an angry air?

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139 Ll. 1239-40: orig.: "Comment? profèrent-ils d'vn accent orgueilleux, / Où est donc cet Hector? ce Prince merueilleux?" (p. 38).

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.

MESSENGER

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]

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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 Chantelouve] *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[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?

Rien ne scauroit durer en toute eternité,
Que l'eternité seule, et les saisons qui changent
Font les iours, puis les iours l'vn par l'autre se mangent. (p. 39)

I attempt to translate both literally and clearly.

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,[147]
Now be closed, cease to breathe—the time has come for dying;

147 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][148]

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[149]

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,

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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 Guysien ou perfidie tyrannique commise par Henry de Valois es personnes des illustriss. reverdiss. & tresgenereux 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.[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[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,[153]
The brilliance will still be preserved.
    The high spirit[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.

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151 Orig.: "Ferme en sa propre grauité"(p. 42).
152 "[W]ithout shade": orig. "sans ombre" (p. 42), convincingly proposed by Petit de Julleville, ed. (p. 283, n. to p. 42) as an emendation of the text's obscure "sous ombre".
153 Orig.: "D'vne flamme bien allumée" (p. 43).
154 "[S]pirit": orig. "vapeur" (p. 43).

Act IV

Andromache, Cassandra, Priam, Hecuba,
[Chorus of Women],[155] [Chorus], [Antenor]

[Enter Andromache, Cassandra, Chorus of Women, Chorus[156]]

ANDROMACHE

So, then, the cruel villain has abandoned me!
Implacable Fate! And you, day of infamy,
Could you have passed without accomplishing an evil—
One that never had its equal, and never will?
Thus do your[157] strokes become impossible to shun?[158]
Turn, O wretched mortals, in every direction;
Come try, if you can, to avoid its mortal blow.
Alas, to whom can I turn, on whose mercy throw
Myself? To what god must you pray in lamentation,
Poor woman, your soul now stricken with devastation,
All sad and grieving—rather, nothing else but grief?
Only the final misery will bring relief.
    Withdraw your sweet lights, O heavens, into the air,
Which deceive our desires, make light[159] of our prayer.
Will you thus cheat our hope? The brightness that you
    show—
Must it serve no end but your cruelty to shadow?
But must I only of your cruelty complain?
No, but also of his who seems you to constrain,
By the mad audacity with which his heart fills,
To pour on him the harshest of your deadly ills.
    O wretched Hector! The furor, for vengeance pressing,
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. 1453-55 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

Andromache, cease: if the gods' own potencies[162]
Lack power to prevent the sovereign destinies
Of men born to mortality in their due season[163]
From their accomplishment, we weep for no good reason.
But tell yourself that the storm which thunders and lightens
Is not yet ready to break out when most it frightens.

ANDROMACHE

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

CHORUS [OF WOMEN]

Now to your passion you are giving too free rein,
Chaste spouse of Hector, in this excess of your pain,[164]
And render more bitter the wrath, by this vain transport,
Of gods from whom we seek their succour and support.

ANDROMACHE

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

---

162 Ll. 1501-6 are marked for emphasis.
163 "[I]n their due season": orig. "du soir au lendemain" (p. 44).
164 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.

HECUBA

1568 O good gods! Turn aside this threat of Fate unkind!

PRIAM

1569 What can keep a noble spirit behind a fence?[166]

HECUBA

1570 And yet at other times he seemed to have good sense.

PRIAM

1571 He still does; it's only that for honour he burns.

HECUBA

1572 It's by use of reason well-being one discerns.[167]

Priam

1573 He always holds out hope that Mars will be his friend.

HECUBA

1574 Many in that hope come to a pitiful end.

PRIAM

1575 Great author of combats, may it please you stand by him!

HECUBA

1576 And may you, saviour Jupiter, your aid supply him!

PRIAM

1577 Let us see if someone can surer news provide.

HECUBA

1578 There's his Andromache, Cassandra at her side.

PRIAM

1579 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

My daughters, come and tell us: why are you upset?

ANDROMACHE

We mourn, O venerable queen, what we foresee:
Our noble Hector's lamentable misery.

HECUBA

Why do you weep at the height of his happiness?

PRIAM

No one who lives with honour can be in distress.[168]

ANDROMACHE

There is no greater misfortune than life to lose.

PRIAM

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

ANDROMACHE

I'm surer of it than I ever was before.

PRIAM

The hands of heaven the web of his fate control.

ANDROMACHE

You'll never see him again—or just without soul.

HECUBA

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

ANDROMACHE

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

---

168 Ll. 1584-86 are marked for emphasis.

HECUBA

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

PRIAM

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

ANDROMACHE

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

---

169 "[B]reasts": orig. "l'estomach" (p. 48), which gives as ridiculous an effect in modern French as it would if translated literally. Cf. Petit de Julleville, ed., p. 284, n. to p. 48.

170 She presumably calls on the second Chorus; see above, n. 156.

CHORUS

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

HECUBA

You should have restrained his valour's fatal career.[171]

CHORUS

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

PRIAM

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

ANDROMACHE

Priam, it is not enough when misfortunes press[172]
To implore their favour and sleep in idleness,
Head on a feather-pillow; they are deaf and mute
To those who don't help themselves but to them make suit.

PRIAM

But in this situation, what more can I do?

ANDROMACHE

Make use of your sceptre, and his wisdom renew.

PRIAM

Have we not already that means employed in vain?

---

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

172 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.[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.

---

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

One must maintain one's honour as a sacred thing.[174]

ANDROMACHE

The enemy's blows no disgrace to it can bring.

PRIAM

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

ANDROMACHE

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

PRIAM

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

ANDROMACHE

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

PRIAM

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

ANDROMACHE

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

PRIAM

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

ANDROMACHE

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

The more a man for his perfections garners praises,[175]
The more his actions attract penetrating gazes.

ANDROMACHE

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

PRIAM

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

ANDROMACHE

Unbelieving Priam! Is that how you refer
To that form divine who deigns with men to confer,
That genuine hero to whom the sun bears witness?[176]
All right, so much for Hector: let my eye caress
That face of his never again. Not me alone
Does his life concern, but his father hard as stone,
His mother, his relations, his obstinate friends,
For their disdain of him will meet with wretched ends.
And yet, O good gods, since his own father, no less,
His mother and family, blind to their distress,
Seem to outdo themselves in countering his welfare,
Let my death precede his own—that is all my prayer!

PRIAM

I attribute these words to your tender intent,
Which rate, however, as foolish and impudent;
My love for your husband by all is recognised,
That by Hecuba and his kin he is all-prized;
My court respects, admires him, proud to embrace

175 Ll. 1683-84 are marked for emphasis.
176 "[T]o whom the sun bears witness": orig. "attesté du Soleil" (p. 51).

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,[177] run to the field[178] where our bloody frays
Spill lives,[179] 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[180] of honour works on a valiant heart,[181]
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

Do I not see Antenor making his approach?

HECUBA

There he is indeed.

[Enter Antenor.]

PRIAM

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

ANTENOR

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

PRIAM

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

ANTENOR

No—plunging like lightning among the Greeks headlong.

ANDROMACHE

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

ANTENOR

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

PRIAM

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

ANTENOR

I was separated from him, slightly ahead;
To go out today was the last thing in my head,
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.
The most timid man any challenge can defy,

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[184]
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.[185]
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[186]—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[187]
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.

186 I.e., Achilles' favourite, Patroclus, killed by Hector.
187 The entire Chorus is marked for emphasis.

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.
For such, disaster makes no sense,
Nor a rebel in mutiny,
Nor diverse strokes of Destiny,
Nor any ill star's influence:
Although one may attempt to spite him
To his own good all things invite him.
His speeches, dictated by prudence,
Pay attention to high and low,
Though he can hardly fail to know
The limited intelligence
Of those whose knowledge and whose age
May cause them to appear more sage.
If a result thwarts his intent,
That does not his conviction dull,
Or unawares his spirit lull
To match the evil newly present;
But, never by surprise beguiled,
To what he sees is reconciled.
By stark contrast, a feeble soul
At the first gust may be affected,
And though he nothing has neglected,
In his despair may lose control,
As if the cleverest of men
Of his fate could be sovereign.
Blind in his knowledge's pretence,
His inner peace perturbed by passion,
He holds forth in digressive fashion
On the bizarre experience,
Thinking to some fixed law to bend
What on himself does not depend.
Thus locked in his vain stubbornness,
Should it happen that his emotion
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

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

HECUBA

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

PRIAM

I have the proof today, for that imagined ill,
From which my spirit frees itself little by little,
More than any other trouble has caused me woe:
It is just when one loves dearly that one fears so.[189]

HECUBA

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

---

188 Ll. 1901-4 are marked for emphasis.
189 The line is marked for emphasis.

PRIAM

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

HECUBA

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

PRIAM

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

HECUBA

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

PRIAM

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

HECUBA

It gives extreme pleasure to fathers in old age[190]

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[191] 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.[192]

PRIAM

Sometimes a misfortune may prove profitable:[193]
If the harsh hand of Destiny inevitable
Had not poured so many troubles upon our head,

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n. to p. 57, explains "bonnes gens" as a common locution simply indicating age.

191 "Tickles your heart": orig. "Chatouille ... ton cœur" (p. 57), literally equivalent to the English.

192 If a specific daughter is in question, she is not identifiable, but Hecuba's daughters included Cassandra and Polyxena, who both suffered notably unhappy fates, while the verb in l. 1960 ("[a]ccoupleroit" [p. 57]) is open-endedly conditional. On Hecuba's lines in the context of the play's treatment of heroic values, see the Introduction, pp. 23-24.

193 The line is marked for emphasis.

1964 Hector's full worth we would not have appreciated.

HECUBA

1965 The pilot one neglects in weather fair and calm,[194]
1966 And the warrior in peacetime garners no palm;
1967 By contrast, we reckon his strength and value just
1968 In a hard-fought field, his harvest of honour trust.

PRIAM

1969 That life is truly fairer and more glorious
1970 Which divers accidents render laborious:
1971 For the torch of glory, though in the air raised higher,
1972 Unless strongly shaken, will never catch on fire.

HECUBA

1973 A life that is lived in tempests of human stress,
1974 Amidst the fatal storms of manifold distress,
1975 Gives reason to be talked of more extensively
1976 Than another from such torment exempt and free.
1977 But my own desire rather my choice directs
1978 To fulfil an equable life in all respects,
1979 Than to travel a road rugged and tortuous,
1980 As is feigned to be the path of the virtuous:
1981 For man with a portion of grace divine is born,
1982 Which plucks, without being pricked, the rose on the thorn.

PRIAM

1983 Subjected to corruption would be the great ocean
1984 If it were always sleeping without any motion;
1985 Thus the soul languishes, by idleness infected,
1986 If by cares and exertion it is not affected.

HECUBA

1987 As a little exercise to health is conducive,
1988 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:[195]
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.

195 Ll. 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,[197]
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

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

PRIAM

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

HECUBA

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

PRIAM

Her features are a certain sign that is the case.

[Enter Andromache.]

ANDROMACHE

You, tumult, are the harbinger of some mischance!

HECUBA

Fortune has turned—it's in Andromache's appearance.

ANDROMACHE

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

PRIAM

Alas, what new fatal disaster has occurred?

ANDROMACHE

But I cannot know whom it most closely concerns.

HECUBA

Daughter, what trouble so your temper overturns?

ANDROMACHE

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

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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.[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 cursèd Greeks the booty and the prey!
O agèd 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,

199 This line is marked for emphasis.

From this moment let go the sinews of your strength:[200]
Their life-source[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?

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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".

201 "[L]ife-source]": orig. "Celui qui l'animoit" (p. 61).

MESSENGER

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

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.

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.

PRIAM

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

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,[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 Diomedes[203] and Hipponoos[204] 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. 63, 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. 63). I borrow from the list in *Iliad*, XI.299-303, which also includes Autonoos (l. 2151), orig. "Antonoe" (p. 63).

By his murderous arm had been sent to a grave;
Autonoos and Ienteus,[205] both in jousts distinguished,
From the radiance of the heavens he had banished;
And the brave Sthenelus,[206] struck by his sword, in turning,
A wound cut into his thigh felt painfully burning,
When the skilled Polybetes[207] 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. 63); 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 Julleville, ed., p. 385, n. to p. 63, identifies as the son of Pirithoos. The correct form would then be Polyoiptes, 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 queyntly and richely armed" (bk. III, fol. xxx^{r}). 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 sprit and voice had forever fled;
Then he had one of his soldiers recuperate
The gleaming armour in all its glorious weight;
[Andromache re-enters.][208]
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![209]

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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208 The moment of Andromache's re-entrance is not textually mandated. We know she is on stage at ll. 2285, but she seems to have assimilated the essentials of Achilles' treachery—hence my conjecture.

209 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[210] 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.[211]

PRIAM

What sense has honour now? The Manes[212] 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![213] Never did Thetis you bear,
Although the cruel waves remain always your lair;
Although by old Peleus as his son received,[214]
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,

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210 The original ("deshonore" [p. 64]) is not more explicit.
211 See above l. 228 (Act I) and n. 37.
212 "Manes": as in original (p. 64), the spirits of the dead in Roman mythology.
213 "[F]elon": the term in the original (p. 64), which in early French connoted violation of socio-political codes or obligations.
214 On the legendary parentage of Achilles, see Smith, s.v.

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!

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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.

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.

217 "[D]eath-dealing Fate": orig. "la fatale Parque", which, translated literally, seems tautological.

ANDROMACHE

Let my sorrows, in turn, be openly expressed:
Too long have I nurtured mourning within my breast.
Permit me the capacity to speak, O sighs,
And that in speaking my life may volatilise,
Fortunate indeed in my bitter agony
If I die in lamenting my hard destiny.
It is you, O Heavens, I find I must accuse:
With what equity could you with contempt refuse
So many ardent vows, so many fervent prayers,
Invoking your benevolence for our affairs?
No, I know well Andromache does not deserve
To have gods busy themselves her content to serve;
But Hector, that Hector, whose rare qualities shone
So that to barbarous nations he was well known—
That famous magnanimity, courage so perfect,
Should have made your harsh decrees my wishes respect.
Virtue,[218] you are useless if an idol, no more—
Mere wind of opinion, breath of an orator!
O ignorant mortals! Try hoping, when distressed,
The gods will never fail to look out for the best,
Now that Hector is dead, so ardently engaged
In glory's pursuit. For a man merely enraged—
Or rather a tiger—having no effort spent,
Cut down his vanquisher, subjects his corpse to torment.
What new horror is this! With numbing chills I quake;
My mind's eye now seems an image of you to make:
I see you, dear husband, legs upward from the ground,
Downward the head, leaping with jerks from bound to bound,
As Achilles directs and urges on his horses
To ply round and round our ramparts their agile courses.
O you despairing grief, my senses wild you render!
O grievous despair,[219] to which myself I surrender!
At this point in the martyrdom in which I seethe,

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218 "Virtue": orig. "vertu" (p. 66), here obviously in the broadest sense of manhood, integrating moral and physical qualities.

219 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[220] 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[221] of the bravest man of war
Who ever the proud laurel on his forehead wore—
Without such trickery[222] 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 coüard ennemy" (p. 67); cf. the apostrophe of Shakespeare's Troilus: "thou great-sized coward" (*Tro.*, V.xi.26).

222 "[T]rickery": orig. "intelligence" (p. 67)—so explained by Petit de Julleville, ed., p. 286, n. to p. 67.

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.[223]
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[224]
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,[225]
If it depends on one alone, though brave and able,
Who offers himself freely to all risks of dying.[226]
Mortals, learn from this that, no more for being king,

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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