

## Melancholy Destroys Andromache

### Depression, Fear, and Hallucinatory Mourning in Seneca's *Troades*

#### 1. Andromache's Opening Lines: Seneca, *Troades* 409-25

**1A** Quid, maesta Phrygiae turba, laceratis comas miseramque tunsae pectus effuso genas fletu rigatis? **levia** perpressae sumus, si flenda patimur. **1B** Ilium vobis modo, mihi cecidit olim. cum ferus curru incito **mea membra raperet** et gravi gemeret sono Peliacus axis pondere Hectoreo tremens. **tunc obruta atque eversa** quodcumque accidit **torpens malis rigensque sine sensu fero.** **1C** iam erepta Danais coniugem sequerer meum, nisi hic teneret: hic **meos animos** domat morique prohibet; cogit hic aliquid deos adhuc rogare— tempus aeramnae addidit, hic mihi malorum maximum fructum abstulit, nihil timere: prosperis rebus locus ereptus omnis, dira qua veniant habent, miserimum est timere, cum speres nihil.

**1A** Why, sad lot of Phrygia, do you tear your hair, beat your wretched breast, and wet your cheeks with boundless tears? Trivial were the misfortunes we endured then if we suffer our present woes with tears.

**1B** Ilium fell for you just now, for me she fell long ago, when the brute with his fast car seized my limbs, and the wheels from Mount Pelion groaned a heavy groan and shook with the weight of Hector. I was ruined then, and utterly destroyed. Now I bear whatever comes stunned by woes and numb, without feeling.

**1C** I would have already snatched myself from the Greeks and followed my husband, if this boy were not holding me back. He tames my strong emotions and holds me back from dying. This boy compels me to pray to the gods for something even now; he has added time to my suffering. He has taken away from me the greatest reward of woes: to fear nothing. Any place for happiness has been ripped away, but there is still room for more cruelty. It is most wretched to be afraid, although you hope for nothing.

#### 2. Melancholy and Temperature: excerpted from Aristotle *Problemata* 954a 14-39

διὸ καὶ ἡ μέλαινα χολὴ καὶ θερμότατον καὶ ψυχρότατον γίνεται...καὶ ἡ χολὴ δὲ ἡ μέλαινα φύσει ψυχρὰ καὶ οὐκ ἐπιπολαίως οὕσα, ὅταν μὲν οὕτως ἔχη ὡς εἴρηται, ἐὰν ὑπερβάλλῃ ἐν τῷ σώματι, ἀποπληξίας ἢ νάρκας ἢ ἀθυμίας ποιεῖ ἢ φόβους, ἐὰν δὲ ὑπερθερμανθῇ, τὰς μετ' ᾧδῆς εὐθυμίας καὶ ἐκστάσεις καὶ ἐκζέσεις ἐλκῶν καὶ ἄλλα τοιαῦτα.

For this reason, black bile becomes both very hot and very cold...Now black bile (melancholy), which is naturally cold and not on the surface (of the body), when it is in the state described, if it is in excess in the body, results in apoplexy or torpor, or despondency or fear; but if it gets too hot, it produces cheerfulness with song, and ecstasy, and the breaking out of sores and so forth.

#### 3. Andromache Learns of Hector's Death: Homer, *Iliad* 22.462-467

αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ πύργον τε καὶ ἀνδρῶν ἴξεν ὄμιλον ἔστη παπτήνασ' ἐπὶ τείχει, τὸν δὲ νόησεν ἐλκόμενον πρόσθεν πόλιος: ταχέες δὲ μιν ἵπποι ἔλκον ἀκηδέστως κοίλας ἐπὶ νῆας Ἀχαιῶν. τὴν δὲ κατ' ὀφθαλμῶν ἐρεβεννὴ νύξ ἐκάλυψεν, ἦριπε δ' ἐξοπίσω, ἀπὸ δὲ ψυχὴν ἐκάπυσσε.

But she approached the ramparts and the men gathered there. She stopped at the wall and looked out to see him dragged away from the city. The swift horses dragged him unburied to the hollow boats of the Achaeans. But black night covered her eyes and she fell backwards and lost consciousness.

#### 4. The Workings of the Mind and Hallucinations: Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* 1.132 -35

et quae res nobis vigilantibus obvia mentes terrificet morbo adfectis somnoque sepultis, cernere uti videamur eos audireque coram, morte obita quorum tellus amplectitur ossa.

And what thing terrifies our minds while we are awake and diseased or buried in sleep, so that we seem to see and to hear as though next to us those who have met with death, those whose bones the earth holds in an embrace.

## 5. Dreams, Visions, and Hallucinations of Hector: Seneca, *Troades* 443-51; Seneca, *Troades* 464-68; and Seneca, *Troades* 643-62

**5A** cum subito nostros Hector ante oculos stetit,  
non qualis ultro bella in Argivos ferens  
Graias petebat facibus Idaeis rates,  
nec caede multa qualis in Danaos furens  
vera ex Achille spolia simulato tulit,  
non ille vultus flammeum intendens iubar,  
sed fessus ac deiectus et fletu gravis  
similisque maesto, squalida obiectus coma.  
iuvat tamen vidisse.

**5B**           hos vultus meus  
habebat Hector, talis incesso fuit  
habituque talis, sic tulit fortes manus,  
Sic celsus umeris, fronte sic torva minax  
cervice fusam dissipans iacta comam—

**5C** hinc natus, illinc coniugis sacri cinis,  
pars utra vincet? testor immites deos,  
deosque veros coniugis manes mei:  
non aliud, Hector, in meo nato mihi  
placere quam te. vivat, ut possit tuos  
referre vultus— proutus tumulo cinis  
mergetur? ossa fluctibus spargi sinam  
disiecta vastis? potius hic mortem oppetat.—  
poteris nefandae deditum mater neci  
videre? poteris celsa per fastigia  
missum rotari? **potero, perpetiar, feram,**  
dum non meus post fata victoris manu  
iactetur Hector.— hic suam poenam potest  
sentire, at illum fata iam in tuto locant—  
quid fluctuaris? statue, quem poenae extrahas.  
**ingrata, dubitas? Hector est illinc tuus—  
erras: utrimque est Hector; hic sensus potens,  
forsan futurus ultor extincti patris—  
utriusque parci non potest: quid iam facis?**

**5A** Then all of a sudden Hector stood before my eyes, not like he was before when he brought war against the Argives and attacked the Greek ships with torches from Mount Ida, and not like he was when he raged against the Danai with slaughter aplenty and carried off Achilles' real armor from a fake Achilles. His face did not spread a brilliant radiance, but it appeared exhausted and downcast, heavy with weeping and gloomy like my own, covered with filthy hair. I was happy to see him nonetheless.

**5B** My Hector used to have these features, such was he in gait, such was he in posture, just so did he bear his strong arms, just so did he carry his shoulders high, just so the dangerous menacing expression on his brow, when he shook his flowing hair, his neck thrown back.

**5C** Here is my son, there are the sacred ashes of my husband—which one will win out? I call to witness the cruel gods and the true gods, the shades of my husband. In my son there is nothing except you that pleases me. Let him live, so that he might reanimate your face—but will your ashes be torn from the tomb and drowned? Shall I allow your bones to be thrown out and scattered in the vast waves? Let this one meet his death instead. Will you, his mother, be able to look upon him given over to a heinous death? Will you be able to see him thrown and spinning from the high roofs? I can, I will endure and bear it, as long as my Hector is not thrown down after death by the conqueror's hand...but this one can feel his punishment, and death holds that one in safety. Why can't you make up your mind? Decide which one you will save from pain. Are you hesitating, ungrateful woman? Your Hector is over here—you are wrong, Hector is on both sides: this one is alive, and will perhaps be a future avenger of his dead father. It is not possible to save both. What are you doing?

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