

JEAN RACINE  
LACY LOCKERT

# Best Plays of Racine



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THE BEST PLAYS OF RACINE



THE  
BEST PLAYS  
OF  
RACINE

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH RHYMING VERSE  
WITH INTRODUCTIONS AND NOTES BY

LACY LOCKERT

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*To My Father*

CHARLES LACY LOCKERT

NO WORDS CAN TELL WHAT HIS LOVE, HIS  
INFLUENCE, AND HIS COMRADESHIP  
HAVE MEANT IN MY LIFE



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“. . . the four great masterpieces of Racine: *Andromaque*, *Britannicus*, *Phèdre*, *Athalie*.”—N.-M. Bernardin in L. Petit de Julleville’s *Histoire de la Langue et de la Littérature française*.

“. . . *Andromaque* . . . *Britannicus* . . . *Phèdre* . . . if we except *Athalie*, which is manifestly a type by itself, it is by these three dramas that Racine must be judged.”—C. E. Vaughan in *Types of Tragic Drama*.

“. . . looking at Racine’s theatre through the cool grey spectacles of old age, I find that I prefer *Athalie*, *Phèdre*, *Britannicus*, and . . . *Andromaque*.”—Mary Duclaux in *The Life of Racine*.

“. . . among the works of Racine . . . the four miracles . . . are, in my opinion, *Andromaque*, *Britannicus*, *Phèdre*, and *Athalie*.”—Émile Faguet in *Propos de Théâtre*.

## TRANSLATOR'S FOREWORD

RACINE, the greatest of French tragic dramatists and in the judgment of his own countrymen the equal of Molière in magnitude of genius and achievement, has never been appreciated by the English-speaking world. The reason for this fact is not merely, as we commonly hear it said, that he is too artificial for our taste; the fault is less one-sided. His plays are artificial in respects in which our literary tradition demands naturalness; they are natural in respects in which our literary tradition demands artificiality.

In depicting the life of other lands and days than his own, Racine, like most writers prior to the age of romanticism, makes little use of "local colour." This in itself would not repel us. It is scarcely less true of Shakespeare; his Hamlet is essentially an Elizabethan in an Elizabethan world. But Racine's world, the Court of Louis XIV, happens to have been a peculiarly artificial one—its speech and manners modelled on those of the absurd, high-flown pastoral romances which were in great favour then; a world of strained conventions, preciousness, gallantry, decorum, and preoccupation with love-making. It jars upon us that the dramatist's Greek heroes and Roman citizens wear the masks of such a world. We are prone not to realize that under those masks are emotions as poignant and passions as savage as literature can show. We are repelled by a love-jargon of "sighs" and "flames" and "conquests"—all the more so because such stereotyped phrasing is associated in our minds with the frigid, declamatory, insincere English tragedies of the age of Dryden and Pope.

On the other hand, we expect poetry (even dramatic poetry) to be full of figurative, heightened language. We find it so in Shakespeare, and in Aeschylus and Calderon and

Goethe. Almost all literature accepts this convention. Macbeth can speak of

pity, like a naked new-born babe,  
Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubim horsed  
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,

without our being offended by the consideration that no man ever actually talked like that. But Racine nearly always puts in the mouths of his characters only those metaphors and similes which would be natural under the circumstances of their utterance. Here it is he who is the severe realist; and hence we, who are accustomed to splendid imagery in poetry, think his lines flat and unpoetic. Their poetry is of another sort, rare in English literature: the sort that we occasionally find in lines of Wordsworth like

For old, unhappy, far-off things,  
And battles long ago;

or in Rossetti's translation of a line of Dante,

We were alone and without any fear,

—a perfect union of precision, clarity, and euphony.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John C. Bailey in his volume of condescending criticism, *The Claims of French Poetry*, points out that Racine has no sense of the infinite with its wonder and its mystery, no deep and broad view of life, no strange or great thoughts, no fine surprises of language, no detailed and intimate delight in nature such as we encounter in Homer, Virgil, Shakespeare, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Dante, and Goethe, and maintains that writing which lacks these characteristics is not the highest poetry. That is doubtless true, but writing which lacks them may at least be poetry. Bailey would perhaps admit that the opening lines of Tennyson's *Oenone*,

There lies a vale in Ida, lovelier  
Than all the valleys of Ionian hills,

are poetry, though little save the sheer music of the words distinguishes them from the bald prose statement, "There is a valley in East Tennessee more beautiful than any in Vermont." A whole poem could conceivably be made up of lines as simple as those quoted from Tennyson, and yet be charming, if it were all equally musical. And when lines of no less exquisite

Effective verse translation, especially in the case of a poet of such alien genius, must be content to compromise and approximate. In rendering Racine, I have used the rhymed iambic pentameter couplet. It is the best English analogue of the French alexandrine. It was the prevalent verse form in our own "classical" period, when English literature was somewhat under the influence of French "classical" literature, of which Racine was the culmination; and hence it naturally associates itself in our minds with the ideas and art of French classicism. Moreover, the same consideration which led Gilbert Murray to employ it in translating Greek tragedies is of still greater importance in translating Racine: its rhymes retain for it some effect of poetry even where the language is very simple, whereas in English blank verse as a rule "the language has to be tortured a little, or it will read like prose."

For most of us, the old "heroic couplet" of Dryden, Pope, and Dr. Johnson is distasteful because of its monotonous swing and heavily clashing rhymes. These unpleasant features can be avoided in two ways: by making the pauses occur in the middle instead of at the end of a line, and by using imperfect rhymes. I have freely availed myself of both devices.

As regards the "language of gallantry" which we find so difficult to accept in Racine, I have somewhat toned it down, occasionally by omitting it altogether, and frequently by employing a conventional English turn of expression which better conveys to us the effect of Racine's phrasing on French ears than literal translation could succeed in doing. Thus

verbal melody are the vehicle of plays in which masterful dramaturgic skill presents gripping situations and acutely psychologized characters, no formula of any critic can gainsay the immense value of the achievement or the extreme greatness of the author.

"glance" has been used conventionally in English much as Racine uses "eye" or "eyes."

I have appropriated words or phrases now and then from the old Bohn Library blank verse translation of Racine by R. B. Boswell—e.g. in the heroine's address to the sun in Act I of *Phèdre*; but I find, on subsequent comparison of Boswell's version of the plays with mine, that much more often we have quite independently made the same or closely similar departures from a literal rendering of our original.

Stage directions are at times altered, enlarged, or added for the sake of greater clearness or vividness.

To M. Georges Bally, Assistant Professor of French at Vanderbilt University, and to Miss Louise Allen my indebtedness for assistance in this translation of Racine's masterpieces is very great. Without M. Bally's encouragement it would not have been attempted, and he has overseen it throughout with unfailing patience and kindness. In putting Racine into English verse I have been guided by Miss Allen's fine sense of literary values to only a slightly less extent than in my translation of the *Inferno* of Dante. I wish to express also my appreciation of the assistance of Miss V. O. King in proof-reading.

LACY LOCKERT.

ANDROMAQUE  
(ANDROMACHE)



## INTRODUCTION

AS a memorable event in the history of the French stage, the first performance of *Andromaque* yields in importance only to that of Corneille's *Cid* and perhaps that of Victor Hugo's *Hernani*. The enthusiasm which Racine's play aroused was scarcely less great than the furor created by the *Cid*; the fashionable theatre-goers of 1667-8 could think of nothing but the Trojan heroine and her sorrows. In the nineteenth century *Andromaque* was acted more times than any other tragedy of its author.

Few dramas have achieved such continuous tension and so many startling effects with an equal economy of means. Each of the four major characters is ruled by a single emotion. Orestes loves Hermione to distraction, who in turn is infatuated with Pyrrhus, her betrothed, who has conceived an overmastering passion for his Trojan captive, Andromache, whose own heart is with her dead husband, Hector. Pyrrhus tells Andromache that he will kill her child if she will not marry him, and on her hesitation to take this step, to which her fears as a mother urge her, and from which her instincts as a devoted widow make her shrink, the action of the play depends. When she encourages Pyrrhus, he forsakes Hermione, who in wild frenzy of outraged pride and jealous love has to fall back upon Orestes, who thereupon is beside himself with joy and hope; when she repulses Pyrrhus, she drives him into the arms of the enraptured Hermione, who then disdains Orestes, who becomes frantic with rage and despair. Notwithstanding the decorous language and the smooth flow of the polished alexandrines in which they speak, the struggle of these tormented souls is nothing less than that of "wildcats in a red-hot iron cage." Unfriendly critics of French classical



drama have complained that it portrays types rather than individuals. But Orestes, Pyrrhus, and Hermione are living, individualized figures, were it only by reason of their appalling vileness, pettiness, and malevolence. Suffering makes them hateful. When it seems that Hermione is to wed Pyrrhus after all, Orestes plans to abduct her that she may not be happy while he himself is miserable. Pyrrhus, in announcing his decision to marry her, wantonly tortures Orestes; and later, when he has broken his word and is about to espouse Andromache instead, he cannot keep away from the woman he has betrayed. As for Hermione, her position is piteous, but she is no "sympathetic" victim of man's perfidy. The strain and agony of the situation in which she is placed have keyed her nerves to the snapping-point and brought out all the hardness and unloveliness in her nature. It was she who, before the play opens, incited Greece to demand the life of the infant Astyanax. In the face of all evidence and argument, she persists in regarding Andromache as her voluntary "rival," and hates her accordingly. She tries to hold Orestes that she may have some one in reserve if her hopes are finally defeated; but her claws are quick to wound him when he maladroitly says that Pyrrhus disdains her; and when she presently feels that her wedding is sure to take place, she dismisses him and his anguish from her mind with the impatient question, "Have we no theme, except his sighs, for cheer?" and in that hour of her seeming triumph, when Andromache implores her to save Astyanax, nothing could be more venomous than her sweetly-phrased refusal.

The character of Hermione is, in fact, the finest thing in the play; she may almost be said to "make" the play; Racine has done scarcely anything else so brilliant. She is one quivering compound of intense emotions, veering impulses, unreason, and vicious spite—utterly feminine and eternally real.

Pyrrhus and Orestes, also, are in essence true to life, though in their case universal human nature is tricked out in the garments of a highly mannered, artificial civilization, as different as can well be imagined from that heroic and legendary age of Greece to which they properly belong. There is not much "local colour" in the secular dramas of Racine. Some of his characters, like Hermione, have few traits peculiar to people of his own land and times; some have many; but none of them has an appreciable number which are *not* those of seventeenth century French men and women but are instead distinctive of the country and period in which the scene is laid. Taine and Benjamin W. Wells have pointed out that Pyrrhus's conception of love is "that of the *précieux* salons of Paris and of the courtiers of Versailles, with a certain decorum in its outward expression, with happily turned phrases, and insinuating attenuations that mask with a certain courtliness the fundamental brutality of his absolute power." Orestes, indeed, is something more than a conventional young prince of the dramatist's own day who is disappointed in love; but that something more is not ancient but, strange to say, prophetically modern. As Jules Lemaître has shown in a very acute piece of critical writing, Orestes is an anticipation of the characteristic hero of the age of romanticism, a melancholy egoist who considers himself uniquely persecuted by heaven and hence a man apart, not subject to the same responsibilities as other men. But his creator, unlike Chateaubriand, Hugo, and the elder Dumas, does not solicit our admiration for such a person; he represents him, rightly, as a potentially criminal weakling.

It is a commonplace of criticism that after the two plays of his novitiate, *La Thébàïde* and *Alexandre le Grand*, Racine attained to full stature of genius at a single bound and gave to his country a new type of tragedy, his own peculiar type,

with simple plot, natural characters swayed by universal human passions, and (for the French "classical" stage) a minimum of conventions;—that this type was at once originated and perfected in *Andromaque*, a masterpiece which stands on an essential parity with his very best subsequent work. The truth is somewhat less spectacular, as truth is wont to be. Others before Racine—notably Rotrou and Tristan l'Hermite—had portrayed with considerable success men and women mastered by genuine, passionate love; Tristan had used simple plots, with no more conventions than Racine and with far greater regard for certain kinds of realism. And, moreover, *Andromaque* has a larger share of the artificialities which then characterized French tragedy than can be found in any subsequent play of Racine.

This is true, for instance, as regards its preciousness of diction, marked by "an incredible abuse of the word *yeux*"<sup>1</sup> and such extravagances of the language of gallantry as the declaration of Pyrrhus that the flames of love with which he burns for Andromache are fiercer than the flames of burning Troy. Again, with each of the four chief characters—Andromache, Pyrrhus, Hermione, and Orestes—is associated one of those insipid, colourless figures known to the French stage as "confidants," who have no personality of their own but exist solely to listen to their respective principals, to inform them, advise them, and sympathize with them, and to do their bidding. And the very dilemma of Hector's widowed wife, which is the mainspring of the action, owes its poignancy to feelings which are not of all time but of an age.

Andromache might, indeed, not unnaturally have found it very difficult to bring herself to wed Pyrrhus, because he was associated in her memory with the horrors of the sack of

<sup>1</sup> In the present translation frequently rendered not "eyes" but "glance" or in some other way.

Troy. She alleges this obstacle once in a brief reference to it in the first act and once at length in an eloquent speech near the end of Act III. That it was what she felt she ought to feel, rather than what she did feel, and that she did not instinctively shrink from Pyrrhus for this or any other reason, is made sufficiently clear by the rest of the play. In the first place, as critics have frequently pointed out, she appeals constantly to his love for her in every way that she can without committing herself; she would find such a course intolerable if he really were repulsive to her. Furthermore, Pylades' report indicates that after the murder of Pyrrhus she mourns him with genuine affection; and this fact was brought out unmistakably in a scene which the author included in his original version of Act V but afterwards suppressed as dramaturgically defective. It was because of her belief that to wed again would be a disloyalty to Hector's ashes that she refused marriage with Pyrrhus even when it seemed the only way to save the son whom she had borne to Hector. The best that can be said for such a viewpoint is that it was in keeping with the ideas of the pastoral and gallant romances, with the notions of the salons of Paris, which are reflected in the drama as well as in the social life of the period. Natural, rational, sane, it is not. The more Andromache loved Hector, the more precious should the life of their child have seemed to her, and the more readily should she have sacrificed any personal repugnances with the feeling that by the preservation of that child she could be most truly loyal to its father.<sup>2</sup>

When the issue presently becomes unescapable, the solution which Andromache finds for it is no less preposterous than

<sup>2</sup> Cf., in contrast, Euripides' beautiful portrait of Andromache in *The Trojan Women*. Faced with the prospect of having to be not Pyrrhus' wife in honourable marriage but his mere concubine, she, too, shrinks from

was her attitude which drew its lines so sharply. She will consent to wed Pyrrhus, she tells her confidante, and will make him swear in turn to protect her son, and then, as soon as the marriage ceremony is over, she will kill herself. It never seems to occur to her that Pyrrhus may very probably, and reasonably, think that he is in no way obligated to keep a bargain of which she has kept only the letter, not the spirit at all; or that he, too, might keep only the letter of it and find a savage satisfaction in thus amply revenging his disappointed hopes—perhaps, for instance, by guarding the child “safely” in a tower, without food or drink, like Ugolino and his sons. It does not seem even to occur to her that Pyrrhus, who for her sake must become irrevocably embroiled with the whole of Greece, will not be thankful for merely being able to call himself her husband for a few minutes. In contrasting *Andromaque* with the extravagant dramas which immediately preceded it, Jules Lemaitre selects as an example of their absurdities the rapture of the hero of Thomas Corneille’s

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such a sequel to her dear union with Hector, but is advised by Hecuba to make the best of the inevitable, so as to ensure her son’s being well treated. Then she is told that the Greeks have decided to kill him. Her first, immediate words are: “Oh, I could have borne mine enemy’s bed!”

The “dilemma” of Racine’s *Andromache* is taken straight from *Pertharite*, one of the most far-fetched and unnatural of Corneille’s tragedies in the period of his degeneration as a dramatic artist. This and other parallels in the relations of four of its characters with each other to those of the four major characters in *Andromaque* were first pointed out by Voltaire. Like similarities can be found with Thomas Corneille’s *Mort de l’Empereur Commode* and *Camma*. H. C. Lancaster, in his *History of French Dramatic Literature in the Seventeenth Century*, Part IV, pp. 54-55, has noted these and many more parallels between details in *Andromaque* and in earlier French “classical” plays, and there are yet others. Daniel Mornet has tried to show that all of Racine’s tragedies draw heavily upon the work of his immediate predecessors, but Mornet can assemble no such list of similarities in the case of any of the rest of them. The fact is that in *Andromaque* Racine took details right and left from these predecessors, and into this body of romanesque material breathed a fierce breath of life.

*Timocrate* when he finds that he will be wedded to the woman he loves and then be killed directly afterwards. But almost the identical absurdity which Lemaitre ridicules in *Timocrate* is to be found in *Andromaque*! In charging Cephissa, who will survive her, to see that Pyrrhus does not break his word, Andromache says:

Make him appreciate  
The marriage which I grant him.<sup>3</sup>

At the end of the drama "all who gave way to passion have perished in body or in mind," observes B. W. Wells. "Andromache alone remains, because she alone has not been passion's fool." But soberly considered, Andromache might with justice be described in the phrase of Shakespeare's Thersites as "a fool positive."

And yet—so strangely wise is genius even when most perversely astray—the folly of Andromache is self-consistent. If any woman could be capable of one phase of it, she might perhaps be capable of it all. It all admits of a single explanation: that Andromache's mind deals almost entirely—as every one's does to some extent—with words, which are but the names of real things, instead of dealing with the realities themselves. Pyrrhus wants to marry her; well, if she "marries" him, she satisfies his wish! She will have "kept her bargain" (the words of it); he will keep his. If, in spite of herself, she should live after the wedding (as in fact she does), Pyrrhus, alive or dead, is her "husband," and that makes her love him. She loved Hector and cannot bear to "be

<sup>3</sup> In their point of likeness, the heroine of *Andromaque* is really more absurd than the hero of *Timocrate*. He, like many lovers but to a greater degree than they, *feels* extravagantly; she bases her plans on the *belief* that some one else will feel thus, and thinks it only natural and right that he should.

untrue to his memory"; it would be "untrue to his memory" to "wed another husband"; therefore she cannot "wed another husband"—circumstances make no difference. Her eventual decision, to marry Pyrrhus and then immediately take her own life, is not at variance with the rest; her suicide would punish and atone for her "disloyalty" to Hector in submitting to the ceremony, and she would be dead (she thinks) before she could begin to love Pyrrhus as "her husband." So bizarre a figure is not very convincing, yet is perhaps sufficiently plausible to be allowed in a drama; but to fill the rôle of the sympathetic heroine—that is another matter! The tragedy in which this character is presented in that rôle cannot rightly be accounted a genuine masterpiece and one of the great plays of the world; it is, rather, a superb, an astonishing *tour-de-force*.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Émile Faguet maintains that Racine purposely represented Andromache as "passion's fool," and that he did not intend her "stratagem" to be regarded as a well-advised plan but merely as the utmost concession to which she can force herself for her son's sake, and one in the efficacy of which she believes because she wishes to believe in it. In answer it may be said: (1) that Cephissa's failure to point out the absurdity of Andromache's plan shows that Racine did not think it absurd or expect his audiences to do so; (2) that her plan was in keeping with the fantastic conceptions prevalent in the upper-class seventeenth century French society that read Madeleine de Scudéry's romances and went to plays like *Timocrate*; and (3) that even if Faguet's interpretation is correct, Racine has none the less blundered, for among people who are not steeped in the pseudo-classical tradition a "heroine" who is so foolish and self-indulgent and unmotherly will elicit irritation or disgust more often than such sympathy as the artistic effect demands for her.





## CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

ANDROMACHE, *widow of Hector; captive of Pyrrhus.*

PYRRHUS, *son of Achilles; King of Epirus.*

ORESTES, *son of Agamemnon; former suitor of Hermione, whom he still loves.*

HERMIONE, *daughter of Menelaus and Helen, the King and Queen of Sparta; affianced bride of Pyrrhus.*

PYLADES, *friend of Orestes.*

CLEONE, *female attendant of Hermione.*

CEPHISSA, *faithful friend of Andromache.*

PHOENIX, *aged counsellor of Pyrrhus.*

FOLLOWERS OF ORESTES.

*The scene is laid in the palace of Pyrrhus at Buthrotum, a city of Epirus.*

# ANDROMACHE

## ACT I

*The scene shows a palace with columns, and in the background the sea, with some ships. Enter ORESTES and PYLADES.*

ORESTES.

Yes, now that I regain so true a friend,  
My fortune wears a new face, and doth mend  
With wrath already softened, since her care  
Was taken thus to re-unite us here.

Who would have thought that when I reached a shore  
Fatal to all my longings, 'twould restore  
Pylades to Orestes' sight?—that when  
Six months I had lost thee, Pyrrhus' court again  
Would give thee back to me?

PYLADES.

Thanks render I

For this to heaven, which persistently  
Had thwarted me, until it seemed quite barred  
Was my return to Greece, since that ill-starred  
Day when the waves waxed angry to divide  
Our vessels, with Epirus nearly spied.  
Parted from thee, ah, what anxieties  
I suffered! Tears how many have mine eyes  
Given to thy misfortunes and the fear  
Thou mettest new dangers which I could not share.  
I most of all dreaded that gloom wherein  
Thy soul was plunged, as I so long have seen.

I dreaded lest heaven should offer, cruelly kind,  
 The death to thee for which thy heart has pined  
 Always. But I once more behold thee, sir ;  
 And (dare I say it?) the fate is happier  
 That leads thee to Epirus. The rich train  
 Following thy steps is not of one who fain,  
 Since he is so unfortunate, would die.

ORESTES.

Alas, who can divine the destiny  
 That brings me hither ! Love constraineth me  
 To seek a heartless woman, but its decree  
 Who knoweth, or if I life or death shall find ?

PYLADES.

What ! is thy soul a slave whom love doth bind,  
 That on it thus thy whole existence hangs ?  
 How art ensorcelled that, with all the pangs  
 Forgot that once were thine, thou art disposed  
 To wear again its chains ? Hast thou supposed  
 That, though in Sparta cruel, Hermione  
 Will in Epirus be more kind to thee ?  
 Ashamed of having with thy prayers addressed her  
 In vain so long, thou camest to detest her,  
 Until thou wouldst not even speak of her  
 To me. 'Tis clear, thou didst deceive me, sir.

ORESTES.

Myself did I deceive. Friend, do not tread  
 On one forlorn who loves thee. Have I hid,  
 Ever, my heart from thee, or my desire ?  
 Thou sawest me first with longing set on fire ;  
 And when his daughter Menelaus gave  
 To Pyrrhus who avenged him,<sup>1</sup> sawest me rave

In my despair ; and hast observed me since,  
 The while from sea to sea I dragged my chains  
 Of love and sorrow. I regretfully  
 Beheld thee ever fain to follow me  
 In this sad state, my frenzy's rage to stay,  
 And from myself to save me every day.  
 But when I thought of how, while I endured  
 Such agonies, Hermione outpoured  
 On Pyrrhus all her store of bounties, then  
 Thou knowest how anger seized me ; her disdain  
 I would requite with my forgetfulness.  
 I convinced others, and myself no less,  
 That I was mine own master, now. I thought  
 My passion that of hate. I held as naught  
 Her charms, and cursed her for her cruelty,  
 Defied her glance again to trouble me,  
 And deemed that I had quenched my love.

To Greece

Did I return with soul that seemed at peace,  
 And found her princes were together met  
 As though disturbed by dangers new and great.  
 I flew to them. I hoped, 'mid glorious wars,  
 To fill my mind with different, nobler cares,  
 To gain anew my spirit's former zest,  
 And love's last remnant drive from out my breast.  
 But join with me to marvel how the fate  
 That ever hounds me made me hurry straight  
 Into the snare I fain would shun. I heard  
 Everywhere threats 'gainst Pyrrhus. He had stirred  
 To murmurs the whole land. Complaint is loud  
 That, heedless of his blood and what he vowed,  
 He rears the foe of Greece beside his throne,  
 Astyanax, the hapless little son

Of Hector, and the last of all that race  
Of kings who have 'neath Troy their resting place.  
Andromache, to save his life, beguiled  
The shrewd Ulysses, and another child,  
Supposed to be Astyanax, let him tear  
From her and put to death.<sup>2</sup> All this I hear,  
And more : that Pyrrhus for Hermione  
Cares little, and that elsewhere offers he  
Both heart and crown. Though Menelaus will  
Not credit the report, he likes it ill,  
And that the marriage is so long delayed.

E'en while his soul with trouble is o'erweighed,  
A secret joy is born in mine, and yet  
I tell myself at first that naught is it  
But vengeance that so thrills me. Very soon  
Within my breast reigned the disdainful one  
Again. Too well I knew that smouldering fire.  
I saw 'twould not be long before mine ire  
Had run its course. Rather, I saw instead  
I had always loved her. I solicited  
The choice of all the Greeks. So was I sent  
To Pyrrhus ; I assumed the charge, and went.  
I am to try to wrest from out his arms  
This child whose life so many States alarms ;  
But oh, if I, made bold by passion's sway,  
Instead of Hector's son might bring away  
My princess ! Dream not any peril could  
Dampen mine ardour, now twofold renewed.  
Since all my struggles have proved vain, I let  
Myself be blindly driven on by fate.  
I love Hermione ; I am seeking her  
Here in these halls to move her heart, to bear  
Her hence, or die before her eyes. Thou who

Dost Pyrrhus know, what thinkest thou he will do?  
What taketh place within his Court, within  
His breast? Does my Hermione retain  
Her power o'er him, Pylades, or will he  
Give back the prize that he hath snatched from me?

## PYLADES.

I should deceive thee, dared I promise, sir,  
That to thy hands he would surrender her,  
Although his pride at winning her is scant.  
His soul on Hector's widow is intent.  
He loves her. But that cold, bereavèd one  
As yet repayeth his love with hate alone,  
And each day seeth him try every art  
To melt or gain by fear his captive's heart.  
He hides her child from her, threatens his life,  
Makes flow, then staunches straight, her tears of grief;  
And many a time Hermione hath viewed  
Her lover turn to her again in mood  
Exasperate and lay before her feet  
The homage of his vows, impelled by heat  
Of love less than of rage. Expect not, then,  
Assurance of a heart that nowise can  
Control itself. He may, to madness moved,  
Wed one he loathes and injure one beloved.

## ORESTES.

But tell me how Hermione sees now  
Her marriage deferred, her charms esteemed so low.

## PYLADES.

Hermione appeareth outwardly  
Heedless of her betrothed's inconstancy,  
As sure that never need she bend her pride,

For he will beg her yet to be his bride ;  
 But she with tears hath unto me complained.  
 She weeps in secret that she is disdained.  
 Always will she depart, hath always stayed.  
 Sometimes she calls Orestes to her aid.

ORESTES.

Ah, if I could believe it, I would fly  
 To cast myself . . .

PYLADES.

Discharge thine embassy.  
 Thou dost await the King. 'Gainst Hector's son  
 Let thy words show him, sir, Greece leagued as one.  
 Far from surrendering unto them the child  
 Of her he loves, he will be only filled  
 With tenderer passion by their hate. The more  
 'Tis sought to part them, they are joined more sure.  
 Urge him. Insist on everything, to gain  
 Nothing. He comes.

ORESTES.

So be it! But go, then,  
 And move anew my cruel torturer  
 To see a lover who seeks only her.

[*Exit* PYLADES. *Enter* PYRRHUS and PHOENIX

ORESTES (*to* PYRRHUS).

Ere all the Greeks address thee by my voice,  
 Let me declare myself, in being their choice,  
 Fortunate, sir, and tell thee of my joy  
 To see Achilles' son, taker of Troy.  
 Thy deeds, like his, we view admiringly:  
 Hector fell before him, Troy before thee ;

And thou hast shown, by bravery and success,  
None but Achilles' child could fill his place.

But that which he would ne'er have done, with grief  
Doth Greece behold thee do: afford relief  
To the misfortunes of the Trojan strain,  
Be touched with ill-timed pity, and sustain  
The remnant which long war hath left their cause.  
Hast thou forgotten, sir, what Hector was?  
Our decimated folk remember well.  
His name alone makes wives and daughters quail,  
And in all Greece there are no families  
Who do not from this wretched son of his  
Demand a reckoning for sire or spouse  
Whom they have lost through Hector. And who knows  
To what his offspring may some day set hand?<sup>a</sup>  
We yet may see him on our ports descend  
And burn, as we have seen his father do,  
Our ships, and brandishing a torch, pursue  
Their flight across the waves. Sir, shall I dare  
To speak my thought? Thou thyself for thy care  
Of him shouldst dread the recompense. Fear lest  
This serpent which thou rearest in thy breast,  
For saving him, shall some day serve thee ill.  
Then give thou unto all the Greeks their will.  
Assure their vengeance. Thine own life assure.  
Destroy a foe from whom thou hast the more  
Danger since he, ere war with them, would make  
Trial of arms 'gainst thee.

PYRRHUS.

Greece for my sake  
Is much too anxious. I imagined her  
Concerned o'er things of greater moment, sir,



And thought her projects would be grander far,  
Hearing the name of her ambassador.  
Who would suppose, indeed, that this affair  
Deserved the intervention of the heir  
Of Agamemnon, or that an entire  
People, so oft victorious, would conspire  
Against a child's life? As a sacrifice  
To whom, then, must I slay him? Unto Greece?  
Hath Greece some right still o'er him, and alone  
Of Greeks can I not deal with, as mine own,  
A captive given me by lot, withal?  
Yea, sir, when underneath the smoking wall  
Of Troy the blood-stained conquerors divided  
Their spoil, the lot that each man's share decided  
Then gave Andromache and her son to me.  
Ulysses filled the cup of misery  
For Hecuba.<sup>4</sup> Thy sire to Argos bore  
Cassandra. Have I yet o'er them or o'er  
Their captives claimed authority? Have I  
E'er touched the guerdon of their bravery?

'Tis feared, forsooth, that Hector and hence Troy  
May live again some day, and that this boy,  
Hector's, may rob me of the light I spare  
Unto his eyes. Sir, 'tis excessive care  
That such great prudence showeth. I have no skill  
Thus to conceive a so-far-distant ill.  
I call to mind how stood that city once  
With her proud ramparts and heroic sons,  
Mistress of Asia; then consider I  
What lot was Troy's and what her destiny.  
I see but prostrate towers covered o'er  
With ashes, now, a river red with gore,  
Waste fields, a child in chains; nor can I deem

That Troy, so fallen, cherishes a dream  
Of vengeance. Yet if death had for the son  
Of Hector truly been resolved upon,  
Why hath it been deferred this whole year past?  
Could not the sword have pierced him on the breast  
Of Priam? With so many others dead,  
'Neath ruined Troy he should have slept instead.  
All was permitted then. Both infancy  
And age alike on weakness did rely  
Vainly to shield them. Victory and night,  
More cruel than we, were potent to incite  
Our hearts to slaughter, and to wanton blows  
Our swords. My wrath against our vanquished foes  
Was but too fierce. Yet shall my cruelty  
Outlive my rage? Must I deliberately,  
Though now my soul, touched with a milder mood,  
Feels pity, dip my hands in a child's blood?  
Nay, sir; let Greece find other prey. Let her  
Pursue the remnant left of Troy elsewhere.  
My hate hath run its course; 'tis at an end.  
What war hath spared, Epirus will defend.

## ORESTES.

Full well thou knowest, sir, by what trickery  
A false Astyanax was sent to die  
Instead of Hector's only son. 'Tis not  
The Trojans, it is Hector that is sought.  
Yea, the Greeks hound the father in the child.  
He won their wrath with blood too freely spilled.  
Naught can efface it save his blood alone,  
And e'en to Epirus it can lead them on.  
Do thou act first.

## ANDROMAQUE

PYRRHUS.

Nay, I accept with joy  
 That prospect. Let them seek another Troy  
 Here in Epirus. Let them in blind hate  
 Distinguish him no longer who of late  
 Made them be conquerors, from the conquered. This  
 Is not the first injustice wherewith Greece  
 The service of Achilles did repay.<sup>5</sup>  
 It availed Hector once, sir, and some day  
 It may avail his offspring equally.

ORESTES.

So Greece hath a rebellious child in thee?

PYRRHUS.

And is it but to follow at her beck  
 That I have triumphed?

ORESTES.

Hermione will check  
 Thy course, my lord. Her glance will interfere  
 Between her sire and thee.

PYRRHUS.

However dear  
 Hermione may always be to me,  
 To love her does not mean that I must be  
 Her father's slave. I still may reconcile  
 The claims of love and honour. Yet some while  
 Shalt thou see Helen's daughter. I know what tie  
 Of blood unites you. After that, sir, I  
 Shall not detain thee further; and thou mayst  
 Say to the Greeks I will not do their hest.

[Exit ORESTES.]

PHOENIX.

Thou sendest him thus to his belovèd's feet!

PYRRHUS (*with casual indifference*).

Long did he languish for the princess, it  
Is said.

PHOENIX.

But what, sir, if that fire now were  
Rekindled, and he gave his heart to her  
Again? What if he won her heart thereby?

PYRRHUS.

Ah, let them love each other, Phoenix! I  
Oppose it not. Let her go hence. Aflame  
With mutual madness each for each, let them  
Return to Sparta. All our ports give free  
Exit to him and her alike. For me  
How much constraint and weariness 'twould heal!

PHOENIX.

My lord . . .

PYRRHUS.

Another time I shall reveal  
My soul to thee. Andromache is here.

[*Exit* PHOENIX. *Enter* ANDROMACHE and CEPHISSA.

Thou seekest me, madam? May a hope so fair  
Be mine?

ANDROMACHE.

I go but to the place where they  
Keep my son.<sup>6</sup> Seeing thou only once a day  
Permittedst me to look on the single joy  
Left to me still from Hector and from Troy,

I go to weep with him a little space.  
Not yet since yesterday hath my embrace  
Clasped him.

PYRRHUS.

Nay, if I did but heed their fears,  
The Greeks would give thee soon new cause for tears,  
Madam.

ANDROMACHE.

And what is this anxiety  
With which their hearts are smitten? Can it be,  
My lord, some Trojan hath escaped?

PYRRHUS.

Not dead  
Yet is their hate toward Hector; and they dread  
His son.

ANDROMACHE.

O worthy cause for their dismay—  
A hapless child, who knows not to this day  
That he is Hector's offspring, nor that thou,  
Sir, art his master!

PYRRHUS.

Howsoever, now  
All Greece demands that he shall die. The son  
Of Agamemnon comes to importune  
His death at once.

ANDROMACHE.

Wilt thou accord so grim  
A sentence? Ah, is it my love for him  
That makes him guilty? No one is afraid

He will some day avenge his father dead.  
 'Tis feared that he will from his mother's face  
 Wipe the tears. He could take for me the place  
 Of sire and husband. But I needs must lose  
 All, and at thy hands always.<sup>7</sup>

PYRRHUS.

I did refuse,  
 Madam, and therefore needless are thy tears.  
 Greece threatens me already with her spears.  
 But though a thousand ships o'erpass the sea<sup>8</sup>  
 Once more to seek thy son,—yea, even though he  
 Cost all the blood that Helen made to flow,—  
 Though I behold my palace halls laid low,  
 After ten years, in ashes, still would I  
 Not falter; still I to thine aid would fly.  
 I would defend his life, though with mine own!

But 'mid these perils to be undergone  
 For thy sake, look more kindly upon me!  
 Still must I strive against thy cruelty,  
 Now, when assailed on all sides and abhorred  
 By all the Greeks? I offer thee my sword.  
 May I not hope that thou wilt also take  
 A heart that worships thee? When for thy sake  
 I battle, shall not this be mine: nowise  
 To number thee among mine enemies?

ANDROMACHE.

My lord, what makest thou? What will Greece say?  
 Must a heart so magnanimous needs display  
 Such weakness? Wouldst thou have so brave and good  
 A purpose laid to a mad lover's mood?  
 Wouldst fain Andromache, a captive, grieving

Eternally and wearied out with living,  
 Should love thee? Those unhappy eyes of hers,  
 Which thou hast doomed to everlasting tears,—  
 What charms do they possess for thee? No, no!  
 To reverence the misery of a foe,  
 To save the unfortunate, to render back  
 A son unto his mother and for his sake  
 To oppose a hundred peoples' cruelty  
 Without requiring that my heart shall be  
 The price of saving him—'gainst my will, if needs  
 Must, to protect him—these, my lord, are deeds  
 Worthy of Achilles' son.

PYRRHUS.

What! Hath thine ire  
 Not run its course? Can any without tire  
 Hate and for ever punish? True, much teen  
 I wrought, and oft these hands hath Phrygia seen  
 Dyed with the blood of those akin to thee.  
 But oh, how sore thine eyes have wounded me!<sup>19</sup>  
 How very dearly they have made me pay  
 For tears they shed! have rendered me the prey  
 Of what remorse! I suffer all the pain  
 I dealt at Troy. Vanquished, with chain on chain  
 Fettered, torn by regrets, burning with fires  
 Fiercer than those I kindled, such desires  
 Unquiet, such tears, and such anxiety—  
 Alas! so cruel as thou, was ever I?  
 But each of us in turn sufficient woes  
 Hath on the other brought. Our common foes  
 Ought to unite us. Grant me nothing more,  
 Madam, save only hope. I will restore  
 Thy son to thee. I will be to him now

A father. I myself will teach him how  
To avenge his countrymen. I will requite  
Greece for your wrongs and mine. Give me the light  
Of one glance, and I all can undertake.  
Thine Ilium shall from the dust awake  
Once more. The Greeks less swiftly cast them down  
Than I within those walls new-reared shall crown  
Thy child.

## ANDROMACHE.

Such honours can no longer stir  
My heart. I vowed them his when lived his sire.  
Nay, ye look not to see us any more,  
Dear, sacred walls that did not have the power  
To save my Hector! Wretches are content  
With lesser boons. It is our banishment  
I ask of thee with tears. Oh, suffer me  
Far from the Greeks to go, far even from thee,  
To hide my son and for my husband mourn.  
Thy love doth win us too much hate. Return,  
Return to Helen's daughter!

## PYRRHUS.

Madam, can  
I do so? Ah, thou rackest me with what pain!  
How shall I give her back a heart which thou  
Dost captive hold? I know that I did vow  
Its empery to her. I know that she  
Came to Epirus as the queen-to-be.  
Fate chose to bring you both together here,  
Her to give slavery's chains, and thee to bear  
Its yoke. But have I sought to make her glad?  
Would not one rather say, on seeing instead



Thy charms supreme and hers held in disdain,  
 That she is captive here, and thou dost reign?  
 Oh, with what joy one sigh of all I breathed  
 For thee, if given her, would be received!

ANDROMACHE.

Wherefore unwelcome would she find thy sighs?  
 Hath she forgotten thy past services?  
 Do Troy and Hector make her shrink from thee,  
 And oweth she to a husband's memory  
 Her love? And what a husband, too! Ah, dire  
 To think of: 'twas *his* death that gave thy sire  
 Immortal fame! He gained his whole renown  
 From Hector's blood. Both thou and he are known  
 But at my tears' expense!<sup>10</sup>

PYRRHUS.

So be it! so!

I must obey thee, must forget thee—no,  
 Rather must hate thee, for my passion's force  
 Hath grown too frenzied to end now its course  
 In mere indifference. Think well hereof:  
 My heart henceforward, if it doth not love  
 To madness, shall to madness hate. No stay  
 My righteous wrath shall know. The son must pay  
 The reckoning for his mother's scorn to me.  
 Greece doth demand him, nor as formerly  
 Do I intend to find my glory in  
 Preserving the ungrateful.

ANDROMACHE.

Alas, then,

He needs must die. He hath for his defence  
 His mother's tears and his sweet innocence—

Naught else. And after all, this lot of mine  
Being what it is, perchance his death shall win  
A speedier end of all my sorrows. I  
Have borne for him my life and misery.  
But in his steps now I shall follow close  
To see once more his father. We shall thus,  
All three of us, by thee again made one,  
To thee . . .

## PYRRHUS.

Go, madam, go unto thy son.  
Mayhap thy heart, when once thine eyes have spied  
His face, will grow more timorous, nor a guide  
Make of its wrath for ever. I shall return  
Unto thee presently, that I may learn  
Our fates. When thou within thine arms fast caught  
Dost hold him, let his safety be thy thought.

*[Exeunt severally.]*

## ACT II

*The scene is the same. HERMIONE and CLEONE are discovered.*

HERMIONE.

I do as thou desirest. I consent  
That he shall see me. I will yield, and grant  
This joy still to him. Pylades will lead  
His footsteps hither soon. But did I heed  
Mine own misgivings, I would shun his sight.

CLEONE.

And what ill doth his face portend, what blight,  
For thee? Is he not that Orestes yet  
Whose constancy and love thou wouldst regret,  
Madam?—for whose return thou oft hast prayed?

HERMIONE.

That love, which I have all too ill repaid,  
It is which maketh his presence in this place  
So hard for me to bear. Ah, what disgrace  
For me, what triumph for him, now to behold  
Mine evil fortune match his woes of old!  
“Is this the proud Hermione?” he will scoff.  
“Once she disdained me; she hath been cast off,  
Herself now, by another. She must learn,  
Who set a high price on her heart, in turn  
To suffer scorn.” Ah gods!

CLEONE.

Nay, give thou o'er  
These empty fears. He knoweth too well the power  
Of thy fair charms. Dost thou suppose that he