

# **The Trojan Women**

Euripides

## Euripides *Trojan Women*

### Poseidon

From the depths of salt Aegean sea [*pontos*] I, Poseidon, have come, where choruses [*choroi*] of Nereids dance in a graceful maze; for since the day that Phoebus and I with exact measurement [5] set towers of stone about this land of Troy and ringed it round, never from my heart [*phrenes*] has passed away a kindly feeling for my Phrygian town [*polis*], which now is smouldering and overthrown, a prey to Argive might. For, from his home beneath Parnassus, [10] Phocian Epeus, aided by the craft of Pallas, framed a horse to bear within its womb an armed army, and sent it within the battlements, a deadly statue; [from which in days to come men shall tell of the Wooden Horse, with its hidden load of warriors.] [15] Groves stand forsaken and temples of the gods run down with blood, and at the altar's very base, before the god who watched his home, Priam lies dead. While to Achaean ships great store of gold and Phrygian spoils are being conveyed, [20] and they who came against this town [*polis*], those sons of Hellas, only wait a favoring breeze to follow in their wake, that after ten long years they may with joy behold their wives and children. Vanquished by Hera, Argive goddess, and by Athena, who helped to ruin Phrygia, [25] I am leaving Ilion, that famous town, and my altars; for when dreary [*kakē*] desolation seizes on a town [*polis*], the worship of the gods decays and tends to lose respect [*timeîn*]. Scamander's banks re-echo long and loud the screams of captive maids, as they by lot receive their masters. [30] Arcadia takes some, and some the people of Thessaly; others are assigned to Theseus' sons, the Athenian chiefs. And such of the Trojan women as are not portioned out are in these tents, set apart for the leaders of the army; and with them Spartan Helen, [35] daughter of Tyndareus, justly [from *dikē*] counted among the captives. And if you would see that queen of misery, Hecuba, you can; for there she lies before the gates, weeping many tears for many sorrows; at Achilles' tomb [*taphos*], [40] without her knowledge, her daughter Polyxena has died most piteously; Priam is gone, and her children too; Cassandra,

whom the lord Apollo left a virgin [*parthenos*], frenzied, has been forced by Agamemnon, in contempt of the god's ordinance and of piety, to a dishonored wedlock. [45] Farewell, O city [*polis*] once prosperous! farewell, you ramparts of polished stone! if Pallas, daughter of Zeus, had not decreed your ruin, you would be standing firmly still.

**Athena**

May I address the mighty divinity [*daimōn*] whom the gods revere [*timeîn*] and who to my own father is very near in blood [*genos*], [50] laying aside our former enmity [*ekhthros*]?

**Poseidon**

You may; for over the mind [*phrenes*] the ties of kin exert no feeble spell, great queen Athena.

**Athena**

For your forgiving mood my thanks! I have messages to impart affecting both yourself and me, lord.

**Poseidon**

[55] Do you bring fresh tidings [*epos*] from some god, from Zeus, or from someone of the other divinities [*daimones*]?

**Athena**

From none of these; but on behalf of Troy, whose soil we tread, I have come to seek your mighty aid, to make it one with mine.

**Poseidon**

What! have you laid your former hate [*ekhthros*] aside [60] to take compassion on it [= Troy] now that it is burnt to ashes?

**Athena**

First go back to the former point; will you make common cause with me in the scheme I purpose?

**Poseidon**

Yes, surely; but I want to learn your wishes, whether you have come to help Achaeans or Phrygians.

**Athena**

[65] I wish to give my former foes [*ekhthroî*], the Trojans, joy, and on the Achaean army impose a bitter return [*nostos*].

**Poseidon**

Why do you leap thus from mood to mood? Your hate and love [*phileîn*] both go too far, on whomever centred.

**Athena**

Do you not know the outrage [*hubris*] done to me and to the shrine I love?

**Poseidon**

[70] I do: when Ajax dragged away Cassandra by force [*biā*].

**Athena**

Yes, and he did not hear anything or suffer [*paskhein*] anything from the Achaeans.

**Poseidon**

And yet it was by your mighty aid they sacked Ilion.

**Athena**

For which cause I would join with you to do them harm [*kakos*].

**Poseidon**

My powers are ready at your will. What is your intent?

**Athena**

[75] I will impose on them a return [*nostos*] that is no return [*nostos*].

**Poseidon**

While they stay on shore, or as they cross the salt sea?

**Athena**

When they have set sail from Ilion for their homes [*oikoi*]. On them will Zeus also send his rain and fearful hail, [80] and inky tempests from the sky; and he promises to grant me his thunder-bolts to hurl on the Achaeans and fire their ships. And you, for your part, make the Aegean strait to roar with mighty billows and whirlpools, and fill Euboea's hollow bay with corpses, [85] that Achaeans may learn henceforth to reverence my temples and regard all other gods.

## Poseidon

So shall it be, for this favor [*kharis*] needs only a few words. I will vex the broad Aegean sea; and the beach of Mykonos and the reefs round Delos, [90] Skyros and Lemnos too, and the cliffs of Kaphareus shall be strewn with many a corpse. You go to Olympus, and taking from your father's hand his lightning bolts, keep careful watch against the hour when Argos' army lets slip its cables. [95] A fool is he who sacks the towns [*polis*] of men, with shrines and tombs [*tumbos*], the dead man's hallowed [*hieros*] home, for at the last he makes a desert round himself and dies.

## Hecuba

Lift your head, unhappy one [*non-eudaimoniā*], from the ground; raise up your neck; this is Troy no more, [100] no longer am I queen in Ilion. Though fortune [*daimōn*] change, endure your lot; sail with the stream, and follow fortune's [*daimōn*] tack, do not steer your ship of life against the tide, since chance must guide your course. [105] Ah me! ah me! What else but tears is now my hapless lot, whose country, children, husband, all are lost? Ah! the high-blown pride of ancestors, humbled! how brought to nothing after all! [110] What woe must I suppress, or what declare? [What dirge [*thrēnos*] shall I awake?] Ah, woe is me! the anguished way [= with a heavy *daimōn*] I recline, stretched here upon this hard bed! [115] O my head, my temples, my side! How I long [*pothos*] to turn over, and lie now on this, now on that, to rest my back and spine, while ceaselessly my tearful wail [*elegoi*] ascends. [120] This too is a song for those in misfortune, for singing disasters [*atai*] that cannot be expressed with song-and-dance [*khoros*].

You swift-prowed ships, rowed to sacred [*hieros*] Ilion over the deep dark sea, [125] past the fair havens of Hellas, to the flute's ill-omened music and the dulcet voice of pipes, [130] to the bays of Troy, alas! where you tied your hawsers, twisted handiwork from Egypt, in quest of that hateful wife of Menelaos, who brought disgrace [*non-kleos*] on Kastor, and on Eurotas foul reproach; who murdered [135] Priam, the father of fifty children; the cause why I, the unhappy Hecuba, have wrecked my life upon this disastrous [*atē*] strand. Oh that I should sit here, over against the tent of Agamemnon! [140] As a slave I am led away from my home [*oikos*], a lamenting [*penthos*, adj.] old woman, while from my head the hair is piteously shorn for grief. Ah! unhappy wives of those armored sons of Troy! Ah! poor maidens, luckless brides, [145] come weep, for Ilion is now a smouldering ruin; and I, like some mother-bird that over her fledglings screams, will begin the strain; not

the same as that [150] I once sang to the gods, as I leaned on Priam's staff and beat with my foot in Phrygian time to lead the dance [*khoros*]!

### **First Semi-Chorus**

O Hecuba! why these cries, these piercing shrieks? What do your words mean? For I heard your piteous wail [155] echo through the building, and a pang of terror shoots through each captive Trojan's breast, as within these dwellings [*oikoi*] they mourn their slavish lot.

### **Hecuba**

My child, even now at the ships of the Argives—

### **First Semi-Chorus**

[160] The rower's hand is busy?

Ah, woe is me! what is their intent? Will they really carry me away from my country in their fleet?

### **Hecuba**

I do not know, though I guess our *atē*.

### **First Semi-Chorus**

O misery! [165] woe to us Trojan women, soon to hear of our troubles: "Come out of the houses [*oikoi*], the Argives are preparing to return [*nostos*]".

### **Hecuba**

Oh! please do not bid the [170] wild Cassandra leave her chamber, the frantic prophetess, for Argives to insult, nor to my griefs add yet another. Woe to you, ill-fated Troy, Troy, your sun is set; and woe to your unhappy children, living and dead alike, [175] who are leaving you behind!

### **Second Semi-Chorus**

With trembling step, alas! I leave this tent of Agamemnon to learn of you, my royal mistress, whether the Argives have resolved to take my wretched life, or [180] whether the sailors at the prow are making ready to ply their oars.

### **Hecuba**

My child, your wakeful heart [*psūkhē*]!

### **Second Semi-Chorus**

I have come, stricken with terror. Has a herald from the Danaans already arrived?  
[185] To whom am I, poor captive, given as a slave?

### **Hecuba**

You are not far from being allotted now.

### **Second Semi-Chorus**

Alas! What man of Argos or Phthia will bear me in sorrow far from Troy, to his home, or to some island fastness?

### **Hecuba**

[190] Ah! ah! Whose slave shall I become in my old age? in what land? a poor old drone, the wretched copy of a corpse, alas! set to keep the gate [195] or tend their children, I who once held royal honors [*tīmai*] in Troy.

### **Chorus**

Alas, alas! What piteous dirge will you devise to mourn the outrage done you? No more through Ida's looms [200] shall I ply the shuttle to and fro. I look my last on my children's bodies, my last; I shall endure surpassing misery, it may be as the unwilling bride of some Hellene (perish the night and divinity [*daimōn*] that brings me to this!); [205] it may be as a wretched slave from Peirene's sacred fount I shall draw their store of water. Oh! may it be ours to come to Theseus' famous realm, a land of joy [*eudaimoniā*]. [210] Never, never let me see Eurotas' swirling tide, hateful [*ekhthros*] home of Helen, there to meet and be the slave of Menelaos, whose hand laid Troy waste!

That holy land by Peneus fed, [215] nestling in all its beauty at Olympus' foot, is said, so have I heard, to be a very granary of wealth [*olbos*] and teeming fruitfulness; next to the sacred [*hieros*] soil of Theseus, I could wish to reach that land. [220] I hear too about Hephaistos's home, beneath the shadow of Aetna, fronting Phoenicia, the mother of Sicilian hills, how it is celebrated by heralds with its garlands [*stephanoi*] that signal noble striving [*aretē*]. Or may I find a home on that shore that lies very near [225] the Ionian sea [*pontos*] for sailors, a land watered by [the river] Krathis, in all its beauty, which makes fiery red the hair, blond as it is, tending with its holy waves and making blessed [*olbios*] the land of good men.

**Chorus Leader**

[230] But see! a herald from the army of Danaans, with a store of fresh proclamations [*mūthoi*], comes hastening here. What is his errand? What does he say? For we are indeed slaves now to Dorian lords.

**Talthybios**

[235] Hecuba, you know me from my many journeys to and fro as herald between the Achaean army and Troy; I was no stranger to you, lady, even before: I, Talthybios, now sent with a fresh message.

*In the following lines, Talthybios makes spoken responses to Hecuba's sung questions.*

**Hecuba**

Ah, kind friends [*philai*], it has come! what I so long have dreaded.

**Talthybios**

[240] The lot has decided your fates already, if that was what you feared.

**Hecuba**

Ah me! What city [*polis*] did you say, Thessalian, Phthian, or Cadmean?

**Talthybios**

Each warrior took his prize in turn; you were not all at once assigned.

**Hecuba**

To whom has the lot assigned us severally? Which of us Trojan women [245] does a happy fortune await?

**Talthybios**

I know, but ask your questions separately, not all at once.

**Hecuba**

Then tell me, whose prize is my daughter, hapless Cassandra?

**Talthybios**

King Agamemnon has chosen her out for himself.

**Hecuba**

To be the slave-girl [250] of his Spartan wife? Ah me!



**Talthybios**

No, to share with him his stealthy love.

**Hecuba**

What! Phoebus' virgin-priestess [*parthenos*], to whom the god with golden locks granted the gift [*geras*] of living unwed?

**Talthybios**

[255] The dart of love has pierced his heart, love for the frenzied maid.

**Hecuba**

Daughter, cast from you the sacred keys, and from your body tear the holy [*hieroi*] wreaths that drape you in their folds.

**Talthybios**

Why! is it not an honor that she should win our monarch's love?

**Hecuba**

[260] What have you done to her whom recently you took from me, my child?

**Talthybios**

Do you mean Polyxena, or whom do you inquire about?

**Hecuba**

Yes, that one; to whom has the lot assigned her?

**Talthybios**

To minister at Achilles' tomb has been appointed her.

**Hecuba**

[265] Woe is me! I the mother of a dead man's slave! What custom [*nomos*], what ordinance is this among Hellenes, friend [*philos*]?

**Talthybios**

Count your daughter happy [*eudaimoniā*]; it is well with her.

**Hecuba**

What wild words are these? Please tell me, is she still alive?

**Talthybios**

[270] Her fate is one that sets her free from pains [*ponoi*].

**Hecuba**

And what of the wife of Hector skilled in arms, sad Andromache? declare her fate.

**Talthybios**

She too was a chosen prize; Achilles' son took her.

**Hecuba**

As for me [275] whose hair is white with age, who need to hold a staff to be to me a third foot, whose servant am I to be?

**Talthybios**

Odysseus, king of Ithaca, has taken you to be his slave.

**Hecuba**

Oh, oh! Now smite the close-shorn head! [280] tear your cheeks with your nails! Ah me! I have fallen as a slave to a foul treacherous man, an enemy of justice [*dikē*], a monster of lawlessness [= contrary to *nomos*], [285] one that by his double tongue has made non-*philos* to us all that once was friendly [*philos*] in his camp, changing this for that and that for this again. Oh weep [*goēmenai*] for me, you Trojan women! Lost and ill-fated! [290] Ah woe! a victim to a most unhappy lot!

**Chorus Leader**

Your fate, royal mistress, now you know; but for me, what Helene or Achaean is master of my destiny?

**Talthybios**

Go, servants, and bring Cassandra forth to me here [295] at once, that I may place her in our captain's hands, and then conduct to the rest of the chiefs the captives each has had assigned. Ha! what is the blaze of torches there within? What are they doing? Are they firing the chambers, [300] because they must leave this land and be carried away to Argos? Are they setting themselves aflame in their longing for death? Truly the free bear their troubles [*kaka*] in cases like this with a stiff neck. Open up! lest their deed, which suits them well [305] but is hateful [*ekhthros*] to the Achaeans, bring blame [*aitiā*] on me.

### **Hecuba**

It is not that they are setting anything ablaze, but my child Cassandra, frenzied maid, comes rushing wildly here.

### **Kassandra**

Bring the light, uplift and show its flame! I am doing the god's service, see! see! making his holy place [*hieros*] to glow with tapers bright. [310] O Hymen, lord of marriage! blessed [*makar*] is the bridegroom; blessed [*makar*] am I also, soon to wed a princely lord in Argos. Hail Hymen, lord of marriage! [315] Since you, my mother, are busied with tears and lamentations [*goos*] in your mourning for my father's death and for our country dear [*phila*], I at my own nuptials [320] am making this torch to blaze and show its light, giving to you, O Hymen, giving, O Hecate, a light, at the girl's [*parthenos*] wedding, as the custom [*nomos*] is.

[325] Nimble lift the foot; lead the dance [*khoros*] on high, with cries of joy, as if to greet my father's happiest [*makar*] fate. The dance [*khoros*] is sacred. Come, Phoebus, now, for it is in your temple [330] among your bay-trees that I minister. Hail Hymen, god of marriage! Hymen, hail! Dance [*khoreuein*], mother, and laugh! link your steps with me, and circle in the most *philos* measure, now here, now there. [335] Salute the bride on her wedding-day with happy [*makar*] hymns and cries. Come, you maids of Phrygia in fair raiment, sing [*melpain*] my marriage [340] with the husband fate ordains that I should wed.

### **Chorus Leader**

Hold the frantic maiden, royal mistress, lest with nimble foot she rush to the Argive army.

### **Hecuba**

You god of fire, it is yours to light the bridal torch for men, but piteous is the flame you kindle here, [345] beyond my blackest expectation. Ah, my child! how little did I ever dream that such would be your marriage, a captive, and of Argos too! Give up the torch to me; you do not bear its blaze aright in your wild frantic course, nor have your afflictions left you in your sober senses, [350] but still you are as frantic as before. Take in those torches, Trojan friends, and for her wedding madrigals weep your tears instead.

### **Kassandra**

O mother, crown my head with victor's wreaths; rejoice in my royal match; lead me

[355] and if you find me unwilling at all, thrust me there by force; for if Loxias is indeed a prophet, Agamemnon, that famous king of the Achaeans, will find in me a bride more vexatious than Helen. For I will slay him and lay waste his home [360] to avenge my father's and my brothers' death. But let that go; I will not sing [*humneîn*] of that axe which shall sever my neck and the necks of others, or of the ordeals [*agōnes*] ending in a mother's death, which my marriage shall cause, nor of the overthrow of Atreus' house [*oikos*]. [365] But I, for all my frenzy, will so far rise above my frantic fit, that I will prove this city [*polis*] happier [*makar*] far than those Achaeans, who for the sake of one woman and one passion have lost a countless army in hunting Helen. [370] Their captain too, whom men call wise [*sophos*], has lost for what he hated [*ekhthros*] most what most he prized, yielding to his brother for a woman's sake—and she was willing and not taken by force [*biā*] —the joy he had of his *philo*i children in his home [*oikos*]. For from the day that they landed upon Scamander's strand, their doom began, [375] not for loss of stolen frontier nor yet for fatherland with high towers; whomever Arēs took, those never saw their children again, nor were they shrouded for the tomb by hand of wife, but in a foreign [*xeinos*] land they lie. At home [*oikos*] the case was still the same; [380] wives were dying widows, parents were left childless in their homes, having reared their sons for others, and none is left to make libations of blood upon the ground before their tombs. Truly the army is worthy of this praise. One had better keep silent about things that are disgraceful, may song not become for me [385] a singer who hymns [*humneîn*] evils [*kaka*].

But the Trojans were dying, first for their fatherland, fairest fame [*kleos*] to win; whomever the sword took, all these found friends [*philo*i] to bear their corpses home [*oikoi*] and were laid to rest in the embrace of their native land, [390] their funeral rites all duly paid by duteous hands. And all such Phrygians as escaped the warrior's death lived [*oikeîn*] always day by day with wife and children by them, joys the Achaeans had left behind. As for Hector and his griefs, hear how the case stands; [395] he is dead and gone, but still his fame remains as bravest [*aristos*] of the brave, and this was a result of the Achaeans' coming; for had they remained at home [*oikos*], his worth would have gone unnoticed. And Paris married the daughter of Zeus, whereas, had he never done so, the alliance he made in his family would have been forgotten. [400] Whoever is wise should fly from making war; but if he come to this, a noble death will garland [*stephanos*] his city [*polis*] with glory, a coward's end

with bad *kleos*. Therefore, mother, you should not pity your country or my bed, for this my marriage [405] will destroy those whom you and I most hate [*ekhthros*].

### **Chorus Leader**

As you laugh sweetly at the bad things [*kaka*] that are happening to you, you sing-and-dance [*melpein*] a song-and-dance [*melpein*] that you will show are not clear [*saphē*], maybe!

### **Talthybios**

Had not Apollo turned your wits [*phrenes*] to Bacchic revelry, you would not for nothing have sent my chiefs [410] with such ominous predictions forth on their way. But, after all, these lofty minds, reputed wise [*sopha*], are nothing better than those that are held as nothing. For that mighty king of all Hellas, *philos* son of Atreus, has yielded to a passion [415] for this mad maiden of all others; though I am poor enough, yet would I never have chosen such a wife as this. As for you, since your senses [*phrenes*] are not whole, I give your taunts against Argos and your praise of Troy to the winds to carry away. Follow me now [420] to the ships to grace the wedding of our chief. And you too follow, whenever the son of Laertes demands your presence, for you will serve a mistress most moderate [*sōphrōn*], as all declare who came to Ilion.

### **Kassandra**

A clever one [*deinos*], this servant! Why is it heralds hold [425] the name they do? All men unite in hating with one common hate the lackeys of kings [*turannoī*] or cities [*polis*]. You say my mother shall come to the halls of Odysseus? Where then are Apollo's words, so clear to me in their interpretation, which declare [430] that she shall die here? What else remains, I will not taunt her with. Unhappy Odysseus, he does not know the suffering [*paskhein*] that await him; or how these ills [*kaka*] I and my Phrygians endure shall one day seem to him precious as gold. For beyond the ten long years spent at Troy he shall drag out other ten and then come to his country all alone . . . [435] where dreadful [*deinē*] Charybdis lurks in a narrow channel between the rocks; past Cyclops the savage shepherd, and Ligurian Circe who turns men to swine; shipwrecked often upon the salt sea-wave; longing to eat the lotus, and the sacred cattle of the sun, [440] whose flesh shall utter in the days to come a human voice, bitter to Odysseus. In brief, he shall descend alive to Hādēs, and, though he shall escape the waters' flood, yet shall he find a thousand troubles [*kaka*] in his country when he arrives.

Enough! why do I recount the troubles [*ponoi*] of Odysseus? [445] Lead on at once, that I may wed my husband for his home in Hādēs' halls. Base [*kakos*] you are, and basely [*kakos*] shall you be buried, in the dead of night when day is done, you captain of that army of Danaans, who think so proudly of your fortune! Yes, and the rocky chasm with its flood of wintry waters shall give my corpse cast forth in nakedness to wild beasts to make their meal upon, [450] near my husband's tomb [*taphos*], I, Apollo's servant. O garlands of that god most dear [*philos*] to me! farewell, you mystic symbols! I here resign your feasts, my joy in days gone by. Go, I tear you from my body, that, while yet mine honor is intact, I may give them to the rushing winds to waft to you, my prince of prophecy! [455] Where is that general's ship? Where must I go to take my place there? Lose no further time in watching for a favoring breeze to fill your sails, doomed as you are to carry from this land one of the three avenging spirits. Fare you well, mother! dry your tears. O dear [*philē*] country! my brothers below the earth and my own father, [460] it will not be long before you shall welcome me; victory shall crown my advent among the dead, when I have overthrown the home of our destroyers, the house of the sons of Atreus.

### **Chorus Leader**

You guardians of the grey-haired Hecuba, see how your mistress is sinking speechless to the ground! Take hold of her! will you let her fall, [465] you worthless [*kakai*] slaves? lift up again, from where it lies, her withered body.

### **Hecuba**

Leave me, my maidens—unwelcome [not *phila*] service does not grow *phila*—lying where I fell; what I am suffering [*paskhein*] now, what I have suffered [*paskhein*], and what I will suffer [*paskhein*], all claim this lowly posture. Gods of heaven! small help I find in calling faithless [*kakoi*] allies, [470] yet is there something in the form of invoking heaven, whenever we fall on evil days. So then, first of all, it's dear [*philon*] to me to sing from beginning to end the good things [*agatha*]; so shall I inspire the greater pity for my present woes [*kaka*].

Born a ruler [*turannos*] and wedded to a ruler [*turannos*], [475] I was the mother of a race of gallant sons; no mere ciphers they, but Phrygia's chiefest pride, children such as no Trojan or Hellenic or barbarian mother ever had to boast. All these have I seen slain by the spear of Hellas, [480] and at their tombs [*tumbos*] have I shorn off my hair; with these my eyes I saw their father, Priam, butchered on his own hearth, and my city [*polis*] captured, I did not lament [*klaiein*] from what I heard from others.

The girls [*parthenoi*] I brought up [485] to see chosen for some marriage high, for strangers have I reared them, and seen them snatched away. Nevermore can I hope to be seen by them, nor shall my eyes behold them ever in the days to come. And last, to crown my misery [*kakon*], [490] I shall be brought to Hellas, a slave in my old age. And there the tasks that least befit the evening of my life will they impose on me, Hector's mother, to watch their gates and keep the keys, or bake their bread, and on the ground instead of my royal bed [495] lay down my shrunken limbs, with tattered rags about my wasted frame, a shameful garb for those who once were prosperous [*olbios*]. Ah, woe is me! and this is what I bear and am to bear for one woman's marriage! [500] O my daughter, O Cassandra! whom gods have summoned to their frenzied train, how cruel the lot that ends your virgin days! And you, Polyxena! my child of sorrow, where, oh! where are you? None of all the many sons and daughters I have born comes to aid a wretched mother. [505] Why then raise me up? What hope is left us? Guide me, who before trod so daintily the streets of Troy, but now am a slave, to a bed upon the ground, near some rocky ridge, that from there I may cast myself down and perish, after I have wasted my body with weeping. [510] Of all the prosperous [*eudaimoniā*] crowd, count none a happy man before he die.

### **Chorus**

Sing me, Muse, a tale of Troy, a funeral dirge in strains [*humnoi*] unheard as yet, with tears; [515] for now I will uplift for Troy a piteous chant, telling how I met my doom and fell a wretched captive to the Argives by reason of a four-footed beast that moved on wheels, when Achaea's sons left at our gates that horse, [520] loud rumbling to the sky, with its trappings of gold and its freight of warriors; and our people cried out as they stood upon the rocky citadel, "Up now, you whose toil [*ponos*] is over, [525] and drag this sacred [*hieros*] image to the shrine of the Zeus-born maiden, goddess of our Ilion!" Forth from his house came every youth and every grey-head too; and with songs of joy [530] they took the fatal *atē* within.

Then hastened all the race of Phrygia to the gates, to make the goddess a present of an Argive band ambushed in the polished mountain-pine, [535] Dardania's ruin [*atē*], a welcome gift [*kharris*] to be to her, the virgin queen of deathless steeds; and with nooses of cord they dragged it, as it had been a ship's dark hull, to the stone-built [540] temple of the goddess Pallas, and set it on that floor so soon to drink our country's blood. But when the pitchy night came on their labor [*ponos*] and their joy

[*kharis*], loud the Libyan flute was sounding, [545] and Phrygian songs awoke, while maidens beat the ground with airy foot, uplifting their glad song [*melpein*]; and in the halls a blaze of torchlight shed its flickering shadows [550] on sleeping eyes.

In that hour inside the halls I was singing-and-dancing [*melpein*] my songs-and-dances [*khoroï*], and my song was the girl [*parthenos*] of the mountains, the daughter of Zeus; [555] when there rang along the town [*polis*] a cry of death which filled the homes of Troy, and *phila* babies in terror clung about their mothers' skirts, [560] as forth from their ambush came the warrior-band, the handiwork of maiden Pallas. Soon the altars ran with Phrygian blood, and desolation reigned over every bed where young men lay beheaded, [565] a glorious garland [*stephanos*] for Hellas won, for her, the nurse of youth, but for our Phrygian fatherland a bitter grief [*penthos*].

### **Chorus Leader**

Hecuba, do you see Andromache advancing here on a foreign chariot? [570] and with her, clasped to her throbbing breast, is her dear Astyanax, Hector's child. Where are you being carried, unhappy wife, mounted on that chariot, side by side with Hector's brazen arms and Phrygian spoils of war, [575] with which Achilles' son will garland [*stephein*] the shrines of Phthia on his return from Troy?

### **Andromache**

My Achaean masters are leading me away.

### **Hecuba<sup>1</sup>**

Ah me!

### **Andromache**

Why do you in note of woe utter the dirge that is mine?

### **Hecuba**

Alas—

### **Andromache**

For these sorrows—

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<sup>1</sup> Different editions of the *Trojan Women* differ with regard to the identification of speaking voices for verses 577–587 [Heroization Team]



**Hecuba**

[580] O Zeus—

**Andromache**

And for this calamity.

**Hecuba**

O my children!

**Andromache**

Our day is past.

**Hecuba**

Joy [*olbios*] is gone, Troy is gone.

**Andromache**

Unhappy!

**Hecuba**

For my gallant sons

**Andromache**

Alas!

**Hecuba**

Alas indeed, for my

**Andromache**

[585] Miseries [*kaka*]!

**Hecuba**

Piteous the fate

**Andromache**

Of our city [*polis*],

**Hecuba**

Smouldering in the smoke.

**Andromache**

Come to me, my husband, come!

**Hecuba**

Ah, hapless wife! you call on my son who lies in the tomb.

**Andromache**

[590] Your wife's defender!

**Hecuba**

Oh, you, who before made the Achaeans grieve, eldest of the sons I bore to Priam, take me to your rest in Hādēs' halls!

**Andromache**

[595] These great griefs [*pothoi*] —

**Hecuba**

Unhappy one, bitter these woes to suffer [*paskhein*].

**Andromache**

Our city [*polis*] ruined—

**Hecuba**

And sorrow to sorrow added.

**Andromache**

Through the will of angry heaven, since the day that son<sup>2</sup> of yours escaped death, he that for the sake of [*kharis*] a hated bride brought destruction on the Trojan citadel [*polis*]. There lie the gory corpses of the slain by the shrine of Pallas for vultures to carry off; [600] and Troy has come to slavery's yoke.

**Hecuba**

O my country, O unhappy land—

**Andromache**

I weep for you now left behind.

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<sup>2</sup> i.e., Paris, who had been exposed to die on account of an oracle foretelling the misery he would cause if he grew to man's estate; but shepherds had found him on the hills and reared him. [E.P. Coleridge]

**Hecuba**

Now do you behold your piteous end [*telos*].

**Andromache**

And you, my house, where I gave birth.

**Hecuba**

O my children! bereft of her city as your mother is, she now is losing you. Oh, what mourning [*ialemos*] and what sorrow [*penthē*]! . . . [605] oh, what endless streams of tears in our houses! The dead alone forget their griefs [and never shed a tear].

**Chorus Leader**

What a sweet thing that there are tears for those who have gone through bad things [*kaka*], the wailings of laments [*thrēnoi*], and the song that has sorrows!

**Andromache**

[610] Do you see this, mother of that man, Hector, who once laid low in battle many a son of Argos?

**Hecuba**

I see that it is heaven's way to exalt what men accounted nothing, and ruin what they most esteemed.

**Andromache**

Hence with my child as booty am I borne; the noble [= good *genos*] [615] are brought to slavery—a bitter change.

**Hecuba**

This is the terror [*deinon*] of necessity; it was just now that Cassandra was torn with violence [*biā*] from my arms.

**Andromache**

Alas, alas! it seems a second Ajax has appeared to wrong your daughter; but there are other ills for you.

**Hecuba**

[620] Yes, beyond all count or measure are my sorrows; evil [*kakon*] vies with evil [*kakon*] in the struggle to be first.

### **Andromache**

Your daughter Polyxena is dead, slain at Achilles' tomb [*taphos*], an offering to his lifeless corpse.

### **Hecuba**

O woe is me! This is that riddle [*ainigma*] Talthybios [625] long ago told me, a truth obscurely uttered.

### **Andromache**

I saw her myself; so I alighted from the chariot, and covered her corpse with a mantle, and struck upon my breast.

### **Hecuba**

Alas! my child, for your unhallowed sacrifice! and yet again, alas! for your shameful [*kakon*] death!

### **Andromache**

[630] Her death was even as it was, and yet that death of hers was after all a happier fate than my life.

### **Hecuba**

Death and life are not the same, my child; the one is annihilation, the other keeps a place for hope.

### **Andromache**

Hear, O mother of children! give ear to what I urge so well, [635] that I may cheer my drooping spirit [*phrēn*]. It is all one, I say, never to have been born and to be dead, and better far is death than life with misery. For the dead feel no sorrow any more and know no grief; but he who has known prosperity and has fallen on evil [*kakai*] days [640] feels his spirit [*psūkhē*] straying from the scene of former joys. Now that child of yours is dead as though she never had seen the light, and little she knows of her calamity [*kakon*]; whereas I, who aimed at a fair repute, though I won a higher lot than most, yet missed my luck in life. [645] For all that stamps the wife a moderate woman [*sōphrōn*], I strove to do in Hector's home. In the first place, whether there is a slur upon a woman, or whether there is not, the very fact of her not staying at home brings in its train an evil [*kakon*] name; [650] therefore I gave up any longing [*pothos*] to do so, and stayed within my house; nor would I admit indoors the clever talk [*epos*] women love, but I was content to have in my own mind [*noos*] a

sound teacher. And ever would I keep a silent tongue and serene [*hēsukhos*] eye before my husband; [655] and well I knew where I might rule him, and where it was best to yield.

Report of this has reached the Achaean army, and proved my ruin; for when I was taken captive, Achilles' son would have me [660] as his wife, and I must serve in the house of murderers. And if I set aside my love [*philos*] for Hector, and open my heart [*phrēn*] to this new lord, I shall appear [*phainein*] a traitress [*kakē*] to the dead, while, if I hate him, I shall incur my master's displeasure. [665] And yet they say a single night removes a woman's dislike for her husband; I despise the woman who, when she has lost her former husband, transfers her love [*phileîn*] by marrying another. Not even the horse, if parted from her stablemate, [670] will cheerfully draw the yoke; and animals have neither speech nor sense to help them, and are by nature man's inferiors.

O my *philos* Hector, in you I found a husband amply dowered with wisdom, noble birth [*genos*] and fortune, a brave man and a mighty; [675] while you took from my father's house a spotless bride, yourself the first to make this maiden wife. But now death has claimed you, and I am soon to sail to Hellas, a captive doomed to wear the yoke of slavery. Has not then the dead Polyxena, [680] for whom you wail, less evil [*kaka*] to bear than I? I have not so much as hope, the last resource of every human heart [*phrenes*], nor do I beguile myself with dreams of future bliss, the very thought of which is sweet.

### **Chorus Leader**

You are in the same plight as I; your lamentations [685] for yourself remind me of my own pains [*pēma*, pl.].

### **Hecuba**

I never yet have set foot on a ship's deck, though I have seen such things in pictures and know of them from hearsay. Now sailors, if there comes a storm of moderate force, are all eagerness to save [*sōzein*] themselves by toil [*ponoi*]; [690] one stands at the tiller, another sets himself to work the sheets, a third meanwhile is baling out the ship; but if tempestuous sea [*pontos*] arise to overwhelm them, they yield to fortune and commit themselves to the driving billows. Even so I, by reason of my countless troubles [*pēma*, pl.], [695] am speechless and forbear to say a word; for this surge of misery from the gods is too strong for me. Cease, my *philē* child, to speak of

Hector's fate; no tears of yours can save him; honor [*timeîn*] your present master, [700] offering your conduct as the sweet [*philon*] bait to win him. If you do this, you will cheer your friends [*philoî*] as well as yourself and you shalt rear my Hector's child to lend stout aid to Ilion, that so your children in the aftertime [705] may build her up again, and our city [*polis*] yet be established. But our talk must take a different turn; who is this Achaean servant I see coming here again, sent to tell us of some new design?

**Talthybios**

You that once were the wife of Hector, bravest [*aristos*] of the Phrygians, [710] do not hate me, for I am not a willing messenger. The Danaans and sons of Pelops both command—

**Andromache**

What is it? your prelude bodes evil [*kaka*] news.

**Talthybios**

It is decreed your son is—how can I tell my news?

**Andromache**

Surely not to have a different master from me?

**Talthybios**

[715] None of all Achaea's chiefs shall ever lord it over him.

**Andromache**

Is it their will to leave him here, a remnant of Phrygia's race?

**Talthybios**

I know no words to break the bad news [*kaka*] lightly to you.

**Andromache**

I thank you for your scruples [*aidōs*], unless indeed you have good news to tell.

**Talthybios**

They mean to slay your son; there is my hateful [*kakon*] message to you.

**Andromache**

[720] Oh me! this is worse [*kakon*] tidings than my forced marriage.

### **Talthybios**

So spoke Odysseus to the assembled Hellenes, and his word prevails.

### **Andromache**

Oh, once again alas! there is no measure in the woes [*kaka*] I suffer [*paskhein*].

### **Talthybios**

He said they should not rear such a son of a noble [*aristos*] father.

### **Andromache**

May such counsels prevail about children of his!

### **Talthybios**

[725] He must be thrown from Troy's battlements. Let it be so, and you will appear [*phainein*] the more wise [*sophos*]; do not cling to him, but bear your sorrows [*kaka*] nobly [= good *genos*], nor in your weakness think that you are strong. For nowhere do you have any help; consider this you must; [730] your husband and your city [*polis*] are no more, so you are in our power, and I alone am match enough for one woman; therefore I would not see you bent on strife, or any course to bring you shame or hate, nor would I hear you rashly curse the Achaeans. [735] For if you say anything to anger the army, this child will find no burial [*taphos*] nor pity either. But if you hold your peace and with composure take your fate, you will not leave his corpse unburied, and you yourself will find more favor with the Achaeans.

### **Andromache**

[740] My dearest [*philē*]! my own sweet child and most highly honored [*timeîn*]! your death the foe [*ekhthros*] demands, and you must leave your wretched mother. Your father's nobility [= good *genos*], the salvation [*sōtēriā*] of others, proves your destruction; to you your father's valor [*esthlos*] has proved no gift. [745] O my unlucky bed and marriage, that brought me once to Hector's home, hoping to be the mother of a son that should be king [*turannos*] over Asia's fruitful fields instead of serving as a victim to the Danaans! Do you weep, my child? do you know your hapless fate [*kaka*]? [750] Why clutch me with your hands and to my garment cling, nestling like a tender chick beneath my wing? Hector will not rise from the earth and come gripping his famous spear to bring you salvation [*sōtēriā*]; no kinsman of your father appears, nor might of Phrygian hosts; [755] one dreadful headlong leap from the dizzy height and you will dash out your life with none to pity you! Oh to

clasp your tender limbs, a mother's fondest [most *philos*] joy! Oh to breathe your fragrant breath! In vain it seems these breasts did suckle you, wrapped in your swaddling-clothes; [760] all for nothing I used to toil [*ponoi*] and wear myself away! Kiss your mother now for the last time, nestle to her that bore you, twine your arms about my neck and join your lips to mine! O you Hellenes, cunning to devise new forms of cruelty [*kaka*], [765] why slay this child responsible [*aitiā*] for no wrong? You daughter of Tyndareus, you are no child of Zeus, but I say you were born of many a father, first of some evil demon, next of Envy, then of Murder and of Death, and every horror [*kaka*] that the earth breeds. [770] That Zeus was never father of yours I boldly do assert, bane as you have been to many a Hellene and barbarian too. Destruction catch you! Those fair eyes of yours have brought a shameful ruin on the fields of glorious Troy. Take the child and bear him hence, hurl him down if you wish, [775] then feast upon his flesh! It is the gods' will we perish, and I cannot ward the deadly stroke from my child. Hide me and my misery; cast me into the ship's hold; for it is to a fair wedding I am going, now that I have lost my child!

### **Chorus Leader**

[780] Unhappy Troy! you have lost countless men for the sake of [*kharis*] one woman and her hateful bed.

### **Talthybios**

Come, child, leave fond embracing of your woeful mother, and mount the high coronal of your ancestral towers, [785] there to draw your parting breath, as is ordained. Take him away. His should the duty be to do such herald's work, whose heart knows no pity and who loves [*philos*] ruthlessness more than my soul does.

*Exeunt Andromache and Talthybios with Astyanax.*

### **Hecuba**

[790] O child, son of my hapless boy, an unjust [*adikos*] fate robs me and your mother of your life [*psūkhē*]. What am I suffering [*paskhein*]? What can I do for you, luckless one? For you I strike upon my head and beat my breast, my only gift; [795] for that is in my power. Woe for my city [*polis*]! woe for you! What sorrow do we not have? What is wanting now to our utter and immediate ruin?

### **Chorus**

O Telamon, King of Salamis, the feeding-ground of bees, [800] who have your home



[*oikos*] in a sea-girt isle that lies near the holy hills where first Athena made the grey olive branch to appear, a garland [*stephanos*] for heavenly heads and adornment [*kosmos*] for happy Athens, you came, you came in knightly brotherhood [805] with that great archer, Alkmene's son, to sack our city [*polis*] Ilion, in days gone by, [on your advent from Hellas];

When he led the chosen flower of Hellas, vexed [810] for the steeds,<sup>3</sup> and at the fair stream of Simoeis he stayed his sea-borne ship and fastened cables to the stern, and forth from the ship he took the bow his hand could deftly shoot, to be the doom of Laomedon; and with the ruddy breath of fire [815] he wasted the masonry squared by Phoebus' line and chisel, and sacked the land of Troy; so twice in two attacks has the blood-stained spear destroyed Dardania's walls.

[820] In vain, it seems, you Phrygian boy<sup>4</sup> pacing with dainty step among your golden chalices, do you fill high the cup of Zeus, a lovely service; [825] the land of your birth is being consumed by fire. The shore re-echoes to our cries; and, as a bird bewails its young, [830] so we bewail our husbands or our children, or our old mothers. The dew-fed springs where you bathed, the course where you trained, [835] are now no more; but you beside the throne of Zeus are sitting with a calm, sweet smile upon your charming [*kharis*] young face, while the spear of Hellas has destroyed the land of Priam.

[840] Ah! Love, Love, who once sought these Dardanian halls, deep-seated in the hearts of heavenly gods, how high you made Troy to tower in those days, [845] allying her with deities! But I will cease to urge reproaches against Zeus; for white-winged dawn, whose light is dear [*philon*] to man, [850] turned a baleful eye upon our land and watched the ruin of our citadel, though she had within her bridal bower a husband to give her children,<sup>5</sup> from this land, [855] whom once a chariot of gold spangled stars caught up and carried there, great source of hope to his native country; but all the love the gods once had for Troy is passed away.

## **Menelaos**

[860] Hail! you radiant flare of the sun, by whose fair light I now shall capture her that was my wife, Helen; for I am that Menelaos, who has toiled so hard, I and

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<sup>3</sup> Hēraklēs had destroyed a sea-monster for Laomedon on condition of receiving a gift of horses for his trouble, and, on Laomedon repudiating the promise, sacked Troy. [E.P. Coleridge]

<sup>4</sup> Ganymede, a son of Tros. [E.P. Coleridge]

<sup>5</sup> Referring to the union of Eos [Dawn] and Tithonos. [E.P. Coleridge]

Achaea's army. I came to Troy, not so much as men suppose [865] for, the sake of a woman, but to punish the man who from my house stole my wife, traitor to my hospitality. But he, by the gods' will, has paid the penalty [*dikē*], ruined, and his country too, by the spear of Hellas. And I have come to bear that wretched woman away—wife I have no mind [870] to call her, though she once was mine—for now she is one among the other Trojan women who share these tents as captives. For they, the very men who toiled to take her with the spear, have granted to me to slay her, [875] or, if I will, to spare and carry back with me to Argos. Now my purpose is not to put her to death in Troy, but to carry her to Hellas in my sea-borne ship, and then surrender her to death, a recompense to all whose *philo*i were slain in Ilion. [880] Ho! my servants, enter the tent, and drag her out to me by her hair foul with murder; and when a favoring breeze shall blow, to Hellas will we convey her.

### **Hecuba**

O you that do support the earth and rest thereupon, [885] whoever you are, a riddle past our knowledge! Zeus, whether you are natural necessity, or man's intellect [*noos*], to you I pray; for, though you tread over a noiseless path, all your dealings with mankind are guided by justice [*dikē*].

### **Menelaos**

What is this? Strange the prayer you offer to the gods!

### **Hecuba**

[890] I thank you, Menelaos, if you will slay that wife of yours. Yet shun the sight of her, lest she strike you with longing [*pothos*]. For she ensnares the eyes of men, overthrows their towns [*polis*], and burns their houses [*oikoi*], so potent are her witcheries! Well I know her; so do you and those who have suffered [*paskhein*] too.

### **Helen**

[895] Menelaos! this prelude well may fill me with alarm; for I am taken with violence [*biā*] by your servants' hands and brought before these tents. Still, though I am sure you hate me, yet I want to inquire [900] what you and Hellas have decided about my life [*psūkhē*].

### **Menelaos**

To judge your case required no great exactness; the army with one consent, that army whom you wronged [= not + verb from *dikē*], handed you over to me to die.

**Helen**

May I answer this decision, proving that my death, if I am to die, will be not *dikaios*?

**Menelaos**

[905] I came not to argue, but to slay you.

**Hecuba**

Hear her, Menelaos; let her not die for want of that, and let me answer her again, for you know nothing of her villainies [*kaka*] in Troy; and the whole case, if summed up, [910] will insure her death against all chance of an escape.

**Menelaos**

This gift needs leisure; still, if she wishes to speak, she may. Yet I will grant her this because of your words, that she may hear them, and not for her own sake [*kharis*].

**Helen**

Perhaps you will not answer me, from counting me a foe, [915] whether my words seem good or ill [*kakon*]. Yet I will put my charges and yours over against each other, and then reply to the accusations I suppose you will advance against me. First, then, that woman was the author of these troubles [*kaka*] [920] by giving birth to Paris; next, old Priam ruined Troy and me, because he did not slay his child Alexandros, baleful semblance of a fire-brand,<sup>6</sup> long ago. Hear what followed. This man was to judge [*krinein*] the claims of three rival goddesses; [925] so Pallas offered him command of all the Phrygians, and the destruction of Hellas; Hera promised he should spread his dominion over Asia, and the utmost bounds of Europe, if he would decide [*krinein*] for her; but Cypris spoke in rapture of my loveliness, [930] and promised him this gift, if she should have the preference over those two for beauty. Now mark the inference I deduce from this; Cypris won the day over the goddesses, and thus far has my marriage proved of benefit to Hellas, that you are not subject to barbarian rule, neither vanquished in the strife, nor yet by tyrants crushed. [935] What Hellas gained, was ruin to me, sold for my beauty, and now I am reproached for that which should have set a garland [*stephanos*] upon my head. But you will say I am silent on the real matter at hand, how it was I started forth and left your house by stealth. [940] With no small goddess at his side he came, my accursed wretch, call

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<sup>6</sup> Hecuba had dreamed she would hear a son who would cause the ruin of Troy; on the birth of Paris an oracle confirmed her fears.

him Alexandros or Paris, as you will; and you, villain [most *kakos*], left him behind in your house, and sailed away from Sparta to the land of Crete.

[945] Enough of this! For all that followed I must question myself, not you; what thought led me to follow the *xenos* from your house, traitress to my country and my home? Punish the goddess, show yourself more mighty even than Zeus, who, though he lords it over the other divinities [*daimones*], [950] is her slave; therefore I may well be pardoned. Still, from this you might draw a specious argument against me; when Paris died, and earth concealed his corpse, I should have left his house [*oikos*] and sought the Argive fleet, since my marriage was no longer in the hands of gods. [955] That was what I was eager to do; and the warders on the towers and watchmen on the walls can bear me witness, for often they found me seeking to let myself down stealthily by cords from the battlements [but there was that new husband, Deiphobos, that carried me off [960] by force [*biā*] to be his wife against the will of Troy]. How then, my lord, could I be justly [= with *dikē*] put to death . . . by you, with any show of right [*dikaios*], seeing that he wedded me by force [*biā*], and those my other natural gifts have served a bitter slavery, instead of leading on to triumph? If it is your will indeed [965] to master gods, that very wish displays your folly.

### **Chorus Leader**

O my royal mistress, defend your children's and your country's cause, bringing to nothing her persuasive arguments, for she pleads well in spite of all her villainous *kaka* deeds; this is monstrous [*deinon*]!

### **Hecuba**

First I will take up the cause of those goddesses, [970] and prove how she perverts justice [*dikē*]. For I can never believe that Hera or the virgin [*parthenos*] Pallas would have been guilty of such folly, the one to sell her Argos to barbarians, or that Pallas ever would make her Athens subject to the Phrygians, [975] coming as they did in mere wanton sport to Ida to contest the palm of beauty. For why should goddess Hera set her heart so much on such a prize? Was it to win a nobler lord than Zeus? or was Athena hunting down among the gods a husband, [980] she who in her dislike of marriage won from her father the gift of remaining unwed? Do not seek to impute folly to the goddesses, in the attempt to adorn [*kosmeîn*] your own sin [*kakon*]; never will you persuade the wise [*sophoi*]. Next you have said—what well may make men jeer—that Cypris came with my son to the house of Menelaos. [985]

Could she not have stayed serenely [*hēsukhos*] in heaven and brought you and Amyklai as well to Ilion?

No! my son was exceedingly handsome, and when you saw him your mind [*noos*] straightaway became your Aphrodite; for every folly that men commit, they lay upon this goddess, [990] and rightly does her name<sup>7</sup> begin the word for “senselessness”; so when you caught sight of him in gorgeous foreign clothes, ablaze with gold, your senses [*phrenes*] utterly forsook you. Yes, for in Argos you had moved in simple state, but, once free of Sparta, [995] it was your hope to deluge by your lavish outlay Phrygia’s town [*polis*], that flowed with gold; nor was the palace of Menelaos rich enough for your luxury to riot in.

Enough of this! My son carried you off by force [*biā*], so you say; what Spartan saw this? what cry for help [1000] did you ever raise, though Kastor was still alive, a vigorous youth, and his brother also, not yet among the stars? Then when you had come to Troy, and the Argives were on your track, and the mortal combat [*agōn*] had begun, whenever tidings came to you of [1005] Menelaos’ prowess, you would praise him, to grieve my son, because he had so powerful a rival in his love; but if the Trojans prospered, Menelaos was nothing to you. Your eye was fixed on Fortune, and by such practice you were careful to follow in her steps, careless of virtue’s [*aretē*] cause. [1010] And then you assert that you tried to let yourself down from the towers by stealth with twisted cords, as if unwilling to stay? Where were you ever found fastening the noose about your neck, or whetting the knife, as a noble wife would have done in longing [*potheîn*] for her former husband? [1015] And yet often I advised you saying, “Get away, daughter; my sons will take other brides, and I will help you to steal away, and convey you to the Achaean fleet; oh, end the strife between us and Hellas!” But this was bitter to you. [1020] For you were behaving outrageously [*hubrizein*] in Alexandros’s house, wishing to have obeisance done you by barbarians. Yes, it was a proud time for you; and now after all this you have adorned yourself, and come forth and have dared to appear under the same sky as your husband, revolting wretch! [1025] Better if you had come in tattered raiment, cowering humbly in terror, with hair cut short, and if your feeling for your past sins were one of moderation [*sōphrōn*] rather than effrontery. Menelaos, hear the conclusion [*telos*] of my argument; [1030] crown Hellas by slaying her as she

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<sup>7</sup> It is almost impossible to reproduce the play on words in Ἀφροδίτη [*Aphroditē*] and ἀφροσύνη [*aphrosunē*]; perhaps the nearest approach would be “sensuality” and “senseless.” [E.P. Coleridge]

deserves, and establish this law [*nomos*] for all other women: death to every one who betrays her husband.

### **Chorus Leader**

Avenge yourself, Menelaos, on your wife, as is worthy of your home and ancestors, [1035] clear yourself from the reproach of effeminacy at the lips of Hellas, and appear [*phaineîn*] to your foes [*ekhthroi*] as noble [= good *genos*].

### **Menelaos**

Your thoughts coincide with mine, that she, without constraint, left my palace, and sought a the bed of a *xenos*, and now Cypris is introduced for the sake of [*kharis*] mere bluster. Away to those who shall stone you, [1040] and by your speedy death requite the weary toils [*ponoi*] of the Achaeans, so that you may learn not to bring shame on me!

### **Helen**

Oh, by your knees, I implore you, do not impute that heaven-sent affliction to me, or slay me; forgive me!

### **Hecuba**

Do not betray your allies, whose death this woman caused; [1045] on their behalf, and for my children's sake, I entreat you.

### **Menelaos**

Peace, revered lady; to her I pay no heed. I bid my servants take her away, aboard the ship, in which she is to sail.

### **Hecuba**

Oh never let her set foot within the same ship as you.

### **Menelaos**

[1050] Why is that? is she heavier than before?

### **Hecuba**

No one is a lover who doesn't love [*phileîn*] for ever.

### **Menelaos**

Why, that depends on the mind [*noos*] of those we love. But your wish shall be granted; she shall not set foot upon the same ship with me; for your advice is surely

not unsound [*kakon*]; [1055] and when she comes to Argos the ignoble [*kakē*] woman shall die a shameful [*kakon*] death as is her due, and impress the need for being moderate [*sōphrōn*] on all women. No easy task; yet shall her fate strike their foolish hearts with terror, even though they are more enimical [*ekhthrai*] than she.

*Exit Menelaos, dragging Helen with him.*

### **Chorus**

[1060] So then you have delivered into Achaea's hand, O Zeus, your shrine in Ilion and your fragrant altar, the offerings of burnt sacrifice with smoke of myrrh to heaven uprising, [1065] and holy [*hieros*] Pergamos, and glens of Ida tangled with the ivy's growth, where rills of melting snow pour down their flood, a holy sun-lit land that bounds the world [1070] and takes the god's first rays!

Gone are your sacrifices! gone the choruses' [*khoroī*] cheerful shout! gone the vigils of the gods as night closed in! your images of carven gold are now no more; [1075] and Phrygia's holy festivals, twelve times a year, at each full moon, are ended now. It is this, it is this that fills me with anxious thought [*phrēn*] whether you, lord, seated on the sky, your heavenly throne, care at all that my city [*polis*] is destroyed, [1080] a prey to the furious fiery blast.

Ah! my *philos* husband, you are a wandering specter; [1085] unwashed, unburied lies your corpse, while over the sea the ship sped by wings will carry me to Argos, land of steeds, where stand Cycloped walls of stone reaching to heaven. There in the gate the children gather, [1090] and weep their piteous lamentation; they cry, they cry: Mother, alas! torn from your sight, the Achaeans bear me away from you to their dark ship [1095] to row me over the deep to sacred [*hiera*] Salamis or to the hill on the Isthmus, that overlooks two seas, the seat that holds the gates of Pelops.

[1100] Oh may the sacred blazing thunderbolt of the Aegean, hurled in might, smite the ship of Menelaos full in the middle, on its way in mid-sea, [1105] since he is carrying me away in bitter sorrow from the shores of Ilion to be a slave in Hellas, while the daughter of Zeus still keeps her golden mirrors, delight [*kharithes*] of girls [*parthenoi*]. [1110] Never may he reach his home in Laconia or his father's hearth and home, nor come to the town [*polis*] of Pitane<sup>8</sup> or the temple of the goddess<sup>9</sup> with the

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<sup>8</sup> Part of Sparta was so called. [E.P. Coleridge]

<sup>9</sup> Athena of "the Brazen House," a temple on the acropolis. [E.P. Coleridge]

gates of bronze, having taken as his captive the one whose marriage brought disgrace on Hellas through its length and breadth and woeful anguish [*pathos*] [1115] on the streams of Simoeis!

*Enter Talthybios and attendants, bearing the corpse of Astyanax on Hector's shield.*

### **Chorus Leader**

All me! ah me! new troubles fall on my country, to take the place of those that still are fresh! Behold, [1120] you hapless wives of Troy, the corpse of Astyanax, whom the Danaans have cruelly slain by hurling him from the battlements.

### **Talthybios**

Hecuba, one ship alone delays its plashing oars, [1125] and it is soon to sail to the shores of Phthia freighted with the remnant of the spoils of Achilles' son; for Neoptolemos is already out at sea, having heard that new calamities have befallen Peleus, for Akastos, son of Pelias, has banished him from the realm. Therefore he is gone, not having the pleasure [*kharis*] of delaying, [1130] and with him goes Andromache, who drew many tears from me when she set out from the land, wailing her country and crying her farewell to Hector's tomb [*tumbos*]. And she begged her master leave to bury this poor dead child of Hector [1135] who breathed out his [*psūkhē*] when hurled from the turrets; entreating too that he would not carry this shield, the terror of the Achaeans—this shield with plates of brass with which his father would gird himself—to the home of Peleus or to the same bridal bower where she, Andromache, [1140] the mother of this corpse, would be wed, a bitter sight to her, but let her bury the child in it instead of in a coffin of cedar or a tomb of stone, and to your hands commit the corpse that you may deck it with robes and garlands [*stephanoi*] as best you can with your present means; [1145] for she is far away and her master's haste prevented her from making funeral rites [*taphos*] the child herself. So we, when you have arranged [*kosmeîn*] the corpse, will heap the earth above and set upon it a spear; but do you with your best speed perform your allotted task; [1150] one toil however I have already spared you, for I crossed Scamander's stream and bathed the corpse and cleansed its wounds. But now I will go to dig a grave [*taphos*] for him, that our united efforts [1155] shortening our task may speed our ship towards home [*oikos*].

*Exit Talthybios.*



## Hecuba

Place the shield upon the ground, Hector's shield so deftly rounded, a piteous sight, and not *philon* for me to see. O you Achaeans, more reason have you to boast of your prowess than of your *phrenes*. Why have you in terror of this child [1160] been guilty of a murder never matched before? Did you fear that some day he would rear again the fallen walls of Troy? It seems then you were nothing after all, when, though Hector's fortunes in the war were prosperous and he had ten thousand other arms to back him, we still were daily overmatched; and yet, now that our city [*polis*] is taken and every Phrygian slain, [1165] you fear a tender child like this! I do not commend the fear of one who fears but never yet has reasoned out the cause.

Ah! most *philos*, yours is a piteous death indeed! If you had died for your city [*polis*], when you had tasted of the sweets of manhood, of marriage, and of godlike tyranny [*turannos*] over others, [1170] then were you blessed [*makar*], if anything here is blessed [*makar*]. But now, once again seeing and recognizing with your soul [*psūkhē*], you know them no more, my child, and have no joy of them, though heir to all. Ah, poor child! how sadly have your own father's walls, those towers that Loxias reared, shorn from your head [1175] the locks your mother fondled, and so often caressed, from which through fractured bones the face of murder grins—briefly to dismiss my shocking theme. O hands, how sweet the likeness you retain of his father, and yet you lie limp in your sockets before me! [1180] *Philon* mouth, so often full of words of pride, death has closed you, and you have not kept the promise you made, when nestling in my robe, “Ah, mother, many a lock of my hair I will cut off for you, and to your tomb [*taphos*] will lead my troops of friends, taking a fond [*philon*] farewell of you.” [1185] But now I am not to be buried by you, but you, the younger one, a wretched corpse, are honored with funeral rites by me, on whom old age has come without city [*polis*] and without children. Ah me, those kisses numberless, the nurture that I gave to you, those sleepless nights—they all are lost! What shall the bard [*mousopios*] inscribe upon your tomb [*taphos*] about you? [1190] Argives once for fear of him slew this child? Foul shame should that inscription be to Hellas. O child, though you have no part in all your father's wealth, yet shall you have his brazen shield in which to be honored with burial rites [verb, *taphos*]. Ah! shield that kept safe the comely arm of Hector, [1195] now have you lost your most noble [*aristos*] keeper! How fair upon your handle lies his imprint, and on the rim that circles around are marks of sweat, that trickled often from Hector's brow as he pressed it against his beard in the ordeals [*ponoi*] of battle. [1200] Come, bring forth,

from such store as you have, adornment [*kosmos*] for the hapless dead, for the *daimōn* gives no chance now for lovely offerings; yet of such as I possess, you shall receive these gifts. He is a foolish mortal who thinks his luck secure and so rejoices [*khairain*]; for fortune, like a madman in her moods, [1205] springs towards this man, then towards that; and no one ever experiences the same unchanging luck.

### **Chorus Leader**

Look! all is ready and they are bringing at your bidding from the spoils of Troy adornment [*kosmos*] to put upon the dead.

### **Hecuba**

Ah! my child, it is not as victor over your comrades [1210] with horse or bow—customs [*nomoi*] Troy honors [*timeîn*], without pursuing them to excess—that Hector's mother decks you now with ornaments from the store that once was yours, though now Helen, whom the gods abhor, has bereft you of your own, yes, and robbed you [1215] of your life [*psūkhē*] and caused your house [*oikos*] to perish root and branch.

### **Chorus**

Woe! thrice woe! my heart [*phrenes*] is touched, and you the cause, my mighty lord of the city [*polis*] in days now passed!

### **Hecuba**

About your body now I swathe this Phrygian robe of honor, which should have clad you on your marriage-day, [1220] wedded to the noblest of Asia's daughters. You too, *philon* shield of Hector, victorious parent of countless triumphs past, accept your crown, for though you share the dead child's tomb, death cannot touch you; for you merit honors [*timeîn*] far beyond those arms<sup>10</sup> [1225] that *sophos*, *kakos* Odysseus won.

### **Chorus**

Alas! alas! you, O child, shall earth take to her breast, a cause for bitter weeping. Mourn, you mother!

### **Hecuba**

Alas!

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<sup>10</sup> the arms of Achilles, which were set up as a prize, and won by Odysseus from Ajax. [E.P. Coleridge]

**Chorus**

[1230] Wail for the dead.

**Hecuba**

Woe is me!

**Chorus**

Woe indeed for your unending sorrow [*kaka*]!

**Hecuba**

Your wounds in part I will bind up with bandages, a wretched healer in name alone, without reality; but for the rest your father must look to that among the dead.

**Chorus**

[1235] Smite, oh smite upon your head with frequent blow of hand. Woe is me!

**Hecuba**

My kind, good friends—

**Chorus**

Speak out, Hecuba, the word that was on your lips.

**Hecuba**

[1240] It seems the only things that heaven concerns itself about are my ordeals [*ponoi*] and Troy hateful in their eyes above all other cities [*polis*]. In vain did we sacrifice to them. But if the god had not caught us in his grip and plunged us headlong beneath the earth, we should have been non-appearing [= not *phainein*], and not ever hymned [*humneîn*] in Muses' songs, [1245] furnishing to bards of after-days a subject for their minstrelsy. Go, bury now in his poor tomb the dead, wreathed all duly as befits a corpse. And yet I think it makes little difference to the dead, if they get a gorgeous funeral; [1250] but this is a cause of idle pride to the living.

*The corpse is carried out for burial.*

**Chorus Leader**

Alas! for your unhappy mother, who over your corpse has closed the high hopes of her life! Born of a noble [*agathos*] stock [*genos*], counted most happy [*olbios*] in your lot, [1255] ah! what a *deinos* death is yours!

*Soldiers are seen on the battlements of Troy, torch in hand.*

Ha! who are those I see on yonder pinnacles darting to and fro with flaming torches in their hands? Some new calamity [*kakon*] will soon alight on Troy.

### **Talthybios**

[1260] You captains whose allotted task it is to fire this town of Priam, to you I speak. No longer preserve [*sōzein*] the fire-brand idle in your hands, but launch the flame, that when we have destroyed the city [*polis*] of Ilium we may set forth in gladness on our homeward voyage from Troy. [1265] And you, you sons of Troy, to let my orders take at once a double form—start for the Achaean ships for your departure from the land, as soon as the leaders of the army blow loud and clear upon the trumpet. And you, unhappy grey-haired lady, [1270] follow; for here come servants from Odysseus to fetch you, for to him you are assigned by lot to be a slave far from your country.

### **Hecuba**

Ah, woe is me! This surely is the last, the utmost limit, of all my sorrows [*kaka*]; I go forth from my land; my city [*polis*] is ablaze with flame. [1275] Yet, you aged foot, make one painful struggle to haste, that I may say a farewell to this wretched town [*polis*]. O Troy, that before had such a grand career among barbarian towns, soon will you be bereft of that splendid name. They are burning you, and leading us even now from our land [1280] to slavery. O gods! Yet why do I call on the gods? They did not hearken ever before to our call. Come, let us rush into the flames, for to die with my country in its blazing ruin would be a noble death for me.

### **Talthybios**

Your *kaka* drive you frantic, poor lady. [1285] Go, lead her away, make no delay, for you must deliver her into the hand of Odysseus, conveying to him his prize [*geras*].

### **Hecuba**

Woe! oh woe! Son of Kronos, prince of Phrygia, father of our race, [1290] do you behold such things we suffer [*paskhein*] now, unworthy of the stock of Dardanos?

### **Chorus**

He sees them, but our mighty city [*megalopolis*] is a city [*polis*] no more, and Troy's day is done.

**Hecuba**

Woe! oh woe! [1295] Ilium is ablaze; the homes of Pergamos and its towering walls are now one sheet of flame.

**Chorus**

As the smoke soars on wings to heaven, so sinks our city [*polis*] to the ground before the spear. [1300] With furious haste both fire and enemy spear devour each house.

**Hecuba**

Oh, earth, nourisher of my children!

**Chorus**

Ah, ah!

**Hecuba**

Hearken, my children, hear your mother's voice.

**Chorus**

You are calling on the dead with voice of lamentation.

**Hecuba**

[1305] Yes, as I stretch my aged limbs upon the ground, and beat upon the earth with both my hands.

**Chorus**

I follow you and kneel, invoking from the nether world my hapless husband.

**Hecuba**

[1310] I am being dragged and hurried away—

**Chorus**

The sorrow, the sorrow of that cry!

**Hecuba**

To dwell beneath a master's roof!

**Chorus**

From my own country!

**Hecuba**

Woe is me! O Priam, Priam, slain, unburied [= without *taphos*], without *philos*, nothing do you know of my disaster [*atē*].

**Chorus**

[1315] No, for over his eyes black death has drawn his pall, a pure man slain by the impure.

**Hecuba**

Woe for the temples of the gods and for our *phila* city [*polis*]!

**Chorus**

Ah, ah!

**Hecuba**

Murderous flame and enemy spear are now your lot.

**Chorus**

Soon will you tumble to your own *philē* soil, and be forgotten.

**Hecuba**

[1320] And the dust, mounting to heaven on wings like smoke, will rob me of the sight of my home [*oikos*].

**Chorus**

The name of my country will pass into obscurity; all is scattered far and wide, and hapless Troy has ceased to be.

**Hecuba**

[1325] Did you know, did you hear?

**Chorus**

Yes, it was the crash of the citadel.

**Hecuba**

The shock, the shock—

**Chorus**

Will overwhelm our city [*polis*] utterly.

**Hecuba**

O woe is me! trembling, quaking limbs, support my footsteps! away! to face [1330]  
the day that begins your slavery.

**Chorus**

Woe for our unhappy town [*polis*!] Pick up your step and head for the oared ships of  
the Achaeans.