Tragic Time in Racine's *Andromaque*

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Il y a diverses sortes de presence.

Pierre Du Moulin[1]

When Hamlet exclaims that 'The time is out of joynt',[2] he is responding not only to the hasty marriage of Claudius and Gertrude—which followed painfully quickly upon the funeral of his father, and yet was only an acceleration of what might happen in the ordinary course of events—but more particularly to the disclosure just imparted by the Ghost of King Hamlet, namely that he had been murdered by his own brother. This revelation comes from beyond the grave, from a Purgatory where the Ghost is

> Doom'd for a certaine terme to walke the night;
>
> And for the day confin'd to fast in Fiers,
>
> Till the foule crimes done in my dayes of Nature
>
> Are burnt and purg'd away. (I v 10-13)

The tragic time initiated by the Ghost is deeply troubling: he intrudes into the everyday world from a long period of purgation—only to be measured in human days and nights by conjectural metaphor—and one effect of the Ghost's command to revenge is to accelerate time for Hamlet, so that he 'with wings as swift | As meditation, or the thoughts of Love, | May sweepe to my Revenge' (I v 29-31).

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[1] Pierre Du Moulin, *Apologie pour la saincte Cene du Seigneur* (Geneva: Isaie Le Preux, 1610), p. 16. I take this epigraph from Neil Kenny, *Death and Tenses: Posthumous Presence in Early Modern France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 4.

[2] *The Tragedie of Hamlet, Prince of Denmarke*, I v 196. All quotations from Shakespeare are taken from *The Works of Shakespeare*, edited by Herbert Farjeon, 7 vols (London: The Nonesuch Press, 1929-33). Given the complexity of the concept of time, the gloss on the word 'time' provided at this point by the editors of the Arden 3 edition, 'things in general', is inadequate (*Hamlet*, edited by Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, revised edition (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), p. 257).

Ironically, of course, the opposite happens, and Hamlet delays his revenge, diverted into different kinds of time in inset moments such as his reflection on the afterlife in 'To be, or not to be', or his wrapt attention to the narrative of the fall of Troy performed by the First Player. Time will never again be simple or linear for Hamlet, for the Ghost has inaugurated tragic time, which holds the protagonist apart from the mudane passage of events as experienced by other characters, moving him into a different dimension. Macbeth, too, lives in tragic time, for he wishes unavailingly that the murder of King Duncan 'Could trammell up the Consequence, and catch | With his surcese, Successe' (I vii 3-4); a trammel is a net, and Macbeth envisages gaining control over the normal processes of cause and effect, gathering up all the consequences of the murder and holding them fast, so preventing them from unravelling. Ultimately the passage of time becomes meaningless for him, merely 'To morrow, and to morrow, and to morrow… Signifying nothing' (V v 19-28), while Lady Macbeth in her sleepwalking scene is caught in an eternal return to the night of the murder: for her, time is static.

I begin with these familiar examples in order to sketch the idea that tragic protagonists, whether through their own actions or because of some untimely intervention by others, experience time in a different way from those around them.[3] They may, like Romeo, be the victim of accidents of bad timing; or, more profoundly, like Orestes they may inherit obligations from a previous generation which determine their own present so radically that they are virtually repeating the actions of an ancestor: Orestes' murder of Clytemnestra in the *Choephoroi* is staged as a near-repetition of her murder of Agamemnon, so that Orestes almost re-enacts the past, and in so doing stands in for his father, submerging his will and his agency in the presumed will and agency of Agamemnon. In such cases the protagonists may seem to be haunted, almost possessed, by the past, to the point where they have little or no autonomous agency, and seem the instruments of another's will. There is no

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[3] I have explored the uncanny isolation of the tragic protagonist temporally and spatially in *The Strangeness of Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

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single pattern to tragic time, but many forms of displacement and distortion. For students of seventeenth-century French drama, it may be that the dominant idea of the unity of time has created an expectation that plays will present a uniformity of time, but for Racine the time which his protagonists inhabit is anything but uniform. As for the *vraisemblance* (probability, truth to life) which neo-classical theory also demanded, that is not synonymous with the simple presentation of the mundane, and *vraisemblance* may be achieved by the imaginative depiction of those experiences of temporal dislocation and disturbance which often attend extreme states of passion.[4]

In *Andromaque*, which was first performed in 1667, the past—the Trojan War and its aftermath—weighs heavily upon all the principal characters, but they do not all stand in the same relation to the past.[5] Lucien Goldmann in *Le Dieu caché* says that Andromaque, as the tragic protagonist, is separate from all the other characters who constitute what he calls 'le monde', the ordinary world; indeed, he goes further, and maintains that the tragic character does not belong in time at all, but rather in a form of eternity: 'La conscience tragique' he says, 'ignore le temps'; it is '*intemporelle*—l'avenir étant fermé et le passé aboli—elle ne connaît qu'une seule alternative : celle du *néant* ou de *l'éternité.*' The course of action which it resists is 'de revenir au monde et à la vie quotidienne, de retomber dans le relatif et le compromis.' [6] Goldmann's term 'intemporelle' to describe the tragic state of mind seems to me to be exact, though I would disagree with his claim that for the tragic

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[4] According to an epigram attributed to Racine, one critic objected to *Andromaque* on the grounds of a lack of *vraisemblance*. *Andromaque* is cited from Racine, *Œuvres complètes: I: Théâtre, Poésie*, edited by Georges Forestier, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris : Gallimard, 1999); the epigram is printed on p. 257.

[5] For a brief analysis of the characters' relationships to time see John Lyons, 'Racine et la dramaturgie du temps', in *Jean Racine 1699-1999: Actes du Colloque Île-de-France — La Ferté-Milon 25-30 Mai 1999*, edited by Gilles Declercq and Michèle Rosellini (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2003), pp. 127-37, and in the same collection ('Racine et le temps du futur, temps tragique', pp. 148-65) Henry Phillips studies the concept of the future in this play. See also Roland Racevskis, *Tragic Passages: Jean Racine's Art of the Threshold* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2008), ch. 3 for a detailed account of the characters' relations to the past.

[6] Lucien Goldmann, *Le Dieu caché: Étude sur la vision tragique dans les* Pensées *de Pascal et dans le théâtre de Racine* (Paris: Gallimard, 1959), pp. 88-9. While I find some of Goldmann's formulations productive, I would dissociate myself from the Marxist approach which dominates his book.

protagonist the past has been abolished: rather, it seems to me that Andromaque, and other Racinian protagonists, notably including Phèdre, are located in a form of stasis, a version of the present in which certain crucial elements of the past—now solidified and given as it were the status of presences which make strong ethical and psychological demands—are ineluctably present. But their presence is not exactly *in* the present; rather, the demands of the past haunt and occupy the tragic protagonist, as the Ghost haunts and possesses Hamlet, drawing such a character out of the present tense which others share and into another dimension, their own tragic dimension.

But one might respond that Pyrrhus, Oreste, and Hermione also bound by their pasts, as they try to escape the bonds and obligations which have been created for them by others. They are, but I think that Goldmann is right in separating Andromaque existentially from these other characters, for they are differently bound to the past, and differently inhabit the present. So let us first consider briefly the temporality of these figures who for Goldmann inhabit 'le monde', the untragic world of relativity and compromise. For them the future seems far from being 'fermé', for throughout the play there are evocations of possible futures, though these turn out to be false futures, outcomes which will never actually materialize. As for their pasts, Oreste and Hermione are both constrained by the obligations which others have placed upon them: the duty of Oreste as ambassador for the Greeks to demand the surrender of Andromaque's son Astyanax, the sole heir of Troy; and the expectation that Hermione will marry Pyrrhus, which is why she has been sent to his palace at Épire. Both are also in thrall to their own past feelings for each other. Pyrrhus, too, is constrained by the past, in that he is bound by his obligation to marry Hermione, while his wish to marry Andromaque is thwarted by the inescapable fact that he is the killer of her father-in-law Priam, and the son of Achilles, killer of her husband Hector.[7] These characters are primarily conceived of

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[7] He is reminded of this at I 146-50, II 634-7.

by themselves and by others *qua* ambassador, *qua* bride, *qua* killer. Such forms of identity, shaped by past actions, give rise to much of the emotional ebb and flow of Racine's drama, but they are rather different from the ties that bind Andromaque, for they play out in a present which is malleable. A familiar Racinian geometry is in place here, which Roland Barthes cast into the form of an equation:

A a tout pouvoir sur B.

A aime B, qui ne l'aime pas.[8]

We might try to apply such a formula to *Andromaque*:

Oreste → Hermione → Pyrrhus→Andromaque→Hector

But the love which is signified by these arrows is liable to turn at any moment into hatred or resentment or indifference (whether feigned or real), and while a version of such geometry might be appliedto the relations between Pyrrhus, Oreste, and Hermione, we cannot easily insert Andromaque into such a formula: she alone knows that the object of her love (the dead Hector) is unattainable—or is in a sense already attained, being constantly present to her. Barthes' simple present tenses are inadequate to express the complex kind of time which she inhabits.

Andromaque, essentially, is bound to her dead husband, Hector; she is also bound to her present master, Pyrrhus, but this bond compels her only in so far as it might serve to protect her son Astyanax, who could perpetuate and renew Troy. *Pace* Goldmann, it is precisely because Andromaque does not accept that the past is abolished or the future closed that she clings to her son,[9] who is 'Le seul bien qui me reste, et d'Hector et de Troie' (I 262). In his two prefaces to the play Racine introduces Andromaque to us by way of an extended quotation from Book III of the *Aeneid*, which presents her pouring libations at the cenotaph which she has erected to Hector. This is the Andromaque whom Racine wishes us to see in our mind's eye

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[8] Roland Barthes, 'Sur Racine' in *Œuvres complètes*, edited by Éric Marty, 5 vols (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2001), ii 77.

[9] In his second preface to the play Racine observes that he has changed the story which he has inherited, so that whereas Euripides has Andromache fear for Molossus, her son by Pyrrhus, Racine has her fear for Astyanax, her son by Hector. This point relates to Euripides' *Andromache*; in his *Trojan Women* Euripides shows Astyanax being killed and then buried on his father's shield.

as we begin to read the play, the Andromaque who calls to the spirit of her dead husband to come and take possession of this empty tomb: *Manisque vocabat | Hectoreum ad tumulum*.[10] It is this scene of mourning and this invocation of Hector which defines her, and it is notable that Racine's quotation gives no hint of what Virgil has just told us—that Andromache has remarried and is now the wife of the Trojan prince Helenus, Hector's brother. It is from this Virgilian version of 'la vie quotidienne', in which life has moved on, that Racine removes Andromaque and places her instead in tragic time.

With the help of Neil Kenny's book *Death and Tenses: Posthumous Presence in Early Modern France* we can appreciate the subtle ways in which Racine defines Andromaque's temporality and atemporality through the manipulation of tenses.[11] Kenny shows how significant the choice of tenses could be in writing about the dead in this period, and in particular draws attention to the difference between the *passé simple* (e.g. 'je vis', I saw) and the *passé composé* (e.g. 'j'ai vu', I have seen). The *passé simple* indicates an action in the past which is complete and closed off, whereas the *passé composé*, while also referring to a completed action, has the additional implication that there is some link to the present: it thus serves, says Kenny, 'to convey the past's partial presence within present time', and he quotes the sixteenth-century grammarian Jean Garnier to the effect that the *passé composé* should be used 'when we speak of those things whose way of having happened in the past makes them appear to be present'. In using the *passé composé* the speaker includes himself or herself within the same 'part of time' as the event to which they are referring, and it is essentially the quality of the relation between speaker and event which matters, rather than the quantity of time which separates them.[12]

Andromaque sometimes uses the *passé composé* in ways which evoke a continuing bond to the past, thus ensuring that the past is never quite past. Here she

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[10] Virgil, *Aeneid*, iii 303-4. Virgil is quoted from *Virgil*, edited by H. Rushton Fairclough, revised by G. P. Goold, Loeb Classical Library, 2 vols (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999-2000).
[11] See also Henry Phillips' perceptive account of 'Speech and Time', which is chapter 4 of his *Racine: Language and Theatre* (Durham: University of Durham, 1994).
[12] Kenny, pp. 6, 68-9.

switches poignantly from the *passé simple* to the *passé composé*, and then to the present:

> Ma flamme par Hector fut jadis allumée;
>
> Avec lui dans la tombe elle s'est enfermée.
>
> Mais il me reste un Fils.   (III 865-7)

Racine adapted these lines from Dido's reference to her dead husband Sychaeus:[13]

> ille meos, primus qui me sibi iunxit, amores
>
> abstulit; ille habeat secum servetque sepulcro.[14]

Virgil's movement from the perfect tenses (*iunxit…abstulit*) to the present subjunctives (*habeat…servet*) is mirrored in Andromache's tenses. In the first line she recalls how the flame of her love was once ('jadis') kindled by Hector, using the *passé simple*: that moment of kindling is irrevocably past. Then she moves into the *passé composé* to say that this flame has been shut up with Hector in his tomb—has been, but in a sense still is shut up there. (The verb is actually reflexive, so it is the flame which has shut itself up in the tomb.) This makes all the more significant her subsequent move into the present tense when she says that a son yet remains to her, for though the moment when her love was kindled is over, and her love for Hector is both past and present, the son Astyanax exists wholly in the present, and it is this very existence which is under threat. In a later speech Andromaque says that the night which brought about the destruction of Troy 'fut [*passé simple*] pour tout un peuple une nuit éternelle' (III 998): that was a single event in the past. But when Andromaque reminds Céphise of what she saw that night, the events retain a kind of presence for her, and the *passé composé* is used:

> J'ai vu mon Père mort, et nos Murs embrasés,
>
> J'ai vu trancher les jours de ma Famille entière,
>
> Et mon Époux sanglant traîné sur la poussière. (III 932-4)

This is not quite an analepsis, for the movement into the past is not completed. Such sights can never be safely closed off and consigned to the past: the *passé composé*

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[13] As Forestier points out (p. 1359).

[14] *Aeneid*, iv 28-9: 'He who first linked me to himself has taken away my heart; may he keep it with him, and guard it in the grave'.

gives them abiding presence. And it is the abiding presence of Troy's heroes that Andromaque wishes Céphise to inculcate into Astyanax after her death:

> Fais connaître à mon Fils les Héros de sa Race;
>
> Autant que tu pourras, conduis-le sur leur trace.
>
> Dis-lui, par quels exploits leurs noms ont éclaté,
>
> Plutôt ce qu'ils ont fait, que ce qu'ils ont été.   (IV 1117-20)

The *passé composé* used in 'ont éclaté… ont fait… ont été' shows that their names and their deeds have achieved a renown which still resonates.

Andromaque's sense of self is so profoundly defined by her relationship to her dead husband and her still-living son that is almost an abnegation of selfhood and agency, and her first person pronoun 'je' is less the utterance of an individual will than the expression of an obligation to her past which generates her sole purpose in the present, to protect Astyanax.[15] In this respect she inhabits that realm of the absolute which Goldmann describes. His central idea is that tragic man lives under the gaze of the *deus absconditus*, and for Andromaque this hidden god seems to take the form of the abiding presence of Hector and of Troy; for although I said that Andromaque inhabits the realm of the absolute, it might be more accurate to say that the realm of the absolute inhabits her. In an uncanny way the walls of Troy accompany her, for when Pyrrhus offers to avenge the fall of Troy and to crown Astyanax as its king within its rebuilt walls, Andromaque's refusal includes a parenthetical apostrophe to what she calls these *sacred* walls:

> Non, vous n'espérez plus de nous revoir encor,
>
> Sacrés Murs, que n'a pu conserver mon Hector. (I 335-6)[16]

It would have been unsurprising if Andromaque had said that she and her son do not hope to see the walls of Troy again, but what she actually says is that the walls do not hope to see Andromaque and Astyanax again—a remarkable attribution of

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[15] I have explored aspects of the problematic 'je' uttered by Racine's characters in 'The Rhetoric of Space and Self in Racine's *Bérénice*', *Seventeenth-Century French Studies*, 36 (2014), 141-55.

[16] For Racine's uses of apostrophe see Michael Hawcroft, 'L'apostrophe racinienne', in *Jean Racine 1699-1999: Actes du Colloque Île-de-France – La Ferté-Milon 25-30 Mai 1999*, edited by Gilles Declercq and Michèle Rosellini (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2003), pp. 397-414.

agency and of presence to the fabric of Troy, an apostrophe to an entity which now exists only in her own mind, but which seems to be as clearly present to her now as Pyrrhus with whom she is currently sharing the stage space—except that Andromaque is momentarily inhabiting a different conceptual space from that occupied by Pyrrhus, and the walls of Troy are present to her with a different form of presence, and in a different form of the present, from the king's physical presence. It is in this particular respect that I think we can use Goldmann's word 'éternité' to define the tragic dimension in which Andromaque exists, though this is not eternity as defined by Christian theologians,[17] nor is it the eternity envisaged by Antigone when she says,

> ἐπεὶ πλείων χρόνος
>
> ὃν δεῖ μ᾽ ἀρέσκειν τοῖς κάτω τῶν ἐνθάδε.
>
> ἐκεῖ γὰρ αἰεὶ κείσομαι·[18]

Rather, in the case of Andromaque, Goldmann's 'éternité' is an atemporal condition in which Hector and Troy are always present to her.

Perhaps we should pause over Andromaque's word 'Sacrés', which, like many elemental words, may have faded somewhat over the years, and lost some of its force to the mind of a largely secular society; so we might recall the precise and intense significance of its Latin original, *sacer*:

> Ce qui est *sacrum*… appartient au monde du «divin»… et diffère essentiellement de ce qui appartient à la vie courante des hommes… La notion de *sacer* ne coïncide pas avec celle de «bon» ou de «mauvais» ; c'est une notion à part. *Sacer* désigne celui ou ce qui ne peut être touché sans être souillé.[19]

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[17] e.g. St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 10, a. 4.

[18] 'For I owe a longer allegiance to the dead than to the living; in that world I shall abide for ever' (Sophocles, *The Antigone*, edited by Sir Richard Jebb, third edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1900), ll. 74-6).

[19] Alfred Ernout and Anotine Meillet, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine* (Paris: Klincksieck, 2001), p. 586.

And 'sacré' itself may be glossed as 'Qui est digne d'un respect absolu, qui a un charactère de valeur absolue'. [20] For Furetière 'sacré' 'se dit… des choses pour lesquelles on a… de la veneration… on appelloit un lieu *sacré*, celuy où on avoit enterré un mort'.[21] The sacred does not belong to 'la vie courante des hommes', to that world in flux in which move Pyrrhus, Oreste, and Hermione; the sacred is absolute. So Racine's adjective 'Sacrés' is by no means a routine filler: it designates the walls of Troy as the unquestioned source of Andromaque's conduct, as the absolute which possesses her, sets her apart, and draws her out of 'la vie courante des hommes'.

We might also pause over another word in Andromaque's speech. That little word 'revoir' which she uses here is one of many verbs beginning with the prefix *re-* which Racine deploys in the course of this play. ('*Andromaque* est, par excellence, le drame du recommencement', observed Georges Poulet.[22]) While in some *re-* words the prefix indicates an emphasis, a duplication or intensification of effort—as we see, for example, in the verb 'renferme' (II 574)—in most cases the *re-* words denote a turning back, a revisiting, a desire to recover that which has been lost: *rallumer, ramener, rapporter, reprendre, rentrer, retourner, retrouver, réveiller, revenir, revivre*.[23] All these words refer to the emotional vacillations of the three characters Pyrrhus, Oreste, and Hermione, who turn back to their earlier commitments, or return to an abandoned lover: so Andromaque in this same speech tells Pyrrhus, 'Retournez, retournez à la Fille d'Hélène' (I 342). In fact, two kinds of return are juxtaposed here: Pyrrhus *can* go back—physically and emotionally—to the woman whom he has

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[20] *Le Grand Robert de la Langue Française*, edited by Alain Rey, 6 vols (Paris: Dictionnaires Le Robert, 2001), s.v. *sacré*, vi 105. Cf. 'Est sacré l'être, la chose ou l'idée à quoi l'homme suspend toute sa conduite, ce qu'il n'accepte pas de mettre en discussion… ce qu'il ne renierait ni ne trahirait à aucun prix… Le sacré est ce qui donne la vie et ce qui la ravit, c'est la source d'où elle coule, l'estuaire où elle se perd' (Roger Caillois, *L'Homme et le Sacré* (Paris: Galimard, 1950), pp. 170-8, cited in *Le Grand Robert*, *ad loc.*).

[21] Antoine Furetière, Dictionaire Universel, Contenant generalement tous les mots françois tant vieux que modernes, 3 vols (La Haye: Arnout et Reinier Leers, 1690) s.v.

[22] Georges Poulet, *Études sur le temps humain* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1949), p. 141.

[23] I derive this list from Bryant C. Freeman, *Concordance du Théâtre et des Poésies de Jean Racine*, 2 vols (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968). *s.vv.*

deserted, but the returning of Andromaque to Troy is of an altogether different existential and temporal order. In her imagination she returns to the night of Troy's ruin; but Troy is also enduringly present to her, as a moral and a cultural imperative, and as it is incarnated in her son. Racine's cluster of *re-* words maps for us two different ways of experiencing time.

There is also the word *reste* (from Latin *re + stare*), which occurs more than twenty times in this play. What is it that remains? Some past feelings remain unextinguished in the characters, whether 'un reste de tendresse' (II 477, 706) or 'un reste d'espérance' (II 498), or 'quelque pitié' (III 908) or 'fierté' (III 918). These traces of emotion can be appealed to, and may blossom afresh. But in particular it is Astyanax who is referred to on nine occasions through the noun or verb 'reste'—he alone 'Reste de tant de Rois sous Troie ensevelis' (I 72 ; cf. 154, 218, 262, 599, 871, 1126-7). 'C'est le seul qui nous reste' (III 876), says Andromaque. But in what time does Astyanax remain, in the tragic time of Andromaque, or in the mundane time of the other characters? In the former, he embodies the past and promises a renewed existence for Troy in the future; in the latter he is a political pawn who faces imminent death. In effect, the play enacts a struggle to possess him, to locate him inescapably in one time scheme or the other. Perhaps it is significant that Astyanax never actually appears on stage, for in this way he can more easily be located in both these different forms of time.

Racine, who was a skilled classicist with an unusually retentive memory,[24] may well have recalled the expressive prevalence of such *re-* words in the *Aeneid*, especially in Book II, in which Aeneas recalls the fall of Troy. Later in the poem the recovery of Troy will take the form not of a return to the original site, but the building of a new home on new ground in Italy. As Aeneas says to Dido, to tell the

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[24] An engaging story told about Racine's adolescent years illustrates his remarkable memory. He once bought a copy of Heliodorus' Greek novel in ten books, *The Ethiopian Story of Theagenes and Chariclea*, but the sacristan confiscated and burnt it, deeming it unsuitable. Racine bought a second copy, which met the same fate. He then bought a third copy, which he handed to the sacristan, telling him that he could burn it because he had now committed the text to memory (Georges Forestier, *Jean Racine* (Paris: Gallimard, 2006), p. 104).

story of the fall of Troy is itself to renew an unspeakable grief, *Infandum... renovare dolorem*, from which his mind has recoiled in pain, *luctu refugit*.[25] Aeneas recalls how he escaped from the burning ruins of his city, but went back in an attempt to rally his friends and rescue his family:

> ipse urbem repeto et cingor fulgentibus armis.
>
> stat casus renovare omnis omnemque reverti
>
> per Troiam et rursus caput obiectare periclis.[26]

The verbs *repeto* ('seek again'), *renovare* ('renew'), and *reverti* ('turn back') underline the danger of Aeneas' decision to go back through the city again (*rursus*), tracing his steps backwards (*repeto et vestigia retro... sequor*[27]). He looks back (*respicio*[28]) for his little son, and invites his audience to look back with him and see (*respice*[29]) the towers of the city in their mind's eye. He goes back, Troy's hopes ebb back: *retro*, says Virgil, *retro*, and for a third time *retro*.[30] Ultimately, however, there is no going back for Aeneas: there is only the divine command to go forward.

Is there any mode of going back, is there any way of going forward, for Andromaque? After one of her dialogues with Pyrrhus, Andromaque turns to her confidente Céphise and says, 'Allons rejoindre mon Époux' (III 928), but her verb 'rejoindre' denotes a wholly different kind of meeting from the one signified by 'rejoindre' in Acte I, when Oreste had said to Pylade that Fortune 'a pris soin de nous rejoindre ici' (I 4). That rejoining of old friends belongs in the mundane world, whereas the rejoining of Andromaque and Hector belongs in an eternity, or in a present of the imagination. When Céphise reminds her mistress that Pyrrhus through his offer of marriage 'vous fait remonter au rang de vos Aïeux' (III 992) she is using the verb 'remonter' in a sense which Andromaque would not recognize: for

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[25] Virgil, *Aeneid*, ii 3, 12.

[26] *Aeneid* ii 749-51: 'I myself seek again the city, and gird on my glittering arms. I am resolved to renew every risk, to retrace my way through all Troy and once more expose my life to every peril.'

[27] *Aeneid* ii 753-4.

[28] *Aeneid* ii 564.

[29] *Aeneid* ii 615.

[30] *Aeneid* ii 169, 378, 753.

Céphise, and for Pyrrhus, Andromaque can return to her ancestral rank by marrying him, since he is a king; for Andromaque, however, it is she alone who can bring about a return to her ancestors, and she plans, having married Pyrrhus, to accomplish all her duties to the sacred walls of Troy through her suicide, for in this way, and *only* in this way, 'J'irai seule rejoindre Hector, et mes Aïeux' (IV 1099). There is no alternative, no path through the world of relativity and compromise, for, as she says, 'as-tu pensé qu'Andromaque infidèle | Pût trahir un Époux qui croit revivre en elle [?]' (IV 1081-2). The present tense in 'croit' indicates that there is a form of the present, and a mode of existence, in which the dead Hector believes that he lives again in her. And in Astyanax. Andromaque is so close to her dead and still living husband that she actually greets her son as Hector:[31]

> *C'est Hector,* (disait-elle en l'embrassant toujours;)
>
> *Voilà ses yeux, sa bouche, et déjà son audace,*
>
> *C'est lui-même, c'est toi, cher Époux, que j'embrasse.* (II 656-8)

Andromaque also addresses Hector directly when she turns aside from Pyrrhus and asks her husband to pardon her for her credulity in trusting her new master:

> Pardonne, cher Hector, à ma crédulité.
>
> Je n'ai pu soupçonner ton Ennemi d'un crime,
>
> Malgré lui-même enfin je l'ai cru magnanime.
>
> Ah! s'il l'était assez, pour nous laisser du moins
>
> Au Tombeau qu'à ta Cendre ont élevé mes soins;
>
> Et que finissant là sa haine et nos misères,
>
> Il ne séparât point des dépouilles si chères! (III 944-50)

In so turning aside, she turns away from 'le monde', from 'la vie courante des hommes', into that time and space which she shares with Hector, her mind dwelling

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[31] There is an intriguing pre-echo here of the moment when Phèdre looks at Hippolyte and sees her husband Thésée (*Phèdre et Hippolyte*, II 627-9). In both cases Racine is depicting a mind under stress which laminates a form of the past over a form of the present.

upon a reunion of their ashes—a reunion cast into an impossible time scheme through the use of the negative imperfect subjunctive ('ne séparât point').

Andromaque even speaks with Hector's voice when repeating the words of his last speech to her, so that his dead voice takes over her own voice:

> *Chère Épouse*, dit-il en essuyant mes larmes,
>
> *J'ignore quel succès le sort garde à mes armes,*
>
> *Je te laisse mon Fils pour gage de ma foi;*
>
> *S'il me perd, je prétends qu'il me retrouve en toi.*
>
> *Si d'un heureux hymen la mémoire t'est chère,*
>
> *Montre au Fils à quel point tu chérissais le Père.* (III 1025-30)

These lines draw upon the celebrated episode in *Iliad* VI—which Racine marked in his own copy of Homer as an 'Entretien divin'[32]—when Hector takes leave of his wife for the last time as he goes into battle to fight Achilles, and their little child is frightened by the nodding plumes on his father's helmet. But in a formula which is not found in Homer, Hector tells Andromache that he wishes their son to find him again in her, 'qu'il me retrouve en toi', so closely joined are husband and wife. After Andromaque has visited Hector's tomb to seek his counsel, Céphise begins Acte IV by attributing Andromaque's new resolution (to safeguard Astyanax by marrying Pyrrhus) to the persuasion of Hector, for her will is not her own:

> Ah! je n'en doute point. C'est votre Époux, Madame,
>
> C'est Hector qui produit ce miracle en votre âme.
>
> Il veut que Troie encor se puisse relever
>
> Avec cet heureux Fils, qu'il vous fait conserver.[33] (IV 1053-6)

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[32] Racine, ed. Forestier, p. 1362.

[33] 'relever' is another of the play's important *re-* words, and expresses the promise, or the fear, that Astyanax might rebuild Troy: cf. Oreste to Pyrrhus: 'la Grèce avec douleur | Vous voit du Sang Troyen relever le malheur' (I 151-2); Pyrrhus to Andromaque: 'Je puis… | Dans ses Murs relevés couronner votre Fils' (I 331-2); Pyrrhus: 'je relevais Troie' (II 611). Cf. 'renaître', which is similarly used for a reborn Troy under Astyanax: Pyrrhus: 'On craint qu'avec Hector Troie un jour ne renaisse' (I 193); Céphise: 'voir avec lui renaître tant de Rois!' (IV 1075); and cf. also 'revivre': in Oreste, Agamemnon lives again (II 622), and in Andromache Hector lives again (IV 1082).

We should note the present tenses here in the verbs 'produit', 'veut', and 'fait conserver' which signify Hector's intervention: instead of saying that Hector *has produced* this change in Andromache, Céphise says rather that he *is producing* it, as if Hector's abiding presence continues to work this new determination in Andromaque. And he has not simply entrusted Astyanax to her at one moment in the past, when leaving to fight Achilles: he continues to do so—'il vous fait conserver', not 'fit conserver'. Even on her way to the altar to marry Pyrrhus, Andromaque occupies a time and a space which are different from those inhabited by the other characters:

> Andromaque, au travers de mille cris de joie,
>
> Porte jusqu'aux Autels le souvenir de Troie,
>
> Incapable toujours d'aimer, et de haïr,
>
> Sans joie, et sans murmure elle semble obéir. (V 1445-8)

Carrying with her the memory of Troy, indeed; but more striking is Cléone's observation that she is now 'Incapable toujours d'aimer, et de haïr', for she has moved beyond those emotions of love and hate which direct the actions of the other characters in *le monde*.

And yet… at the end of the play Racine startlingly reverses the trajectory of his principal characters. Andromaque herself, who has so far existed in her own time and space, now finds herself in *le monde* of urgent action, directing Pyrrhus' soldiers to avenge his assassination.[34] Meanwhile, Oreste, who has lived up to this point in the mundane ebb and flow of duties and emotions, is transported into a totally different time and space by the onset of the Furies. It had previously been Andromaque who lived in an intertextually shaped dimension, her mode of existence charted by echoes of Homer, Euripides, Virgil, and Seneca; now Oreste

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[34] In the original edition of 1668 Racine has Andromaque say in the penultimate scene that because of his murder Pyrrhus has displaced Hector in her heart (V 1522), and she apparently joins Hermione to avenge his death (V 1608). When Racine rewrote the ending for the edition of 1673 he removed Andromaque from this scene altogether. He may have felt that keeping her unseen in an offstage space better preserved her dignity, her attachment to Hector, and her tragic isolation.

moves into a version of the remote and archaic textual space of Aeschylus. Yet whereas in the *Choephoroi* Orestes' mind begins to turn after his murder of Clytemnestra, haunted by the Furies who punish matricide for that particular society, in Racine's play he is tormented by Furies who themselves have no such social role in the conceptual space previously mapped out by this work, and do not inhabit its time.

So the tragedy of Andromaque turns out not to have a tragic ending, as she is moved finally into 'la vie quotidienne'—albeit into a bloody and chaotic form of it— whereas Oreste is suddenly brought forward as a tragic figure, transported into an atemporal madness which, we might say, combines both of Goldmann's terms for the world of the tragic protagonist, madness being a state of mind which is at once both its own *éternité* and its own *néant*.

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