AN EDITION OF SIR WILLIAM ALEXANDER’S
THE TRAGEDIE OF CRÆSUS
(1607 ISSUE)
WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES
BY RUDOLF WILLOCKX

PROMOTOR:
PROF. DR. W. SCHRICKX

PROEFSCHRIFT VOORGELEGD TOT
HET BEHALEN VAN DE GRAAD VAN
LICENTIAAT IN DE LETTEREN EN
WIJSBEGEERTE,
GROEP GERMAANSE FILOLOGIE
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My very special thanks go to Mr P. S. MacAuly, M.A., B. Lit., who helped me in every way in his power and who read through my manuscript before I typed it. I am greatly indebted to the valuable suggestions and remarks he made in the course of this one-year work.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS


Herodotus The History of Herodotus, translated by G. Rawlinson, in Great Books of the Western World, vol. 6, (Published by the Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., Chicago, London, Toronto, 1952),


N.E.D.  

Pauly  
A. Pauly’s Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft, ed. G. Wissowa, (Stuttgart, from 1894 onwards),

Schelling  

Sh. Lex.  

Tilley  

Xenophon  
The Education of Cyrus, Translated from the Greek of Xenophon by H. G. Dakyns, (London, J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, n.d. – Everyman’s Classical),
Sir William Alexander, Earl of Stirling
**BIOGRAPHY OF SIR WILLIAM ALEXANDER**

This summary of Thomas H. MacGrail's *Sir William Alexander, First Earl of Sterling, A Biographical Study*, is a joint effort by Yo Massa, who edited *The Tragedie of Darius*, Gerd Van Vosselen, editor of *The Tragedie of Julius Caesar*, and myself.

Information about the earliest period in the life of Sir William Alexander, later Earl of Stirling, is very scanty: even the year in which he was born has not been recorded. Several biographers have tried to settle this matter, but the results of their guesswork differ widely. The only certainty is that Alexander was born at the village of Menstry in the parish of Logie, Clackmannanshire, Scotland.

Older writers accepted 1580 as the year in which he was born, basing themselves on the inscription on the engraved portrait by Marshall, which was prefixed to some copies of the 1637 edition of his *Recreations with the Muses*. Rogers, however, has pointed out that the portrait was not made especially for that occasion, and the phrase “Ætatis suae LVII” is therefore of no significance. Without any particular reason Rogers then fixes upon 1567-1568 as the date of birth, but MacGrail maintains that Alexander was born not earlier than 1577, basing his evidence on a letter Alexander sent to Vaughan, in which he alludes to the coincidence of their “Horoscope”. (Vaughan was born in 1577).

Alexander probably received his education at the University of Glasgow, but whether or not he went to Leyden to complete it remains an open question. He certainly went to France, Italy and Spain, which he referred to in his sonnet-cycle *Aurora*, and on his return his interest in literature was aroused by Alexander Hume, who became his intimate friend. Early in 1601 Alexander married Janet, a daughter of Sir William Erskine of Balgonie, by whom he had eleven children: William, Anthony, Henry, John, Charles, Robert, Ludovick, James, Jean, Margaret and Elizabeth.

It is not known how Alexander met James VI of Scotland; he was certainly not with the king when he went to London in 1603. Between 1608-09 Alexander was knighted, and

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after he had been made a gentleman of the Privy Chamber his political career sped rapidly upwards. There is, however, no ground for the assumption that he was a tutor to prince Henry.

After his activities as a tax-collector and a mining-engineer, Alexander was created Master of Requests of Scotland in 1614, and in 1615 he was admitted a member of the Privy Council of Scotland. In 1616, when the bulk of his poetic and dramatic works had appeared, he was moreover connected with a scheme for the formation of a great National Academy, but with the death of James the project was abandoned. From June to September 1621 he attended sessions of Parliament as one of the Lords of the Articles, and although he is usually regarded as a sycophant of James I and Charles I, he seems to have shown his independence on several occasions.

In order to solve the economic problems of his native country, and no doubt because he wanted to achieve immortal fame, he hit on a plan of establishing colonies in America, inspired by the enterprises of Hawkins, Drake and Raleigh. His idea of colonising was further stimulated by his meeting with Captain John Mason, who had become governor of Newfoundland and in 1621 published *A Briefe Discourse of the New-found-land*.

Alexander requested from James a grant of the land, and on 29 September 1621 he was appointed hereditary lieutenant of the Nova Scotia colony, which occupied a territory of about 60,000 square miles and included Nova Scotia itself, New Brunswick, Gaspé and the islands Cape Breton and Prince Edward.

The very same territory was, however, claimed by France on the basis of a settlement by Jacques Cartier in 1541 under a patent given by François I to François de la Roche, and this was the origin of many a dispute between France and England. That claim did not quench Alexander’s enthusiasm, and in March 1622 he organised his first expedition. Owing to bad weather, the ship could not reach Cape Breton and the crew had to spend the winter at Newfoundland. When the supply-ship arrived there early the next year they had been decimated, and the only thing that could be done was to explore the coast of
Nova Scotia and to return to England. All in all, this failure cost Alexander six thousand pounds, which the king refused to pay back.

In 1624 Alexander published his Encouragement to Colonies, and when it failed to raise the Scots’ interest in his scheme, he suggested to James the creation of the order of the Knight-Baronets of Nova Scotia. His fellow-countrymen showed themselves particularly unwilling to buy this title, and as a result of this Alexander never got the 150 baronets he needed in order to work out his scheme of colonisation. Even when English and Irish noblemen, and later members of the lower gentry could apply for the title, interest was lacking, and in spite of several personal interventions of the king, the only thing Alexander gained was personal unpopularity in his native country.

In the summer of 1626, Alexander worked on a third expedition to Nova Scotia, but mutiny and financial problems delayed the three ships in the harbour of Dumbarton. Meanwhile Cardinal Richelieu created the powerful Company of New France, which aimed to colonise the whole of Canada. It was in this year (1627) that the war between France and England broke out. Nevertheless, in May 1628, William Alexander Junior was ready to sail to a region that is nowadays called Lower Granville, and when he returned to England, he left a prosperous colony behind him. The Kirkes, an important tradesmen family, had sailed with them as far as Quebec, where they took over a French settlement and returned with a conquest of seventeen French ships and a number of prisoners including Claude La Tour, who was to become an associate in the latter colonial scheme of Sir William Alexander.

When the London financiers of the Kirkes’ expedition claimed a patent for the sole trade and plantation in Canada, Alexander objected strongly, and in the end the ‘Anglo-Scotch Company’ was created by which both parties shared in the enterprise. All their endeavours, however, proved in vain after the French-English war. When William Junior returned from a second expedition in 1630, the French government wanted the English to give up the settlements in the district that William Alexander had so much
laboured for to colonise. Charles ordered the retirement from Port Royal as a part of the dowry upon his marriage to Henrietta Maria.

This was a great financial loss to Alexander. But he did not despair. His interests in the New World continued: in 1633 he became a member of the Commission to reprieve “able-bodied persons convicted of certain felonies, and to bestow them to be used in discoveries and other foreign employments”: in 1634 he was made a member of the “Committee for Foreign Plantations”, and in the same year William Alexander and his son were created “Counsellors and Patentees of the New England Company”.

These colonial enterprises of William Alexander, in the period between 1621 and 1630, were not his only interests. He was also very busy trying to strengthen his position in London and Scotland. He purchased the lands of Tillicoultry and assured his son William a position in government service. In 1624, King James, who wanted to live on friendly terms with the Pope in order to secure the loyalty of his Catholic subjects, also sent Alexander on a secret errand to Rome. When James died in May 1625, Alexander was created “Secretary in Attendance upon the King”, a position which contributed to his unpopularity in Scotland.

In 1626, King Charles ordered that all the lands that his predecessor had taken from ecclesiastical institutions and granted to noble families in Scotland were to be returned to the Crown. For this purpose he ordered a commission, which included Alexander, to persuade these nobles to obey the king, and if they did not, they fell victims to a legal process against the king. His participation in this commission and later in the persecution of the Scottish Catholics did not make William a popular person in his home country.

In the period between 1625 and 1632, Alexander received a large number of new offices. In 1627 he was created “Keeper of the Signet”: every legal or official document had to pass through his hands to be imprinted with a signet. He was made a member of a commission to examine the laws and Acts of Parliament in order to decide which ones needed reprinting because most of them had become obsolete and difficult to interpret.
The results of this commission, however, were rather poor. He also held an important position in the “Association for the Fishing”, a great commercial enterprise to develop the possibilities of the fishing industry in England and Scotland. In 1628 he was made a “Commissioner of the Exchequer”. In 1629 he received the power to nominate “clerks of the peace” in Scotland and in 1630 Charles sent him to Scotland as a “Royal Commissioner” to negotiate with the Scottish Parliament and to prepare the coronation of the king in 1633. On 28 July 1631 he became “Extraordinary Lord of the College of Justice”, the supreme civil tribunal of Scotland.

The most important contribution to the unpopularity of Sir William Alexander was the affair of the “copper coinage”. In 1631 there was a tremendous need for small specie throughout the kingdom. As the custom was such that the right to coin money was given to individuals by a royal grant or charter, the authority for the coining of the copper one- and two-penny was given to Alexander on 26 August 1631. It is not known what exactly happened to the “turners”, as they were called, but soon it appeared that they were not worth their declared value. Nevertheless, King Charles ordered William to go on with the coinage because it was an important source of income to the latter and Charles had many debts to pay him. In any case, the result of this coinage was an inflation, for which Alexander was blamed. It is not known whether he acted through greed or through ignorance of the elementary laws of economics, but people changed his family motto: “Per Mare, Per Terras”, into “Per Mare, Per Turners”.

After the coronation of King Charles at Holyrood Kirk in Edinburgh, William Alexander was created “Earl of Sterling”. At his coronation, Charles had expressed his wish to fashion the Church of Scotland after the pattern of the English Church, and he started a severe ecclesiastical legislation to achieve his purpose. Alexander chose the side of the Church of England and became a member of the “Commission for the Maintenance of Church Discipline” in 1634.

One of Alexander’s chief literary creations during his association with James I was assisting the King to complete a new translation of the Psalms of David. The first
edition appeared at Oxford in 1631, just when Alexander was suffering serious financial losses. King Charles started a campaign in England, Ireland and Scotland to have the work adopted by the clergy. The bishops of England rejected it, while those of Ireland were disposed to view it with approbation. In Scotland, however, there was a violent action against it, and the General Assembly of the Scottish Church drew up a list of their objections to the new translation. In 1634 Charles commanded the Privy Council and the bishops themselves that no Psalm books of the old translation should be printed or sold in Scotland on pain of confiscation and prosecution. In 1635 Charles went on launching innovations in the Church of Scotland: a “Book of Ecclesiastical Canons” was shortly to appear, which would among other things enjoin the use of a new Service Book. This Service Book was to be used in all Scottish churches, but when it was used for the first time in 1637 in Edinburgh, the people burst out in a fury. The significance of this disturbance was at first not realised at Court, but it led to a “Supplication” by the people, which demanded not only the recall of the Service Book, but the virtual destruction of the whole Episcopal system that had been superimposed on the Church of Scotland.\footnote{Cf. J. H. S. Burleigh, \textit{A Church History of Scotland}, (1960), chapter IV, and G. D. Henderson, \textit{Religious Life in Seventeenth-Century Scotland}, (1937).}

The King was furious, and his wrath was directed against Alexander, his Scottish Secretary. In 1638 the “Supplication” was rejected and the whole Scottish nation entered into a pact called the “National Covenant”.

Charles realised the danger of impending civil war, and when the Privy Council was turned asunder, he sent a commission to restore a semblance of order. The Earl of Sterling was not chosen for this commission, which was significant in showing Charles’s lack of confidence and the Scottish people’s dislike. When in 1638 the General Assembly was ordered to dissolve, this was neglected and the Service Book was consigned to oblivion forever.

In 1634 Alexander had manifested a commendable zeal in promoting the worldly prosperity of the Scottish Church by founding a parish: parts of Menstry and Gogar
were conveyed to the Church. But during riots Alexander’s name was vilified. His unpopularity among his countrymen was, as far as the Service Book controversy was concerned, caused by nothing objectionable in the Psalms themselves, but by the unfortunate circumstance of being bound up in the “Popish-Inglish-Scottish-Masse-Service-Books” that had been foisted upon the people by the imperious will of a despotic ruler. During the period from 1636 to his death in 1640 Sir William Alexander was stricken by a succession of calamities.

After the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, a political oath, the Oath of Allegiance, was framed, which all Catholic commoners had to take. Herein they were forced to deny as heretical the doctrine that popes could depose kings. This had brought dissensions between Rome and the English Court, and commissions were set up to affect a compromise. The affair lasted until about 1636.

Alexander had a large participation in this business, due to his position and to his having a personal acquaintance with the chief actors in it. That he himself had leanings toward Catholicism is, considering his activities in various anti-Catholic commissions, very doubtful. Nevertheless, rumours and false accusations began to get about that he was aiding a design to resubmit the Church of England to the Pope of Rome.

In 1637 Alexander had recourse to a legal formality, because the title of Earl of Sterling had not been united with Alexander’s estates, so that it was possible that in some future day the title and the Scottish estates might be inherited by two different persons. He resigned his lands of Tullibody and Tillicoultry into the King’s hand, so as to get a new infeftment\(^1\) of them. On 30 July 1637, the King created him Earl of Dovan, but since this title was a pure formality, he continued to use that of Earl of Sterling.

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\(^1\) In Scots law, the old process of giving symbolical possession of heritable property, the legal evidence of which is an instrument of sasine (the delivery of feudal property, typically land).
In September 1637 occurred the death of his son Anthony Alexander, but on 18 May came the most cruel blow of all: the death in London of Sir William Alexander Jr, his eldest son.

In March 1639, Charles started a campaign known as the First Bishop’s War, to bring the recalcitrant Scots to terms with Church and State. Alexander accompanied the King on this expedition and this had the effect of tremendously increasing the ill-will felt towards him by the majority of his countrymen.

Late in 1639, Alexander must have known that he was going to die, because he went through another legal formality in connection with his estate. By the charter of “Novodamus” in 1639, all his possessions were united through royal authority into one sole and district earldom: the Earldom of Sterling. In January 1640 Alexander became ill. His creditors flocked like vultures around his sickbed and they made him sign an assignation of his emoluments and estate in their favour.

He died in London, at his home in Covent Garden, on 12 February 1640. After his burial, a burlesque “epitaph” was circulated in Scotland, which illustrated the opinion of his contemporaries of him.

The Edinburgh University Library possesses a letter in which is said that when Alexander’s body arrived at Sterling, encased in a lead coffin, it was detained at the church door by spiteful creditors. So his friends were obliged to erect an aisle over it virtually on the spot. After a century, during which it lay uninterred, the coffin had been nearly all taken away by schoolboys.

Early in 1812 Bowles Aisle was removed, and the remains of its long-dead occupants forever scattered: among them the noble dust of Alexander.

In the consignment of his grave to final and complete oblivion we may read the fate that has overtaken all that he once held dear. His literary works lie neglected and unread, his colonial enterprises have virtually been forgotten, and his family honours have long lain
dormant. Everything that he won in a lifetime of labour, triumph and disease followed him and turned to dust.

The poems and plays on which Alexander’s literary reputation was based had all appeared by 1616, when the splendour of Elizabeth’s reign had declined.

The accession of James had literary and political effects: after 1603 the attention of the world of letters was turned to Scotland and Scottish history as an as yet unexplored mine of subject matter and inspiration. Scottish literature had fallen into a decline and the three most important writers, Drummond, Aytoun, and Alexander, expressed themselves in English, not in Scottish.

His position at Court and the fact that he had little competition from his countrymen were of great advantage to Alexander’s literary reputation, but it cannot be denied that he did enjoy much fame in London as a man-of-letters.

A clearer conception of his literary standard can be gained by seeing him in his relation with such writers of the period as it is evident that he knew.

He was most intimate with his fellow Scot, William Drummond of Hawthornden. Their friendship started in 1606, when Drummond read Menstre’s Aurora. Drummond’s copy of the “4 Tragedies”, that is, The Monarchiche Tragedies of 1607, is in the possession of the National Library of Scotland. It contains Drummond’s signature, marginal annotations in his hand and a sonnet in praise of Alexander. Drummond also prefixed a sonnet to the edition of Doomes-Day in 1614. From their correspondence we can assume that they first met in 1612, and from then until about 1628 they had a lively exchange of letters. In 1628 they ceased writing for a considerable period. In 1636 they started again, and Alexander sent his Anaerisis to Drummond. With Alexander’s death a beautiful friendship of nearly thirty years ended. They grew apart in politics, ideals and philosophies, but their common love of literature was their strongest bond.
Through his friendship with Drummond, Alexander must have had some acquaintance with Ben Johnson (who had some conversations with Drummond) and Michael Drayton.

Alexander was probably associated with another Scottish poet, Sir Robert Aytoun. Aytoun was also connected with the English Court and he probably collaborated with Alexander and King James in the translation of the Psalms. Only one definite record of their association appears to have survived: a commendatory sonnet of Aytoun’s prefixed to the 1604 edition of *The Monarchicke Tragedies*.

Other poets with whom Alexander had been acquainted were Walter Quin, John Leech, Arthur Johnston and John Murray. Quin wrote a long poem on the occasion of Alexander’s wedding, and prefixed the 1603 edition of *Darius* with two commendatory poems. Almost complete oblivion has overtaken the names of Leech and Johnston, because the greater part of their work is in Latin. They both wrote several poems in praise of Alexander.

Little is known about John Murray, who wrote a sonnet prefixed to the 1603 edition of *Darius*. He had some poetic reputation, but very few of his works have survived. Other contemporary writers who have sung Alexander’s immortality in verse are William Habington, James Cockburne, John Dunbar, John Abernethy, William Lithgow and John Wodroeph.

Finally, it should be noted that Alexander was a friend of Edward Alleyn, the famous Elizabethan actor. Alexander wrote a complimentary poem to him because he devoted a large part of his money to the establishment of a charity school and hospital at Dulwich, called the College of God’s Gift.
THE WORKS OF SIR WILLIAM ALEXANDER

A Short Discourse of the Good Ends of the higher providence, in the late attempt against his Majesties Person

Anonymous, but attributed to William Alexander

Printed by Robert Waldegrave, 1600.

The Tragedie of Darius
(Edinburgh, 1603)

Aurora – Sonnet Sequence
(London, 1604)

The subtitle of the work states that it contains “the first fancies of the author’s youth”

A Parænesis To The Prince
(London, 1604)

Didactic Poem

The Monarchicke Tragedies
(London, 1604)

containing Darius,
Crœsus,
A Parænesis to the Prince,
Some Verses Written to his Majestie at the time of his Majesties first entrie into England,
Some Verses Written shortly thereafter by reason of an inundation of Douen, a water neare to the Authors house, whereupon his Maiestie was sometimes wont to Hawke.

1 McGrail, p. 21.
2 McGrail, p. 25.
The Monarchicke Tragedies
(London, 1607)
This is a reissue of the Monarchicke Tragedies of 1604, but “The Tragedie of Julius Cæsar” and “The Alexandrean Tragedie” are published here for the first time.

An Elegie on the Death of Prince Henrie
(Edinburgh, 1612)

Doomes-Day, or, The Great Day of the Lords Ivdgement,
(Edinburgh, 1614)

Supplement To A Defect In The Third Book of “Arcadia”.
(Dublin, 1621)

An Encouragement To Colonies,
(London, 1624)
Prose tract

The Psalms of King David, Translated by King James
(Oxford, 1631)
“The precise extent of Alexander’s work in this connection is impossible to ascertain, though we may agree with Baillie that he has a much better title to be considered to be the true author of the version than King James, under whose name it was published”\(^1\)

The Mapp And Description of New England
(London, 1630)
“This work is merely a reissue of the 1624 Encouragement to Colonies, and differs from it in only two aspects: a change in titlepage and the suppression of the dedication to Prince Charles”\(^2\)

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1 McGrail, p. 49.
2 McGrail, p. 51.
Anacrisis

Critical Essay
“the essay first appeared in the 1711 folio edition of Drummond’s works”

Recreations With The Muses
(London, 1637)
containing  Crœsus
Darius
The Alexandrean Tragedie
The Tragedie of Iulius Caesar
A Parænesis to Prince Henry
enlarged version of the 1614 Doomes-Day
Jonathan (a fragment of a heroic poem).

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*
SYNOPSIS OF THE PLAY

Actus I

The first act consists of a monologue spoken by Solon in which he explains why he despises worldly pleasures. He knows from experience that man, “the unreasonable reasonable creature”, is continually trying to attain to a condition in life in which he could consider himself happy. The problem is, however, that even wise men often do not know where happiness lies, and that man, whether he is an epicurean, a stoic or a believer, becomes unhappy whenever he has reached his standard of happiness, because he then wants a greater share of it. Even kings, who surpass all others in splendour and wealth, are dissatisfied with their state, because they are aware of the unreliability of Fortune. It is clear that happiness based upon material grounds leads only to confusion.

Solon believes that man can only be truly happy when he lives his life as virtue inspires him. This way of living has not been forced upon him: he does not despise prosperity because he has never enjoyed it. As a matter of fact, he came from a wealthy family, and he could have been a tyrant himself if he had wished, after he had secured the possession of Salamis for his native Athens, and after he had solved its internal problems. He refused, however, and in doing so he won the highest reward possible to man: the respect of all, even of his worst enemies. Long after an empire has been destroyed people will still remember the emperor’s deeds. He is pleased with Croesus’ invitation to come to his court: he will not praise the king for his wealth, but try to convince him of his own point of view.

Chorus

The chorus expatiates on Solon’s point of view as regards human happiness. Man’s discontent with his earthly status results from the conflict between the soul, struggling to affirm its heavenly origin, and the body, preoccupied with this world and its pleasures. This dissatisfaction entices man to a wild search for a secure material
position, in which he disregards reality and in the end finds only disappointment. Only men who realise the vanity of human wishes become aware of their own imperfections, and by not giving in to contradictory passions they escape confusion and enjoy perfect happiness. If they were to give laws to mankind, teaching them how to live with an eye on man’s ultimate destination, they would be far greater than a king who rules the entire world.

Acts II, scena i

Æsop informs Cræsus of Solon’s arrival at the palace in Sardis. The king is pleased to hear that the philosopher seemed very impressed by the beauty of his country and by his luxuriously arrayed courtiers, and after welcoming Solon and praising him for his achievements and his wisdom, he comes to the point of his sending for him. He has shown him his wealth because most people – as himself in fact – regard him as the favourite of Fortune, and he would like to have this confirmed by someone reputed for his learning and wisdom. Solon, however, refuses to flatter him because he is concerned with his well-being, and gives the title of the happiest man to an Athenian citizen, Tellus, who fell for his country and was buried amid national mourning. He believes that possessions are no criterion for regarding somebody as happy, and although Cræsus ascribes contempt of worldly goods to jealousy, he reluctantly accepts the answer. But when he hears Solon name Cleobis and Biton as the second happiest, because they died when their mother implored the gods to give them the best mortals could have, he flies into a passion and reproaches Solon for despising him for his wealth. He simply cannot understand why poor people, whose lives even depend on the arbitrariness of their sovereign, can be happier than he. Solon maintains that it is not immediate success that counts, because life is so full of changes that one must wait until a person has died before deciding whether he was happy or not. Cræsus thinks that Solon’s reputation has been greatly overrated; bitter with disappointment, he dismisses him.
Solon pities Crœsus for his narrow-minded absorption in material things. Æsop points out that the king’s complete denial of spiritual values has been facilitated by his early acquaintance with wealth and power, which have so distorted his mind that he does not tolerate arguing and approves only of flattery. He deplores Crœsus’ unkind behaviour, but Solon does not mind: Crœsus would have presented him with gold, and by accepting it as a reward for misleading him like his courtiers, Solon would have denied his own principles, thus losing the reputation he enjoys amongst people of his own understanding.

He agrees with Æsop that kings hold their office from the gods, who give them the opportunity of surrounding themselves with dutiful counsellors in order to solve their problems. Yielding to flattery has caused the ruin of many a king, and if Crœsus wants to remain the mainstay of his country, he must remove the cringing parasites from his court. Solon bids farewell to Æsop, saying he feels out of place where corruption prevails over good advice.

Chorus

Once more, the chorus endorses Solon’s ideas. Because of the dangers that surround man from his early childhood onwards, he must be regarded as the most helplessly miserable creature on earth. He is not aware of his ever-changing fortune, and when he becomes too bold in his momentary prosperity he abuses Fortune, who will take revenge on him by destroying his felicity, making him die with grief. People who most enjoy worldly happiness cannot control themselves, and are therefore most liable to come to a shameful end. It is to be feared that Crœsus will be one of them, although he himself thinks his happiness is so great, that the heavens cannot end it. He might lose it all if he keeps following cringing flatterers, who make him flout the advice of wise men.
Actus III, scena i

Crœsus has dreamt that Atis, his favourite son, was killed by accident, and as he believes that the soul of a man has a foreknowledge of future events and can communicate this by way of dreams, it puzzles him so much that he thinks he has lost his happiness in a moment. He knows that he can do nothing to prevent this catastrophe, and tells Adrastus all about it when he is asked for the reason of his sorrow. Adrastus tries to comfort Crœsus by saying he cannot be held responsible for his son’s eventual death, whereas he himself is haunted by the idea that he has unwillingly slain his own brother. Because Crœsus thinks Adrastus’ grief will lessen his, he asks him how it happened. Adrastus tells him that he had fallen in love with a girl who refused the advances of the man her parents wanted her to marry. After much hesitation they finally consented to the marriage, but the rejected lover poisoned the girl because he could not bear the idea that she would not be his. In the evening the news reached Adrastus, and he ran to the scene of the crime, where he killed the first person he saw. The victim of his revenge turned out to be his brother.

Crœsus pities Adrastus for his misfortunes, and advises him to forget them: as for Atis, he will take every possible precaution in order to defy the decree of the Fates: no Lydian is allowed to carry arms any longer, and Atis has been married to Cælia, so that, even if he is killed, his children will ensure the succession. When Crœsus and Adrastus see Atis talking to some countrymen, they go and join him.

scena ii

A group of farmers have come to ask Crœsus a favour: their quiet and happy life has been disturbed by the appearance of a huge wild boar, which destroys their crops and kills everyone that crosses his path. They praise Crœsus for his statesmanship and implore him to let Atis go out to kill this monster. Their normal life will be restored and the hunt will be a pleasant pastime for the prince. Crœsus promises that the boar will be killed, but he does not allow Atis to go hunting.
Atis thinks his father suspects him of cowardice, and after much entreaty he persuades his father to let him go so that he can prove himself worthy of his descent and of his loving wife. Cræsus apologizes for the presumed insult and tells Atis about his dream, urging him to be prudent. As a token of his confidence he entrusts Adrastus with the protection of his son, and although Adrastus would have preferred to stay at the palace because he fears that his company might bring bad luck, he promises to do his utmost. When Atis is leaving, he is stopped by his wife. In tears, Cælia reproaches him with stealing away from her and earnestly begs him not to go because she has misgivings: she thinks he has no right to put their happiness at stake. Although somewhat taken aback by Cælia’s request, Atis will not give in: he assures her of his faithfulness and promises to come back as soon as possible.

Chorus

The chorus enlarges on the power of the gods, who have subdued the universe and who destroy everyone that does not resign himself to their will. Man often forgets this when he tries to escape the destiny they have determined for him even before he was born, and although their revenge may not be immediate, it will fall, if not on the person himself, then certainly on his descendants, when they aggravate his mistake. Cræsus might be punished for the faults of his ancestor Gyges: he is afraid his son will be killed, and the uncertainty about it and his trying to find ways to prevent it only intensify his torment.

Actus IIII, scena I

On his return to Sardis, Adrastus wonders in low spirits why the gods still suffer him to be alive, whereas he regards himself as a horrible monster: by accident he has killed Cræsus’ son, whom he was supposed to be protecting. Cræsus is beside himself with anger, and reproaches him with ingratitude towards his benefactor. Adrastus grants his reproaches are just, and he thinks it would have been a blessing if he had died after his brother’s murder, thus being prevented from doing further harm.
He implores Crœsus to be executed, but on second thoughts Crœsus ascribes the accident to the intervention of a revengeful god and forgives him. Bending over his son’s body he repents his pride, until all of a sudden having gone mad with grief, he accuses the gods of injustice …

Adrastus is not relieved by Crœsus’ forgiving, and in despair he decides to commit suicide, although he knows it will damn him eternally. After summing up his crimes and asking forgiveness to Atis’ ghost, he stabs himself. Crœsus is horrified with the scene, and kneeling beside Atis’ body he curses the gods for punishing an innocent person for his own faults.

scena ii

Sandanis, a man who stands in great favour with Crœsus, is worried about the king’s dejected appearance, and lest the Lydian empire should decay, he exhorts him to bear his affliction more bravely. Crœsus agrees that immoderate mourning will not bring back his son, but he repents his own faults, which have caused the death of Atis. Unlike other monarchs he would have rejoiced in his succession, but since his son cannot maintain the renown of the Lydian dynasty, he has devised other plans to achieve immortal glory.

Crœsus reminds Sandanis of the conflict that had arisen between his father Alyattes and the Median king Cyaxares regarding some Scythians who had committed atrocious crimes, about which they misinformed Alyattes in order to win his protection. The battle between the two royal armies was interrupted by a solar eclipse, and after a conference peace was restored, which was sealed by the marriage of Alyattes’ daughter and Cyaxares’ son, Astyages. Astyages has now been dethroned by his grandson Cyrus, and because his brother-in-law’s humiliation constitutes a blemish on his honour, Crœsus will avenge it by holding up Cyrus’ advance in Assyria. Sandanis praises Crœsus for his good intentions, but at the same time he warns him not to be over-bold, because his
underestimation of the joined Median and Persian forces might cause the ruin of his own empire.

Crœsus, however, regards himself again as the favourite of the gods, because the oracles have approved of his plans: he is prepared to venture what he has in order to bring the old Assyrian empire under Lydian domination.

Cælia bemoans her husband’s death and regrets that she was ever born; she even curses her virtuous youth, Atis’ main reason for marrying her. Their perfect harmony of love, in which the one could not do without the other, must have provoked the jealousy of the gods, especially that of Juno, who decided to end their happiness because it tended to surpass hers. Cælia addresses Atis, who has become a part of herself and appears continually in her dreams, to soften her grief: because she wants to be with him for ever, she will grant death a full victory by committing suicide.

Chorus

The chorus comments on the prevalence of misery in human life, a punishment the gods inflict upon mortals whenever they misuse their intellect by trying to disclose future events. The more man discovers, the more he is baffled, and all the pains kings take in order to find out their destiny add only to the disturbance of their inward peace. Crœsus’ precautions to save his son’s life have proved to be of no avail, and his consultation of the oracles as regards the issues of his intended campaign against Cyrus reminds the chorus of Tantalus, who was punished for prematurely revealing the gods’intentions.

Actus V, scena i

When Cyrus is preparing himself to make offerings to the gods, who have assisted him in his victory over Crœsus, Harpagus praises them for protecting his lord throughout his life. As a matter of fact, Cyrus’ death had been commanded the very day he was born, because Astyages had had a dream, which portended that his grandson would procure his fall. He consigned the task to Harpagus, who passed down the order to one of his
servants because he did not have the heart to do it himself. By sheer coincidence, this
man’s wife had just given birth to a stillborn child, and the couple agreed to change the
babies. When Cyrus had already grown up, the truth came to light, and seemingly
rejoicing the old king gave a feast, during which Harpagus was served with the flesh of
his own son. Years later, when Cyrus revolted against Astyages, the latter was so in-
considerate as to entrust Harpagus with his defence, thus giving him an excellent
occasion to revenge himself by choosing the side of Cyrus.

Cyrus mourns for Abradatus, who met his death by rashly attacking Cræsus’ Egyptian
allies in order to prove that he was worthy of his friendship. On hearing the news,
Panthea, the man’s wife, committed suicide, and her example was followed by all her
servants. Cyrus orders a mausoleum to be built for them, decides to let his soldiers sack
Sardis, and as a deterrent for those who would dare to rebel against his supremacy,
Cræsus will die at the stake.

scena ii

A messenger reports the fall of Sardis and gives a detailed account of the events. Cyrus
had heard that Cræsus had conferred with his allies about his plans to attack him, and he
marched against Lydia to encounter Cræsus before preparations had been made.
Although Cræsus was taken unawares, he managed to mobilise his troops, but his
cavalry was defeated by a stratagem of Cyrus, and his men had to retreat to Sardis.

Because one of Cyrus’ scouts had found an unguarded approach, they could not hold the
town, and when the Persians invaded the city Cræsus ran in the streets, seeking his own
death. Seeing that a soldier tried to kill him, Cræsus’ other son, who had been mute
since his birth, suddenly found his voice and shouted to him not to murder the king.

Cræsus was then taken to Cyrus, because he had promised a great reward to the one
who could capture the defeated king. When the flames of the pyre were kindling around
him, Cræsus invoked Solon and Cyrus grew curious: after he had heard about the
interview with the philosopher he was moved to compassion and set Cræsus free.
Cœrus then implored his victor to save Sardis, and Cyrus agreed because he feared that the sudden wealth of the spoils might undermine the discipline of his soldiers.

The scene ends in a long monologue spoken by Cœrus, who is lamenting his foolish pride and his neglect of good advice. Blinded by ambition, he courted disaster because he did not realise the ambiguity of the words of the oracle, and the only consolation for his misfortunes is that his fall might be a lesson to other kings, because it has demonstrated the transitoriness of all glory and prosperity.

Chorus

The chorus considers Cœrus’ fall an illustration of Solon’s theory that no man can be regarded as happy before he has died. As a promising crop or vintage is subject to the fury of storms, man must resign himself to the fate that the gods have assigned to him, and with Cœrus they will now live under the yoke of him whose defeat they had planned.

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CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

The Tragedie of Croesus forms part of a group of four Senecan tragedies written during the years 1603 – 1607 by Sir William Alexander. Darius, the first of the quartet, was published in 1603, soon followed by Croesus, with which it was reprinted after revision in 1604 under the comprehensive title The Monarchick Tragedies. In 1607 they were reissued in a revised form, and enlarged with two new plays, The Alexandrean Tragedie and The Tragedie of Iulius Caesar. These four plays underwent two more revisions, one in 1616, and another in 1637, when Alexander published his complete literary production in Recreations with the Muses.

Each of these tragedies deals with the fall of one of the four leading empires of antiquity, Assyria (although Croesus is not exactly an Assyrian king), Persia, Greece and Rome, and according to Charlton¹ their comprehensive title was suggested by the vision of the prophet Daniel, chapters vii and xi, which also proved to be very influential on the earlier historians’ concept of the world.

This is evident in Lyndsay’s poem The Monarche, which represents history as a succession of four great empires, and the same idea occurs in Sleidan’s historical treatise De Quattuor Summiss Imperiis. Charlton thinks it doubtful, however, that Alexander’s original intention was to cover all four eras, because he started with Darius, the last of the Persian kings, whose reign came long after that of Croesus. He suggests that Alexander only hit on this idea – probably under Sleidan’s influence² - after he had completed his Croesus, because he had then incidentally dealt with two of these ancient empires.

His Monarchicke Tragedies stand at the end of the development of the Senecan tradition in England, initiated by performances of Seneca’s plays, followed by vernacular trans-

lations and early productions such as Sackville and Norton’s Gorboduc (1561-62), Gascogne and Kinwelmersh’s Jocasta (1566), and Gismond of Salerne (1567), later revised as Tancred and Gismund, which were all written and performed by the students of the Inns of Court. A new impulse was given by the publication of Seneca His Tenne Tragedies Translated into Englysh (1581), and new plays written in Latin by English authors also reveal Seneca’s increasing influence; these, however, do not concern us here. In 1587-88 The Misfortunes of Arthur, another Senecan play, was produced by Hughes and other students of Gray’s Inn, but soon afterwards popular plays such as Locrine, attributed to Peele, Kyd’s Spanish Tragedy and Shakespeare’s Titus Andronicus mark the beginning of the adaptation of Seneca for the common stage.

There is an ever-widening gap between these popular productions, which culminate with Shakespeare’s great contemporary successes, and those written in imitation of Seneca inspired on French models. The latter are the products of a small circle of people working in close affinity with one another. The movement was started by the Countess of Pembroke’s translation of Garnier’s Marc Antoine (1590), followed by Kyd’s translation of Cornélie (1593-4) by the same author. More original works were produced by other members of the Pembroke-circle, Sir Fulke Greville, writer of Alaham (1604-9) and Mustapha (1604-9), Samuel Brandon, author of The Virtuous Octavia (1598) and Samuel Daniel, who wrote Cleopatra (1594) and Philotas (1605)1.

Alexander’s position in this group of imitators of French Seneca is far from clear; Ward has suggested an independent influence of the French Senecans on him2, but Schelling thinks it more likely that his immediate model was Samuel Daniel, whom Alexander must have admired because he was acknowledged court poet succeeding Spenser3.

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1 This passage is greatly indebted to Charlton, Introduction to The Poetical Works of Sir William Alexander, I, pp. cxxxviii – clxxxvi, in which a more detailed survey can be found.
3 Schelling, op. cit., II, p. 15.
Anyhow, there are correspondences between Alexander’s dramas and those by Greville and Daniel, some of which will be touched upon in the course of this chapter. Like the other Monarchicke Tragedies, Crœsus was never performed, and with the Pembroke-circle Alexander must have shared the contempt of the popular stage, which Greville has so clearly expressed in his Life of Sidney, p. 224, where he refers to his own dramas:

“And if thus ordaining and ordering matter, and forme together for the use of life, I have made these Tragedies no Plaies for the Stage, be it known, it was no part of my purpose to write for them, against whom so many good, and great spirits have already written”\(^1\)

Typical of Alexander’s attitude is his preface to Darius (1603), in which he does not refer to it as a play, but as a “Tragicall Poeme”\(^2\), and stage directions in Crœsus are very rare.

This conception of tragedy has serious consequences on their composition: Crœsus, as well as other tragedies written in this fashion, has an almost exclusively narrative character. The play consists, in fact, of four stories: Crœus’ glory and later fall, linked with the conquest of Sardis, the way in which Adrastus unintentionally slew his brother, Cyrus’ youth and Panthea’s suicide. With the exception of Adrastus’ account, Alexander has borrowed all his material from classical authors, mainly Herodotus, and supplementary subject matter was provided by both Plutarch and Xenophon. In this he follows the prescriptions of the French Senecan school, which – although it favoured the use of stories taken from Plutarch – had also sanctioned the works of Herodotus as material suited for dramatic adaptation.

A striking divergence from the French Senecans, however, is Alexander’s insertion of a passage in which Adrastus tells how he killed his brother, an episode that Herodotus did not include. This expansion in III, i, 113-260 contains many elements of the Italian way of adapting Seneca: it is a story of stirring passion, resulting in fratricide (a popular

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\(^2\) See Charlton, op. cit., I, p. cxcvi.
theme in Italian Seneca) because of Adrastus’ unexpected encounter with his brother\(^1\). Moreover, the man whose love Adrastus’ beloved had rejected executes his revenge by poisoning her, and this way was considered the traditional means of Italian revenge\(^2\).

It is surprising that Alexander used precisely these elements which, through the earlier Senecan productions, had found their way to the common stage, where they enjoyed a great success. As a profound moralist his intentions must have been to condemn revenge by showing that fatal mistakes may happen when one takes the law into one’s own hands. He approves, however, of Harpagus’ treason in revenge of the Thyestian banquet Astyages had arranged for him as a punishment for his disobeying his order to kill the infant Cyrus (V, i, 191-202 and 219-226). Wicked kings must be dethroned, and this brings us to the predominant, and at the same time the most boring, characteristic of Alexander’s \textit{Creesus}: its emphasis on moral and political questions.

In this, Alexander shows himself a dedicated follower of the French Senecans, who, like Garnier and Grévin, defined their tragedies as “traités” or “discours” and intended them to be read, rather than to be acted\(^3\). The moral questions Alexander touches upon are seen in the light of stoic philosophy, and a constantly recurring theme is that of the vanity of human wishes. In fact, the very opening lines already reveal this tendency:

\begin{verbatim}
Loe how the trustless world the worldlings tosses,
And leads her louers headlong unto death;
Those that doe court her most haue maniest crosses,
And yet vaine man , this halfe-spent sparke of breath,
This dying substance, and this living shadow,
The sport of Fortune, and the spoile of Time,
Who like the glory of a halfe-mow’d meadow
Doth flourish now, and strait falles in his prime,
Still toyles t’attaine (such is his foolish nature)
A constant good in this inconstant ill;
\end{verbatim}

(I, 1-10).

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\(^1\) Elements of Charlton’s definition of Italian Seneca, \textit{op. cit.}, I, p. clxxii.
\(^3\) Charlton, \textit{op. cit.}, I, p. cxxxvii.
This kind of preaching is characteristic of all Solon’s speeches, in whom Alexander seems to have projected the incarnation of stoic philosophy. The following passages speak for themselves:

What happiness can be imagin’d here?
Though we our hopes with vaine surmises cherish,
Who hardly conquer first what we hold deare,
Then feare to loose it still that once must perish

(I, 41-44), and

Yet ouer all mortall states, change so preuailes,
We alterations daily do attend,
And hold this for a ground that neuer failes,
None should triumph in blisse before the end.

(II, i, 157-160)

Alexander’s idealising description of country-life in III, ii, 53-64 contrasts sharply with these vain pretences and is intended to show where real happiness lies: it has, moreover, some merits in its imitation of Arcadian poetry:

Ere this, of true Repose we were the types,
And pastur’d on each plaine our fleecie flockes,
And made a confort of our warbling pypes,
With mouing chrisstals th’ issue of the rockes.
And sometime to refresh vs after trauell;
With flowrie garlandes shielded from Sunne-beames
We gazd vpon Pactolus golden grauell,
Glassd, bathd, and quenshd our thirst with his pure streames:
Whilst we preferd, the Riuere seemed amazd,
Vnto his golden bed, his grassye bancke,
And lay and lookd whereas our cattle grazd,
Without all enuie of a greater ranke.

As indicated above, a theme Alexander frequently hits upon is that of the duties, rather than the rights, of kings. This is expressed at its fullest in III, ii, 5-8, where a group of countrymen address Cræsus,

My Soueraigne all his subjectts well remembers,
As vile as our estate is thought of now
You are our head, and we are of your members,
And you must care for vs, we care for you,

and in Crœsus’ answer in III, ii, 25-32:

Be not discourag’d by your base estate,
Yee are my people, and I’le heare your plaint,
A King must care for all, both small and great,
and for to helpe th’afflicted neuer faint,
   The Scepter such as these should chiefely shrowd,
Not cottages, but Castles spoile the Land,
   T’aduance the humble and t’abate the proud
This is a Vertue that makes Kings to stand.

Later, in IIII, ii, Sandanis incites Crœus to give up his excessive mourning over his
don’s death, lest the nation should decay:

Then let this torment your mind no more
This crosse alike with you your Countrie beares,
If wailing could your ruined state restore,
Soules fraught with griefe should sayle in Seas of teares,
   Lest all our comfort dash against one shelfe,
and this vntimely end occasion yours,
   Haue pitie of your people, spare your selfe,
If not to your owne vse, yet vnto ours

(IIII, ii, 67-74)

Finally, there is the danger of indulging in flattery, and if Alexander had already been
with James I, when the king moved his court to London in 1603, critics might have
enlarged on the profuse warnings that this future statesman had addressed to his
sovereign. There is, however, a wide discrepancy between Alexander’s political ideas
and those expressed in his literary works, in which he merely followed the fashion set
by the Senecans. Solon’s speech in II, i, 145-148 is the first to deal with this danger, and
in II, ii, 39-44 Æsop, represented as an experienced courtier, seems to support Solon’s
point of view. The theme is most elaborately dealt with in II, ii, 190-201,

For forraine flatterers could not find accesse,
Wer’t not ouer-valuing his owne worth too much,
He flattred first himselfe and thinks no lesse
But all their praises ought for to be such.
And when these hireling Sycophants haue found
A Prince whose iudgement selfe-conceat disarmes,
They breach his weakest part , and bring to ground
The greatnesse of his State with flatteries charmes.
Then bearing ouer his Passions once the sway,
Least by the better sort he be aduisd,
To wholesome counsell they close vp the way,
And vse all meanes t’haue honest men despid,

and in the final stanzas of the chorus of act II, which are too long to be included here.

As if this were not enough, the moral is summarised again in V, ii, 295-410, where Crœsus, now a broken man, looks back on his mistakes and hopes his fate will be a lesson for other kings:

What needs me more of my mishap to pause?
Though I haue tasted of afflictions cup,
Yet it may be, the gods for a good cause
haue cast me down to raise a thousand vp,
And neuer let a Monarch after me,
Trust in betraying titles glorious bates,
Who with such borrow’d feathers rashly flee,
Fall melted with the wrath of greater states,

(V, ii, 295-302)

Many of the characters in Crœsus function as representatives of the ideas illustrated above, and on the whole the characterization in this tragedy tends to be on the weak side. In each of his long tirades Solon expatiates on the vanity of human wishes or the worthless nature of worldly goods, and in this his speeches have more of preaching than of genuine dramatic speech. He is the prototype of the grave stoic philosopher, well contrasted with the cunning courtier Æsop, who has at least more of a human being than a set of principles come to life.

Crœsus, the main character of this tragedy, is the only one that changes during the course of the action. On the whole he is portrayed as a kind man (see e.g. his attitude to the countrymen in III, ii, 25-32) and a loving father, but he is brought down by his unlimited ambition, by which he brings the anger of the gods on himself. The entire play seems to be constructed in order to show how kings invite their own ruin when,
deluded by their foolish ambition, they neglect the good advice of counsellors and favour instead the flattery of cringing courtiers. His figure stands in sharp contrast with the Persian king Cyrus, who has surrounded himself with men who are unspoiled by the excesses of luxury and wealth.

His son Atis is represented as a virtuous young man, eager to distinguish himself on every occasion to prove worthy of his wife, Cælia. Like Seneca’s women, she stands on the same level as the male characters\(^1\), and she does not hesitate to make an attempt to dissuade him from joining the fatal hunting party, although she knows it will offend him. When she hears he has been killed, her speech in III, ii, 283-432 becomes the most moving passage of this tragedy.

It is remarkable that on the rare occasions when Alexander moves out of the narrow scheme of French Seneca, he reveals himself as a better poet. In this speech romantic interest prevails over the arid moralising, so characteristic of Croesus, and some passages are indeed meritorious, such as the following:

\begin{verbatim}
Fierce tyrant Death, that in thy wrath didst take
One halfe of me, and left an halfe behind,
Take this to thee, or giue me th’other backe,
Be altogether cruell, or all kind.
For whilst I liue, thou canst not wholy dye,
O! euen in spite of death, yet still my choice,
Oft with th’Imaginations loue-quicke eye,
I thinke I see thee, and I heare thy voice,
And to content my languishing desire,
Each thing to ease my mind some helpe affords,
I fancie whiles thy forme, and then afire,
In euery sound I apprehend thy words.
\end{verbatim}

\textit{(III, ii, 377-388), and}

\begin{verbatim}
Ah! pardon me, (deare Loue) for I repent
My lingring here, my Fate, and not my crime.
Since first thy body did enrich the Tombe,
In this spoild world, my eye no pleasure sees,
\end{verbatim}

And Atis, Atis, loe, I come, I come,
To be thy Mate, amongst the Mirtle trees.

(III, ii, 427-432).

If this play had ever been performed, the last passage would suggest that Cælia commits suicide off-stage, and the same goes for Adrastus’ suicide in III, i, on which the chorus reports in lines 193-200:

The man himselfe doth desperately wound,
With leaden lights, weake legs, and head declined,
The body in disdaine doth beate the ground,
That of his members one hath prou’d vnkinde:
The fainting hand falles trembling from the sword
With this micidiall blow for shame growne red,
Which strait the blood pursues with vengeance stor’d
To drowne the same with the same floods it shed.

These are the only two instances where violence is more or less directly connected with the action. Other violent deeds are referred to in the speeches the characters make, such as Adrastus’ fratricide, mentioned before, and Thyestian banquets. These occur twice, once in IIII, ii, 107-110, where Crœsus refers to the origin of the Median-Lydian quarrel, and in V, i, 189-202, where Harpagus tells Cyrus that he was confronted with the “bloodless face” of his son after the feast Astyages had arranged.

The epic character of this tragedy is well-marked by Alexander’s extensive use of the Senecan stock character of the ‘nuntius’ or messenger, who relates much of the action¹. In V, ii, 29-286 the account of the battle in which Sardis was conquered and of Crœsus’ fate afterwards is given by such a messenger, not included in the list of dramatis personae, and in V, i, 41-202 and 219-226 Harpagus has this kind of role when he tells Cyrus all about his youth. In V, i, 203-218 the king interrupts him to provide the audience (i.e. the reader) with additional information. Moreover, Cyrus functions as a messenger in V, i, 245-2252, where he expands on the death of Abradatus and his wife Panthea’s suicide that followed it.

¹ Cunliffe, op. cit., p. 43.
In addition to his part as a messenger, Harpagus is at the same time the ‘faithful servant’, the male counterpart of the ‘confidential nurse’, a character which does not figure in Creesus, but she is mentioned in V, i, 291, dealing with Panthea’s suicide. On Creuses’ side, both Adrastus and Sandanis play the same role.

Apart from their conception of tragedy as a poem to be read, the imitators of French Seneca distinguished themselves from the earlier English Senecans by an “exact and careful form”. Most of the earlier plays had been written in blank verse, but Daniel and Greville made extensive use of rhyme. Daniel used alternately rhyming decasyllabic lines in his Cleopatra, whereas Greville had, in addition to these, both complete couplets and passages in blank verse.

Alexander’s Creesus is, like Daniel’s Cleopatra, written in quatrains, a pattern he uses consistently, except in the choruses. The only interruptions in this pattern are sententiae, which appear in the form of rhyming couplets, and for stichomythia he also hits on this device, such as in II, ii, 69-84, from which this fragment is taken:

Æsop  –  Who come to Court, must with Kings faults comport,
Solon  –  Who come to Court, should trueth to Kings report.
Æsop  –  A wise man at their imperfections winks,
Solon  –  An honest man will tell them what he thinks.
Æsop  –  So should you loose your selfe, and them not win.
Solon  –  But I would beare no burden of their sin.
Æsop  –  By this you should their indignation finde,
Solon  –  Yet haue the warrant of a worthy minde.
Æsop  –  It would be long, ere you were thus prefer’d,
Solon  –  Then it should be the King, not I that er’d.

(II, ii, 59-78)

This kind of repartee cannot compensate for the lack of dialogue in Creesus, which is one of the most obvious faults of plays written in this fashion, but as Charlton puts it;

1 Gunliffe, _op. cit._, p. 44.
2 Schelling, _op. cit._, II, p. 15.
“Neither dialogue nor anything else dramatic is legitimately to be sought in tragedies like those of Garnier, Greville, and Alexander.”

Alexander’s choruses are more elaborate than those of either Greville or Daniel. They are, like those of the French poets, treatises commenting on the events that have occurred in the act that they conclude. They have a primarily didactic purpose, worked out in five or six stanzas. Each chorus follows a different rhyme-pattern and the length of the choruses varies considerably. Schematically they may be represented as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Act</th>
<th>Number of stanzas</th>
<th>Number of lines in each stanza</th>
<th>Rhyme-pattern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>a b a b c a d d c e e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>a b b c c a d b a c b d c d d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>a b a b c d c d e f e f g g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIII</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>a b a b b c d d c c d d c d e c e e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>a b b a a c c d d d c d e c d d e</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Alexander’s inadequate command of the English language often made it difficult for him to adhere to these complicated patterns throughout. This can be illustrated in the first stanza of the chorus of act I, which has

a b b a a c b d e e d d.

In the 1616 and 1637 versions, however, it was revised and made uniform with the other stanzas.

In the chorus of act II, some rhymes could be called assonants, but it is possible that these lines rhymed in Alexander’s pronunciation, e.g. “conceit” in line 25 as opposed to

1 Charlton, op. cit., I, p. clxxxvi.
“fate”, “state” and “date” in lines 18, 19 and 28, or that he regarded them as eye-rhymes, such as “saíd” in line 57, rhyming with “affraid”, “betraid” and “obbraid” in lines 50, 51 and 60. Remarkable also is the first stanza in this chorus, in which the rhymes represented as “a” and “d” have the same sounds. These are consistently differentiated in spelling, the a-ones being “below”, “overthrow”, “know” and “show”, as opposed to “fo”, “so”, “wo” and “go”.

The third chorus is peculiar in that its stanzas have the pattern of Shakespearean sonnets, a form Alexander had already been using in his sonnet-cycle Aurora. Coincidence or not, but the same had been done before him by Samuel Daniel in the fourth chorus of his Cleopatra (1594), which incidentally also has five stanzas.¹

Moreover, the fifth stanza of the chorus of act III reveals an influence which is definitely Daniel’s: in this, there appear double feminine rhyming units. These occur also on various occasions in the quatrains that build up the scenes of Cræsus, but Alexander later rejected this oddity in his revisions².

A peculiarity of the last chorus is that its first five stanzas end in the same line,

No perfect blisse before the end,

which echoes Solon’s words in II, i, 160:

None should triumph in blisse before the end.

In the last stanza, that line appears in a modified form to announce the end of the play:

No man is blest, behold the end.

The chorus is, however, not restricted to these parts at the end of each act. In IIII, i, 193-200 it is brought in to comment on Adrastus’ suicide, and in V, ii, 1-28 it speaks in

² Charlton, op. cit., I, p. cxciv.
stichomythic dialogue with the messenger, interrupting the long account of the fall of Sardis on several occasions, as in V, ii, 133-140 and 287-294, where it laments the fate of Crœsus and the Lydians. This, too, Alexander has in common with Daniel, who incorporates the chorus in the dialogue of the actors in his Cleopatra, act V, ii, 1387-1424 and 1677.

The plot of Crœsus is loosely knit: Solon’s long soliloquy, which covers the whole of act I, gives an intimation of the underlying moral in the following acts, and at the same time it serves as a prologue, making the audience acquainted with the characters of both Solon and Crœsus, as well as with some incidents that have happened before the action of the play commences.

Various stories, like Adrastus’ explanation of how he killed his brother (III, i) and the stories of Cyrus’ youth and Panthea’s suicide (both in V, i) have little or nothing to do with the plot of this tragedy, which shows how Crœsus, blinded by surmised felicity and unlimited ambition causes his own ruin by attacking the rising Persian king Cyrus. These expansions only detract the attention of the audience from the main plot, and they can be left out without harming the comprehensibility of this tragedy, the more so because now the fall of Sardis is announced twice, once in the introductory lines of V, i and more elaborately in the messenger’s account in V, ii.

Moreover, there is something wrong with the scene-division in both III, ii and V, ii. Each of these scenes ends in a long soliloquy, and these should have been made new scenes. It is inconceivable that Cælia delivers her speech in III, ii, in which she suggests that she will commit suicide, in front of Crœsus and Sandanis, who have been discussing the intended war with Persia. Crœsus’ speech in V, ii, 295-410 has the character of an epilogue, and should have been separated from the preceding message of the “nuntius”.

---

Finally, a few words must be said about Alexander’s observation of the dramatic unities of action, place and time, in which he may, with certain restrictions, be regarded as a follower of the French Senecans. The unity of action needs little comment, because Crœsus contains hardly any action at all. This results from the French Senecans’ conception of drama, dealt with above, which urged them to condense action even more than it had already been done in Seneca’s tragedies¹

Unlike these French imitators, Alexander disregards the unity of time, caused by a misinterpretation of Aristotle’s Poetics: the events in Crœsus could hardly have occurred in the course of an artificial day of twelve hours, posited by the French tragedians²: even an extension to a period of two days, as the Italians used, cannot contain all of them. This is probably due to Alexander’s use of the history of Herodotus for the subject matter of his Crœsus. This author definitely mentions that the Lydian king gave himself up to two years of mourning over his son’s death³, and his preparations for a war with Cyrus and the siege of Sardis have taken at least several months. It must be remarked, however, that Alexander summarizes this episode very briefly.

The unity of place is more problematic, although Sardis is mentioned as the ‘scene’ above the list of the dramatis personae. Most of the scenes have the royal palace in Sardis as their setting, but it is improbable that Solon’s soliloquy in act I and the report of the messenger in V, ii are delivered there. Because of its complete lack of dramatic interest, this closet drama might be considered to be abstracted from both time and place, like many of the French works.⁴

Even Charlton minimises the aesthetic value of Crœsus and the other Monarchicke Tragedies, although he characterises them as

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¹ Charlton, op. cit., I, p. cxxv.
² Charlton, op. cit., I, p. cxxviii.
⁴ Charlton, op. cit., I, p. cxxxii.
“the most comprehensive realisation of the qualities of their class, the final crystallisation of all the tendencies of Seneca of the French school.”

Alexander’s lack of dramatic interest may be attributed to his following this tradition, but his commonplace moralising, his weak characterisation, his far from original use of classical mythology and, above all, his lack of poetic diction and his stereotype metaphors, invariably developed from the theatre or from nature, fully deserve T. S. Eliot’s comment: “poor stuff”.

His works are inferior to those by either Greville, who takes his subject matter from more recent eastern history and makes well-founded philosophical expatiations, or Daniel, whose works reveal great passages. The best adaptation of Seneca is found in two plays by Ben Jonson, Sejanus (1603) and Catiline (1611), which have realism and well-drawn characters. Moreover, they lack the wooden pomposity of the French Senecans and their imitators, which is so characteristic of Cresus.

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1 Charlton, op. cit., I, p. cxci.
SOURCES OF THE PLAY

The fact that each of Alexander’s four Monarchicke Tragedies deals with the fall of a famous ruler of the pre-Christian era, together with the high esteem the author enjoyed amongst scholars of his day for his extensive knowledge of both Greek and Latin literature, makes the works of the classical historiographers one of the most obvious sources as regards the subject matter of his plays.

In his Account of the English Dramatick Poets (Oxford, 1691) Gerard Langbaine seems to have followed the same line of thought, for after giving a few biographical data about Alexander, he provides his readers with a surprisingly elaborate list of the sources of those plays. Of The Tragedie of Crœsus, the subject of this edition, he says:

Crœsus, is chiefly borrow’d from Herodotus, see lib. I sive Clio. You may consult likewise, Justin lib. I cap. 7. Plutarch’s Life of Solon, see besides Salian, Torniel, A.M. 3510. In the Fifth Act there is an Episode of Abradates, and Panthea, which the Author has copied from Xenophon’s Cyropaideia, or the Life and Institution of Cyrus, Lib. 7., and the Ingenious Scudery has built upon this Foundation, in that diverting Romance, call’d Grand Cyrus, see Part 5. Book I.

Of the works quoted, only Herodotus, Plutarch and Xenophon reveal a direct influence on the composition of this play.

The abbreviated account of Pompeius Trogus’ last work Historiae Philippicae et totius mundi origines et terrae situs by the third century A. D. Roman historian Marcus Junianus Justinus deals only very superficially with the history of Crœsus and Cyrus.

The same must be said of the works by both the Italian ecclesiastical historian Augustus Torniellus (1543 – 1622) and the French Jesuit scholar Jacobus Salianus (1557 – 1640). They may be regarded as contemporaries of Alexander, and the nature of their works – compilations of earlier historical accounts – makes it highly improbable that they have been able to find new information about so remote a historical period as that of Crœsus. Details about Torniellus’ Annales sacri et ex profanis praecipui ab orbe condito ad
eodem Christi passione redemptum are lacking, but Salianus’ Annales Veteris Testamenti ab orbe condito usque ad Christi mortem must definitely be excluded from the list of possible sources, because this work appeared only in the years 1622-1625, and at that time Alexander had already completed the third edition of The Tragedie of Crœsus.

Like Kastner and Charlton, the most recent editors of Alexander’s works¹, I propose to confine myself to Herodotus, Plutarch and Xenophon in the survey of the sources of this play.

A. PLUTARCH, LIFE OF SOLON

As these two scholars have pointed out², Alexander faithfully follows the history of Crœsus as it is given in the first book of Herodotus, entitled Clio; in the first two acts, however, he relies heavily on Plutarch’s Life of Solon, which provides many additional details regarding Solon’s background and his encounter with the Lydian king.

In Book I, 30, Herodotus mentions only briefly that Solon was invited to Crœsus’ court after he had secured Salamis for Athens and then left the country in order not to have to repeal any of his laws. This scanty information could hardly have sufficed to fill the whole of act I, a soliloquy spoken by Solon in which he illustrates the vanity of worldly things with the incidents that have occurred in his own life.

Moreover, lines I, 105-112 (the conquest of Salamis) seem to be a summary of Plutarch, op. cit. 8, 1-6, and a passage in lines I, 113-126, referring to the discord amongst the Athenians (Plutarch, op. cit., 13, 3-6 and 14, 5-6), contains the translation of the words of the oracle as given in 14, 6: Alexander has

Then the weale-publicke in a dangerous storme,
All ioyn’d to place the ruther in my hand,

(I, 121-122),

where Plutarch reads:

Take the mid-seat, and be the vessel’s guide,
Many in Athens are upon your side.¹

A more striking example of borrowing is found in I, 135-137,

I might a Tyrant still haue govern’d so,
But my pure Soule could not such thought conceiue,
And that ouersight yet neuer made me wo.

where Alexander paraphrases a fragment of a poem by Solon which Plutarch had inserted in his account. The translation by J. S. White omits this part, and I give here the Dutch version by Nauwelaerts:

- als ik mijn vaderstad heb gespaard,
en aan alleenheerschappij en onverbiddelijk geweld
mijn hand niet heb geslagen, mijn roem niet
bezoedeld noch te schande gebracht,
dan spijt het mij niet; …²

Alexander proceeds with adapting Plutarch’s account of Solon’s laws and his subsequent journeys, and although Kastner and Charlton regard line I, 159

Where seuen-mouth’d Nil from a concealed source,
as an echo of either Ovid or Virgil, it was undoubtedly inspired by Plutarch’s quotation of another line by Solon in 26, 1, namely:

Near Nilus mouths, by fair Canopus’ shore.³

¹ Life of Solon: Plutarch’s Lives, selected and edited by J. S. White, (London, 1885, 2 vols.), vol. I, p. 111. This is the only English translation I have been able to find; it omits certain passages and it has no division into chapters and sentences. The division I use comes from the Leven van Soloon by M. A. Nauwelaerts (Antwerpen, 1957 – Klassieke Galerij, nr. 125), who follows the critical edition of the Plutarchi Vitae Paralleles by Lindskog and Ziegler, (Leipzig, 1914).
² Leven van Soloon, p. 20.
³ White, Life of Solon, p. 118.
Plutarch’s influence is even more apparent in act II, i, where Alexander introduces the well-known fabulist Æsop as one of the persons residing at Crœsus’ court, a fact which is not even mentioned by Herodotus.

The very same metaphor that Plutarch uses in 27, 3 is taken over by Alexander in II, i, 29-40, although he expands it a little. To illustrate the point, one might compare both versions:

Plutarch has:

They say, therefore, that Solon, coming to Crœsus at his request, was in the same condition as an inland man when first he goes to see the sea: for as he fancies every river he meets with to be the ocean, so Solon, as he passed through the court, and saw a great many nobles richly dressed, and proudly attended with a multitude of guards and foot-boys, thought every one to be the king, till he was brought to Crœsus, who was decked with every possible rarity and curiosity ...

Alexander makes Æsop say to Crœsus:

When first he in the regall Pallace entred,  
As one, who borne amongst the craggie Mountainess,  
That neuer for to view the plaines aduentured,  
Acquainted but with dew and little Fountainess:  
If he be forc’d for to frequent the Vailes,  
And there the wanton Water-Nimphs to see,  
The rareness of the sight so far prevails,  
Each strip appears to be a flood, each flood a Sea.  
So all that he r’encountered by that way,  
Did to his mind a great amazement bring,  
The gold-embroidered Gallants made him stay,  
Each groome appear’d a Prince, each squire a King.

The conversation between Solon and Crœsus as to who must be considered as the happiest man is given in both Plutarch (27, 6-7) and in Herodotus (I, 30), and although both versions are very similar, some details are in favour of Herodotus.

1 White, Life of Solon, p. 119.
Alexander returns, however, to Plutarch in II, i, 145-200, in which he copies his Life of Solon, 27, 8-9. This is testified by the high degree of resemblance between the opening lines of Solon’s final speech to Crœsus in both Plutarch and Alexander:

\[
\text{The gods, O King, have given the Greeks all other gifts in moderate degree; and so our wisdom, too, is a cheerful and a homely, not a noble and kingly, wisdom; ...} \quad \text{(Life of Solon, 27, 8)}^1
\]

\[
\text{Vnto vs Græcians (Sir) the gods haue granted A moderate measure of a humble wit.} \quad \text{(Crœsus, II, i, 149-150)}
\]

The whole speech is, in fact, modelled on that of Plutarch’s Solon, and Alexander only adds a comparison of human life with games of chance, whereas he modifies Solon’s metaphor of the wrestler (Life of Solon, 27, 9) into that of two people who fight a duel with the sword (Crœsus, II, i, 169-176). Act II, scene ii, dealing with the conversation between Ἀσωπ and Solon is based entirely on Plutarch, Life of Solon, 28,1. Lines II, ii, 31-32 run parallel with Plutarch’s

\[
\text{Ἀσωπ ... was concerned that Solon was so ill-received, and gave him this advice: ...}^2
\]

and the stichomythia in lines II, ii, 69-85 seems inspired by this very passage:

\[
\text{“Solon, let your converse with kings be either short or seasonable.”} \\
\text{“Nay, rather,” replied Solon, “either short or reasonable.”}^3
\]

---

1 White, Life of Solon, p. 120.
2 Idem, p. 121.
3 Idem, p. 121
HERODOTUS, BOOK I (CLIO)

From act III onwards the history of Herodotus, which Alexander had been using as the framework of the story, adding many passages taken from Plutarch’s Life of Solon, becomes Alexander’s exclusive source.

Act II, scene i, which deals with the conversation between Crœsus and Solon about who is the happiest man, has already shown some indications pointing to Alexander’s preference of Herodotus: Of this, line II, i, 126 will suffice as an example. Alexander has:

Both in the Church were found the next morrow,

and Herodotus I, 31 also mentions that Cleobis and Biton fell asleep in the temple, never to rise again whereas Plutarch, Life of Solon, 27, 7 does not specify the place where they died.

Herodotus I, 34 is the source of the story of Crœsus’ ominous dream, and although this sequence is very short in the original version, Alexander manages to expand so largely on every element it contains, that this episode covers the first hundred lines of III, i. The discussion between Crœsus and Adrastus about the portent of this dream (the death of Crœsus’ son Atys) differs from Herodotus I, 35, according to whom Adrastus had only arrived in Sardis after Crœsus had made arrangements for Atys’ marriage.

This reversal of the sequence of events was probably made for reasons of dramatic interest, and another divergence from Herodotus is that Alexander names Atys’ wife Cælia, whereas the Greek historian has no name for her.

The remainder of III, i (lines 101-260) proves to be an expansion of Herodotus I, 35. In the Greek version we find only that Adrastus has unintentionally slain his brother, and was therefore driven away from his native country. In order to make the character of Adrastus more acceptable to his audience, Alexander has invented the passage of his unsuccessful attempt to take revenge on the murderer of his beloved. On account of the
word “Secretary” in III, i, 46 Kastner and Charlton maintain that Adrastus is exalted to
the place of the Senecan Consigliere or Confidant.¹

The very end of III, i, consists of a summary of Crœsus’ measures to save his son’s life
as they are given in Herodotus I, 34:

and whereas in former years the youth had been wont to command the
Lydian forces in the field, he now would not suffer him to accompany them.
All the spears and javelins, and weapons used in the wars, he removed ... 
est lest perhaps one of the weapons ... might strike him.²

Compare with III, i, 289-294:

I haue commanded vnder paine of death,
That no such weapon be within my walles,
As I suppos’d should haue abridg’d his breath,
T’enshew such sudden euill as rashly falles.
   He shall goe rarely to the fields, and then
   With chosen bands be guarded all the time:

In act III, scene ii, Alexander returns to the history of Herodotus, although there is one
last echo of Plutarch’s Life of Solon (5, 4). In my note on lines III, ii, 67-68,

Your lawes like Spiders webs do not ensnare
The feeble flies, and by the Bees are broken,

I have followed Tilley, L 116, who quotes Erasmus’ Adagia, 169 c, as the origin of this
proverb, but the well-known humanist has probably borrowed it from Plutarch’s

/written laws/ were like spider’s webs, and would catch, it is true, the weak
and poor, but easily be broken by the mighty and rich.³

The story of the Mysian farmers calling for assistance in the hunt of the wild boar comes
from Herodotus I, 36, and Alexander faithfully copies the account of this author

¹ The Poetical Works of Sir William Alexander, I, p. 455.
² The History of Herodotus, translated by G. Rawlinson, (University of Chicago Press, 1952 –
³ White, Life of Solon, p. 106.
containing Crœsus’ refusal to let his son go, the argument between father and son and
Crœsus’ unwilling consent to let Atys join in the hunt (I, 36-40). The best illustration of
this point can be found in these parallel passages:

Herodotus I, 36

I will grant you a picked band of Lydians, and all my huntsmen and hounds;
and I will charge those whom I send to use all zeal in aiding you to rid your
country of the brute. ¹

Crœsus, III, ii, 93-96,

Th’ ostentiue gallants that your Grace attend,
And wait th’ occasion but t’ aduance their strength,
Against the Boare shall all their forces bend,
With houndes and darts still till he fall at length.

Atys’ plea to let him go is an expansion of the very same arguments he uses in
Herodotus I, 37:

Thou hast never beheld in me either cowardice
or lack of spirit ...²

and in Crœsus, III, ii, 101-104

Or what vile signe of a degenered mind
Ah wherein Father haue I thus offended!
Haue you remark’d in me that euer tended
To the reproach of our Imperiall kind?

Compare also Herodotus I, 37

What must my young bride think of me?³

with Crœsus, III, ii, 165:

What fancies might my late spousd wife possess?

¹ Rawlinson, Herodotus I, p. 8.
² Idem, p. 8.
³ Idem, p. 8.
Alexander, however, omits Atys’ interpretation of his father’s dream - a boar cannot throw arms at him - and this is the principal reason why Crœsus lets him go. In Alexander’s version one has the impression that Atys’ arguments about his honour and his reputation make Crœsus give in, and I believe that this modification has been inspired by the Renaissance attitude towards a man’s reputation, which was regarded as his highest virtue.

Another small divergence from Herodotus I, 41-42 is, that Alexander makes Atys a witness of the conversation between Crœsus and Adrastus in lines III, ii, 179-218, whereas this interview was held privately. The dramatist was probably forced to do so because of the nature of his medium.

Apart from this, the passage has the aspect of an English verse translation of Herodotus, and to demonstrate my point, I here insert both passages:

**Herodotus I, 41**

Then the king sent for Adrastus, the Phrygian, and said to him, “Adrastus, when thou wert smitten with the rod of affliction – no reproach, my friend – I purified thee, and have taken thee to live with me in my palace, and have been at every charge. Now, therefore, it behoves thee to requite the good offices which thou hast received at my hands by consenting to go with my son on this hunting party, and to watch over him,”

**Crœsus, III, ii**

And (deere Adrastus) I must let him know
What benefits I haue bestow’d on thee,
Not to vpbraid thee, no, but for to show
How I may trust thee best that’d bound to me.
When thou from Phrigia come defild with blood,
And a fraternall violated loue:
When in a most extreme estate thou stood,
Chac’d from thy father’s face, curst from aboue,
Thou found me friendlie, and my Court thy rest

(II, 179-189)

---

1 Rawlinson, Herodotus I, p. 8.
and

Behold how Atis of our age the shield,
Whose harme as you haue hear’d I fear’d ere now
Is to go take his passion in the field,
And with his custodie ile credit you.

(II, 195-198)

The same goes for Adrastus’ answer to Cræsus (Herodotus I, 42 – III, ii, 203-218), but at the end of III, ii there are two passages which are entirely Alexander’s own invention: these are Cælia’s entreaty to Atys, urging him not to go, and Atys’ farewell speech to her, which contain some of the best lines Alexander ever wrote (III, ii, 248-266).

Adrastus’ mourning over Atys’ death, of which he has unwillingly been the instrument (III, i, 1-52), must also be placed to Alexander’s credit, but from line III, i, 61 onwards he returns again to Herodotus I, 44-45. He follows closely on his account of the events, expanding largely, however, on Cræsus’ reproaches against Adrastus, whose deed he makes him attribute to ingratitude and vindictiveness.

Adrastus’ answer in III, i, 73-100 echoes Herodotus on several occasions, such as in

No, no, such Rhetoricke comes out of time;
I’le not suruiue his death as earst my brother’s

(ll. 83-84),

where Herodotus I, 45 has:

his former misfortune was burthen enough;
now that he had added to it a second, he could not bear to live. ¹

and in III, i, 93-94,

Come, cause him, who the spriteless body buries,
Vpon the Tombe to sacrifice my blood,

which runs as follows in Herodotus I, 45:

¹ Rawlinson, Herodotus I, p. 9.
Adrastus delivered himself into his power with earnest entreaties that he would sacrifice him upon the body of his son.\(^1\) Alexander’s borrowing continues in the passage where Cræsus pardons Adrastus and names a revengeful god as the cause of the accident during the hunt. Compare, for instance

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{No doubt some angrie God hath layd his snare,} \\
&\text{And whilst thy purpose was the Boare to kill,} \\
&\text{Did intercept thy shaft amidst the aire,} \\
&\text{And threw it at my Sonne against thy will.}
\end{align*}
\]

(III, i, 217-220)

with *Herodotus I*, 45:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{But in sooth it is not thou who hast injured me,} \\
&\text{except so far as thou hast unwittingly dealt the blow. Some god is the author} \\
&\text{of my misfortune.}\(^2\)
\end{align*}
\]

Adrastus’ final speech before he commits suicide is once more Alexander’s own invention, with an occasional reference to *Herodotus I*, 45:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Adrastus … regarding himself as the most unfortunate wretch whom he had} \\
&\text{ever known, slew himself upon the tomb.}\(^3\)
\end{align*}
\]

In III, i, 147-148 Alexander has:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{They this opprobrious office do disdaine,} \\
&\text{To be the Deaths-men of so base a wretch}
\end{align*}
\]

The scene ends in a speech by Cræsus, in which he pardons Adrastus once again and addresses his buried son. This is not to be found in Herodotus, but it gives Alexander an excellent opportunity to accentuate Cræsus’ grief and his contempt of the will of the gods, whose favourite he thought himself to be.

Act III, scene ii is again based upon Herodotus, but Alexander has skipped I, 47-70, in which the Greek historian gives an account of Cræsus’ sending to diverse oracles and of his search for allies after he had heard about Astyages’ overthrow by Cyrus.

\(^1\) Ibidem, p. 9  
\(^3\) Ibidem, p. 9.
Alexander links up the preceding scene with Herodotus I, 71 by means of a conversation between Crœsus and Sandanis, in which the latter urges him to give up his excessive mourning for his son’s death. This speech is Alexander’s own creation, and from IIII, ii, 91 onwards he has rearranged the order of events.

In Herodotus I, 71 Sandanis dissuades Crœsus to wage war against Persia at a time when the Lydian army is already on its way, whereas in The Tragedie of Crœsus it appears that the king holds counsel with him before he decides to launch his attack. This is probably due to illustrate how little Crœsus cared about good advice.

I disagree with Kastner and Charlton where they maintain that Crœsus’ ostensible reason for attacking the Persians was the Scythian-Median quarrel.¹

Both Alexander’s Crœsus (IIII, ii, 107-179) and Herodotus I, 73 contradict this. As a matter of fact, the conflict between the Lydians and the Medes about the Scythian nomads took place under the reign of Crœsus’ father Alyattes, and when peace was restored, Astyages, the son of the Median king, married Crœsus’ sister. In lines IIII, ii, 107-152 Alexander has given a condensed summary of the corresponding fragment in Herodotus I, 73-74 in order to underline that Crœsus’ initial cause to wage war against Cyrus is, that the latter has wronged his brother-in-law by dethroning and imprisoning him and has thus cast a blemish on Crœsus’ honour:

> Those circumstances show that shame of his Tends to the derogation of our glorie. (IIII, ii, 169-170)

Throughout his speeches in IIII, ii, 91-178 and in IIII, ii, 203-242, it becomes evident that Crœsus’ intention to free Astyages is not devoid of self-interest: this is because Alexander expands largely upon the line

> There were two motives which led Crœsus to attack Cappadocia: firstly, he coveted the land, which he wished to add to his own dominions ...²

² Herodotus I, 73 – Rawlinson’s translation, p. 16.
and thus makes ambition Cræsus’ main motive.¹
This is marked most clearly in the following lines:

Yet lest the rauenous course of flying howres
Should make a prey of my respected name,
I hope t’engender such a generous brood,
That the vnborne shall know how I haue liu’d.
And this no doubt would do my ghost great good,
To be by famous Victories reuiu’d.

(III, ii, 93-98),

and in III, ii, 203-206:

I grant indeed which very few shall know,
Though I designe but to relieue my friend,
My thoughts are aym’d (this vnto you I’le show),
And not without great cause, t’a greater end.

I must disagree once more with Kastner and Charlton where they contend that in Herodotus “Sandanis’ arguments are not those of Alexander’s Sandanis.”²

It has probably escaped their attention that Sandanis tries twice to dissuade his king from a war with Persia, once in III, ii, 179-202, and a second time in III, ii, 243-278. Sandanis’ first attempt is undoubtedly Alexander’s own invention, but the second one sounds like a translation of Herodotus I, 71. I give here Herodotus’ version in full in order to rectify their mistake:

“Thou art about, oh! king, to make war against men who wear leather trousers, and have all their other garments of leather: who feed not on what they like, but on what they can get from a soil that is sterile and unkindly; who do not indulge in wine, but drink water; who possess no figs nor anything else that is good to eat. If, then, thou conquerest them, what canst thou get from them, seeing that they have nothing at all? But if they conquer thee, consider how much that is precious thou wilt lose: if they once get a taste of our pleasant things, they will keep such hold of them that we shall never be able to make them loose their grasp. For my part, I am thankful to the gods that they have not put it into the hearts of the Persians to invade Lydia.”³

³ Rawlinson, Herodotus I, p. 16.
Crœsus, III, ii, 251-252; 257-262; 267-278 have:

- You vnadvisdlie purpose to pursue
  A barbarous people that are foes to peace,

- cloath’d with wild beasts skinnes they do defye
  The force of Phoebus rayes, and Eols windes.
  They simplie feede, and are not grieu’d each day,
  With stomacks cloyd decocting diuers meates,
  They fare not as they would, but as they may,
  Of judgement sound, not carried with conceates.

- Those whose ambition pouertie did bound,
  Of the delights of Lydia if they taste
  Will haue in hatred still their barren ground
  And insolentlie all our treasures waste.
  To gouerne such although that you preuaile,
  You shall but buy vexation with your blood,
  And do yourselfe and yours, if fortune faile,
  From a possessed Soueraignty seclude.
  Yea, though this rash desire your judgement leades,
  I for my part must praise the gods for you,
  That haue not put into the Persian heads,
  To warre against the Lidiens long ere now.

Crœsus’ retort in III, ii, 279-282 is also modelled upon Herodotus I, 71, but in the long monologue spoken by Cælia (III, ii, 283-432) Alexander gives his imagination free scope. This passage thus becomes the most moving one in this play and one of the rare highlights in the whole of Alexander’s bulky literary production.

The passage following on the announcement of the fall of Sardis in V, i, which deals with Cyrus’ youth, is again taken from Herodotus I, 107-119, but Alexander’s summary resembles Justin, Book I, chapter 7 in its omission of the first dream that portends Astyages’ overthrow. Justin I, 7 can, however, not be considered as the source of this scene, because Harpagus’ speeches in V, i, 41-202 and 219-226 contain most of the particulars given in Herodotus, and the detail mentioned above left alone, Alexander has expanded or condensed the story by the Greek historian as he thought best,
accentuating, however, Harpagus’ act of treason against the old king in revenge of his punishment.

Cyrus’ speech in V, i, 203-218 provides an abbreviated account of Herodotus I, 120-122 and 124-125.

The remainder of this scene is filled with the history of Abradates and Panthea and will be dealt with later, because Alexander has here used Xenophon’s Cyropædia: in Herodotus there is nothing of the kind.

In V, ii Alexander relies on Herodotus I, 79-80 for the account the nuntius gives of the battle between the Lydian and the Persian armies. He distorts, however, the facts as they are given by Herodotus on several occasions, the most obvious being his omission of the first encounter between Crœsus’ and Cyrus’ forces, which ended in a draw, after which Crœsus disbanded his mercenary troops, thinking Cyrus would postpone the next attack until the following year (I, 77). In the account of the battle itself, the stratagem to use camels in order to defeat the Lydian cavalry is Harpagus’ idea (I, 80), and not Cyrus’, as Alexander suggests in V, ii, 39-40. Of the passages which show a high degree of resemblance with Herodotus, I would like to quote one last example from Book I, namely the fragment referring to the camels:

He collected together all the camels that had come in the train of his army to carry the provisions and the baggage, and taking off their loads, he mounted riders upon them accoutred as horsemen.¹

Alexander lists the very same particulars in V, ii, 41-44:

Vntrussing all their baggage by the way,  

Of the disburthen’d Camels each did beare  
A grim-fac’d Groome, who did himselfe array  
Euen as the Persian Horsemen vse to weare.

The way in which Sardis is taken (V, ii, 109-132) follows Herodotus I, 84 in every detail, and the same goes for Crœsus’ capture, his being put on a pyre and his salvation

¹ Rawlinson, Herodotus I, p. 18.
after the miraculous intervention of the gods (V, ii, 141-246), which Alexander has taken from Herodotus I, 85-87. As in III, ii, Alexander also ends this scene with a long monologue (V, ii, 295-410) which is entirely his own invention.

XENOPHON, CYROPÆDIA, BOOK VII

Xenophon is the author to whom Alexander is least indebted as regards his borrowing of subject matter. The passage in Cyrus’ speech about Abradates and Panthea (V, i, 245-316) is in fact the only one taken from this writer, and goes back mainly on his Cyropædia, VII, C3, 8-15, with an occasional reference to VI, C4, 10-11 in lines 258-260 where Panthea kisses her husband’s war-chariot and sees him depart for the field;

In V, i, 261-300 Alexander follows Xenophon closely in the details, as this passage shows:

(Panthea has found Abradates’ body and) has brought it here to the banks of the Pactolus ...and she is seated on the ground with his head upon her knees.

(Cyropædia, VII, C3, 4-5)

In Creesus, V, i, 267-268 we find:

But being to Pactolus’ banks retir’d,
She in her bosome did entombe his head.

Panthea’s end in V, i, 289-295

I was not well departed from her face,
When as she charg’d the Eunuchs out of sight,
Then pray’d her nurse to burie in one place
Her and her Lord, as they deserv’d of right.
Then looking on his corps she drew a sword,
And euen as if her soule had flowne in him,
She stabd her self, then falling on her Lord.

reveals a close affinity with the Cyropædia, VII, C3, 14:

---

Therewith Cyrus took his leave of her, and then
Panthea bade her chamberlains stand aside.
But she made her nurse stay with her and said:
“Nurse, when I am dead, cover us with the same
cloak.” Then Panthea took the scimitar, that
had been ready for her so long, and drew it
across her throat, and dropped her head upon
her husband’s breast, and died.¹

Xenophon’s influence on Alexander is, however, much more relevant than these
passages would suggest, because the spirit that pervades V, ii is that of the Cyropaedia,
and not of Herodotus, Book I, although the facts are taken from this source.

Xenophon’s work is indeed reputed for having little or no historical value because it is a
long panegyric on the Persian king, illustrating the author’s ideas on education and a
number of other subjects.² Alexander also emphasizes Cyrus’ merits, and this probably
the reason why he distorts Herodotus’ evidence in such a conspicuous way in V, ii,
whereas he has followed him precisely on all other occasions. It is generally accepted
that Croesus was not defeated at his full strength because he had disbanded his
mercenary troops, an episode which Alexander has deliberately suppressed, and like
Xenophon he makes Cyrus’ victory appear to be an instantaneous one, whereas Cyrus
took Sardis only after two successive battles and a siege which lasted at least fourteen
days.

It has been my aim in this survey to point out how much of The Tragedie of Croesus
depends on the works of these three writers, at the same time indicating how slight has
been Alexander’s own contribution. Each scene contains, in fact, an episode from one of
those authors’ books as its starting point, into which Alexander has worked in something
of his own. With a few rare exceptions, such as Cælia’s speech at the end of IIII, ii, it is
of little or no literary interest at all, being merely moralising comment on the events as
they have come down from Plutarch, Herodotus or Xenophon.

I do not intend to debate here whether Alexander has used their works in the original version or in translation; Alexander’s reputation as a man of learning is certainly in favour of the first option, but on the other hand it must be admitted that translations were extant at the time he started to write his *Cresus*.

In 1584 B. Rich had published his translation of the first two books of Herodotus, entitled *The famous History of Herodotus*, and North’s *Plutarch*¹, dated 1579 but entered in the Stationer’s Register as late as April 1595, provides a translation of the ’Lives’. Even Xenophon is represented in the list of translations by *The bookes of Xenophon containing the Disciplin Schole*, education of Cyrus, a work produced by W. Barker circa 1560.

Alexander must be given the credit of having been the first to dramatise the history of Crœsus. Only one play reveals a very remote connection with *The Tragedie of Crœsus*: it is the anonymous *Wars of Cyrus against Antiochus, with the Tragical End of Pantheia*. This play, written in blank verse, deals with Cyrus’ relations to Panthea and is based entirely on Xenophon’s *Cyropædia*. The events in it differ so greatly from those in *The Tragedie of Crousus* that it is highly improbable that Alexander ever read it, let alone used it as a source or a dramatic prototype.

Finally, there are some indications that the material Alexander has used was fairly popular some decades before he wrote his *Cresus*. This is shown by a sonnet by Thomas Howell, *The infortunate ende of Cresus Kynge of Lydia, a worthy note for Couetousnesse sake* (ed. Grosart, “Newe Sonets,” p. 124)², and by a few stories in W. Painter’s *Palace of Pleasure* (1566-67), namely those of Candaules and Gyges and of Solon and Crœsus, based upon *Herodotus*³, and that of Panthea, based upon *Xenophon*⁴.

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³ Bush, *op. cit.*, p. 35.
⁴ Bush, *op. cit.*, p. 35
THE TEXT

In the Stationers’ Register the following entry for 30 April 1604 is found:

Edward Blunt Entered for his copy by order of Court A booke Conteyninge The Monarchicke Tragedies, Paranethis to the Prince, and AURORA vjd

Although this entry does not specifically mention The Tragedie of Crœsus, we may assume that the play was entered that day, because in this 1604 volume it shares the comprehensive title The Monarchicke Tragedies only with Darius.

My edition is based on photostats of a copy of the 1607 quarto from the Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

The title page is described by W. W. Greg:

THE / MONARCHICKE / TRAGEDIES .
Crœsus,
Darius,
The Alexandrean,
Iulius Cæsar.

Newly enlarged / By William Alexander, Gentleman / of the Princes priuie / Chamber, / Carmine dij superi placantur , carmine manes, /
[lace ornament] / LONDON / Printed by VALENTINE SIMMES for /
ED: BLOVNT. / 1607. 2

---
The collation formula Greg gives is:

\[ 4^\circ, A^4 (\pm A_2) \ a^2B - M^4 N^2 \]

and causes some difficulties because most of the part represented as \(A^4 (\pm A_2)\) is lacking in the photostats. Judging from Greg’s description of the 1604 version, of which the 1607 one is a reissue, this deficient part must have looked like:

\[\begin{align*}
A_1 & \quad \text{probably blank.} \\
A_2^* & \quad \text{general title, described above. It is a cancel, replacing the original title-leaf} \\
        & \text{A}_2 \text{ of the 1604 copy.} \\
A_2^* & \quad \text{blank.} \\
A_3 - A_4 & \quad 102 \text{ lines in verse, entitled “To his Sacred Maiestie”}.^2 \\
\text{This text can be found in Kastner and Charlton, The Poetical Works of Sir} \\
\text{William Alexander, I, pp. 3-6.}
\end{align*}\]

This makes the collation formula of the copy I used

\[ 4^\circ, A_2 a^2 B - M^4 N^2 \]

\[\begin{align*}
A_2^* & \quad \text{described above.} \\
A_2^* & \quad \text{blank.} \\
a_1^* & \quad \text{lace ornament /} \\
\text{a commendatory sonnet entitled “To the Author of the “Monarchicke} \\
\text{Tragedies”, signed “Robert Ayton”.} \\
\text{An ornamental letter “W” precedes lines 1-4}
\end{align*}\]

---

1. Greg, ibid.
2. Greg, ibid.
a’1 / lace ornament / “The Argument.” (32 lines in prose) The text begins with an ornamental letter “A” preceding lines 1-6

a’2 / lace ornament / “The Argument.” (continued), (18 lines in prose)

a’2 / lace ornament / “The Scene in Sardis.” “Actors” (a list of the dramatis personae) It does not mention the “NUNTIUS” of V, ii


N’2 Explicit] FINIS. W. A. / ornament /

N’2 blank.

From B’1 onwards, all pages have a catchword. Only one catchword, c’4 “Sol.”, is anomalous: this is due to the repetition of the last line on that page on D’1, and should have been “Æsop”.

Two sets of running titles occur. Most of them are “The Tragedie of Cræsus”, but “The Tragedy of Cræsus” appears on B2, C2, D1, E1, E2, G1, G2, I1, I2, L1, M1, M2, all of which are recto pages.

The play is written in quatrains, the first line of each, as well as the first of each speech being indented.
Greg lists six copies of the 1607 quarto edition, available in the following libraries:

**IN THE U.S.A:**

1. the Boston Public Library, Boston, Massachusetts;
2. the Chapin Library, Williamstown, Massachusetts;
3. the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington D.C.;
4. the Harvard College Library, Cambridge, Massachusetts;
5. the Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California, the copy which has been used for this edition.

**IN GREAT BRITAIN**

1. the Bodleian Library, Oxford

To this he adds two uncertain copies, both in Great Britain
1. the British Museum.
2. Trinity College, Cambridge.

This list is incomplete: Pollard and Redgrave also mention the existence of copies in the J. L. Clawson and W. A. White collections'.

Finally, MacGrail maintains that:

> “the Bodleian and White Libraries possess merely detached copies of The Alexanderian and Julius Cæsar, and the former, in addition, a separate detached copy of Cærus.”

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MacGrail also discovered a copy of *The Monarchicke Tragedies* in the Signet Library, Edinburgh, and three others, bound in with *A Pargenesis* and *Aurora* in the National Library of Scotland, the Library of Innerpeffray, Perthshire, and in the possession of Mrs. Kate Alexander of Bridge of Allen, Stirlingshire, Scotland. These, however, could be copies of the 1604 edition.

**Other Issues**

*The Tragedie of Creesus* had been published before in a quarto volume entitled *The Monarchick Tragedies*, printed in London by Valentine Simmes for Edward Blount in 1604, of which the 1607 edition I have used is a reissue.

Two more versions followed:
- one in an octavo volume entitled *The Monarchicke Tragedies*, printed in London by William Stansby in 1616, and
- one in a folio edition entitled *Recreations with the Muses*, printed by Thomas Harper in 1637, also in London.

In these two editions the text differs substantially from that in the 1604-1607 issues, and Kastner and Charlton, who have used the 1637 version, have included a list of the variants in the footnotes to their edition.

It is noteworthy that the text of 1616 was enlarged by 24 lines, due to several insertions of one or more quatrains:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Act</th>
<th>Number of lines added</th>
<th>Numbered in Kastner and Charlton as</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>II, i,</td>
<td>128-129</td>
<td>359-362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II, ii,</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>647-650, 655-658</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III, i,</td>
<td>64 - 65</td>
<td>803-806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V, i,</td>
<td>194-195</td>
<td>2329-2332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V, i,</td>
<td>284-285</td>
<td>2423-2426</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The 1637 version retains these insertions and has an additional quatrain in II, ii in between the two quatrains added there in the 1616 copy: in Kastner and Charlton these are numbered as 651-654.

EDITORIAL PRACTICE

It has been my aim to give an accurate rendering of the 1607 version of Alexander’s The Tragedie of Croesus, a reprint of the text of 1604, using photostats of copy C 334 60611-2 in the Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

- The spelling, punctuation and capitalisation have been left unaltered. Words which required explanation are given in their original spelling in the annotation. Where this spelling might have caused confusion or differs substantially from modern English, these words are followed by their current English form.

- A few passages in Act V, scene i were extremely difficult to read because the printing had faded, and I have here interpolated the corresponding passages of the 1604 version. Those passages are indicated by an asterisk at the end of each line.

- Speech prefixes have been made uniform: they are abbreviated throughout the entire play and appear in the form in which they first occurred in the text. Where they were missing (at the beginning of acts) they have been added between square brackets.

- The stage directions have been preserved.

- Words printed in italics have been underlined in full.

- Catchwords are omitted.

- The lines have been numbered as prose. The numbering is not continuous as in the edition by Kastner and Charlton, but restarts with each new scene or chorus.

- The f-like spelling variant of the “s” has been replaced by its current equivalent, and an occasional ß-form has been replaced by “ss”. The letters “u” and “v”, apparently used indiscriminately, have been left unaltered.
To the Author of the Monarchicke

Tragedies.

Well may the programme of thy Tragick stage
Inuite the curious pompe-expecting eies,
To gaze on present shewes of passed age,
Which iust desert Monarchick dare baptize.

Crownes throwne from Thrones to tombs, detom’d arise
To match thy Muse with a Monarchicke theame;
That whilst her sacred soaring cuts the skies,
A vulgar subiect may not wrong the same;

And which gives most advantage to thy fame,

The worthiest Monarch that the Sunne can see,
Doth grace thy labours with his glorious Name,
And daignes Protector of thy birth to be:
Those all Monarchick, Patron, subiect, stile,
Make thee, the Monarch-tragick of this Isle.

Robert Ayton.

---

1 desert: noun, personalisation: what one deserves, merit.

2 Sir Robert Ayton: (1570-1630): one of the earliest Scottish poets to use southern standard English as a literary medium. His contemporary literary reputation was considerable. He was private secretary to the queens of James I and Charles I.
The Argument

At that time when the states of Greece began to growe great, and Philosophie to be thought precious, Solon the first light of the Athenian common-wealth like a prouidtent Bee gathering honnie ouer many fields, learning knowledge ouer many countries, was sent for by Crœsus King of Lydia as famous for his Wealth, as the other was for his Wisedome. And not so much for any desire the King had to profit by the experience of so profound a Philosopher, as to haue the report of his (as he thought it) happiness approued by the testimonie of so renowned a witnesse. But Solon always as himselfe entring the regall Pallace, and seeing the same very gloriously apparell, but very incommodiouslie furnisht with courtiers, more curious\(^1\) to haue their bodies deckt with a womanishlie affected forme of rayment, and some superficiaill complement of pretended curtesie, then to haue their minds enriched with the true treasure of inestimable vertue, he had the same altogether in disdaine. Therefore after some conference had with Crœsus concerning the felicitie of man, his opinion not seconding\(^2\) to the Kings expectation, he was returned with contempt as one of no understanding. But yet comforted by Æsop (Author of the wittie fables) who for the time was resident at court, and in credit with the King.

Immediately after the departure of Solon, Crœsus hauing two Sonnes (whereof the eldest was dumbe, and the other a braue youth) dreamd that the youngest dyed by the wound of a dart, wherewith being maruellously troubled, he married him to a Gentlewoman named Cælia, and for farther disappointing the suspected, though ineuitable destenie, he discharged the vsing of all such weapons as he had dreamed of. Yet who could cut away the occasion from the heauens of

\[^1\] 10: *curious*: anxious (N.E.D.).

\[^2\] 14: *seconding*: supporting, backing up (N.E.D.).
accomplishing that which they had designed. The spiritfull youth being long
restraind from the fields, was inuited by some countrie-men to the chase of a
wild Boare, yet could very hardlie impetrate\(^1\) leaue of his louinglie suspitious
father.

Now in the meane time there arriued at Sardis a youth named Adrastus, sonne of
the King of Phrigia, one no lesse infortunate then valourous, he hauing lost his
mistresse by a great disaster, and hauing killed his brother by a farre greater,
came to Creesus, by whom he was courteously entertaind, and by the instancie\(^2\)
of the King, and the instigation of others against his owne will, who feared the
frowardnes of his infectious\(^3\) fortune, he got the custodie of Atis \(\text{so was the}
Prince called) whom in time of the sport thinking to kill the Boare, by a
monstrous mishap he killed. After which disastrous accident standing aboue the
dead corps after the inquirie of the truth being pardoned by Creesus, he punished
himselfe by a violent death. There after, Creesus sorrowing exceedingly his
exceeding misfortune, he was comforted by Sandanis , who laboured to dis-
swade him from his unnecessary iourney against the Persians, yet he reposing on
superstitious, and wrong interpreted responses of deceauing oracles, went
against Cyrus, who hauing defeated his forces in the field, and taken himselfe in
the Citie, tyed him to a stake to be burned, where by the exclaiming diuers times
on the name of Solon, mouing the Conquerour to compassion, he was set at
libertie, and lamenting the death of his Sonne, and the losse of his Kingdome,
make the Catastrophe of this present Tragedie.

---

\(^{1}\) impetrate: obtain by request or entreaty (N.E.D.).

\(^{2}\) instancie: instancy: sollicitation, pressure (N.E.D.).

\(^{3}\) infectious: here used in the meaning of “contagious”: injurious to human life or
health otherwise than by breeding disease; pernicious, dangerous. (N.E.D.)
The Scene in Sardis

Actors.

Crœsus King of Lydia.
Atis his sonne.
Cælia wife to Atis.
Adrastus.
Sandanis a Counsellour.

Solon.
Æsop.
Cyrus king of Persia.
Harpagus Lieutenant to Cyrus.
Chorus of some Countrie-men.
Chorus of all the Lidiens.
LOE how the trustlesse world the worldlings' tosses,
and leades her louers headlong vnto death,
Those that doe court her most haue maniest' crosses,
And yet vaine man, this halfe-spent sparke of breath,

This dying substance and this liuing shadow,
The sport of Fortune, and the spoile of Time,
Who like the glory of a halfe-mow'd meadow
Doth flourish now, and strait' falles in his prime,

Still toyles t’attaine (such is his foolish nature)

A constant good in this inconstant ill:
Unreasonable reasonable creature
That makes his reason subiect to his will

1: worldling: one who is devoted to the interests and pleasures of the world; a worldly or worldly-minded person. (N.E.D.).

2: maniest: comparatives and superlatives of “many” are frequent in obsolete Scottish. (N.E.D.).

Whilst in the Stage of Contemplation plac’d
Of worldly humours I behold the strife,

Though different sprites\(^2\) have diuers partes\(^3\) imbrac’d\(^4\),
All act this transitorie Scene of Life:

Of curious\(^5\) mindes who can the fancies fetter,
The Soule unsatisfide, a pray t’ each snare,
Still loathing what it hath, doth dreame of better,

Which gotten, but begets a greater care\(^6\).

And yet all labour for t’ attaine the top
Of th’ unsure souveraigne blisse that they surmise,
Flowres of Felicitie, that few can crop,

Yes, scarce can be discerned by the wise.


Some’ place their happinesse (unhappie beasts,
And I must say, more senseless then their treasures)
In gorgeous garments, and in dainty\(^8\) feasts,
To pamper breath-toss’d\(^9\) flesh with flying pleasures.

Some more austerely with a wrinkled brow
That triumph o’re their passions with respectes,
With neither fortune moou’d to brag or bow,
Would make the world enamour’d of their sectes.

---

1 13- 16: Alexander here develops a cluster of images based on the theatre.
2 15: sprite: a person considered in relation to his character or disposition. (N.E.D.).
3 15: part: the character assigned to or sustained by an actor in dramatic performance; a role. (N.E.D.).
5 17: curious: difficult to satisfy; particular. (N.E.D.).
6 20: gotten ... begets: pun.
7 25– 29 – 33: “Some” is used anaphorically.
8 27: dainty: pleasant, delightful (N.E.D.).
9 28: breath-toss’d: tossed, when passive, can have the meaning of “kept in motion” (N.E.D.).
Some rauish’d still with vertues purest springs\(^1\),

35

Feede on th’ Idea of that diuine brood,

And search the secrets of celestiall things

As most vndoubted heires of that high good,

Thus with conceited\(^2\) ease and certaine paine,

All seek by seuerall wayes a perfect blisse:

Which, O what wonder, if they not obtaine,

40

Who cannot well discerne what thing it is:

What happinesse can be imagin’d here?

Though we our hopes with vaine surmises cherish,

Who hardly conquer first what wee hold deare,

Then feare to loose it still that once must perish.

45

Thinke (though of many thousands scarcely any

Can at this poyn of Happinesse arriue)

Yet if it chance, it chanceth not to many,

Onely to get for what a world did striue.

And though one swim in th’ Ocean of delights,

50

Haue none aboue him, and his equals rare,

Eares ioying\(^3\) pleasant sounds; eyes stately sights:

His treasures infinite; his buildings faire.
Yet doth the world on Fortune’s Wheele relye
Which loue’s t’aduance the wretched, wracke the great,
Whose course resembles an inconstant eye,
Euer in motion compassing\(^2\) deceat.

Then let the greedie of his substance\(^3\) boast,
Whilst th’ excrements\(^4\) of th’ earth his senses smother,
What hath he gayn’d, but what another lost?

And why may not his losse enrich another?
But ah! All loose\(^5\), who seeke to profite thus,
And found their confidence on things that fade,
We may be rob’d from them, they rob’d from vs,
Al’s grieu’d for th’ one, as for the other glad.

Vaine foole, that thinkes soliditie to finde
In this fraile world, where for a while we range,
Which like sea-waues, depending\(^6\) on the winde,
Ebbes, flows, calms, storms, still moouing, still in change.

---

1. **53:** *Fortunes Wheele:* a Renaissance commonplace. The goddess Fortune has often been represented with a wheel, an emblem of mutability.

   Cf. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, II, ii, 497-501:
   “Out, out, thou strumpet Fortune! All you gods,
   In general synod take away her power,
   Break all the spokes and fellies from her wheel,
   and bowl the round nave down the hill of heaven
   As low as to the fiends ..”

2. **56:** *compassing:* to compass means “to contrive, devise”, with a quibble on another meaning of the verb: “to pass or move around, to traverse in a circular or circuitous course” (N.E.D.).

3. **57:** *substance:* possessions, goods, estates, wealth (N.E.D.).

4. **58:** *excrements:* a growth, a product (N.E.D.).

5. **61:** *loose:* obsolete form of “lose” (N.E.D.).

6. **67:** *depending:* to depend means “to rest entirely upon … for maintenance”, with a possible quibble on the meaning “hang down, be suspended” (N.E.D.).
Each surge, we see, doth drive the first away,
The foame is whitest, where the Rocke is neare,
And as one growes, another doth decay,
The greatest dangers oft do least appeare.
Their seeming blisse that trust in frothie showes,
In Fortunes danger, burthen’d with the Fates,
First to a full¹, then to confusion growes,
A secret Destinie doth guide great States.
But I scorne Fortune, and was euer free
From that dead wealth that wauers in her power,
I beare my treasure still about with mee,
Which neither Time nor Tyrants can deuour².
Light³ author of euents, and vaine aduenter⁴,
Now do thy worst, I know how to vndo thee,
The way is stop’t by which thy poison enters,
Thou can harme none but them that trust vnto thee.
And I haue learn’d to moderate my minde,
Contentment is the crowne of my desires:
My clothes are coarse, my fare such as I finde,
He hath enough, that to no more aspires.
What satisfaction doth ouer-flow my soule,
While as I weigh the world which few hold fast,
And in my memories vnblotted scroule⁵,
Judge of the present by the time that’s past?

¹ 75: a full: the period, point of state of the greatest fullness or strength (N.E.D.).
² 80: deuour: probably a reference to Ovid’s Tempus edax rerum.
⁴ 81: aduenter: adventurer (N.E.D.).
⁵ 91: scroule: obsolete form of “scroll” (N.E.D.).
The poore-rich heire of breath that boasts of smoke,
And come of dust, yet of the drosse\(^1\) still thinkes,
Whilst baser passions do his vertues choake,
The soule ouer-ballanc\’d with the body sinkes,
Yet needs I not to loathe the world and liue,
As one whom stepdame she would neuer nourish,
I had a part of all that she could giue,
My race, my house, by fame and wealth did flourish.
And if that I would vaunt of mine owne deedes,
Faire Cities, where mine eies first suckt the light,
I challenge might what most thy glory breedes
Whose labours both enlarg\’d thy fame and might.

When Salamina\(^2\) utterly was lost,
And by the rascall multitude neglected,
A counterfeited foole\(^3\), I went and crost
All their desseignes, whose courses were suspected.
And when I had my pollicie perswaded
My country to embrace the warres againe,
I both by stratagems and strength inuaded
That famous ile which vanquisht did remaine.

---

1. drosse: refuse, rubbish; worthless, impure matter (N.E.D.).
2. Salamina: Greek accusative form of Salamis. Salamis was a rocky island off the coast of Attica and was the subject of a struggle between Athens and Megara, because it lay close to the Piraeus and could provide alternative anchorage to Athens (Enc. Brit.).
3. A counterfeited foole: According to Plutarch, Life of Solon, 8, 1-6, Solon feigned madness in order not to be punished for breaking the law that forbid discussion about the necessity of taking Salamis for Athens, when he sang an elegy inciting the Athenians to renew the war with Megara about the possession of the island. The Athenians ultimately conquered Salamis, but “according to some accounts, Salamis was lost again, and was recovered by Pisistratus, acting with the support of Solon. Some historians, both ancient and modern, have held that only this second war actually occurred” (Enc. Brit.).
Then hauing compass’d that exployt with speede,
And turn’d in triumph dekt with strangers spoyles
No perfect blisse belowe\(^2\) worse did succeede\(^3\),
The peace that was abroade bred ciuill broyles\(^4\).
What with more violence doth fury leade\(^5\)
Then a rash multitude that wants a head?
The meaner sort could not their minds conforme,
T’ abide at what their betters did command:
Then the weale-publike\(^6\) in a dangerous storme,
All ioyn’d to place the ruther\(^7\) in my hand.
I re-vnited that diuided state,
And manag’d matters with a good successe,
Which farther kindled had beene quench’d too late,
That Hidra-headed\(^8\) tumult to suppresse.
When I had both these glorious works effected,
And troad the path of sou’raignty a space\(^9\),
The minion of the people most respected,
None could be great saue such as I would grace.

---

1 113: *compass’d*: achieved, accomplished (N.E.D.).
2 115: *belowe*: of time: later than, after (N.E.D.).
3 115: *succeed*: follow or come after in the course of events.
4 116: *ciuill broyles*: This probably refers to the discord between the rich landowners and the poor citizens, who accepted Solon as a mediator and wanted to give him absolute power in order to put an end to the conflict. (Plutarch, op. cit., 15, 2-4).
5 117-118: These lines form a sententia and interrupt the normal quatrain rhyme-pattern.
6 121: *weale-publike*: in various phrases (mostly obsolete) rendering or suggested by Latin "res publica", as … public good, weal (also † good or weal public): public wealth, the common or national good or well-being; the commonwealth or state (N.E.D.).
7 122: *ruther*: variant of rudder (N.E.D.).
8 126: *Hidra-headed*: the *Hydra* was a gigantic monster with nine heads, the centre one being immortal. It was killed by Hercules (Enc. Brit.).
9 128: *a space*: an interval of time, a while (N.E.D.).
Thus carried with the force of Fortunes streame,
I absolutely acted what I would,
For the Democratie was but a name,
My hand the raines did of the Citty hold.

135
I might a Tyrant still haue gouern’d so
But my pure soule could no such thought conceiue,
And that oversight yet made me neuer woe,
If I may rule my selfe it’s all I craue.

Yet some that seem’d to be more subtle-witted,
Saide my base sprite could not aspire t’ a crowne,
And foolish Solon had a fault committed,
Who would not doe the like in euery towne.

My minde in this a more contentment findes,
Then if a Diadem adorn’d my brow,

140
I chain’d th’ affections of undaunted mindes,
And made them ciiull that were wilde till now.

145
I hardly could rich Citizens entise,
T’ embrace the Statutes that my Lawes contain’d,
What one approou’d, another did despise,
Some lou’d, some loath’d, eu’n as they thought they gain’d

150
At last at least in show, all rest content,
Eu’n those that hate me most lend their applause,
A worthy minde needes neuer to repent
T’ haue suffered crosses for an honest cause.

---

1 137: oversight: passing over without seeing omission, failure to see or notice (N.E.D).
2 143: more: greater (in degree or extent) (N.E.D.).
3 144: then: obsolete form of “than” (N.E.D.).
4 150: Some lou’d, some loath’d: Solon’s laws contained amongst others the “shaking off of the debts” and monetary reforms (Plutarch, op. cit., 15, 2-4). It displeased the rich, and the poor were dissatisfied with the law because there was no reparcelling of the land. Solon made them agree to live according to his laws for a period of ten years, during which he would travel abroad. (Plutarch, op. cit., 25, 6).
I trauell now with a contented thought,
The memorie of this my fancie feedes,
When all their Empires shall be turn’d to naught.
Time cannot make a pray of Vertues deedes.

Where seuen-mouth’d Nil’ from a concealed source

Inunding° o’re the fields, no bancks can binde,
I saw their wonders, heard their wise discourse,
Rare sights enrich’d mine eyes, rare lights my minde.

And if it were but this, yet this delites,
Behold how Cressus here the Lidian King,

To be his guest vs earnestly inuites,
The which to some would great contentment bring.

But I disdaine that world-bewitched man,
Who makes his gold his God, the earth his heauen,
Yet I will try by all the meanes I can

To make his judgement with his fortune eauen.

---

5 159: seuen-mouth’d Nil: Alexander probably echoes either Ovid’s “septemflua flumina” (Metamorphoses, XV, 753) or Vergil’s “septemgemina Nili” (ÆnId, VI, 801). (K. & Ch.).

CHORVS

What can confirm mans wandering thought,
Or satisfie his fancies all?
Is ought so great, but it seemes small
To that tos’d spirit, which still afflought

5 Doth dreame of things were neuer wrought,
And would gripe more then it can hold:
This sea-enuiron’d centred ball
Is not a bound vnto that minde,
That minde, which big with monsters,

10 The right deluerie neuer consters’,
And seeking here a solide ease to finde,
Would but melt mountains and imbrace the winde.

What wonder, though the soule of man,
A sparke of heau’n, that shines below,

15 Doth labour by all means it can,
It selfe like to it selfe to show,
This heau’ny essence, heau’n would know,
But married with this masse we see,

---


2: *This sea-environ’d centred ball*: the earth. Alexander refers to the Ptolemaic astronomical system, in which the earth stood in the centre. Greek philosophers thought that the world was made of four elements: earth, water, air and fire. Earth, being the heaviest, had gathered itself in the centre: the three other elements formed spheres around it according to their “heaviness”: first came water, then the lighter air, and finally the lightest of all, fire, the sphere of which lay just below the orbit of the moon. Cf. the illustration of the Ptolemaic system from the “Nuremberg Chronicle”(1493) in Shakespeare’s England (Oxford, 1916), vol. I, facing p. 454. See also appendix A (p.233).

3: *consters; construes*: deduces a meaning by interpretation, judges by inference, infers (N.E.D.).

4: *know*: be acquainted with a place (N.E.D.).
. With payne they spend liues\(^1\)' little span,
20 The better part would be aboue,
The earth from t’ earth cannot remoue,
How can two contrair’s well agree?
Thus as the best or worst part doth preuaile,
Man is of much, or else of no auaile.

25 O from what source can this proceede,
T’ haue humours of so many kindes,
Each brayne doth diuers fancies breede,
Al’s many men, al’s many mindes,
And in the world, a man scarce findes
30 Another of his humour right,
There are not two so like indeede,
If we remake their seuerall graces
And lineaments of both their faces,
That can abide the proofe of sight:
35 If the outward formes then differ as they do,
Of force th’ affections must be different too.

Ah! Passions spoile our better part,
The Soule is vext with their dissentions;
We make a God of our owne heart,
40 And worship all our vayne inuentions.
This brain-bred miste of apprehensions,
The mind doth with confusion fill,
Whilst reason in exile doth smart;
And few are free from this infection,

\(^1\) 19: liues: life’s.
45 For all are slauces to some affection,
   Which doth extorse\(^2\) the senses still.
   These partiall tyrants rage the sight ouersyles,\(^3\)
   And doth eclipse the clearest judgemen\(t\) whyles.

A thousand times o happie he,

50 Who doth his passions so subdew,
   That he with cleare reasons eye,
   Their imperfections fountaines view,
   And as it were himselfe renew.
   If that one might prescribe them lawes

And set his soule from bondage free,
   From reason neuer for to swerue,
   And make his passions him to serue,
   And be but moo\(u\)d as he had cause:
   O greater were that monarch of the minde,

60 Then if he might commaund from Thule\(^4\) to Inde\(^5\).
Act. II. Scen. i

CRÆSUS. ÆSOP. SOLO.

Crees. Who euer was so fauour’d by the Fates,
As could like vs of full contentment boast,
Lou’d of mine owne, and feard of forraine states,
I know not what it is for to be crost.

No thwarting chance my good hap doth importune,
In all my attempts my successe hath been much,
The darling of heauen, the minion of fortune,
I wot’ not what to wish I have so much

Mine eyes did neuer yet dismay my hart

With no delightlesse object that they saw,
my name applauded is in euery part
My word an Oracle, my will a Law.

My breast cannot contayne this flood of ioyes
That with a mighty streame o’reflowes my mind,

Which neuer dream’d of sorrow or annoyes,
But did in all a satisfaction find,

My Soule then be content and take thy pleasure
And be not vex’t with feare of any ill.
My blisse abounds, I cannot count my treasure,

And gold that conquers all, doth what I will.

---

18: Wot: obsolete indicative present of “wit”: know (N.E.D.).
Æsop. That Græcian (Sir) is at the Court arriu’d
Whose wisdom, Fame so progically prayse’s

Cros. And haue you not t’ extend my greatnes striu’d,¹
And entertain’d his eares with courteous phrases?

25 Æsop I thinke in all the parts where he hath been,
In forraine Countries or his natuie home,
He neuer hath such stately wonders seen,
As since vnto this princely Court he come².

When first he in the regall Pallace entred,
30 As one, who borne amongst the craggie Mountaines,
That neuer for to view the plaines aduentred³,
Acquainted but with dew and little Fountaines:
If he be forced for to frequent the Vailes,
And there the wanton water-Nimphs to see,
35 The rarenes of the sight so far preuailes,
Each strip⁴ appear’s a flood⁵, each flood a Sea,
So all that he re’ncountred by the way,
Did to his mind a great amazement bring,
The gold-embroidered Gallants made him stay
40 Each groome appear’d a Prince, each squire a King.
And now he com’s t’ attaine your Graces sight,
Whom in his mind, no doubt he doth adore,
He gazd on those, who held of you their light,
Of force he must admire your selfe far more.

¹ 23: *striu’d*: Scottish variant of the simple past tense of “strive”. K. & Ch. Maintain that “Alexander regularly regards a number of verbs as weak, which later usage has accepted as strong”
² 28: *come*: variant form of the simple past tense of “come” (N.E.D.).
³ 31: *aduentred*: adventured (N.E.D.).
⁴ 36: *strip*: a long narrow tract (of land, etc.) (N.E.D.).
⁵ 36: *flood*: a large river (N.E.D.).
45 Now he will set your happy Empire forth\(^1\)
And be eye-witness of your glorious Raigne,
One wise mans testimony is more worth
Then what a world of others would maintaine.

\textit{Sol.} Disdaine not (mighty Prince) the louing zeale,

50 Which a meane man, yet a good mind affords,
And who perchance as much affects\(^2\) your weale\(^3\),
As those that paint their loue with fairer words.

\textit{Cres.} Thy loue (sage Greek) is grateful vnto vs,
Whom Fame long since enamour’d of thy deedes,

55 We of thy vertues haue heard her discusse,
Who in extolling of the same exceedes.
I wish that many such should here resort,
Whose vnstain’d life would teach vs what were best;
Whose graue aspect would grace so great a Court,

60 And like cleare Lamps giue light vnto the rest.

\textit{Sol.} My Sou’raigne, spare, I merite no such praise,
I am but one that doth the world despise,
And would my thoughts to some perfection raise,
A Wisedom-louer that would faine be wise.

65 Yet with great toyle all that I can attaine
By long experience, and in learned schooles,
Is for to know my knowledge is but vaine,
And those that thinke them wise are greatest ffooles.

\(^1\) 45: \textit{set forth}: praise, commend (N.E.D.).
\(^2\) 51: \textit{affects}: has affection or liking for, takes to (N.E.D.).
\(^3\) 51: \textit{weale}: welfare, well-being, happiness (N.E.D.).
Cres. This is the nature of a worthy minde,

It rather would be good then be so thought,
As if it had no ayme but Fame to finde,
Such as the shadow not the substance sought.

Yet that pursues thee too which thon' so fliest,

Still troupes applaude thy worth though thou not spie them,

Whilst thou wouldst presse it downe, it mounts vp hiest;
For Fame and Honor follow those that flie them.

And now I thinke in all the world none liue’s,

That better may vnfold what I would learne,

Then thou to whom franke Nature largely giues

The grace to see, the judgement to discerne,

Sol. I'le answer freely to what you propose,
If my small skill can comprehend the sence.

Cres. Loe, you have seene in what I most repose\(^1\)
My treasures huge, my great magnificence.

Sol. This is the dreame of blisse that Fortune brings,
On which the wisest neuer haue presum’d
I saw nought but a heape of sencelesse things,
A momentarie treasure soone consum’d.

This only serues the body to decorè\(^2\),

And for corruption fram’d cannot perseuer:

The minde immortall layes vp better store
of vnconsumèg ioyes that last for euer.

---

1. 73: *thon*: misprint for “thou”.
2. 83: *repose in*: confide or place one’s trust in, rely on (N.E.D.).
3. 89: *decorè*: decorate, adorn, embellish (N.E.D.).
Crés.  I wot not what you meane by such surmises,  
And faind of imagin’d blisse,  
95  This portrait of Fancie but intices  
Sicke braines to dreame that which indeede they misse.  
   But I brooke more than their conceits can show,  
Whose rich coniectures breede but poore effects:  
And I beseeke you, did you euer know  
100  A man more blest then I in all respects?  
Sol.  Yes, I know Tellus: an Athenian borne,  
Whom I holde happy in the first degree:  
Who eu’n the haruest of Happines hath shorne,  
He liu’d with fame, and did with honour die.  
105  For hauing long time liu’d, lou’d and respected,  
His country in a conflict had the worst:  
He come, and there falne courage re-erected,  
And hauing wonne the field did die vnforst.  
   More happy now nor² when he was aliue;  
110  He dead, doth reape the guerdon³ of his merite,  
And in his childern⁴ doth againe reuiue,  
Who all their fathers worthy partes inherite.

---


2 109: nor: Scottish for “than” (N.E.D).


4 111: childern: note the metathesis of the “r”. Probably Northern or Scottish.
Cres.  Well, since that to a priuate Cittizen
You do ascribe the first most blest estate,
Now in the second ranke of happy men
Whom would you number in your owne conceate?

Sol.  O Cleobis and Biton! now I may
No doubt prefer you next, without reproach,
Their mother chanc’d on a festiuall day
To want two horses, for to draw her coach.

Them to supply the place, Loue kindly raised,
Who drew her to that place of publike mirth,
And both of them exceedingly were praised,
They for their pietie, she for her birth.

This charitable office being ended,
Both in the Church were found dead the next morrow,
I thinke the god, who this good worke commended,
Were loth to let them taste of farther sorrow

And like the brittle glasse, are but a glance,
And oft the heauens t’ abate the height of man,
Do entersour our sweets with some sad chance

Cres.  Then from this Cathagorie am I secluded
And is my state so vile vnto thine eies,

That as one of all happiness denuded,
Thou thus do’st my felicities despise?

---

1 117: Cleobis and Biton: “sons of Cydippe, a priestess of Hera at Argos. In their love for their mother they once drew her chariot to the temple of Hera, 45 stadia, or nearly 6 miles. The mother prayed Hera to grant them the best that mortals might have, and they died in the temple while asleep.” (Everyman’s Encyclopædia).

2 121: raised: incited, instigated to do something (N.E.D.).


4 132: entersour: intermix sourness in or with (N.E.D.).
Or think’st thou me of judgement too remisse,
A miser that in miserie remaines,
The bastard child of Fortune, barr’d from blisse,
Whom heauens do hate, and all the world disdaines?
Are base companions’ then to be compar’d
With one that may consume such in his wrath?
Who, as I please, do punish and reward,
Whose words, nay, euen whose lookes yeeld life or death,

Sir, be not thus commoou’d without all reason,
Nor misconceiue my meaning as you do,
Those that speake freely, haue no mind of treason,
I cannot be your friend and flatter to.
Vnto us Graecians (Sir) the gods haue granted
A moderate measure of a humble wit,
And in our Countrie there haue neuer wanted
Some whom the world for wise men did admit.
And yet amongst vs all, the greatest number
Haue here despair’d of any perfect rest,
Though some a while in Fortunes bosome slumber,
And to world-blinded eyes seeme to be blest,
Yet ouer all mortall states, change so preuailes,
We alterations daily do attend,
And hold this for a ground that neuer failes,

None should triumph in blisse before the end.

1 141: companion: a term of familiarity or contempt (N.E.D.).

2 145: commoou’d: stirred to emotion, raised to passion, excited. After 1500 almost exclusively Scottish (N.E.D.).
I may compare our state to table-playes\(^1\),
Where by dumbe iudges matters are decided,
Their many doubts, the earnest mind dismayes,
The dice must first cast well, then well be guided

So all our dayes in doubt what thing may chance vs,
Time runnes away, the breath of man doth chace it,
And when th’ occasion come’s for to advance vs,
Amongst a thousand one can scarce embrace it.

When two by generous indignation mooued,
Would trie by sword, whose glorie, fame will smother,
Whilst valour blindly by th’ euent is prooued,
And th’ ones ouerthrow can onely grace the other,

O what a foole his iudgment will commit
To crowne the one with vndeseru’d applauses,

Where fortune is for to giue sentence yet,
While bloody agents pleade such doubtfull causes.

This world, it is the field, where each man ventures,
And arm’d with reason, resolutely goes,
To fight against a thousand misaduentures,

Both with externall and internall foes.

And how can he the victors title gaine,
That yet is buried with a doubtfull fight,
Or he be happie that doth still remaine

In Fortunes danger for a small delight,

\(^1\) 161: *table-playes*: “tables” or backgammon, a game played on a board consisting of two tables (usually united by a hinge), with draughtsmen whose moves are determined by throws of the dice. (N.E.D.). K & Ch. explain “table-playes” as “games of chance”.

[ 30 ]
Th’ abortiue course of man away fast weares',
Course that consists of houres, houres of a day,
Day that giues place to night, night full of feares,
Thus all things alter, still all things decay;
   Who flourish now in peace, may fall in strife,
And haue their fame with infamie supprest;
The euening show’s the day\(^2\), the death the life;
   And many are fortunate, but few are blest.\(^3\)

Cres. I see this Græcian of a simple spirite,
The which is capable of no great things,
Men but advance him far aboue his merite,
   He cannot comprehend the States of Kings.
Fame did so largely of his worth report,
It made me long to haue him in my house,
   But all my expectations are come short,
I thinke a Mountaine hath brought forth a mouse.\(^4\)

Exit Cræsus.

---

1 185: *away fast weares*: the normal word order “fast weares away” is reversed because of the requirements of the rhyme-scheme.

2 191: *The euening show’s the day*: proverb, cf. Tilley, E 190: The Evening crowns the Day

3 192: *Many are fortunate, but few are blest*: very similar to Matthew, 22, 14: “For many are called, but few are chosen”.

4 200: *a Mountaine hath brought forth a mouse*: proverb; cf. Tilley, M 1215: The Mountain was in Labour and brought forth a Mouse. The proverb goes back to Erasmus, Adagia, 339 B: “Parturiunt montes, nascetur mus.”
Act. II, scen. ii

SOLON. ÆSOP.

Sol. This king hath put his trust in trustlesse treasures,
Clot’d with th’ abundance of all worldly blisse,
And like a hooded hawk gorg’d with vaine pleasures
At randon flies, and wots not where he is.

O how this makes me wonderfully sore
To see him keepe this lifelesse wealth so straitly,
Whilst witlesse worldlings wonder at his glorie,
Which I not enuie, no, but pittie greatly!

Thus wormes of th’ earth, whose worst part doth preuaile,
Loue melting things, whose shew the body fits,
Where Soules of clearer sight do neuer faile
To thesaurize the gifts of gallant wits.

1: cloi’d, cloyed: clogged, burdened, surfeited (N.E.D.).
2: worldly: The difficulty of writing – ldl – correctly makes it probable that some examples are errors for “worldly” (N.E.D.).
3: at randon: “randon” is an obsolete form of “random”; hence: without aim, purpose or fixed principle (N.E.D.). The obsolete technical hawking-expression “at randon” does not fit in here. The N.E.D. quotes the 1486 version of the Book of Hawking, Hunting a. Blasing of Arms ..., also called the Book of St Albans. As I have been unable to locate this work, I have used a microfilm of the 1496 version (University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan, Reel 127), which reads: “And yf the foule sprynge not but flee a longe after the ryver & thawke [the hawk] nym it: then ye shall saye she slewe it at the Raundon.” The passage quoted begins at the last line of a sheet which is not numbered, but follows on Ciili; I take it to be Civ.

4: melting: decaying (N.E.D.).
5: shew: variant of “show”: the external aspect (N.E.D.).
6: to thesaurize: “to treasure, value; thesaurare was the regular word in Scottish legal documents for ‘treasurer’, but the word is not common.” (K. & Ch.).
Those worldly things do in this world decay,
Or at the least we leave them with our breath,
Whereas the other makes vs liue for ay,
So differ they as farre as life and death.

ÆSOP  And yet what wonder though that he be thus,
Whose knowledge clouded is with prosp’rous windes,
Though this indeed seeme somewhat strange to vs,
Who haue with learning purifide our mindes.

Was he not borne heire of a mighty state?
And vsde\(^1\) with Fortunes smiles, not fear’d for frownes,
Both measure all things by his owne conceate\(^2\)
Th’ infirmitie that fatall is to Crownes:

He hath been from his infancy addicted
To all the pompous showes wealth could deuise,
And still entreated, neuer contradicted,
Now doth all libertie of speech despise.

Though I durst not so to his sight appeare,
Whose corrupt iudgement was from reason sweruing,
I grieu’d to see your entertainment here
So far inferior to your owne deseruing.

That diuine Wisdom which the world admires,
And rauish’d with delight amazed heares,
Because it answer’d not his vaine desires,
Did seeme vnsaourie to distemper’d eares:

Eares that are euer stopt to all discourses
Saue such as enter fraughted with his praises,
He can loue none but them that loue his courses,
And thinks all fooles that vse no flattring phrases.

---

1. vsde with: made familiar or accustomed by habit or practice. Frequently constructed with “in” or “with”; in later use Scottish, chiefly in the past participle (N.E.D.).
2. conceate: opinion (N.E.D.).
This wracks the great, and makes the heauens despight' them;
Let vertue spread forth all her heauenly powers,
If not in their owne liuery to delight them.
They will not daigne her audience a few houres.

45 Sol. I care not Æsop how the King conceated
Of my franke speeches, which I euer vse,
I came not here, till I was first entreated,
Nor being come, will I my name abuse:
Should I his poysonous Sycophants resemble,

A hatefull thing in honest men that know it,
I would not for his Diadem dissemble,
What the heart thinks, the tongue was made to show it².
And what, if his vaine humor to haue cherish’d,
I had my speeches for the purpose painted,

I had but gotten gifts that would haue perish’d
But nothing could haue cleer’d my fame once tainted.
If I had show’n my selfe toward his officious,
It would in end haue but procur’d my shame:
To haue our vertue prais’d by one that’s vicious,

This in effect is but a secret blame.
He thinks him simple, who his anger raises,
But better simply good, then doubly ill;
I neuer value my worth by others praisses,
Nor by opinions do direct my will.

---

1 41: despight, despite: express or show contempt for, treat with contempt (N.E.D.).
2 52: What the heart thinks, the tongue was made to show it: proverb; cf. Tilley, H 334:
What the Heart thinks, the Tongue speaks.
And it content’s me more to be applauded
By one of judgement (though of meane degree)
Then by a Prince of princely parts defrauded;
Who hath more wealth, but no more wit then hee.

Æsop  Who come to Court, must with Kings faults comport,¹
Sol.   Who come to Court, should trueth to Kings report.
Æsop  A wise man at their imperfections winks,
   Sol.   An honest man will tell them what he thinks.
Æsop  So should you loose your selfe, and them not win.
   Sol.   But I would beare no burden of their sin.
Æsop  By this you should their indignation finde,
   Sol.   Yet haue the warrant of a worthy minde.
Æsop  It would be long, ere you were thus prefer’d,
   Sol.   Then it should be the King, not I that er’d.
Æsop  They guerdon’ as they loue, they loue by guesse.
(   Æsop  They guerdon’ as they loue, they loue by guesse.)
Sol.   Yet when I merite well, I care the less.
Æsop  It’s good to be still by the Prince approued.
   Sol.   It’s better to be vpright, though not loued,
Æsop  But by this meane, all hope of Honor failes,
   Sol.   Yet honestie in end euer preuailes.
Æsop  I thinke they should excell as oft they do
   All men in wit, that vnto men giue lawes:
   Kings are the Center of the Kingdome, to
   The which each weightie thing by nature drawes.

¹ 69-85: These lines show stychomythia. Also note the anaphors in lines 69-70 and 71-72.
² 79: guerdon: reward, recompense (N.E.D.).
³ 79: This line has been repeated; this explains the anomalous catchword in the printed edition.
For as the mightie Riuers, little streames,
And all the liquid powers that rise or fall,
Do seeke\(^4\) in sundry parts by seuerall seames
To the maine Ocean that receiu’s them all,
Who as he were but steward\(^5\) of those waters
Returne’s them backe by many secret vaines,

And as the earth hath need of moisture, scatters
His humid treasures to refresh the plaines.
So are Kings breasts the depth where daily flowes\(^6\)
Cleere streames of knowledge with rare treasures charg’d,
And thus continually their wisdom growes

By many helps that others want enlarg’d
For those that haue intelligence ouer all,
Do commonly communicate to Kings
All th’ accidents of weight that chance to fall,
Their greatnes to them this advantage brings.

They being iealous\(^7\) find out many drifts\(^8\),
And by a long experience learne to scance\(^9\) them,
Then those whom Arte or Nature lend’s great gifts,
All come to Kings as who may best aduance them.

\(^4\) seeke ... in: go to, visit, resort to (N.E.D.).
\(^5\) steward: possibly a reference to James I, who was of the House of Stuart. The Scottish spelling commonly accepted at this time was, in fact, “Stewart”
\(^6\) flowes: “In the plural of the present indicative it is common in Scots to find all persons taking –s as inflection either when the subject is no personal pronoun or when the personal pronoun (nominative) is separated from the verb Alexander, however, even in the earlier versions, very rarely has this idiom. The present instance is due to the need for rhyme” (K. & Ch.).
\(^7\) iealous: devoted, zealous (N.E.D.).
\(^8\) drift: a scheme, a plot, a design (N.E.D.).
\(^9\) scance: examine critically, scrutinize (N.E.D.). Not to be confused with Modern English “to scan”.
No doubt, those Powres who put them in their places
To make their qualities with their charge euen,
Do dote them with' some supernaturall graces,
Vice-gods on th’ earth, great Lieutenants of heauen.

Sol. As you haue showne, Kings haue a good occasion
Whereby t’ attaine vnto the height of wit.
Which whoso do imbrace by good perswasion,
Are worthy on a Throne to sit.
But ah! those Riuers are not euer pure
The which through tainted channels whiles conuaid,
Vile flatt’ries poysong rendred hath impure,
Thus are Kings harts oft by their eares betraid.
For impudent effronted persons dare
Court with vaine words and detestable lies,
Whilst purer sprited men must stand afarre,
The light is lothsome to diseased eies.

But this doth rauish oft my soule with wonder,
Some that are wise, with flatt’ry can comport,
And though of all men best mens parts they ponder,
Yet euer entertaine the baddest' sort.

---

1 112: *dote with*: Scotticism: endow with (N.E.D.).
2 121: *effronted*: shameless, unblushingly insolent (N.E.D.).
3 124: *The light is lothsome to diseased eies*: proverb; cf. Tilley, L 274: The light is nought for sore eies. The proverb goes back to Erasmus, Similia, 566 E: “Oculo lippienti non est admovendum lumen”.
4 127: *ponder*: estimate the value of, appraise (N.E.D.).
5 128: *baddest*: “bad” was regularly compared badder, baddest from the 14th to the 18th century (N.E.D.).
Is 't that such men as those cannot controlle them,
Nor neuer' crosse their appetite in ought,
But for each purpose that they speake extolle them,
Where better wits would argue as they thought,
Or as they would haue none for to resist them,
So for th' aduancement of the worthiest sorte,
They will haue none that may seeme to assist them,
Lest any challenge intrest in their glorie.

This selfe-conceate is a most dangerous shelfe,²
Where many haue made shipwracke vnawares:
He that doth trust too much vnto himselfe,
Can neuer faile to fall in many snares.

Of all that liue, great Monarchs haue most need
To ballance all their actions, and their wordes,
And with aduise in all things to proceed:
A faithfull Counsell oft great good affoordes.

Loe, how⁴ th’ inferior Sphears⁵ their courses bend
There, whither the first Moouer⁶ doth them driue:
The Commons customs on the Prince depend,
His manners are the rules by which they liue.

¹ 130: nor neuer: double negative.
² 137: shelfe: a sandbank in the sea or river rendering the water shallow and dangerous (N.E.D.). Used figuratively.
³ 145 - 148: Alexander here develops a simile based on the Ptolemaic astronomical system.
⁴ 145: inferior Sphears: “inferior” is used here in the sense of “lower in rank”, (N.E.D.), and cannot be interpreted as the astronomical term “applied to those planets (Venus and Mercury) whose orbits lie within that of the earth (originally, according to the Ptolemaic astronomy, as having their spheres below that of the sun)”, (N.E.D.), although it is used in an astronomical context.
⁵ 146: first Moouer: Primum Mobile. “The supposed outermost sphere (at first reckoned the ninth, later the tenth), added in the Middle Ages to the Ptolemaic system of astronomy, and supposed to revolve round the earth from east to west in twenty-four hours, carrying with it the (eight or nine) contained spheres.” (N.E.D.). Its existence was inferred to account for the motions of all the other spheres, which are, therefore, “inferior”.
No man is only for himselfe brought forth,
And Kings for th’ use of many are ordaind,
They should like Sunnes, cleere Kingdoms with their worth,
Whose life a patterne must be kept vnstaind.

Those that are vertuous haue an ample field
T’ expresse their wisdom and t’ extend their merite,
Where meane men must to their misfortunes yield,
Whilst lacke of power doth burst a gallant spirite.

As precious Stones are th’ ornaments of rings,
The Stone decore\(^1\) the ring, the ring the hand:
So Countries are conforme vnto their Kings,
The King decore\(^2\) the Court, the Court the Land,
And as a drop of poysone spent alone,
Th’ infected fountaine doth with venome fill,
So mighty States may be orethrowne by one:
A vicious Prince is a contagious ill.

Æsop \(^{165}\) This is an easie thing, for vs to spie
And paint in th’ ayre the shadowes of our mindes,
And t’ apprehend with th’ intellectuall eie;
A blessing that no worldly Kingdom findes.

Sol. I grant imaginarie groundes of ours
Will never moue a world-bewitched Prince,
To disenchant himselfe, and spend some howrs
His own disseignes of follie to convince\(^2\).

Ere Creesus can refraine from this his furie,
He must forsake himselfe, and be renew’d,
And in the Lethe of oblivion burie
The vanities that haue his soule subdewd,

\(^{1}\) 158: decore: decorate, adorn, embellish (N.E.D.).
\(^{2}\) 172: convince: prove or declare guilty of (N.E.D.).
He first must his prerogatives all smother,
And be a man, a man to be controll,
Then all his faults as they were in another

Like an unpartiall Arbiter behold.

Could he cast off this vaile of fond selfe-love
Through which all things not as they are he spies,
He would those wicked Parasites remoue,
Vile instruments of shame that liue by lies.

And th’ onely meanes to force them to depart,
That he might iudge more freely of his state,
Were to cast out the Idole of his hart
Which puffs him vp with a pride-swolne conceate.

For forraine flatterers could not find accesse,
Wer’t not ouer-valuing his owne worth too much.
He flattred first himselfe and thinks no lesse
But all their praises ought for to be such.

And when these hireling Sycophants haue found
A Prince whose iudgment of selfe-conceat disarmes,
They breach his weakest part, and bring to ground
The greatnesse of his State with flatteries charmes.

Then bearing ouer his Passions once the sway,
Least1 by the better sort he be aduised,
To wholesome counsell they close vp the way,
And vse all meanes t’ haue honest men desipsd.

Æsop  If you at Court at credit would arise,
You must not seeke trueth t’acquire renowne,
But learne t’ applaud whiles what you most despise,
And smile in show, whilst in effect you frowne.

---

1 198: least: variant form of “lest” (N.E.D.)
205   Sol.  From Court in time I will my selfe retire,
      I find my humour is not fit for Court.
      I’m none of those whom Crœsus doth desire,
      I can not alway of his worth report.
      O that he cannot see light¹ Fortune flout him

210   While as he glories in his outward show,
      Hedg’d in with greedy Harpies² round about him,
      That gape t’ enrich themselves with his ouerthrow.

Exeunt.

---


² 211: *Harpies*: mythological figures. “Their function was to snatch away mortals to the other world” (Enc. Brit.). Alexander probably uses the word here in its etymological meaning of “swift robbers”.
Of all the creatures below
We must call Man most miserable,
Who all his time is neuer able
T' attaine vn to a true repose,

His very birth may well disclose
What mysteries his blisse ouerthrow,
For being born he cannot know
Who to his state is friend or fo.
Nor how at first for to stand stable,

But euen with cryes and teares doth show
What dangers do his life enclose,
Whose griefes are sure, whose ioyes a fable,
Thus still his dayes in dolour so
He to all perils must expose,

And with vexation liues, and dies with wo,
Not knowing whence he come nor where to go

While as he brookes¹ his lowest place,
O how ucncertain is his state,
Which gouernd by a secret fate

Is subiect to inconstancie,
And euer changing as we see
Is still in toile, neuer in peace,
For if man prosper but a space,
With each sucsesse too too² bold,
And puffed up in his own conceit
He but abuses Fortunes grace:
And when that with adversitie
His pleasures come to end their date,
And with disasters are controlld,
Straight he begins for griefe to die¹:
And still the top of some extreme doth hold,
Not suffering summers heat, nor winters cold.

His state doth in most danger stand
That most abounds in worldly things,
And soars too hie² with fortunes wings,
Which carrie vp aspiring mindes³
For to be beaten with all windes,
The course of such being rightlie scand⁴,
Whilst men can not themselves command
Transported with a pow’reless name,
Oft vnexpected ruine brings.
W’ haue seene examples in this land,
How worldlie blisse the senses blindes,

¹ 30: for griefe to die: to die of grief.
² 35: hie: high.
³ 36: aspiring mindes: Not original to Marlowe:
  Tamburlaine the Great, II, vii, 20 (1590):
  “Nature, that fram’d us of four elements
  Warring within our breasts for regiment,
  Doth teach us all to have aspiring minds”
  The N.E.D. cites Fiftie godlie sermons, the 1577 translation by H. I. of the Decades,
  (a famous sermon series by the Swiss reformer Heinrich Bullinger), 154:
  “We which are not of that aspiring mind.”
⁴ 38: scand, scanned: “scan” means “to pass judgement on”; often in indirect passive
  (N.E.D.).
And on a reed vnsurely hings\(^1\),

45 He that presumes vpon the same
Hid poyson in his pleasures findes,
   And failing rashlie with the windes of fame,
   Doth oft times sinke into a sea of shame.

It’s to be fear’d our King at last

50 Whist he for nothing is afraid,
    Be by prosperitie betraid,
    For growing thus in greatness still,
    And hauing worldlie things at will,
    He thinks though Time should all things wast,

Yet his state shall euer last,

55 The wonder of th’ inferiour round\(^2\),
    And in his owne conceit hath said,
    No course of heau’n his state can cast,
    Nor make his successe to be ill:

If Fortune once those thoughts t’obbraid\(^3\)

60 Will haue our King vn-crownd,
    She may that mind with horrour fill,

\(^1\) hings: obsolete form of “hangs”. (N.E.D.).

\(^2\) inferiour round: “inferiour” must be interpreted as “sublunary” (earthly, subject to the moon’s influence), although the N.E.D. does not list it in this meaning. The N.E.D. gives only the plural substantive “inferiors” meaning “things of this lower world, sublunary affairs or events”. In passing, it might be mentioned that John Donne used “sublunary” in the meaning of “inferior, subordinate to” in his *Sermon N° 3* on the *Book of Proverbs*, xxii, 11:

> “Endymion loved the Moon. The sphere of our loves is sublunary, upon things naturally inferior to our selves.”


round: a sphere, globe, planet (N.E.D.).
this (earthly, etc.) round: the earth (N.E.D.).

\(^3\) obbraid: corrupt form of “upbraid”: reprove (N.E.D.).
And in an instant utterly confound
The state, that stands upon so slipprie ground,

65 When such a Monarchs mind is bent⁴
To follow most the most vnwise,
Who can their follie disguise⁵
With sugred speeches poysonous baites,
The secret canker of great states,

70 From which at first few disassent⁶,
The which at last all do repent,
While as repenting lust’ must go,
When Kings begin for to despise
Of honest men the good intent,

75 Who to assure their Soueraignes seates,
Would faine in time some help deuise,
And would cut off all cause of wo,
Yet can not second⁸ their conceats,

These dreadfull Comets⁹ commonly forgo

80 The Kings destruction that’s miscarried so.

---

⁴ 65- 80: This last stanza consists of two parallel conditional clauses, both introduced by “when” and leading to the concluding statement in lines 79 and 80.

⁵ 67: disguise: old Scottish form of “disguise” (N.E.D.).

⁶ 70: disassent: disagree (N.E.D.).

⁷ 72: lust: desire, relish, inclination for something (N.E.D.).
In the 1616 edition of this play Alexander changed the line in:
“Then whil’st they must to ruine go”.
In this light, “lust” could be interpreted as “inclination to follow the most unwise”.

⁸ 78: second: support, back up, encourage (N.E.D.).

⁹ 79: Comets: comets have in all ages been superstitiously regarded as heralds of strange or disastrous events.
Cf. Shakespeare, Henry VI, I, i, 2:
“Comets importing change of Times and States,
Brandish your crystall tresses in the Skie ...”
Act. III.  Scen. i

CRÆSUS.  ADRASTUS.

1  Crœs.  What vncoth fancies do affright? my soule,
     And haue captiu’d it to a thousand feares?
     Strange cares suggesting griefe my ioyes controule,
     My mind some comming euill charactred beares,

5  And credulous suspition too too wise,
     To fortifie my feares doth meanes inuent,
     Whilst suddaine terrors do my sprite surprise,
     An ominous presage of some bad euent.
     I thinke the soule come of immortall brood

10  As being partner of a diuine powre
     Hath a fore-knowledge both of euill and good,
     Although she can not flie a fatall houre,
         Though with this mortall vaile being made halfe-blinde,
     She can not soare outright with her owne wings,

15  Yet she communicates vnto the mind
     In cloudie dreames and misteries strange things.
         Th’ imagination wonderfull in force
     Of foiles the iudgement with confusion so,
         That presupposing all things to be worse

20  Then’ they fall foorth, we double our owne wo.

---
1:  affright: frighten, terrify (N.E.D.).
2:  captiu’d: captivated, enthralled (N.E.D.).
4:  sprite: spirit (N.E.D.).
For as the shadow seemes more monstrous still
Then doth the substance whence it hath the being,
So th’ apprehension of approaching ill
Seemes greater then it selfe, whilst feares are lying.

This alteration too seemes more then strange,
Which at an instant hath ore-whelm’d my senses,
I see (more then I thought) all states may change,
Against the heauen th’ earth can find no defences.
    My soule her wonted pleasure else¹ is loathing,

This hath indeede so deepe impression left,
A dreame, a fantasie, a shadow, nothing
Hath all my mirth euen in a moment reft.

Whence (mightie Soueraigne) can this change proceede
That doth obscure the rayes of princely grace,
Those that are schoold in wo may cleerely reede,
A mightie passion written in your face.
    And if a stranger may presume so farre,
I would the copie of your passions borrow,
I else coniecture in what state you are,

Taught by a secret sympathie in sorrow
    Two strings in diuers Lutes set in accord,
(Although th’ one be but toucht) together sound
Euen so soules tun’d to griefe the like afford,
And other with a mutuall motion wound.

---
² Adras.: According to Herodotus, I, 35, Adrastus was the son of Gordias and the grandson of King Midas. He had been driven away from Phrygia, which had been absorbed into the Lydian kingdom under the Mermnad dynasty, founded by Gyges. (See note on III, Chorus, 5).
¹ else: at another time; hence: already (N.E.D.).
² then: obsolete form of “than”.

No doubt but it disburdens much the mind
A Secretarie¹ in distresse to haue,
Who by his owne another's griefe can finde,
Where glad minds scorne what they can not conceaue.
    And I (Adrastus) would the cause declare

With which I so torment my selfe in vaine,
O but I blush t' vnfold my foolish care,
It's but th' illusion of a drowsie braine.

According to the bodies constitution,
The soule by night with fancies is afflicted,
Or by these thoughts continuall revolution,
To which by day the mind is most addicted.

Now whilst the Sunne did peepe through Thetis' bower,
And on the beauties of Aurora² gaz'd,
Out of my body spoild of mouing power,
All faculties of life dull sleepe had raz'd,
    While as the sprite more powerfull then euer
Since least impeached³ with this earthlie part
The veritie from lies could best disseuer
Hid mysteries vnclouding⁴ to the hart.

¹ 46: Secretarie: one who is entrusted with private or secret matters, a confidant, one privy to a secret (N.E.D.).
² 57: Thetis: a nymph, daughter of Nereus and Doris. She married Peleus and became the mother of Achilles. (Enc. Am.). Her “bower” is, of course, the water.
³ 58: Aurora: goddess of the morning. Also the title of a sonnet-cycle by William Alexander.
⁵ 64: vnclouding: to “uncloud” means: to free from obscurity or gloom, to make clear (N.E.D.).
I only haue two sonnes, and th’ one you see
The signe of Natures indignation beares,
And from his birth day domme i is dead to me,
Since he can powre no pleasure in my eares.
    The other Atis all my life’s delight,
In whom the treasures of my soule are kept,
I thought (vaine be my thought) in the twie-light
I wot not whether yet I walkt or slept.
    Whilst he was sporting voyd of worldlie cares,
Not in a lists’ belonging to his merites,
A pointed toole fell vnawares,
And pearc’d his temples, and expeld his spirites.
    Whilst the pale carcasse seem’d t’ vpbraid mine eyes,
The horrour of the sight my sense recal’d,
Which when I thinke of, yet my comfort dyes,
Such an exceeding feare my spirit appald,
    This hath me moo’d, it touch’d my state so neerelie,
To match my sonne in marriage at this time
With beauteous Cælia whom he lou’d most deerelie,
That both might reape the pleasure of their prime.
And if the heauens his o’rethrow haue decreed
By destinie that can not be reuoked,
So shall we haue behind some of his seed,
Ere in his blossome all our hopes be choaked.

1 67: domme: obsolete form of “dumb” (N.E.D.).
2 74: lists: “a catalogue of the soldiers of an army or of a particular arm”. It is used in this meaning in the expression “to be in or within the lists”. Here it could be interpreted as “group, company”.
3 74: belonging: appropriate to, proper to (N.E.D.).
Thus ere his soule lodge in the lightlesse shade,
T’ haue of his race twill mitigate my mind,
I can not hold him altogether dead,
That leaues his Image in some one behind.

And for the time we do all that seemses best
For to preuent those but surmiz’d annoyes\(^1\),

Yet for all this my mind hath neuer rest,
Some secret terror still disturbs my ioyes.

Adras. Ah Sir! if but th’ imagind euill of this
Hath plunged your soule in such a gulfe of griev, 
Vnhappie I who waile a thing that is,

And haue not meanes to hope for my reliefe.
If all these dreadfull fancies tooke effect
(Which heauie chance th’ Almighty Ioue withhold)
It could not be compared in no respect\(^2\)
With those misfortunes that my state enfold.

For when your sonne fell by anothers hand,
You should but waile his death, and not your crime,
The heauens of me my brothers blood demand,
His fate, my fault, mourne must I all the time.

Crees. In what strange forme could this disaster fall,

That is th’ occasion of so great distresse,
Tell on at length th’ originall\(^3\) of all,
To heare of greater griev t’ will make mine lesse.

\(^1\) 94: *annoyes: annoyances* (N.E.D.).
\(^2\) 100 and 103: note the double negative.
\(^3\) 111: *originall: the origin* (N.E.D.).
Adras. I haue conceald my sorrowes still till now,
As too offensiue foode for daintie eares,

Yet since of such a subject you allow,
Ile tell a tale that may moue stones to teares.

My father of the Phrigian Princes come,
Had in my growing age a tender care,
That all my education might become

One whom he might for mightie hopes prepare:
As yet foure lusters scarcely had begun
For to discerne my sex with downie cheekes,
When I into that Labirinth was runne,
Whence back in vaine the straying enterer sheekes\(^1\)

I lou’d, O fatall loue! vnlouely fate,
The vertuouslie faire, yet fairest Dame
That euer was enshrin’d in soules conceat\(^2\),
Or gaue a dittie to the sounds of fame.

Straight were my fancies to her beauties tyed,

None can paint passions but in feeling mindes,
I burnd, freezd, hopd, dispaird, and liud, and dyed,
My actions chang’d as oft as th’ Autumnnes windes\(^3\).

Yet after many doubtfull hopes and feares
That I attaing the height of my desires,

She had subscrib’d a truce vnto my teares,
And temperd with encountering flames my fires,

\(^1\) 124: sheekes: corrupt spelling for “seekes”.

\(^2\) 127: opinion (N.E.D.), here: imagination.

\(^3\) 132: My actions chang’d as oft as th’ Autumnnes windes: proverbial; cf. Tilley, W 412: As changeable as the Wind;
For as she was the most affected Saint,
Whose image was erected in my thought,
She had compassion too of my complaint,
And to acquit my firme affection sought.

Thus whilst I triumphd in mine owne conceat,
As one whose loue his Ladie did preferre,
I was corruiald (O unhappe fate!)
By one who lou’d, but was not lou’d by her.

He looking as I look’d, saw what I saw,
Saw Natures wonder, and the worlds delight:
And as a blind god\(^1\) blind guide did him draw
Still like a lizard\(^2\) liu’d but by her sight,

Then strait he striues the Iewell for to wonne',
Whose vnstraind worth he rates aboue his breath,
He hates the light that comes not from my Sunne,
And thinks to liue without her worse then death;

And this affection fauour’d was by Fortune
Which seem’d to ratifie his high rear’d hopes.

The Nymph her parents dayly did importune,
For to confine his flying fancies scopes.

Now iudge if that my miseries were rife,
Who threatned thus with eminent mishap,
Was like to lose a dearer thing then life,

Whilst others striu’d my treasure to entrap.

---

\(^1\) 147: *blind god*: Cupid

\(^2\) 148: *like a lizard*: “By ‘lizard’ Alexander is referring to the Salamander; the sense intended is what Francis I. of France intended when he chose for his crest a lizard in the midst of flames, with the motto *Nutrisco et extingo.*” (K. & Ch.).

\(^3\) 149: *wonne*: Scottish variant of “to win” (N.E.D.).
The man that sought my ioyes to vndermine
I could not wish for this t’ haue him ouerthrowne,
Nor blame the sprite that sympathiz’d with mine
I enuied not his hap\(^1\), but wail’d mine owne.

Now in my breast a battell did begin,
Which forc’d my soule with inward wounds to bleede,
Some fancies fear’d to what his loue might winne,
And possibilitie for to come speede.

Then others call’d her constancie to mind,
Which would not yeeld although she were invaued,
Yet forc’d to feare the frailtie of her kind.
A woman that hath eares may be perswaded.

Thus toss’d with doubts into a deepe of wo,
Which with suspition had my ioyes supplan\(\text{t}\)\(^2\),

I blam’d the thoughts that durst accuse her so,
As\(^3\) vertues patterne had one vertue wanted.

As I concluded, so it come to passe,
Th’ affliction seru’d for fuell to affection,
For she who th’ ornament of women was,

Would neuer wrong her worth with a defection.

When in my absence they had oft assay’d\(^4\)
To haue me from her memorie remou’d,
The Sunne burn’s hottest when his beames are stay’d,
The more that they would let, the more she lou’d,

\(^1\) 164: *hap*: chance or fortune that falls to any one; luck; lot (N.E.D.).
\(^2\) 174: *supplanted*: dispossessed and taken the place of (N.E.D.).
\(^3\) 176: *as*: as if (N.E.D.).
\(^4\) 181: *assay’d*: attempted ventured (N.E.D.).
And finding that delay no ende affords,
And that faire generals¹ are th’ abusers Arte,
She did repel him with disdainfull words
To raze all thought of her out of his harte,
Loue is a toy that vpon paine depends²,

A drop of sweet drown’d in a sea of sowres,
What Follie doth begin, oft Furie ends,
They hate for euer, that haue lou’d for howres³.

When all his arguments prou’d of no force,
Strait⁴ with discaine his soule in secret burn’d,
And what he thought was euill, to make farre worse,
He vnto furour all his fauour turn’d.

As he extreamly lou’d, farre more he hated,
And musde of many meanes how to annoy her,
Which was the best a long time he debated,
To see her dead, or to see me enioy her.

What? saith he when he first had musde a space,
So hard it is to quench a great affection:
Shall I disfigure that angelike face,
And make the world ecclypsde of all perfection?

Shall she by me be to confusion brought,
To whom I vowes and prayers did impart,
To whom I sacrific’d my secret thought,
And on her beauties altar burn’d my hart?

¹ 186: *generals*: generalities (N.E.D.).

² 189: *Loue is a toy that vpon paine depends*: proverb, cf. Tilley, L 505 a: Love is a sweet torment; Tilley also quotes Lily, *Eupheus and his England*: “You see what love is ... a paine full of pleasure, a ioye replenished with misery”

³ 192: *They hate for euer; that haue lou’d for howres*: refers to the proverb “Faithful love will never turn to hate”, Tilley, L 477.

⁴ 194: *strait*: straightaway (N.E.D.).
Or shall I see her in anothers powre,
And in his bosom lie t’ vpbraid my losse,
Whilst both with scornewfull smiles then’ death more sowre,
To point me out for sport report my crosse?

That sight which sometime did me sweetly charme,
Should it become a cause of griefe to me?

No, none that liue’s, shall glorie in my harme,
Since she will not be mine, she shall not be.

Th’ vnlouing Louer having vow’d her death,
Did with a cup of poison drowne my ioyes.
The fairest body from the sweetest breath
Was parted thus, (O Ocean of annoyes!)

That Monster Fame, whose many mouthes and eares
Must know, but not conceale a rare thing long,
And prodigall of ill, most chiefly beares
The worst newes first, inform’d me of this wrong.

For neighbouring neere the most vnhappy part
That had been spoild of such a beauteous guest,
No sooner had death seazde on the chaste hart
Then sorrow on my eares to rob my rest.

How the sadde newes first sounded in my soule,
I will not wearie you with long laments,
Rage did the outward signes of griefe controule;
When great windes blow the fire, the smoke worst vents.

Whilst generous disdaine disguisde my griefe,
(As one transported with a mightie rage)

I ranne to the Theater of mischiefe,
A tragicke Actor for a bloody stage.

---

1 211: then: obsolete form of “than” (N.E.D.).
For I was come no sooner to the place
Where as I thought the Murtherer to haue found,
But I re’ncountred (O vnhappie case)
240
Too deare a friend to catch an enemies wound.
    Ah passions! dim’d mine eyes, wrath led my hand,
I was no more my selfe, sorrow had kild me,
The first (t’ was night) that did before me stand,
I fiercely did pursue, as Furor willd me.
245
    And as it chanc’d, ere one could speake a word,
I filld his bosome with a luke warme flood,
And in his kind breast drown’d the cruell sword,
That in anothers body dranke my blood.
    When as a Torch had partly robde the night,
250
Prowd of supposde reuenge (ah bitter gaine)
I saw, I knew, blaccle knowledge, cruell sight,
T’ was mine owne brother that my selfe had slaine.
    O bitter losse that nothing can repaire!
My soule at once with all woes armie wounded,
255
Griefe, rage, spite, shame, amazement and despaire,
Gauld1, tossd, burnd, dashd, astonishd, and confounded2,
    The thought of my offence torments me most,
Yet am I whiles by my Loues verdict cleansde3,
And whiles my brothers violated ghost
260
By dreadfull dreames doth boast to be reuengde,

1 256: gauld, galled: sore from chafing (N.E.D.).
2 255-256: note the parallelism.
3 258: cleansde: purified from sin or guilt (N.E.D.).

“This word, or its original Scots equivalent “clenge”, was the regular legal term for 'to exculpate', “to prove innocent”. (K. & Ch.).
Cres. Now whilst this great disaster did occurre, 
What came of him that was the cause of all? 
Adras. He hauing heard this lamentable sturre\(^1\), 
Whom selfe-accusing thoughts did guiltie call, 
265 Strait strucken with a wonderfull remorse, 
I wot not whether fear or pitie mou’đ him, 
If not t’ oreluе her death, or dreading worse, 
He killd himselfe, his conscience so disproou’d\(^2\) him. 
Cres. I grant the manner of so rare mischances 
270 Would force compassion from your greatest foe, 
Where all the griefe-begetting circumstances 
Do ioyne to make a harmony in woe. 
But naturall loue doth at our selfe begin, 
It mooues farre more to feele then heare mishaps, 
275 The perturbation that my sprite is in, 
Me in a maze of miscontentments wraps. 
We should such past misfortunes pretermit\(^3\), 
At least no more immoderately lament them, 
And as for those which are but comming yet, 
280 Vse ordinary meanes for to preuent them. 
Adras. No wonder, Sir, although you take great care, 
Lest all your hopes in Atis person perish. 
Cres. I will by all the meanes I may, prepare 
To saue his youth, that he my age may cherish.

---

\(^{1}\) 263: *sturre*: obsolete form of “stir”. (N.E.D.).

\(^{2}\) 268: *disproou’d*: convicted of falsehood or error, refuted him; also: disapproved of him. (N.E.D.).

\(^{3}\) 277: *pretermit*: overlook intentionally. (N.E.D.).
If it be possible for mortal states
To strive against the Stars\textsuperscript{1} and be more strong,
I'll unarm Fortune, and resist the fates,
By barring both\textsuperscript{2} all means to do me wrong.
I have commanded under pain of death,
That no such weapon be within my walls.
As I supposed should have abridged his breath,
To ensnare such sudden evil as rashly falls.
He shall go rarely to the fields, and then
With chosen bands be guarded all the time:
Loe where he communiques with some country-men,
We will go try what they would have of him.

\begin{flushright}
1 286: *Stars*: seen as “determining a person’s fortune, rank or destiny;” (N.E.D.)
Cf. Shakespeare, \textit{Hamlet}, II, ii, 141
“Lord Hamlet is a prince out of thy star,
This must not be . . .”

2 288: \textit{both}: Fortune and the Fates.
\end{flushright}
Act. III.  Scen. ii

CHORVS of Countreymen.  CROŒSVS.  ATIS.
ADRASTVS.  CÆLIA.

[Chorus] Lend (Sir) a willing eare to humble wordes,
Let not our baseness barre vs from your grace,
Which still it selfe alike to all affords
Who blesse their sight with that Maiestike face.

My Soueraigne all his subiects well remembers,
As vile as our estate is thought of now
You are our head, and we are of your members,
And you must care for vs, we care for you.

Our pouertie to vs is no reproach,
Which th’ innocencie\(^1\) of our mind adorn’s,
We neuer on our neighbours bounds encroach,
But by our labours liue midst many thornes,
And euer busied for the Countries good,
We haue no time to muse of vaine conceates,
Yet earning with continuall toile our food
We entertaine the pompe of prowder States.

And (Sir) conceiue not for our meaning ill,
That thus dare speake so freely as we do,
Whilst mediators do dilate\(^2\) our will

They wrest it as they will, and wracke vs too.

---

\(^{1}\) 10: *innocencie*: innocence (N.E.D.).

\(^{2}\) 19: *dilate*: expatiate upon; also: delay, defer (N.E.D.).
To count’nance such as vs you neede not shunne,
A great man too well grac’d may do more harme:
And t’ is no staine\(^1\) vtnto the glorious Sunne,
Though oft his beames an abiect obiect warme.

25  Crees.  Be not discourag’d by your base estate,
Yee are my people, and I’le heare your plaint,
A King must care for all, both small and great\(^2\),
And for to helpe th’ afflicted neuer faint.
   The Scepter such as these should chiefly shrowd\(^3\),

30  Not cotages, but Castles spoile the Land.
T’ aduance the humble and t’ abate the prouwd;
This is a Vertue that makes Kings to stand.

Chorus   Sir, our estate some speedy helpe requires,
   In Mysia\(^4\) neare the famous Mountaine
35  Of great Olimpus\(^5\) that the world admires,
   There haunt’s a Boare by Dianes Fountaine\(^6\)

---

\(^1\) staine: (a person or) a thing that causes disgrace (N.E.D.), with a quibble on 'eclipse'.
   Cf. by the same author, The Alexandrean Tragedie, III, ii,
   “My sonne that was the glorie of his time,
   Staine of times past, and light of times to come.”

\(^2\) T’ aduance the humble and t’ abate the prouwd: “Obviously a compliment to James I:
   it is a translation of his motto, Parcere subiectis et debellare superbos,” (K. & Ch.).

\(^3\) shrowd, shroud: afford protection to (N.E.D.).

\(^4\) Mysia, Mysia: a district of north-western Asia Minor, bounded by Lydia and Phrygia
   on the south, by Bithynia on the northeast and by the Propontis and Aegean Sea on
   the north and west ... It was subjugated by Creesus of Lydia. After the fall of the
   Lydian monarchy it remained under the Persian empire until its overthrow by
   Alexander. (Enc. Brit.).

\(^5\) Olimpus: the name of many mountains in Greece and Asia. (Enc. Brit.).

\(^6\) Dianes Fountaine: Alexander is probably not referring to a particular place in Mysia.
   Diana was often worshipped near lakes and wells.
Of a big body, and a hideous forme,
His fomie Iawe with tuskes like Iauelins strikes,
And all parts in deformitie conforme

His backe hath bristles like to yron Pikes.

This Monster of Nature, Wonder of Men,
The Forrests tyran, and the Countries terrour,
Teares all to death, and draws them to his Den,
That chance¹ into his way by fatall errour.

Whilst tender-hearted Mothers do bewaile
The goared² Infants toyling³ in their blood,
Th' abominable⁴ beast them doth assaile,
And in his bowels buries both for food.

Then when we fly the field where he soiournes,

To haue his hunger or his rage alayde⁵,
He wastes the fruities, and ruines all the cornes⁶,
Thus the poore husbands⁷ hopes are all betraye.

---

¹ 44: *chance*: happen to come (N.E.D.).
⁴ 47: *abominable*: the regular spelling of “abominable” in old French and in English from their first use to the 17th century, due to an assumed derivation from “ab homine” (away from man, inhuman, beastly), which influenced their early use, and has coloured the whole meaning of the word to the present day” (N.E.D.).
⁵ 50: *alayde*: quelled, put down, appeased (N.E.D.).
⁶ 51: *cornes*: crops, cereals (N.E.D.).
⁷ 52: *husband*: Alexander uses the word in a double meaning, that of “a man joined to a woman by marriage”, and that of “a farmer, husbandman”. In early northern use, the last meaning was applied especially to a “manorial tenant, the vilanus or villein of other districts” (N.E.D.).
Ere this, of true Repose we were the types,
And pastur’d on each plaine our fleecie flockes,
And made a confort of our warbling pypes,
With mouing christals¹ th’ issue² of the rockes.
And sometime to refresh vs after trauell,
With flowrie garlands shielded from Sunne-beames
We gaz’d vpon Pactolus³ golden grauell,
Glass’d⁴, bathd, and quenchd our thirst with his pure streames;
Whilst we preferd, the Riuuer seemd amazd,
Vnto his golden bed, his grassye bancke,
And lay and lookd whereas our cattle grazd,
Without all enuie⁵ of a greater ranke.
That to represse oppression you take care,
This rest of ours is an effectuall token,
Your Lawes like Spiders webs do not ensnare
The feeble flies, and by the Bees are broken.⁶
For we by them are fenc’d from great mens pride,
The Heau’ns perpetuate your prosp’rous raigne,
And suffer not this sauage Boare t’ abide’,
To turne that ease which men haue spar’d to paine.

¹ 56: christals, crystal: poetically applied to pure limpid water (N.E.D.).
² 56: issue: the out flowing stream (N.E.D.).
³ 59: Pactolus: “A small stream in ancient Lydia, Asia Minor, celebrated for its golden sand, the reputed source of wealth of Cræsus. It rose on the north side of Mount Tmolus, (modern Boz Dag), flowed past Sardis, and had its outlet in the Hermus (modern Gediz) river” (Enc. Am.).
⁴ 60: glassd, glassed: saw as in a mirror (N.E.D.).
⁵ 64: enuie: envy.
⁶ 67- 68: Your Lawes like Spiders webs do not ensnare the feeble flies, and by the Bees are broken: proverb: cf. Tilley, L 116: Laws catch flies (little flies) but let the hornets (great flies) go free. It finds its origin in Erasmus, Adagia, 169 c: “Aranearum telas texere ... leges cum aranearum textis comparabat.”
Crees. What would ye then, that should be done by me?
For to repay your losse; repaire this wrong.

75 Chorus We crave none of your wealth, yet wish to see
This Boare be-blood the staffe of the most strong:
Let valourous Atis worthily your sonne,
Backd with the best of all the Lidian Youth,
Go to the fields before the rising Sunne

80 Quench with the morning teares his mid-dayes drouth,
And we shall leade them crownd with lawrell forth,
Where in a circuit small, yet a large Theater
For men to make a tryall of their worth
This Monster stayes: th’ earth neuer nurc’d a greater.

85 So shall we both reape profite, and they pleasure,
Which may be brought to pass without great obstacle,
By making this waster of the worlds treasure,
Of a horrid sight, a delightfull spectacle.

Crees. I may not spare my Sonne for a respect,

90 Which is not needfull now for to be knowne,
But I’le send others for the same effect,
That this pestiferous Beast may be o’rethrowne.
Th’ ostentiue gallants that our Grace attend,
And wait th’ occasion but t’ aduance their strength,

95 Against the Boare shall all their forces bend,
With houndes and darts still till he fall at length.

8 76: be-blood, bebleed: stain with blood (N.E.D.).
9 80: drouth: obsolete variant of “drought” (N.E.D.).
10 89: spare: allow to go free (N.E.D.).
11 89: respect: “a consideration; a fact or motive which assists in, or leads to, the formation of a decision; an end or aim (very common in the 17th century)” (N.E.D.).
12 93: ostentiue: obsolete form of “ostentatious”, i.e. boastful (N.E.D.).
I swaere this Monster shall when he is dead,
A memorable monument remaine,
To Dians Church I’le consecrate his head,
The Virgin-goddesse darts no shaft in vaine.

Atis. Ah wherein Father haue I thus offended!
Or what vile signe of a degenerd1 mind
Haue you remark’d in me that euer tended
To the reproch of our Imperiall kind?

That of this praise you would giue me no part,
But barre me from a famous enterprise,
As one vnworthie for to wield a dart:
Who still in vile repose inglorious lies,
   Lies like a wanton with vaine thoughts bewitchd,
Who spoyld of force effeminately liues,
A Peacocke but with painted pennes enrich’d,
Yet poore in all the parts that Glorie giues.
   What glorie giues those glorious Styles2 to me
Which by succession fall, not by desart3,

Should but my Fame with borrowd feathers flee;
For come of Kings a kingdome is my part.

---

1 102: degenerd: degenerated, declined in character or qualities (N.E.D.).

2 111: A Peacocke but with painted pennes enrich’d: this line is rather similar to the expression Greene uses in his pamphlet “A Groatsworth of Wit, bought with a Million of Repentance” when he refers to Shakespeare:
   “Yes, trust them not: for there is an upstart crow beautified with our feathers, that with his tyger’s head, wrapt in a player’s hide, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse, as the best of you ...”

3 113: Styles: customs of performing actions or functions, especially those sanctioned by usage or law (N.E.D.).

4 114: desart: obsolete form of “desert” (N.E.D.).
Who only by his Birth advancement claimes,
Like a base bastard doth his birth-right blot,¹
I will not beg my worth from dead mens names,
Nor conquer Credit only by my Cote².

What comforts this to brooke th’ Imperiall seate,
And all the blisse that Maiestie impartes?
If those whom only we exceed in State,
He our Superiors in farre better partes.

More then a Crowne true Worth is to be valued,
Th’ one Fortunes gift, and th’ other our owne merite;
By which oft times th’ afflicted Mind is salued³,
When Fortune takes what we by her inherite.

Criss. I see what braue Desires boyle in thy Soule,
And make thee with immortall wings to flee,
This hie-bent courage, nothing can controule.
All Lidia is not large euough⁴ for thee.

Go, seeke an Empire equall with thy mind,
No common limits can confine thy thoughts;
But while a full perfection thou wouldst find,
I feare thy fall turne all our hopes to nought.

And pardon me, (deare Sonne) it’s a great Loue
That makes me watch so warily o’re thy wayes,
Th’ affection of a Father what may moue,
Whom such an eminent⁵ danger not dismayes?

¹ 118: *blote*, blot: cast a blot upon (N.E.D.).
² 120: *cote*, coat: a coat of arms (N.E.D.).
³ 127: *salued*: healed, remedied (N.E.D.). This form is the Scottish variant of “salved” and rhymes with “valued”.
⁴ 132: *euough*: misprint for “enough”.
⁵ 140: *eminent*: confused with “imminent”, i.e. impending (N.E.D.).
The Heau’ns of late aduertisde me by Dreame, 
That some sadde fortune did attend thy Youth, 
New Meteors and strange Stars through th’ aire still streame, 
Which are as Oracles of Ioues owne mouth.

This was the cause that hastned Vs so much
To haue thee bound to Himens hallow’d Law¹,
This was the cause that all our care was such,
Out of our sight all weapons to withdraw.

Scorne not th’ amazing Comets that thou notes²,
The Starres to mortall States haue termes prefixt³
And thinke not only that my loue but dotes,
For if thou fall, my fate with thine is mixt.

Atis. Would God I had some meanes once ere my death
To satisfie that infinite desart,
Which I shall hold so long as I haue breath,
Deepe registred with reu’rence in my hart.

Yet (Sir) we see it is a naturall thing
For too excessiue loue t’ engender feares,
A sport like this can no great perill bring
Where either all delights the eyes or th’ eares.

If from my former deedes I now should shrinke,
As void of vertue to soft pleasure thrall.
Of your two Sonnes what might your subiects thinke,
Th’ one wanting but one sense, and th’ other all.

¹ 146: Himens hallow’d Law: marriage. Hymen was originally “the refrain of the Greek marriage song. The term gradually came to be thought of as the name of an ideal person, whose adventures had given rise to the custom of this song. His happy married life caused him ever afterward to be invoked in marriage songs” (Enc. Brit.).

² 149: thou notes: “Alexander fairly frequently in earlier versions uses irregular or provincial forms of the 2nd person of the verb, but usually he corrects them in revisions after 1612.” (K. & Ch.)

³ 150: prefixt, prefixed: fixed or appointed beforehand (N.E.D.).
What fancies might my late spousd loue possesse,
To see her husband hatefull to their sights?
And from the height of Honour to disgresse,
To womanize with courtly vaine delights:
   (Though women loue t’ haue men at their deuotion,
(They hate base mindes that hatch no noble motion.)

Well, well, my Sonne, I see thou must preuaile,
Go follow forth the chase, vse thine owne will,
Yet stay, or let my words thus much auaile,
Walke warilie now t’ eschue this threatned ill.

Thy hautie sprite t’ attempt all hazards bent,
I feare transport thee to a fatall strife,
   (God grant I be deceau’d) yet take good tent,
Thy ouer-franke courage may betray thy life.
   And (deere Adrastus,) I must let him know

What benefits I haue bestow’d on thee,
Not to vpbraid thee, no, but for to show
How I may trust thee best that’s bound to me.
When thou from Phrigia come defild with blood,
And a fraternall violated loue:

When in a most extreme estate thou stood,
Chac’d from thy fathers face, curst from aboue,

---

1 169-170: These lines form a sententia; they are marked in the text and interrupt the normal quatrain rhyme-pattern.
2 177: *take good tent*: Scotticism; take heed, take care (N.E.D.).
3 182: *bound*: under obligations of gratitude (N.E.D.).
4 185: *thou stood*: cf. note on “thou notes” (line 149 above).
Thou found me friendlie, and my Court thy rest,
A Sanctuarie sacred for thy safetie,
Where thou wast entertain’d as pleas’d thee best,

I thinke those dangers scap’t should make thee craftie.
Yet though I grac’d thee earst, ‘t was but a signe
Of a heroick mind that helps the wretched:
But in thy hands my soule ile now consigne,
And giue a proofe of loue not to be matched.

Behold how Atis of our age the shield,
Whose harme as you haue heard I fear’d ere now,
Is to go take his pastime in the field,
And with his custodie ile credit you.

I must my friend euen feruentlie exhort,
Wait on my sonne, remember of my dreame,
This dangerouslie delectable sport,
Doth make me feare the griefe exceede the game.

Adras. I neuer shall those courtesies neglect,
It irkes me’ not to thinke nor heare the same:

For while this sprite these members doth direct,
All shall concurre to celebrate your fame.

If ’t were your will I would not hence depart,
Who all such motiues vnto mirth abhorre,
But with my passions heere, retird apart,

Would waile wo past and shun all cause of more,
For if I striue t’ abandon my annoyes,
I feare my fellowship infect' with wo;
Those that would recreat themselves with ioyes,
Still strange mishaps attend mee where I go.²

Yet since you will commit this charge to me,
Ile vse all meanes that you may not repent you,
At lest³ all my defects faith shall supplie,
I couet nothing more then to content you.

Now for to see this monsters ouglie⁴ shape
With an enflam’d desire my thoughts do burne,
And Father, be not feard for no mishap,
I hope soone, and victorious to returne.

Returne? and whither loue? O deadlie word!
That doth import thy parting from my sight,
I heard thee name, mishap, ah my deere Lord!⁵
Should such strict limits bound so large delight?
O cruell resolution, vnkind dealing,
And canst thou condiscend to leaue me so?
Or from my presence priuillie thus stealing,
Thinkst thou to rob a portion of my wo?
This might indeede to thee yeeld some reliefe,
to haue thy eares not wounded with my mone,
But would wound me with a continuall grieve,
To feare all things where I should feare but one.

¹ 212: infect: subjunctive: “may infect”.
² 214: This line has an ominous ring: it provides a clue to what will follow in the course of events.
³ 217: at lest: Obsolete form of “at least” (N.E.D.).
⁴ 219: ouglie: Obsolete form of “ugly” (N.E.D.).
⁵ 225: K. & Ch. emendate this line to “I heard the name mishap”, but bearing in mind line 221, the version provided by the text is better.
Desist in time from this intended strife,
With which thy thoughts haue vnaduisdlie entred¹,
Remember I haue interest in thy life,
Which I consent not to be thus aduentred.

Hast thou not giuen proofe in thy greene² prime,
That may content the most ambitious hopes,
Whilst Atis was his owne, O then ‘t was time
To follow fancies vnconfined scopes.

Thy selfe then only camp’d in Fortunes bounds,
Thou dost endanger Cælia likewise now,
You sigh her breath, she suffer’s in your wounds:
You liue in her, and she must dye¹ in you.

Atis. Life of my soule, how do such broken speeches
From confusde passions thus abruptlie rise?
I know my loue, thy loue my mind o’re-reaches,
Affection schoold with feares is too too wise.

I go o’re-thwart the fields for sport to range,
Thy sighs do but my soule with sorrow fill,
And pardon (deere) I find this wondrous strange,
Thou neuer did till now resist my will.

¹ 236: entred with: engaged in the consideration of (N.E.D.).
² 239: greene, green: of tender age, youthful (N.E.D.).
   Cf. Shakespeare, Hamlet, I, iii, 71:
   “Affection, pooh! you speak like a green girl
   Unsifted in such perilous circumstance.”
³ 246: dye: die.
If I trespace in aught against my dutie,
Which makes thee thus my faith for to mistrust,
Mistrust not yet the chaines of thine owne beautie,
Which bind all my desires, and so they must.

Are we not now made one? Such feares o’recome

Though I would flie my selfe my selfe do fetter,
And if that I would flie, from whom? to whome?
I can loue none so well, none loues me better.

Haue pittie of those peareles (sweete eyes soules pleasures)
Lest they presage what thou would not haue done,

The heau’ns had not giu’n me those pretious treasures
Of such perfections spoyl’d so soone.
CHORVS

Those that domine¹ aboue,
High presidents of heauen,
By whom all things do moue,
As they haue order giuen:

What worldlings can arise
Against them to repine?
Whilst castel’d² in the skies
With prouidence diuine
They force th’ inferior round³

Their judgements to confesse,
And in their wrath confound
Prowd mortals that transgresse
The couenant they made
With Nature in heauens stead.

Base brood of earth, vaine man,
Why bragst thou of thy might?
The heauens thy courses scan,
Thou walkst still in their sight,
Ere thou wast borne, thy deedes

Their registers dilate⁴,
And thinke that none exceedes
The compasse⁵ of his fate,
What heauens would haue thee to
Though they thy wayes abhorre,

¹: domine: rule, govern, control (N.E.D.).
²: castel’ d: castellated, i.e. lodged or ensconced in a castle (N.E.D.).
⁴: dilate: relate, describe (N.E.D.).
⁵: compasse: bounds, limits (N.E.D.).
That thou of force must do,
And thou may do no more.
This reason would fulfill,
Their worke should serue their will.

Are we not heires of death,
In whom there is no trust,
Who tossd with cirkling breath,
Are but a dramme of dust?
Yet fooles when as we erre
And do th’ heauens wrath contract,

If they a while deferre
A iust reuenge t’ extract,
Pride in our bosome creepes,
And mis-informes vs thus,
That the Eternall sleepes,

Or takes no care of vs.
No, th’ eye of heauen beholds
All what our hart enfolds.

The gods digest no crime
Though they continue long,
And in th’ offenders time
Seeme to neglect their wrong,
Till others of their race
Fill vp the cup of wrath,
Whom ruine and disgrace
Long time attended hath,
And Giges\textsuperscript{1} fault we feare
To \textit{Cresus} charge be layd,
Which Ioue will not forbeare
Though it be long delayd:
\begin{align*}
55 \quad & \text{For ò sometime the gods} \\
& \quad \text{Must plague sinne with sharp rods,}
\end{align*}

And loe how \textit{Cresus} still
Tormented in his mind,
Like a reed on a hill,
\begin{align*}
60 \quad & \text{Is shiuering with each wind,} \\
& \quad \text{Each step a terrour brings,} \\
& \quad \text{Dreames do by night afflict him,} \\
& \quad \text{And by day many things,} \\
& \quad \text{All his thoughts do conuict him:}
\end{align*}
\begin{align*}
65: \quad & \text{He his starre would controule,} \\
& \quad \text{This makes euill not the worst} \\
& \quad \text{Whilst he wounds his owne soule} \\
& \quad \text{With th’ apprehension first:} \\
& \quad \text{Man may his fate foresee,}
\end{align*}
\begin{align*}
70 \quad & \text{But not shun heauens decree.}
\end{align*}

\textsuperscript{1} \textit{Giges fault}: Because Candaules, King of Lydia, had humiliated his queen by exposing her naked to Giges, she took revenge by making Gyges slay Candaules. Gyges then became King of Lydia, but the oracle at Delphi proclaimed that his murder would be revenged in the fifth generation from Gyges. (Herodotus, I, 8-13). \textit{Crasus} is the fifth in descent from Gyges.
Act. III. Scen. i

ADRASTVS. CRÆSVS. CHORVS.

[Adras.] Can heauen behold hands staind with bloud offtimes',
And to the Stigian streames² not hedlongs¹ hurld?
Can th’ earth support one burden’d with such crimes,
As may prouoke the wrath of all the world?

Why sends not loue t’ haue my curs’d course confind,
A death-denouncing flash of rumbling thunder,
Or a tempestuous terrour-breeding wind,
With violence to teare me all asunder.

What vnknowne corner from the world remou’d

5 T’ inhabit in th’ horizon of dispaire
Shall I go now possesse and be approu’d
By monsters like my selfe that hate repaire.
Ile go indeed whom all the world detests,
Who haue no interest in the fields of blisse,

10 And barbarize⁴ among the barbarous beasts,
Where Tigers rage, Toades spue, and Serpents hisse.

Yet though both th’ Artike and Antartike Pole
I should ouerpasse, and find th’ vnpeopled zones,
A wildernese where nought were to controule

15 My damnable cruelties but trees and stones:

---
¹ 1-52: These lines are spoken by Adrastus, although this is not indicated in the text.
² 2: *Stigian streames*: Stygian here means “pertaining to the infernal regions of classical mythology” (N.E.D); hence: “to the streams of the underworld, to the underworld.”
³ 3: *hedlongs*: headlong (N.E.D.).
⁴ 4: *barbarize*: behave like a Barbarian. The earliest instance is, according to the N.E.D., in 1648.
Yet of my deeds which all the world do tell,
All this could not deface th’ infamous scroule,
Within my breast I beare about my hell,
And can not scape’ the horrous of my soule.

Those fearefull monsters of confusd aspects,
Chimera\textsuperscript{2}, Gorgon\textsuperscript{3}, Hydra\textsuperscript{4}, hellish apes\textsuperscript{5},
Which in the world wrought wonderfull effects,
And borrowed from th’ infernall shades their shapes.
Their deuilish formes that did the world amaze,

Not halfe so monstrous as my selfe I finde,
When on mine owne deformities I gaze,
In the black depth of a polluted minde.

No, but my mind vntainted still remaines,
My thoughts in this dilict\textsuperscript{6} haue had no part,

Whch accidentallie this foule fact stains,
My hands had no commission of my hart.
Yet, whether it was fortune or my fate,
Of some hell-bag that did direct my arme,
I quaild the Lidiens hopes abortiue date,

And am the instrument of all their harme.

\textsuperscript{1} 24: *scape*: escape (N.E.D.).
\textsuperscript{2} 26: *Chimera*: a fire-breathing female monster resembling a lion in the fore part, a goat in the middle, and a dragon behind (Enc. Brit.).
\textsuperscript{3} 26: *Gorgon*: a monster of the underworld (Greek Mythology). Hesiod increases the number of Gorgons to three. They are represented as winged female creatures; their hair consists of snakes (Enc. Brit.).
\textsuperscript{4} 26: *Hydra*: a gigantic monster with nine heads, the centre one being immortall. It was killed by Hercules (Enc. Brit.).
\textsuperscript{5} 26: hellish apes: later versions of this play have “Pluto’s apes”. Alexander probably mentions them because of their uncouth resemblance to man.
\textsuperscript{6} 34: *dilict*: a Scots legal term, “offence, crime” (K. & C h.).
\textsuperscript{7} 39: *quaild*: destroyed (N.E.D.).
Then swelling mountaines come and fall vpon me,
Your height may hide me from the wrath of heauen:
But this needes not my fault hath else vndone me,
No torment can with my offence be euen.

Ah of what desart shall I now make choice,
T’ auoid the count’nance of an angrie King?
I know th’ auenging sword of Creesus voice,
To wound my soule hostes of rebukes doth bring;
No, th’ obiect of distresse ile stand alone,

A memorable monster of mishap,
For though Pandoraes plagues were pour’d in one,
All were too few so vile a wretch t’ entrap².

Chorus  O how the King is mou’d with Atis death,
His face th’ expression of a passion beares
With bended eyes, crost armes, and quiuering breath,
His princely roabe desperately teares.

Lo, with a silent, pittie-pleading looke,
Which showes with sorrow mixt a high disdaine,
He whilst his soule seemes to dissolue in smoake,
Whiles eyes the corps whiles³ him by whom t’ is slaine,

Creus.  Thou ruthless Tyrant, ruine of my blisse,
And didst thou so disguise thy deuilish nature
To recompence my courtesies with this?
Ah cruell wretch, abominable creature.

---

1: Pandoraes plagues: According to Greek mythology, Pandora was the first woman. She had found a jar, the so-called “Pandora’s box”, containing all kinds of misery and evil. When she was married to Epimetheus, brother of Prometheus, she opened the jar, from which all matter of evils flew out over the earth. Hope alone remained inside, the lid having been shut down before she escaped. (Enc. Brit.).

2: entrap: bring unawares into a position of difficulty or danger (N.E.D.).

3: whiles ... whiles: now ... then (N.E.D.).
65 Thy Tigrish' mind who could have well detected?
In mortal breasts so great barbarity?
What froward² sprite could have such spight³ suspected?
In hospitalitie hostilitie?
    Did I reuie thee when thy hopes were dead,
70 Whenas⁴ thy life thy parents had not spar’d?
And hauing heapt such fauours on thy head,
Is this? Is this?  Chorus. He would say the reward.
Adrast.  I grant what you alledge⁵, and more, is true,
I haue vnto the height of hatred runne,
75 A blood-staind Wretch, not worthy for to view
The rolling Circles⁶, nor the rayie Sunne.
    I’le neuer striue to cloake my foule abuses,
So for to make my forfeit⁷ to seeme lesse,
And paint my fault with imperfect excuses,
80 T’ is greater farre then words can well expresse.
    Nor go I thus to aggrauate my crime,
And damne my selfe to be absolu’d by others;
No, no, such Rhetoricke⁸ comes out of time,
I’le not suruiue hid death as earst my brothers.

² 67: froward: disposed to go counter to what is demanded or what is reasonable; perverse (N.E.D.).
³ 67: spight: spite, rancourous or envious malice (N.E.D.).
⁴ 70: whenas: while on the other hand (N.E.D.).
⁶ 76: the rolling Circles: in the Ptolemaic world-picture, the spheres or “heavens” in which the heavenly bodies were supposed to revolve. (N.E.D.).
⁷ 78: forfeit: misdeed, crime, offence (N.E.D.).
⁸ 83: Rhetoricke: eloquent speech (N.E.D.).
85 Whose vnkind fall if I had followd straight,
As then indeed I dyed to all delight,
I had not groan’d with this inward weight,
But slept with shadows in eternall night.

Yet must I die last, though late growne wise,

90 This in my minde most discontentment breedes,
A thousand tort’ring deaths cannot suffise
To plague condignely for so haynous deedes.

Come, cause him, who the Spritelesse body buries,
Vpon the Tombe to sacrifice my blood.

95 No fitter offring for th’ infernall Furies\(^1\)
Then one, in whom they raign’d while as he stood\(^2\).

In whom they oft infusde their diu’lish rage,
And in my bosom all their Serpents nestled,
So that this hellish horror to asswage,

I all my dayes haue with disasters wrestled.

\(\text{Cres.}\) I find Adrastus, when I deeply scaunce\(^3\)
Th’ effectuall\(^4\) motiues of this fatall crosse,
That not thy malice, but mine owne mischaunce
Hath been th’ occasion of our bitter losse.

---

\(^1\) Furies: Latin Furiae, by which the Greek Erinyes were known in Roman literature. Erinyes is the name given to the deities of vengeance; their home is the world below, whence they ascend to earth to pursue the wicked (Enc. Brit.).

\(^2\) stood: “to stand” here means “to take up an offensive or defensive position against an army (N.E.D.).

\(^3\) scaunce: scance: examine critically (N.E.D.).

\(^4\) effectuall: a legal term, meaning “valid, binding”. This word could also be an obsolete form of “effective” meaning “earnest, conclusive, pertinent” (N.E.D.).
Whilst barely with a superficiaall wit,
We weigh the out-side of such strange euents,
If but the mediate\(^1\) meanes our iudgements hit,
We search not the first cause, this much contents.

When such prodigious accidents fall out,

Though they amaze our minds, and so they must,
The ground of all comes from our selfe no doubt.
Ah! man hath sin’d, the heau’ns are always iust.

Now when I search the secrets of my soule,
And rip the corners of my corrupt minde,

Marke of my former life th’ offenciue scroule,
And do examine how I was inclinde,

O then I see the angry hosts of heauen\(^2\)
Come girt with flames to plague for my offences,
Which once no doubt will with the world be euen,

And iudge our thoughts, words, acts, and vaine pretences.

Sonne, t’ is my pride that hath procurde thy fall,
I’m guiltie of thy blood, I gaue the wound,
Which was thy death, and whose remembrance shall
My life each day with many deaths confound.

Then iniust Stars, your statutes I contemne;
O! if I were confronted with the gods,
I would their partiall prouidence condemne,
That in such sort do exercise their rods.

---

\(^1\) mediate: intervening or interposed in rank (N.E.D.).

\(^2\) hosts of heauen: the multitude of angels that attend upon God (N.E.D.).

Cf. Shakespeare, _Hamlet_, I, v, 92:

“O all you host of heaven! O earth! what else?
And shall I couple hell?”
Ah! my Sonnes death doth shew their judgement nought,
What could he perpetrate against such Powres?
Should he haue suffred for his Fathers fault?
Whom without cause their wrong-spent wrath deuours.
Now all the world those deities may despise,
Which plague the guiltlesse, and the guiltie spare:

Cease haples man t’ outrage thy selfe thus waies;¹
I pardon thee, and pitie thy despaire.

Adras. O cruell judgement of a rigorous fate!
Must I o’re-liue my selfe t’ entombe my Fame?
All things that I behold vpbraid my state;
Too many monuments of one mans shame.
All (and no more then I) my deedes detest,
Yet some not find a friend, I find no foe
To rid the world of such a dangerous pest,
Borne but to be an instrument of woe.

I know what makes all worthie mindes refraine
The worst against a Catife² for to stretch,
They this opprobrious office do disdaine,
To be the Deaths-men of so base a wretch.
Or must I yet a fouler fact commit,
And fill the world with th’ horrour of my name?
Is there some new disaster resting yet,
And other funerals famous by my shame?
Or would some bastard thought lifes cause debate,
That in the blasted field of comfort gleanes,

No, no, in spite of heau’n I’le force my fate,
One that’s resolu’d to die, cannot want meanes.

¹ 135: thus waies: in this manner, thus (N.E.D.).
² 146: Catife, caitiff: a wretched miserable person, a poor wretch (N.E.D.)
Proud tyrant Death, and must thou make it strange?
T’ involue my wearied soule in further strife,
Vnlesse my courage with my fortune change,
I can appoint a Period to my life.

But this (Ay me) all hope of helpe deuours.
What gaines my soule by death in those sad times?
If potent still in all her wonted powres
She must remember of my odious crimes.

What though unbodyed she the world forsake?
Yet cannot from her conscience be diuorc’d,
It will but vexe her at the shadowie Lake¹,
Till euen to grone the god of ghosts² be forc’d..

But welcome death, and O would God I had
Lesse famous or more fortunately liu’d!
Then had I neuer showne my selfe so mad
T’ haue only been by infamie suruiu’d.

Ah! haue I liu’d to see³ my Ladie die,
And die for me, for me not worth so much;

Ah! haue I liu’d (vnnatural man) to be
My Brothers death, whose loue to me was such.

Ah! haue I liu’d, with mine owne hands to kill
A gallant Prince committed in my charge,
And do I gaze on the dead body still,

And in his Fathers sight my shame enlarge.

---
¹ 167: shadowie Lake: probably the Acheron, which Shakespeare supposed to be a burning lake (Sh. Lex).
² 168: the god of ghosts: Hades, also known as Pluto (Enc. Brit.).
³ 173: Ah! haue I liu’d to see is anaphoric in lines 173, 175, 177 and 181.
Ah! haue I liu’d (O execrable Monster)
To be accounted of a diu’lish nature,
And euen by them that best my actions conster,
For to be cal’d (ad iustly cal’d) a Traitour.

Yet with my blood this staine away I’le wash,
And lest my memorie make th’ earth detracted,
Let my name perish in my bodies ash,
And all my life be as a thought vnacted.

Braue Atis, now I come to pleade for grace,

Although thou frown’st on my affrighted ghost,
And to reuenge thy wrong this wound embrace:
Thus, thus, I toile t’ attaine the Stygian coast.

Chorus. The man himselfe doth desperately wound,
With leaden lights, weake legs, and head declinde,
The body in disdaine doth beate the ground,
That of its members one hath prou’d vnkinde:
The fainting hand falls trembling from the sword
With this micidiall blow for shame growne red,
Which strait the blood pursues with vengeance stor’d
To drowne the same with the same floods it shed.

---

1 183: conser, construe; judge by inference (N.E.D.).
2 186: detracted: disparaged, traduced, depreciated (N.E.D.).
3 194: leaden: spiritless, depressed (N.E.D.).
4 194: lights: eyes (N.E.D.).
5 198: micidiall: “The N.E.D. has no record of this word. It is probably coined by Alexander from the Italian sub. and adj. micidiale, ‘murder(ing)’. The possibility that it is a misprint for ‘suicidal’ is barred by the termination –iall.” (K. & Ch.).
6 200: To drowne the same with the same floods it shed: “i.e. to drown the sword with the very blood it has caused to flow” (K. & Ch.).
Who of those parties can the combate show,
Where both but one, one both strooke\(^1\) and sustained\(^2\)
Or who shall triumph for this strange ore’throw
Whereas the Victor lost, the Vanquish’d gain’d.

205 Cress. Curs’d eies, what sudden change hath drownd your lights,
And made your mirthfull obiects mournfull now?
Ye that were still inurde\(^3\) to stately sights,
Since seated vnder an Imperiaall brow,
O’reclouded now with vapours of my Cares,

210 Are low throwne downe vnto a hell of grieue,
And haue the prospect but my soules desaires,
The sad beholders of a rare mischiefe,
O dead Adrastus I absoule thy ghost,
Whose hand some secret destinie did charme,

215 Thou hated by the Heau’ns, wert to thy cost
An accidentall Actor of our harme.
No doubt some angrie God hath layd this snare,
And whilst thy purpose was the Boare to kill,
Did intercept thy shaft amidst the aire,

220 And threw it at my Sonne against thy will.
Ah Sonne! Must I be witnesse of thy death,
Who view thee thus with violence to bleed,
And yet want one on whom to powre my wrath,
To take iust vengeance for so vile a deed?

\(^1\) 202: *strooke*: obsolete form of the past tense of “strike”, i.e. struck (N.E.D.).

\(^2\) 201- 202: “Inversion and contraction make the sense of these lines doubtful.” (K. & Ch.).

\(^3\) 207: *inurde*: accustomed, habituated (N.E.D.).
This wretch whose guiltlesse mind hath cleard his hand
Grieu’d for his error, loe, vnforcd doth fall,
And not as one that did in danger stand,
For he liu’d still till I forgaue him all.
    Thus haue I but the heau’ns on whom I may
Powre forth the poyson of my troubled spirite,
In my soules bitternesse I’m forced to say,
This seconds¹ not their custome and my merite.

¹ 232: *seconds*: matches with a second instance, confirms, corroborates (N.E.D.).
Act. III. Scen. ii

SANDANIS. CRÆSVS.

[San.] Why spend you (Sir) with sighs th’ Imperious breath,  
Which nought but words of Soueraignty should breed,  
O weake reuenge for one that’s wrongd by death,  
T’ adorne his triumph with a mourning weed¹!

5 This pale-fac’d tyrant, author of our ill,  
Who did, t’ ecclypse our Ioyes, that blacke shaft borrow,  
Should you frame Trophees to his Tigrish will,  
And weare his liuery, and succumbe to sorrow?  
No, though he might this outward blisse o’re-throw,

10 And you saue you of all that’s yours might spoyle²,  
Yet whilst of one that yields no signe you show,  
You triumph still, and he receives the foyle.  
Th’ o’re-flowing humor that would drowne your soule,  
In baser breasts might better be excused,

15 Who want the sprite their passions to controule,  
As from their birth still to subiection vsde.  
But you, in whom high Thoughts have been innated³,  
To this decay how is your Vertue come?  
I blush to see my Soueraigne so abated,

20 And Maiestie by miserie o’recome.

¹ weed: an article of apparel, a garment (N.E.D.).
² spoyle, spoil: plunder, rob, despoil; also: destroy, bring to an end (N.E.D.).
³ innated: “implanted by (at) birth” (K. & C h.).
Nor are my words out of a rockie mind,
T' unnaturalize' you, as not feeling smart,
No, none can barre a Prince from being kind,
Th' undoubted badge of an Heroick hart,

That supreme Powre, by Which great States do stand,
Should order but th' affection, not vndo it.
And I could wish you might your selfe command,
Which though you may not well, yet seeme to doe it.

_Cros_. I will not now rehearse, t' enlarge my griefe,

On what iust reasons my laments are grounded,
But still will muse vpon mine owne mischiefe,
While as my soule a thousand wayes is wounded.

What pensiue pensill\(^3\) euer limm’d\(^3\) aright
The sad conceats of soule-consuming woe:

Ah! Words are weake to show the swelling hight
Of th’ inward anguish that o’re-whelms me so.

Though many Monarchs iealously despise
The rising Sunne\(^4\) that their declining staines\(^5\);
And hate the Heire, who by their fall must rise,

As grieu’d to heare of death, or others raignes.

My loue towards Atis otherwise appeard,
Whom, whilst for him I did my cares engage,
I as a Father lou’d, as King not feard,
The comfort, not th’ encombrance of mine age.

---

\(^{1}\) 22: _unnaturalize_: deprive of natural character (N.E.D.).

\(^{2}\) 33: _pensill_, pencil: an artist’s paint brush of camel’s hair, gathered into a quill; especially one of small and fine make, suitable for delicate work (N.E.D.).

\(^{3}\) 33: _limm’d_, limmed: portrayed, depicted, painted (N.E.D.).

\(^{4}\) 38: _Sunne_: pun on “son”.

\(^{5}\) 38: _staines_: blemishes, soils, with a quibble on the meaning “eclipses” (N.E.D.). Cf. III, ii, 23.
And hadst thou Sonne, as reason would, suruie’d me,
Who glaunc’d and vanish’d like a lightning-flash,
Then death of life could neuer haue depriu’d me,
Whilst such a Phænix had reuiu’d my ash.

San.    Let not these woes ecclypse your Vertues light.¹

Crøs.   Ah! Rage and griefe must once be at a hight.

San.    Striue of your sorrows for to stop the source.

Crøs.   These salt eie-drops² must flow & haue their course

San.    That is not kingly. Crøs. And yet it is kindly³.

Where passions do domine⁴ they gouerne blindly.

San.    Such wofull plaints cannot repaire your State:

Crøs.   Th’ infortuniate at least may waile their Fate.

San.    That is not kingly. Crøs. And yet it is kindly³.

Where passions do domine⁴ they gouerne blindly.

San.    What graue-browd Stoic voyd of all affections,

With tear-lesse eyes could that Youths death behold?
Though greene in years, yet ripe in all perfections,
A hoarie⁵ iudgement vnder lockes of gold.

No, no man liues but must lament to see
The worlds chiefe hope euen in his blossome choaked:

But men cannot controll the Heau’ns decree:
And mischiefe done, can neuer be reuoked.

Then let not this torment your mind no more,
This crosse alike with you your Countrie beares,
If wailing could your ruinde State restore,

Soules fraught with griefe should sayle in Seas of teares.

¹ 49- 58: note the stichomythia and the change in rhyme-pattern
² 52: salt eie-floods: tears
³ 53: kindly: in accordance with nature, natural (N.E.D.).
⁴ 54: domine: prevail (N.E.D.).
⁵ 62: hoarie, hoary: venerable from age (N.E.D.): here it means “wise”.
Lest all our comfort dash against one shelve,
And this vntimely end occasion yours,
Haue pitie of your people, spare your selfe,
If not to your owne vse, yet vnto ours.

75  Cross. When Sandanis, I first thy faith did find,
Thou diu’d so deeply in my bosome then,
That since thou kept the key still of my mind,
And knew what I conceald from other men.

    Behold, I go to open vp to you

80  (Deare Treasurer of all my secrets still)
A mightie enterprise I mind for now:
A Phisicke in some sort t’ asswage my ill.

    Which may vnto my soule yield some reliefe,

85  Or else acquire coparterns in my grieue,
If not for me, yet with me to lament.

San.    This benefite must bind me with the rest,
To loue your Maiestie, and wish you well,
I’le giue you my aduise, and I protest,

90  That you take friendly what I freely tell.

Cross.  Since that it hath not pleased the Diuine powres
That of my of-spring I might comfort claime,
Yet lest the ravenous course of flying howres
Should make a prey of my respected name,

95  I hope t’ engender such a generous brood,
That the vnborne shall know how I haue liu’d,
And this no doubt would do my ghost great good,
To be by famous Victories reuiu’d.
I’le Eagle-like soare with Fames immortall wings,

Vnlesse my hie-bent thoughts themselues deceaue,
That hauing acted admirable things,
I may scorne death, and triumph o’re the graue.
Yet haue I not settled my conceate
That all opinions are to be despised,

Vnfold your iudgement touching my estate,
Take heed I’le tell you what I haue deuisde.

Some Scithian Shepherd in a high disdaine
As I haue heard rehearst by true discourses,
To plague some of the Medes with endlesse paine,

Did entertaine them with Thiestes courses.
And to content their more then Tigrish wishes,

---

1 107: Scithian Shepherd: Later versions have “Shepherds”; the singular form here is probably a misprint. The Median King Cyaxares employed Scythian nomads to train the boys of his noblemen in the use of the bow. One day he insulted these Scythians because they had failed to bring home any game, and they had their revenge by serving the king with the flesh of one of those boys. They then fled to Lydia and won the protection of Crœsus’ father Alyattes. (Herodotus I, 73).

They with the infants flesh the parents fed,
Who not suspecting such polluted dishes,
Did in their bowels burie whom they bred.

Then after this abominable crime,
They come vnto my fathers famous court,
And working on th’ aduantage of the time,
Did as they pleas’d of what was past report.

They shew’d what seru’d to help, and hid the rest,
Whilst pittie pleaded for afflictions part,
He noble-minded fauouring the distrest,
Was woon¹ to them by this Sinonick² art.

San. Oft Kings of Judges thence haue parties³ gone,

¹ 122: woon: variant form of “won” (N.E.D.).
² 123: parties: “party” is an obsolete Scottish term, meaning “partner, mate”. The sense implied is probably that kings, as well as judges, have often made the mistake of listening to the account of only one person.
³ 122: Sinonick: Sinon was the Greek who induced the Trojans to bring the wooden horse into Troy (N.E.D.). Hence: deceiving, betraying.
Where both their eares were patent but to one.¹

125  Ceres.  Then Ciaxare Monarch of the Medes,
To prosecute those fugitives to death,
In indignation of my fathers deedes,
Did boast’ them both with all the words of wrath.

My father thinking that his court should be

130  A sanctuarie for all supplicants,
Did leue men, that all the world might see
He helpt the weake, and scorn’d the mighties vaunts.

Thus mortal warres on euery side proclaim’d,
With mutuall domage² did continue long,

135  Till both the armies by Bellona³ tam’d,

¹ 123- 124: These lines form a sententia; they have indentation and interrupt the normal quatrain rhyme-pattern.
² 128: boast: Scottish for “threaten, terrify” (N.E.D.).
³ 134: domage, damage: injury, harm (N.E.D.).
⁴ 135: Bellona: the goddess of war among the Romans (Enc. Brit.)
Did irke t’ auenge or to maintaine a wrong.

     It chanc’d whilst peace was at the highest dearth
     That all their forces furiouslie did fight,
     A suddaine darkenes courtain’d vp the earth,
     And violentlie dispossest the light.
     I thinke for Phaeton² the Sunne lookt sad,

---

¹ 136: Did irke to: “were restless to” (K. & Ch.).
² 141: Phaeton: “The son of Helios, the sun-god, and the nymph Clymene. He persuaded his father to let him drive the chariot of the sun across the sky, but he lost control of the horses, and driving too near to the earth scorched it. To save the world from utter destruction Zeus killed Phaeton with a thunderbolt.” (Enc. Brit.).
And that the bloodie obiects that he saw
Did wound his memorie, with griefe gone mad,
He from the world his wagon did withdraw.¹

Yet Ignorance the mother of confusion,
With wrestling natures course found cause of feares,
Which well edg’d on² by wiser mens illusion,
Was cause of concord and of truce from teares.

Then straight there was a perfect peace begunne,
And that it might more constantly indure,
Astiages³ the King of Medias sonne,
A marriage with my sister did procure.

A deadlie rancour reconcil’d againe,
Must seal’d with consanguinitie remaine⁴.

Crœs⁵. He since his fathers age-worne course was ended,
Hath ruled his people free from blood or strife,
Till now a Viper of his loynes discended,
Would by his ruine make himselfe a life.

I meane by Cyrus base Cambises⁶ brood,

¹ 141- 144: These lines refer to the famous solar eclipse on 28th May 585 BC, predicted by Thales, which interrupted the decisive battle between the armies of Cyaxares and Alyattes, Cræsus’ father (Enc. Brit.).

² 147: edg’d on, egged on: urged on, incited (N.E.D.).

³ 151: Astiages, Astyages: the son of the Median king Cyaxares: he married Cræsus’ sister Aryênis (Herodotus I, 74)

⁴ 153- 154: These lines form a sententia, indicated by indentation and interruption of the quatrain rhyme-pattern.

⁵ 155: Crœs, has been reprinted although his speech was not interrupted by one of the other characters. This is because of the name Astiages at the beginning of line 151.

⁶ 159: base Cambises: The Median King Astyages gave his daughter Mandané in marriage to Cambyses, a Persian nobleman. He did so because the Persians were at that time
Who by a Bitch' nurst with the countrey swaines,
Degener'd farre from any princely blood,
The doggish nature of his nurse retaines.
He come against his Grandfather to feeld,
And vnxpected with a mightie powre,
Owerthrew his forces, forc'd himselfe to yeeld,
Who captiue kept now waits for death each howre.
That thou may see now what my interest is.
I made recitall of this ruthful storie,
Those circumstances show that shame of his
tends to the derogation of our glorie:
That any dare presume to trouble thus
One whome our kingdomes fauour should defend,
In strict affinitie combind with vs,
Yet not respected for so great a friend.

dominated by the Medes, and in this way he hoped to prevent his being dethroned by
his grandson. Cf. Act V, i, where the history of Cyrus is dealt with in detail.
(Herodotus I, 107).

1 160: Bitch and doggish (line 162) refer to the name of the woman who nursed Cyrus after
she had changed him with her own still-born son. Her name was Space, the Median
word for “bitch”. (Herodotus I, 110).

2 161: degener’d: lost the qualities proper to (N.E.D.).
My ioylesse soule with this will be reioyc’d
Whilst I to warre against that rebell go:
I hope that both shall know how they haue choyc’d¹,
Th’ one a kind friend, and th’ other a fearce fo.

San. Though Natures law you car’d not to transgresse,
And this your wrong’d allye would not repare,
Yet the regard t’ a Monarch in distresse,
Should moue the mightie with a mutuall care.

These terrors to that thunder in your eare,
I thinke the Lidians will not well allow,

For when the Cedar² falls, the Oake may feare,
Th’ Assirians ore-throw may astonish you.

Then we may iudge our owne to be in danger,
It’s better first with others to conspire,

Or we be forc’d our selues t’ inuade that stranger.

Ah this is but the out-side of your course,
A dangerous ambush by ambition planted¹,
There may come raging riuers from this source,
To drowne your state whilst fancies are vndanted.

I know these new-borne monsters of your mind,
Haue arm’d your rauish’d thoughts with faire conceates,
Yet may these wonders that you haue deuin’d,
Proue traiterous proiects for deceates.

¹ 177: choyc’d: “a regular form of the past tense of the Scots ‘to choyce’, i.e. ‘to choose’.” (K. & Ch.)

² 185: Cedar: Lebanon was its most famous early locality: the tree is also called “the Cedar of Lebanon” (N.E.D.). Here it probably refers to Astyages, because he had been ruling over Lebanon, as it formed part of the Assyrian empire when the Medes took possession of their provinces. This Median king has now been dethroned by Cyrus, the man Crœsus intends to wage war against. The Oake would then refer to Crœsus.

³ 192: ambush ... planted: pun.
And (pardon Sir) it is not good to be
Too rashlie stout\(^1\) nor curiouslie\(^2\) wise,
Lest that you from that which is certaine flee,
And not atteaine to that which you deuise.

\(\text{Cros.}\) I grant indeed which very few shall know,
Though I designe but to relieue my friend,

205 My thoughts are aym’d (this vnto you ile show),
And not without great cause, t’ a greater end.

You see how Fortune nought but change affects,
Some are reproach’d that others may be praisd,
And euery age brings forth some strange effects.

210 Some must be ruin’d, others must be raisd.

I doubt not you haue heard who was the first\(^3\)
Whom fame for warring with the world reuiues,
Who had of Soueraigntie so great a thirst,
That it could not be quenchd with thousands liues.

215 T’ was he who first obtain’d the name of Ioue,
Who was reputed for his glorious acts,
The most imperious of the powers aboue,
That vowes and offerings of the world exacts.

He all his time could nought but terrour breathe,

220 To make the world acquaint with warre and dearth,
The chiepest sergeants deputed by death
That made th’ Assirians soueraignes of the earth.

\(^1\) 200: \textit{stout}: resolute, defiant (N.E.D.).

\(^2\) 200: \textit{curiouslie}: cautiously, anxiously (N.E.D.).

\(^3\) 211: \textit{the first}: “From line 238 it would appear that Alexander is thinking of Ninus as described by Justin (I, i), or at greater length by Diodorus Siculus. Neither of these, however, mentions his deification. But scholars of Alexander’s day were greatly confused in their accounts of early history. Alexander may have identified Ninus with Nimrod, as many did ...” (K. & Ch.). Another solution could be that lines 216-218 refer to Ioue, and not to Ninus, as K. & Ch. maintain.
Yet since his course the worlds first plague was past,
His successours who many ages raign’d,

Made shipwrack⁴ of their Empire at the last,
And by the Medes were thral’d, scorn’d, and disdain’d.
This was the cause of that great kingdomes fall,
A King who could not judge of kinglie treasures,
With losse of scepter, honour, life and all,

Did buy his base delights and seruile pleasures.
To that disastred Monarchies decay⁵,
Th’ aspiring Persians purpose to succeede,
But I intend to crosse them by the way,
And quaile⁶ their courage ere that they can speede.

The Persians once the Lidiens force must proue,
And, O who knowes but that it is ordain’d
At the Tribunall of the States aboue,
That I should raigne where famous Ninus raign’d.
This all the host of heauen offtimes foretells,

To this the gods of Greece my mind haue mou’d,
And he that in th’ Arabian⁷ desart dwells,
By his response this enterprise approu’d.

---

⁴ 225: *shipwrack*: used in the figurative meaning of “destruction, total loss or ruin” (N.E.D.).
⁵ 227- 231: Alexander refers to Sardanapalus, the Greek name of Ashurbanipal, “last of the Assyrian kings according to Justin and Diodorus Siculus. His effeminate manners and licentious life led the Medes to revolt against Assyrian domination. (K. & Ch.).
⁶ 234: *quaile*: daunt, depress (courage) with fear or dejection (N.E.D.).
⁷ 241: *Arabian desart*: “Herodotus especially records that, besides consulting the oracles of Greece, Crœsus sent also to the oracle of Ammon in Libya, i.e. to the oracle of the great Oasis: hence Alexander’s description of “Arabian desart” is inaccurate. But “Arabia” was used loosely by early geographers, and “Arabian” often meant nothing but “desert-like”. (K. & Ch.).
San. Thus still in lóue with what we mind to do,
What we affect we fairest still conceaue.

This feedes our humour whilst we labour, to
Seeme full of wit our selues for to deceaue.
You flatter so your selfe, you can not spye
What secret danger this designe doth beare,
But whilst I looke with an indifferent\textsuperscript{1} eye

On your intentions, I find cause of feare.
You vnaduisdlie purpose to pursue
A barbarous people that are foes to peace,
Who but by rapine to their greatness grew,
And would for each light cause the warres imbrace.

No daintie silks of the Assirian dye\textsuperscript{2},
Do deck their bodies to abase their mindes,
But cloath’d with wild beasts skinnes they do defye
The force of Phoebus\textsuperscript{3} rayes, and Eols\textsuperscript{4} windes.

They simplie feede and are not grieu’d each day,

With stomachs cloyd\textsuperscript{5} decocting\textsuperscript{6} diuers meates.
They fare not as they would, but as they may,
Of judgement sound not carried with conceates.

\textsuperscript{1} 249: \textit{indifferent}: impartial, neutral (K. & Ch.)
\textsuperscript{2} 255: \textit{Assirian dye}: Tyrian purple.

The mollusc “Purpura,” found not only on the Phænician coast, but in all the parts of
the Mediterrane, yielded the famous Tyrian dye which was so highly praised by
royalty. (Enc. Am.). Tyre was a city in Lebanon, which was at that time under
Assyrian domination

\textsuperscript{3} 258: \textit{Phoebus}: a common epithet of Apollo, the light- or sun-god (Enc; Brit.).
\textsuperscript{4} 258: \textit{Eol, Æolus}: In Greek mythology, according to Homer, the son of Hippotes, god and
father of the winds, and ruler of the island of Æolia ... According to Virgil, he keeps
the winds imprisoned in a vast cavern. (Enc. Brit.).
\textsuperscript{5} 260: \textit{cloyd}: clogged, cumbered, surfeited (N.E.D.).
\textsuperscript{6} 260: \textit{decocting}: digesting (N.E.D.).
These uncorrupted customes that they hold,
Make all things easie that they feele no paine,

This cooles the Sommers heate, kills Winters cold,
This makes the Riuers dry, the Mountaines plaine.

Those whose ambition pouertie did bound,
Of the delights of Lidia if they taste
Will haue in hatred straight their barren ground,
And insolentlie all our treasures waste.

To gouerne such although that you preuaile,
You shall but buy vexation with your blood,
And do your selfe and yours, if fortune faile,
From a possessed Soueraigne seclude.

Yea, though this rash desire your judgement leades,
I for my part must praise the gods for you,
That haue not put into the Persians heads,
To warre against the Lydians long ere now.

These flames that burne my breast must once burn out

Your counsaile for more quiet minds I leaue,
And be you still thought wise, so I proue stout,
Ile conquer more, or less the thing I haue.

Yet am I forc’d out of afflictions store,
To ease my mind a few sad words to straine

And but vnlode it now to lade it more,
I emptie but mine eyes to fill againe.

\[ 284: \text{straine, strain: to squeeze out (N.E.D.), hence: to utter with difficulty.} \]
My soule must sound euene as my passions strike\(^1\),
Which now are tun’d to nothing but mischiefe,
My breast and eyes are both accurst alike,
The cabinet\(^2\) of care, the cells of griefe.
O cruel heauen, fierce starre, vnhappy fate,
Too foule injustice of the diuine powres,
Whose high disdaine t’wards me with partiall hate,
The comfort of the world (sad world) deoures.

Curst be the day in which I first was borne,
When lying toungs affirm’d I come to light,
A monstrous blasphemie, a mightie scorne,
Since t’was to darkenes and a ioy-set\(^3\) night.
O happie if I then had chanc’d to smother,
That the first houre had been the last to me,
Then from one grave t’ haue gone vnto another,
I should haue dide to liue, not liu’d to die.

What profited to me my parents ioyes,
That with such pomp did solemnize my birth,
When I must be the mirrour of annoyes\(^4\),
And all my dayes taste but one dramme of mirth?
Which seru’d for nothing but to make me know,
The height of horrour that was to succeed,
I was but raisd vp high to be brought low,
That short-liu’d ioyes might endlesse anguish breed.

---

1. 287: strike: to touch (a string or key of an instrument) so as to produce a musical note (N.E.D.).
3. 298: ioy-set: “set” is here used in the figurative meaning of what it has when said of the sun: “gone down”, hence: “declined, waned” (N.E.D.). The meaning implied is, in fact, “a night without joy”.
That nothing might for my confusion lack,
All my best actions but betray’d my state,
My vertues too were guiltie of my wrack,
And warr’d against me banded with my fate.

For whilst my Virgin-yeares with praise I past,
Which did (ah that it did) too much import,
My modest eye told that my mind was chast:
This gain’d the warrant\(^5\) of the worlds report,
And Maides must haue a great respect to fame,
No greater dowrie then an vnstaind name.\(^6\)
Faire beauties Godesse, thou canst beare record,
My offring neuer made thine altar rich,
All such lasciuous fancies I abhord,
My free-borne thoughts no follie could bewitch.

Till happilie (ah so it seem’d to some)
Ah but unhappilie th’ euent hath prou’d:
All this and more to Atis eares did come,
Who straightway likt, and after liking lou’d:
Then to our eares his purpose did impart,
Not lip-sick-louer-like’ with words farre sought,
His toong was but the agent of hid hart,
Yet could not tell the tenth part of his thought.
And lest his trauells should haue seem’d to tend
To breach my honour, worke my fames decay,

He brought his wishes to a lawfull end,
And by th’ effect, th’ affection did bewray.

\(^6\) 319- 320: These lines form a sententia and interrupt the quatrain rhyme-pattern.
\(^7\) 330: lip-sick-louer-like: the meaning is probably “like a lover who strains himself to praise his beloved”.
Their' Juno president of wedlockes vows,
And Hymen with his saffron-colour’d cote,
Our loue with sacred customes did allow,
Whilst th’ ominous Owles\(^2\) no crosses did denote.
The blessing that this marriage did procure.
It was too great to haue continu’d long,
A thing that’s vehement can not indure:
Our ioyes farre past th’ expressing of the toong,
Who euer did full satisfaction finde,
Yet with satietie were neuer cloy’d,
We seem’d two bodies gouern’d by one mind,
Such was the happines that we enjoied.
He lou’d medeerely, I obey’d his will,
Pround of my selfe because that I was his,
A harmonie remaind betwixt vs still,
Each in another plac’d their chiefest blisse.
This mou’d th’ Immortalls to a high disdaine,
That thus two worldlings who of death were heires,
Should in a paradise of ioyes remaine,
Which did exceede, at least did equall theirs.
But chiefly Juno did despight it most,
Who through a iealousie still iarres\(^3\) with Ioue,
That bodie-prison’d soules of that could boast,
Which she (although Heauens Queene) had not aboue.

\(^1\) 337: *Their*: obsolete form of “there”.

\(^2\) 340: *ominous Owles*: because of their doleful “hoot” and their repugnance to light, owls were supposed to accompany evil spirits (Sh. Lex.).

\(^3\) 358: *iarres, jars*: quarrels, disputes, bickers (N.E.D.).
Thus euen for enuy of our rare delights,
The fatall Sisters\(^1\) by the heauens subborn’d\(^2\),
Of my soules treasure closd the louely lights,
By which they thought the earth too much adorn’d.

O but he is not dead, he liues in me,
Ah but I liue not, for I dide in him,
The one without the other can not be,
If death haue set’ his eyes, mine must looke dim.

Since to my sight that Sunne no more appear’d,
From whom my beauties borrowed all their rayes,
A long eclipse that neuer shall be cleer’d,
Hath darkned all the points of my sad dayes.

Ay me! I liue too long, he dide too soone,
Thus still the worst remaine, the best depart,
Of him who told how this black deede was done,
The words like swords\(^4\) shall euer wound my hart.

Fierce tyrant Death, that in thy wrath didst take
One halfe of me, and left an halfe behind,
Take this to thee, or giue me th’ other backe,
Be altogether cruell, or all kind.

---

\(^1\) fatall Sisters: the Parcae or Moirai.

\(^2\) subborn’d: bribed, induced; also: assisted, aided (N.E.D.).

\(^3\) set: caused to become firm (N.E.D.), hence: caused to glaze.

\(^4\) words like swords: cf. Shakespeare, Hamlet, III, iii, 399:

“I will speak daggers to her, but use none.,”
and also III, iv, 94:

“O speak to me no more,
These words like daggers enter in my ears,
No more, sweet Hamlet.”
For whilst I liue, thou canst not wholy dye,
O! euen in spite of death, yet still my choyce,
Oft with th’ Imaginations loue-quicke eye,
I thinke I see thee, and I heare thy voyce.

And to content my languishing desire,
Each thing to ease my mind some helpe affords,
I fancie whiles thy forme, and then afire,
In euery sound I apprehend thy words.

Then with such thoughts my memorie to wound.

I call to mind thy lookes, thy words, thy grace,
Where thou didst haunt, yet I adore the ground,
And where thou stept, O sacred seems that place!

My solitary walks, my widowd bed,
My driery\(^1\) sighs, my sheets oft bathd with teares,

These can record the life that I haue led
Since first sad newes breath’d death into mine eares.

I liue but with despaire my sprite to dash\(^2\),
Thee first I lou’d, with thee all loue I leaue;
For my chaste flames extinguishd in thy ash

Can kindle now no more but in thy graue.

By night I wish for day; by day for night;
Yet wish farre more, that none of both might bee;
But most of all, that banishd from the light
I were no more, their courses for to see.

---

\(^1\) 394: *driery, dreary*: cruel, grievous, horrid (N.E.D.)

\(^2\) 397: *dash*: cast down, depress, daunt (N.E.D.).

Cf. Shakespeare, *Othello*, III, iii, 214:

“I see, this hath a little dash’d your Spirits.”
At night revolving my despaird estate,
I go to summe with sighs my wonted ioyes,
When in an agonie, a grieu’d conceate\(^1\)
Doth blot th’ unperfect compt’ with new annoyes.

When Sleepe the eldest brother of pale Death,
The Child of darkenesse, and Father of rest,
In a free prison hath confinde my breath,
That it may vent, but not with words exprest.

Then with my sprite thou enterst for to speake,
With honyed speaches to appease my griewe,
And my sad hart that labourd for to breake,
In this fayn’d comfort finds a while reliefe.

Yea, if our soules remaind vnited so,
This late diuorcement would not vexe my mind.
But when I waken, it augments my woe,
Whilst this a dreame, and me a wretch I find.

O happy, if I had been happy neuer,
But happier, if my Happinesse had lasted:
Yet had I in this state chang’d to perseuer,
My dayes had with exessiue ioyes soone wasted.

Why waste I thus, whilst vainely I lament,
The precious treasure of that swift Post Time?
Ah! pardon me, (deare oue) for I repent
My lingring here, my Fate, and not my crime.

Since first thy body did enrich the Tombe,
In this spoild world, my eye no pleasure sees,
And Atis, Atis, loe, I come, I come,
To be thy Mate, amongst the Mirtle trees.

---

\(^1\) 407: *grieu’d*: afflicted with pain (N.E.D.).

\(^2\) 407: *conceate*: frame of mind, disposition (N.E.D.).

\(^3\) 408: *compt, count*: reckoning, computation (N.E.D.).

\(^4\) 416: *fayn’d*: faigned.
CHORVS

Loe all our time ev'n from our birth,
In nought but miserie exceeds,
For where we find a moments mirth,
A Month of mourning still succeeds,

By all the euills that Nature breeds,
Which daily do our sprites appall,
Th' infirmities that frailtie sends,
The losse of it, that fortune lends:
And such disasters as oft fall:

Yet to farre worse our states are thrall,
Whilst wretched man with man contends,
And euery one his whole force bends,
How to procure anothers losses;
But this torments vs most of all,

The mind of man, which many a fancie tosses,
Doth forge vnto it selfe a thousand crosses.

O how the Soule with all her might
Doth all her heau'nyl forces straine!
How to attaine vnto the light

Of Natures wonders, that remaine
Hid from our eyes, we striue in vaine
To seeke out things that are vnsure:
In Sciences' to seeme profound,
We diue so deepe we find no ground,

And the more knowledge we procure,
The more it doth our minds allure,

1 23: Sciences: various kinds of knowledge (N.E.D.).
Of mysteries the depth to sound:
Thus our desires we neuer bound,
Which by degrees thus drawne on still,

30 The memorie may not indure:
    But like the tubs that Danaus daughters' fill,
    Doth drinke no faster then it's forc'd to spill.

Yet how comes this? and O how can
Diuine Knowledge the Soules chiepest treasure

35 Occasion such a crosse to man?
    That should afford him greatest pleasure:
        O it's because we cannot measure
        The limits that to it belong!
    But for to tempt forbidden things,

40 Do soare too high with Natures wings:
    Still weakest whilst we thinke vs strong,
        The Heau'ns that thinke we do them wrong,
        To trie what in suspence still hings. ²
    This crosse vpon vs iustly brings':

45 With knowledge, knowledge is confusde,
    And growes a griefe ere it be long.
        That which a blessing is, being rightly vsde,
        Doth grow the greatest crosse, when it's abusde.

---

1 31: Danaus daughters: In Greek legend, Danaus was the son of Belus, king of Egypt, and twin-brother of Ægyptus. Having been driven out by his brother he fled with his fifty daughters to Argos ... In the mean time the fifty sons of Ægyptus arrived in Argos, and Danaus was obliged to consent to their marriage with his daughters. But to each of these he gave a knife with injunctions to slay her husband on the marriage night. All but one obeyed. By way of expiation for their crime, the Danaides were condemned to the endless task of filling with water a vessel which had no bottom. (Enc. Brit.).

2 43: hings: obsolete variant of “hangs” (N.E.D.).

3 44: brings: see note on “flowes” in II, ii, 98.
Ah! what auailes this vnto vs,

Who in this vaile of woes abide,
With endlesse toile to studie thus,
To learne the thing that Heau’n would hide:
And trusting in too blind a guide,
To spie the Planets how they moue,

And too transgressing common barres
The constellation of the starres,
And all that is decreed aboue,
Whereof as oft th’ euent doth proue,
Th’ intelligence our welfare marres,

And in our breasts breeds endlesse warres,
Whilst what our Horoscopes’ foretell,
Our expectations do disproue,⁴
These apprehended plagues proue such a Hell,
That we would wish t’ vnknow them till they fell.

This is the pest of great Estates⁷;
They by a thousand meanes deuise
How to foreknow their doubtfull Fates,
And like new Giants scale⁸ the Skies,
Heau’ns secret store-house to surprise:

Which sacrilagious skill we see

---

⁴ 50: vaile of woes: the world regarded as the scene of woe (N.E.D.), an idea that often occurs in Christian theology.
⁵ 61: Horoscopes: a plan or scheme of the twelve houses of the twelve signs of the zodiac, showing the disposition of the heavens at a particular moment (N.E.D.).
⁶ 62: disproue: refute, prove to be false (N.E.D.).
⁷ 65: great Estates: “estate” is here used elliptically for “person of estate” (N.E.D.).
⁸ 68: scale: attack with scaling ladders (N.E.D.). Alexander refers to the battle between the Gigantes and the Olympian gods, in which the gods prevailed after a desperate struggle and buried the giants under mountains. (Enc. Brit.)
With what great payne they apprehend it,
And then how foolishly they spend it,
To learne the thing that once must be:
Why should we seeke our destinie?

If it be good, we long attend it,
If it be euill, none may amend it:
Such knowledge further rest exiles,
T' is best to be feard, those whom this Arte beguiles,

Do change their fate & make their Fortune wheeles.

And lo of late, what hath our King
By his prepost’rous trauels gaind,
In searching each particular thing
That Atis Horoscope containd;

But what the Heau’ns had once ordaind,
He could not by no meanes preuent,
And yet he labours to find out
Through all the Oracles about,
Of future things th’ vnsure euent,

This doth his rauing mind torment,
Now in his age vnwisely stout
To fight with Cyrus, but no doubt
The Heauens are grieu’d for to heare told
Long ere the time their hid intent.

Let Tantalus\(^1\) b’ a terror to th’ o’re-bold
That dare Ioues cloudy secrecies vnfold.

---

\(^1\) Tantalus: the traditional king of Sipylus in Lydia (or of Phrygia); he was the intimate friend of Zeus and the other gods, to whose table he was admitted. But he abused the divine favour by revealing to mankind the secrets he had learned in heaven ... The punishment of Tantalus in the lower world was famous. He stood up to his neck in water, which flowed from him when he tried to drink it; and over his head hung fruits which the wind wafted away whenever he tried to grasp them. (Enc. Brit.)
Act. V. Scen. i

CYRVS. HARPAGVS.

Goe, Let vs triumph o’re these vnthron’d thralls,
Whose maymed greatnesse to confusion runnes,
Who forfeited their glorie by their falles;
No hand that fights is pure, but that which winnes.

The rauisht world that fraught with doubts did stand,
To see the bloody end of this dayes toyle,
Saw how the Heau’ns placd lightning in my hand,
To thunder on all those that fought my foyle.

Now therefore let vs first deuoutly go

And lose\(^1\) our vowes, the gods detest th’ ingrate,
And who delight t’ adore their deities so,
Do neuer faile t’ establish their estate.

Goe load the Altars, smoke the sacred places
With Bullocks, Incense , Odours of all kinds,

Though none can giue the gods that flow in graces
A sweeter Sacrifice then thankfull minds.

Harp. Though all that indenized\(^2\) in this Vale
Walke here confinde within this fertile Round,
And are tapestred\(^3\) with this azure Pale,

T’ adore the gods by many meanes are bound.

---

1. 10: *lose*, loose: redeem, release by payment (Scotticism) (N.E.D.).
2. 17: *indenized*: “became dwellers”; the N.E.D. quotes no intransitive use of this obsolete form, although it gives an obsolete intransitive sense of “*endenizen*” (K. & Ch.).
3. 19: *tapestred*, tapistered: covered or adorned as with tapestry (N.E.D.).
Yet there are some particularly, I find,
Whose names are written in their dearest scrowles,
Whom extraordinary fauours bind,
Euen to prefer them to their very Soules.

Of which (Sir) you are one, your deeds declare,
Of you amidst innumerable broyles.
Euen from your cradle they haue had a care,
And led you safe through all your greatest toyles.

Though of the dangers of your youth I see,
The thought no more with griefe your mind importunes;
Yet I thinke on who had the hap to be
An Actor in your Tragick-Comick fortunes.¹

Cyr. The accidents that in our Nonage² chance,
When as our yeers grow rype, slide out of thought

Like fabulous dreames that Darknesse doth aduance,
And are by Day disdaind as things of nought.

For our Conceptions are not then so strong
As for to leaue th’ impression long behind,
Yet mixe (deare Friend) old griefe new Ioyes among,

And call afflicted Infancy to mind.

Har. Who would not wonder at thy wondrous Fate,
Whose ruine ere thy Birth appeard conspir’d?
Who vnbegun, seemd to expire that date,
Which now begun, shall neuer be expir’d.

Your mother first her Syre with cares did sting,
While as he dreamd, which yet his soule confounds,
That from her wombe there did a Vine-tree spring,
Which did o’re-shadow all great Asigs bounds.

¹ 32: Again a metaphor based on the theatre (Cf. I, 13-16).
² 33: Nonage: the period of immaturity, the period of legal infancy (N.E.D.).
Then to the Magies\(^1\) strait he gaue in charge\(^2\),

To trie\(^3\) what this strange Vision did presage,
Who haung studied their darke Art at large,
Gaue this response with a prophetick rage.
That once his Daughter should bring forth a Sonne,
For glorious Acts exceedingly renownd,

By whom th’ Empire of Asia should be wonne;
By whom his Grandfather would be vncrownd.

This to Astiages a terour bredde,
Who labouring to anull the heau’ns decree,
Aduisde as best his Daughter for to wedde
T’ a powrelesse stranger, but of base degree.
Then of Cambises he by chance made choyce,
And for his barb’rous Countries cause the rather\(^4\),
Whom by your birth the Princesse did reioyce,
And further then before affright her Father.

Thus tyrannie by feeble sprites begun,
Doth force the Parents to despaire to fall,
A dastard\(^5\) to attempt\(^6\), prowde hauing wonne,
Which being feard of all, doth still feare all.

---

\(^1\) 49: Magies, Magi: one of the tribes of the Medes (Herodotus I, 101): they were reputed for their interpreters of dreams (ibid, 107).

\(^2\) 49: gaue in charge ... to: commanded, charged (N.E.D.).

\(^3\) 50: to trie: to ascertain, to find out (N.E.D.).

\(^4\) 62: the rather: (all) the more quickly, (all) the sooner (N.E.D.).

\(^5\) 67: dastard: one who meanly or basely shrinks from danger; a mean, base, or despicable coward (N.E.D.).

\(^6\) 67: attempt: to attack, assail, assault (N.E.D.).

The meaning of these lines is: Tyranny exerted by weak men forces them to fight like cowards; even when they are victorious and feared by all, they are still afraid of everyone.
And tyrants no securitie can find,
For euery shadow frights\(^1\) a guiltie mind\(^2\).
This Monarch, whom scarce Armies could surprise,
Whom gallant Guards and stately Courts delighted,
Who triumphd o’re th’ Earth, threatned the Skies,
A Babe scarce borne, come of himselfe, affrighted.

And whilst Lucina\(^3\) the last helpe did make,
As if some vugly Monster had been borne,
A Minotaure, a Centaure or a Snake,
The worlds terror, and the Mothers scorne.
The Nephews\(^4\) birth, that would haue seem’d t’ impart

Vnto the grandfather great cause of ioyes,
As if the naked hand had pierc’d his hart,
Did winde him in a maze of sad annoyes.
And to preuent a but suspected spight\(^5\),
By giuing an occasion of just hate,

He sought by robbing you the new-found Light,
To make your birth and buriall of one date.
Soone after this he sent for me in hast,
Whom at that time (and not in vaine) he lou’d,
Then showd me all the circumstances past,

Wherewith his marble mind seemd nothing mou’d.

\(^1\) 70: *frights*: frightens.

\(^2\) 69- 70: These lines form a sententia: it is indicated by indentation and by an interruption of the normal quatrain rhyme-pattern.

\(^3\) 75: *Lucina*: in Roman religion, the goddess of childbirth. Later, both Juno and Diana assimilated Lucina’s function (Enc. Am.).

\(^4\) 79: *Nephew*: a grandson (Common in 17th C.) (N.E.D.).

\(^5\) 83: *spight*: variant form of “spite”.
Out of the which, as he would let me know,
All complements of pittie were not blotted,
He would this superficiall fauour show,
Not with your blood to haue his owne hands spotted.

Thus hauing lulld asleepe the conscience, still
The wicked would extenuate their crimes,
Not knowing those that but allow of ill,
Are Actors in effect, guiltie all times.

Yet with this fault he would haue burdend me,
And willd that I an Innocent should slay.
I promisde to performe his rash decree,
Well weighing whom, but not wherein t’ obey.

When I had parted from his Highnesse face,
And carried you (then swadled) with me too,
Through th’ apprehended horror of my case,
    * I stood perplex’d and wist not what to do
    * Necessitie tooke place, I waild with teares
    * Th’ vntimely funeralls (as I thought) of you,
    * My soule confounded with a swarme of feares,

Did with sad sighes my message disallow,
    Yet t’ him I send a seruant of mine owne,
Who for the time was Heards-man to the King,
To whom I made all my commission knowne,
But as direct to him show’d euery thing.

---

1 106-109: extremely difficult to read because the printing had faded. I have here interpolated the corresponding passages of the 1604 version.

2 112: *Heards-man*: in *Herodotus I*, 110 this man is called Mitridates.

3 114: *as direct*: adverbial phrase, meaning “directly, immediately” (N.E.D.).
Deliuering you with an vnwilling breath,
Then with a mantle of pure gold array’d,
I threatned him with many a cruell death,
If that your death were any way delay’d.

Straight for to execute th’ intended doome,
He from my sight did all astonish’d go:
Too great a charge for such a simple groome,
The show of Maiestie amaz’d him so.

O what a wonder is ‘t for to behold,
Th’ vnfailing prouidence of powrefull loue,
Whose brazen' edicts can not be controld,
Firme are the statutes of the states aboue.

That mortall whom th' Immortalls fauour shields,
No worldlie force is able to confound,
He may securely walke through dangers fields,
Times and occasions are t’ attend him bound.

For loe before the Herds-man was come home,
His wife of a dead burden was deliuered,
Who wondred so to see her Husband come,
That with a secret terrour faintlie shiuered.

She straight grew curious for to know the forme

* How he a Babe so beawtifull obtaind,
* Who did her suddainly of all informe,
* And to what crueltie he was constraind.

---

1 125: *brazen*: made of brass, strong as brass (N.E.D.). The word is here used figuratively, and has the meaning of “irrevokeable”.

2 135: *forme*: manner, method, way, fashion (N.E.D.).

3 136-139: extremely difficult to read because the printing had faded. I have here interpolated the corresponding passages of the 1604 version.
She quickly then th’ occasion to imbrace,

No doubt inspir’d by some celestiall powre,
Prayd him t’ expose her dead child in your place,
Yet where no beasts repair’d him to deoure:
So shall we (saith she) a double gaine,
Our off-spring shall receiue a stately tombe,
And we a princely infant, to remayne
Still nurst with vs as th’ issue of my wombe.

The Husband likt so well his Wifes intent,
That all what she affected he effected,
And soone had I one of my houshold sent,
To try if all were done as t’ was directed:
He seeing the babe dead, dead in that weed,
With that rich funerall furniture about him,
Told what the fellow told, and I indeed
Repos’d on his report, for who could doubt him?

In end, Time posting with hour-e’red wings,
Had giuen you strength with others of your yeeres,
You past the time, not nephews vnto Kings,
But for that time admitted for your peeres.

They faile’, call Fortune blind, she sight bewray’d,
And your authoritie by lot inlarg’d,
In pasturall sports who still the scepter swayd,
And as but borne for that, that best discharg’d.

---

1 139: See footnote 3 on previous page.
2 142: repair’d: were present, dwelt, resided (N.E.D.).
3 151: weed: an article of apparel, a garment (N.E.D.).
4 154: repos’d: confided in, relied on (N.E.D.).
5 159: faile: err, go astray (N.E.D.).
6 159: bewray’d: revealed, divulged (N.E.D.).

“They err who call Fortune blind: she gave proof of her power of sight.” (K. & Ch.).
Then with the other children as it chanc’d,
A noble man of Medeas sonne remaind,
Who swolne with enuy to see you aduanc’d,
Your childish charge with scornefull words disdaint.

You spighting at that proud attempt of his,
Did punish him as it became a Prince:
I doubt now (Sir) if that you thinke of this,

The rest of rashnes did your deed conuince.

Cyr. More mightie matters now to muse vpon,
My memorie with the remembrance cloy,
That those are all forgot, and yet tell on,
For I delight this childish toy.

Har. The father of the child inform’d the King
How such a base-borne boy abus’d his sonne,
And caused and Esquire straightway you to bring,
To suffer for the fault that you had done.

And when the King accus’d you in his sight,
As the presumptuous brat of a base clowne,
You boldlie did maintaine that you had right
To scourge one that rebeld against your crowne.

The King astonish’d at th’imperious words
Of one so magnanimous, and so young,
Doth pawse awhile, and straightway he records,
That you were you, and I had done him wrong.

---

1 167: *spighting at:* “angry at; now obsolete, but common in Elizabethan English.” (K. & Ch.).

2 170: *of rashnes did ... conuince:* “ascribed to rashness.” “Many senses of convince, implying ‘to prove, to demonstrate clearly,’ were common, though now obsolete.” (K. & Ch.).

3 176: *abus’d:* maltreated, injured, wronged, hurt (N.E.D.).

4 177: *Esquire:* a man belonging to the higher English gentry, ranking immediately below a knight: a landed proprietor, (country) “squire”. (N.E.D.).
The tortour to the Net-heard' was presented,
Who soone for feare confest (O suddaine change)
The King seem'd exceedinglie contented,

Sent one for me to heare the tidings strange.
And as he had good cause, in shew delighted,
Did for a solemne Sacrifice prepare,
And me as his most speciall guest invited,
Who with my sonne did straight to Court repaire.

When light was banish'd by nights shadowie sable,
The candles by his forfeit taking place,
They seru'd me with my sonnes flesh at the table,
Then did vpbraid me with his bloodlesse face.

What anguish, or what rage ore-flow'd my soule,
A louing father may imagin best,
Yet at that time I did my rage controule,
But laid it vp for euer in my breast.

Cyr. Some of the wise men then I heard remain'd,
Who from their former sentence did recoyle,
Saying, no danger was since I had raignd,
And so dismist me for my natuie soyle:
Where when I had my vnripe season spent.
Your letter came to giue my fire new fuell,
And told how many of the Medes were bent,
T’ abandon their owne Lord that prou’d so cruell:
And wish’d if to that Scepter I aspir’d,
That I should moue the Persians to rebell,
Which did succeed euen as my soule desir’d,
For they disdain’d in seruitude to dwell.

I plac’d my gallant troupes in warlike ordour,
And lest th’ occasion should have slipt away,
March’d with my armie to my enemyes bordour,
Whereas you had the conduct1 for that day,

Hær.  Lo how those wretches that the heau’ns would wrack
Are spoild of iudgement: that proud Tirant offred
The charge to me not thinking I would take
A high reuenge for th’ injurie I suffred,

   Which was so deeply rooted in my hart,
My countryes thraldome, and mine owne disgrace,

And all the horrors that death could impart,

   Seem’d nought to me so my disdain tooke place.

Cyr.  T’ is dangerous trusting one that’s wrong’d we see,

   Just rancour vnreueng’d can neuer die2.

Hær.  That was the first beginning of your glorie,
Which since hath been augmented by degrees,

   And which by time may breed so braue3 a storie,
As may be pretious in all Princes eyes.

Cyr.  Behold how Cressus with his riches blinded,

   Durst come t’ encounter with my warlike bands,

   And through a long prosperitie high-minded4,

   Was not affrayd to fall before my hands,

   But he and his confederates haue seene,

   How Victorie doth still my troopes attend,

   And Persia must be once all Asiges Queene,

   Or we shall warre vnto the worlds end,

---

1 218: conduct: leadership, command (N.E.D.).
2 227- 228: The sententia interrupts the normal quatrain rhyme-pattern.
3 231: braue: a general epithet of admiration or praise: fine, excellent, famous (N.E.D.).
4 235- 241: extremely difficult to read because the printing had faded. I have here interpolated the corresponding passages of the 1604 version.
Now Croesus is come, rich Sardis taken:
And Lidia fraught with gold is made our spoyle,
Th' Egiptians: haue th' vnprosp'rous league forsaken,
This is the happie end of all our toyle,

But ah one sowre vnseasons all my sweetes,
Braue Abradatus: my brother in armes,
hose praise through all the peopled circuit: fleetes,
And with his loue each generous courage warmes,

Whilst but ouer-bold for to be backt: so badlie,

Th' Egiptian Chariots desperatlie he charg'd:
There with euill-fortun'd valour fighting madlie,
His soule out of th' earths prison: was enlarg'd.

No doubt that dame this trouble hardlie beares,
Who only seem'd for him t' account of life:

I heard him whilst she bath'd his Coach with teares,
Wish to proue worthie of so rare a wife.

When their farewell was seal'd, last speaches spent,
She kist the Coach that did containe her trust,
And with eyes big with pearle gaz'd where he went,

Still till her sight was choak'd with cloudes of dust.

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1 241: See footnote 4 on previous page.
2 243: Egiptian: Croesus had concluded an alliance with the Egyptian ruler Amasis. (Herodotus I, 77).
3 246: Abradatus: The Susian lord Abradatas became Cyrus' ally and loyal friend after Cyrus had restored his wife Pantheia to him. She had been captured during one of Cyrus' campaigns and made part of his spoils; (Xenophon, Cyropedia, VI, 46-49).
5 249: backt: "backt with: 'with a following of'": in Scots back and backing were used substantively for "a band of followers". (K. & Ch.).
6 252: th' earths prison: the platonic and also the Christian idea of the body.
Cyr. I heare you haue not heard how his death prou’d
The black beginning of a bloudie scene,
His wife Panthea at the first not mou’d,
Seem’d as she had some marble image beene.

The bodie that had oft her fancies fir’d
She causd beare out of sight, still deere, though dead,
But being to Pactolus banks retir’d,
She in her bosome did entombe his head.
And then from rage she did some respit borrow,

For sorrow by degrees a passage seeke,
Vapouring forth sighes that made a cloude of sorrow,
A tempest then of teares rain’d downe her cheekes.
And whilst her eye the wonted object misses,
She many a languishing looke doth cast,

And on the senselesse lips still lauish’d kisses,
As affectionedlie as in times past.
I poasted' thither for to haue releeu’d
This Ladie of a portion of her woes,
Heauen beare me witnes I was greatlie grieu’d,

Who would, to saue one friend, spare hosts of foes.
She first a space me passionatlie eyde,
Then with these words her lips did slowlie moue,
My husband loe hath valourouslie dyde,
Well worthie of your friendship, and my loue.

When I had all the flowres of comfort vsde,
That a sad soule o’recharg’d with grievous could show,
I went away with words that were confusde,
And scarcely could my last farewell forth throw.

1 277: poasted: obsolete form of “posted” (N.E.D.).
I was not well departed from her face,

When as she charg’d the Eunuchs out of sight,
Then pray’d her nurse to bury in one place
Her and her Lord, as they deseru’d of right.

Then looking on his corps she drew a sword,
And euen as if her soule had flowne in him,

She stabd her selfe, then falling on her Lord,

Her beauties blubbered starres¹ were waxing dim.

The faithfull Eunuchs for their Sou’raigne sorie,
And scorning to suruiue so rare a date,
In emulation of their mistresse glorie,

Dide violentlie partners of her fate.

O sweet Panthea rich in rarest parts!
I must admire thy ghost though thou be gone,
Who mightst haue made a monarchie of harts,
Yet loth’d vnlawfull loues, and lou’d but one.

O wondrous wonders, wonders wondrous rare!
A woman constant, such a beautie chaste,
So pure a mind ioyn’d with a face so faire,
Beautie and Vertue in one person placde!

Both were well match’d as any could devise,

Whose undiuided end their choyce alowes,
He valourous, she vertuous, both wise,
She worthie such a mate, he such a spouse.

And Harpagus, lest that it should be thought,
The memorie of vertuous minds may dye,

Cause build a stately tombe with statues wrought,
Where their dead bodies may respected lye.

¹ 296: blubbered: flooded with tears; starres: eyes (N.E.D.).
Har. I’le raise a Piramide of *Creesus* spoyles,
Where all their famous parts shall be comprisde,
But how t’ insist in these tumultuous broyles,

320
T’ is best now (Sir) that you were well aduisde.
Your aduersarie doth attend your will,
This hautie citie humbled hath her crest',
And therefore go to pardon, or to kill,
To saue, or sack, euén as you shall thinke best.

325 Cyr. As for old *Creesus* I am else resolu’d,
He with some captiues which I keep in store,
Shall haue their bodies by the fire dissolu’d,
As offrands to the Gods that I adore.
This citie shall my souldiers paines defray,

330 Since by their force it hath been brought to bow,
I yeeld it vnvo them as their iust pray,
Who taste the sweetnes of their trauels now.
Of other things we shall so well dispose,
That our renowne o’re all the world shall shine,

335 Till *Cyrus* name b’ a terour to all those,
That dare against his Sou’raigntie repine.

---

1. 322: *crest*: a “comb” or tuft of feathers, or similar excrescence, upon an animal’s head. Figuratively used as a symbol of pride (N.E.D.).
Act. V.  Scen. ii

NVNTIVS.  CHORVS.

[Nun.]  Ah to what part shall I my steps address,
The burden of base bondage to eschew?
Lo, desolation, ruine, and distresse,
With horrour doth my native home pursue.

And now poore countrey take my last farewell,
Farewell all ioy, all comfort, all delight:

CHORVS

What heauie tidings hast thou for to tell,
That teare’st thy garments thus, tell thy sad plight?

[Nun.]  I tell the wrack of us, and shall that liue,
Within the circuit of this wretched soyle.

CHORVS

A hideous shout we heard the Citie giue,
Is ‘t in th’ enemies hands, is ‘t made his spoyle?

[Nun.]  It’s made his spoyle.  CHORVS  And is our Sou’raigne kild?

[Nun.]  No, but yet neerely scapt doth liue in danger.

CHORVS

Then let our eares be with disasters fild,
And must we beare the yoke of that proud stranger?

[Nun.]  You know how Creesus at th’ aduantage lay,
Still seeking meanes t’ abate’ the Persians pride,
And his confederates had assign’d a day

When they should for th’ intended warre prouide,
But Cyrus hauing heard how that they should
Against his state so great an armie bring,
Straight raising all the forces that he could,
Preuents, inuades, o’recomes and takes our King.

1 18: abate: bring down in value or estimation (N.E.D.).
Chorvs

This shews a Captaine both expert and braue,
First well t’aduise, then t’execute with speede:
No circumstance (friend) vnrelated leaue,
Which with our Kings did our confusion breed.

Nun. When Creesus saw that Cyrus came so soone,

He stood awhile with a distracted minde,
Yet what in time would permit, left nought vndone,
But made his Musters, march’d his Foe to find,
    Our stately Troopes that glistred’ all with gold,
And with vmbragious Feathers fann’d the ayre,

They with vnwarie insolence growne bold,
More how to triumph, then to o’recome, tooke care.

The Lydian Horsemen are of great account,
And are for valour though the world renownd,
    Them Cyrus chiefly labourd to surmount,

And this deuide for that effect was found

    Vntrussing all their baggage by the way,
Of the disburthen’d Camels each did beare
A grim-fac’d Groome, who did himselfe array
    Euen as the Persian Horsemen vse to weare.

To them th’ Infanterie did follow next,
A solide Squadron like a brasen wall,
But those in whom all confidence was fixt,
The braue Cauallerie came last of all.
    Then Cyrus by the raynes his Courser tooke,

And being mounted, holding out his handes,
With an assured and Imperious looke
Went breathing valour through th’ vnconquer’d bandes.

He willd all them that at Deaths game should striue,
To spare none of their foes in any forme,

But as for Croesus, to take him aliue,
And keepe him captiue for a greater storme.

Where famous Hellus doth to Hermus poste
In his broad waues t’ entombe hid strength and name,
Our Armie ran against a greater Hoste
T’ enrich it likewise with our force and fame.

Our Troopes a time with equall valour stood,
Till giuing place, at length we tooke the chase,
While as the Riuere ranne to hide our blood,
But still his borders blusht at our disgrace.

For so soone as the Camels once were come,
Our Horses loathing to indure their sight,
Ranne raging back againe, and of them some
Disordring rancks, put many to the flight.

Yet others that were of more martiall mindes,
Perceiu’d the Stratagem that did deride them,
And lighting on their feet, like mighty windes,
Bare downe before them all that durst abide them.

---


Croesus’ army meets Cyrus’ not far from where the Hyllos flows into the Hermus.

62: tooke the chase: this expression is not mentioned in the N.E.D. Alexander has probably coined it on the analogy of “to give chace” meaning “to pursue”; “we took the chace” would then mean “we fled”.

68: Disordring: throwing into disorder or confusion (N.E.D.).
There, whilst the world prou’d prodigall of breath,
The headlesse troncks lay prostrated in heapes,
This field of funeralls, proper vnto death,
Did paint out Horror in most hideous shapes.

There men vnhorsde, horses vnmastred, strayed,
Some calld on them whom they most dearely tendred,
Some ragde, some groand, some sigh’d, roard, wept & prayd,
Fighting, fainting, falling, desp’rate, maymde, rendred.

Those that escapt, like beasts vnto a Den,
Fled to a Fortresse, which true valour drownes,
Walles are for women, and the fields for men,
For Townes cannot keepe men, but men keepe Townes.

And we were scarcely entred at the Portes,
When as the enemies did the Towne inclose,
And rearing many artificiall Fortes,
To the Defenders did huge paines impose.

There all the military flights were refound,
Which at the like encounters had preuaild,
Both for to vse th’ aduantage of the ground,
Or for to helpe with Arte where Nature faild.

They euer compassing our Trench abut,
Still where the Walls were weakest, made a breach,
Which being straight. repaird, we threw tooles’ out,
And killd all those that came within our reach.

There all the bolts of death edgde by disdaine,
That many curious wits inclinde to ill,
Helpt by th’ occasion, and the hope of gaine,
Had powre t’ inuen, were put in practise still.

---

1. 95: *tooles:* weapons of war, especially swords (N.E.D.).
Yet as we see, it oft times hath occrde,
Where we suspected least, we were surprisde,
Whilst fortune and the fates in one concurred
to have our ruine in their rolles' comprisde.

The side of Sardis that was least regarded,
Which liies t'wars Tmolus, and was thought most sure,
Through this presumption, whilst 'twas weakely guarded,
th' ore-take of all Lidia did procure.

As one of ours (unhappily it chanc'd)
T' o're-take his helmet that had scapt his hand,
Alongst that steepy part his steps aduanc'd
And was returning backe vnto his Band:
He was well markt by one that had not spard
No kind of danger for to make vs thralles,

For Cyrus had proposde a great reward
To any one that first could scale our walles,
And this companion seeing without stay,
One in his sight that craggie passage clim,
Straight followd on his footsteps all the way,
And many a thousand followd after him.
By whom all those that durst resist were killd,
The rest were forc'd, and knew not where to flee:
For every street was with confusion filld,
There was no corner from some mischiefe free.

---

1 104: rolles: a “roll” is “a piece of parchment inscribed with some formal or official record.” (N.E.D.). The rolls of the Fates, containing man’s destiny, is another Renaissance commonplace.
4 117: without stay: without an obstacle, without hindrance. “Stay” can either mean “a cause of stoppage” or “the fact of being brought to a stand or delayed”. (N.E.D.).
O what a piteous clamour did arise,
Of rauisht virgins, and of widowd wiues!
Who pierc’d the heau’ns with lamentable cries,
And hauing lost all comfort, loathd their liues.

Whilst those proud Victors did insist t’ haue staind
Themselves with all the wrongs that such like vse,
They by a charge from Cyrus were restrain’d,
And durst no more their captiues thus abuse.

Chorvs. No doubt desolation then abounded,
Whilst with disdaine the Conqu’rors bosom boylde,
Some with the sword, some with disgrace confounded,
Sacred Temples, priuate houses, all were spoylde.

None can imagin greater misery
Then all the sufferings of a captiue’d Citie.
But whilst this famous Citie was distressed,
What could become of the hard-fortun’d King?

Nun. He seeing th’ enemie of his State possessed,
And that confusion seazde on euery thing,
Stood first amazd, scarse trusting his owne sight,
His former fortune had him so transported,

Yet it is hard for to deny the light,
He saw a stranger that his wealth extorted.

And when that he had deeply apprehended
Th’ unbounded horrors that o’re-flow’d his soule,
As one whose Ioyes had long before been ended,

He could no more the signes of griefe controule.

---

1 137- 138: The sententia is indicated by indentation and interruption of the quatrain rhyme-pattern.
But bursting out in bitter sighs and tears,
Plunged in the deepest depth of black despair,
Through o’re great fear, leaving all kind of fears,
Did of his safety take no further care,

And never wished he so for a long life,
But he o’re-wisht’ it, wishing for death now,
Still seeking danger in the bounds of strife,
Prouiding that he dyde, he car’d not how.

Whilst thus he fostered furies in his breast,
A certain soldier by the way him meets,
As insolent as any of the rest,
That drunk with blood, ran raging through the streets:

And seeking but an object to his ire,
He made to him’, and he to him again,
I wot not which of them did most desire,
Th’ one for to slay, or th’ other to be slain.

But whilst so base a hand towering aloft,
Did to so great a Monarch threaten death,
His eldest Sonne, that as you have heard oft,

Was barr’d from the right function of his breath.

I cannot tell you well, nor in what fashion,
If that the destinies had so ordain’d,
Or if the vehemency of his passion
Did break the strings that had his tongue restrain’d.

---

1 156: o’re-wisht: not in the N.E.D. The prefix o’re, (over) is used here with the sense “to the end of, to an end or issue, to extinction” (N.E.D.). So “o’re-wisht” is virtually the same as “outwished”.

2 164: He made to him: In obsolete Scots “to make to someone” means “to set to work” (N.E.D.); here it could be interpreted as a euphemism, but “make to” probably means “make for” (i.e. assail, go for).
But when he saw his Syre in such a danger,  
He bursted forth into those words the rather,  
Hold, hold thy hand in haste thou furious stranger,  
Kill not King Cрesus, murther not my Father,  
The other hearing this, his hand retyrde,  
Then calld’s his Kings commandement to minde,  
And to no small preferment he aspyrde,  
To whom this desert did his Sou’raigne binde.  
Now, when that Cрesus, who for death did languish,  
Was of this faire occasion disappointed,¹  
O’re-chargd with griefe, and surfeiting of anguish,  
To see himselfe for further euills appointed.  
He with sad sighs those syllables did accord,  
Now cruell destinie do what thou can,  
Which would not vnto me the grace afford  
That I might perish like a priuate man.  
Ah! must I liue to wish t’ haue been vnborne²,  
Charactring³ shame in a diseected face?  
Ah! must I liue to my perpetuall scorne,  
The finger-pointed obiect of disgrace?  
Yet this vnto his soule more sorrow bred,  
He King-like as in former times arrayde,  
Was with a mightie acclamation led  
Strait to the Tent wheras their Emp’rour stayde.

¹ 184: *disappointed*: deprived, dispossessed (N.E.D.).
² 191: Note the anaphoric “Ah! must I liue to” in lines 191 and 193; the same anaphora occurred with little variation in III, i, lines 173-181.
³ 192: *Charactring*: bearing imprinted (N.E.D.), hence: showing.
So soone as Cyrus got him in his powre,

He causde bring bands of yron, burd’nous chaines,
And clogd him hand and foot at that same howre,
As one that was design’d for grievous paines.

Then causde in haste a pile of wood to make,
And in the midst where all men might espy him,

Causde bind the capiu’d King vnto a stake,
With fourteene others of the Lydians by him.

There, as th’ oblation for his Victorie,
With sacred flames their bodies to combure,
Although Ioue hates prepostrous pietie,

And doth delight in offerings that are pure.

Now whilst the fires were kindling round about,
As one that to some powrefull god had vowed,
With eyes bent vp, and with his hands stretcht out,
O Solon, Solon, Cæsæus cride alowd.

Some hearing him to utter such a voyce,
And seeing Cyrus curious for to know,
Now of what Deitie dying he made choyce,
Did pray him liberally his mind to show.

He answered: vpon one in wit profound

He calld, with whom he wisht, if it might be,
That all the Rulers of th’ inferior round
Had had some conference as well as he.

---

1 206: by: in the presence of, beside, with (N.E.D.).
2 208: combure: burn up, consume by fire (N.E.D.).
For he had told him whilst his fortune lasted,
As one expert in good aduises giuing,
That all his flowres of blisse might soone be blasted,
And could not be accomplisht he being liuing.

Then he proceeded for to show at length
The Dialogue twixt Solon and twixt him,
Who prayd him not to trust in worldly strength,
By which vnvo true blisse no man could clim.

This speech mou’d Cyrus deeply, for to ponder
The great vncertaintie of worldly things,
As thinking that himselfe might be brought vnder,
Who had no priuiledge more then other Kings.

Then hauing such a patterne plac’d before him,
Whose farre-changd fortune throughly was reuolu’d,
He freely did his libertie restore him,
And willd him from the fire to be absolu’d.

O now Deuotion! well appeard thy force,
Which binds the earth and opens vp the Heauen,
In the celestiall breasts a deepe remorse
Was strangely wrought whilst Cressus prayd: for euen

Whileas the flashing flames, in vaine to quench,
All men did labour, but could do no good,

The cloudes were opend and a showre did drench
The firie ashes of the flaming wood.

---

1 224: aduises: “advice” (no longer used in the plural); opinions, judgements (N.E.D.).


3 236: reuolu’d: brought round to some position (N.E.D.).
Now whilst that Crœsus comming from the fire,
Saw ruthless sould’ers sacking all the Citie,
To saue the same he had a great desire,
And spake to Cyrus melting all in pitie.

Great Prince, for famous Victories renownd,
Who dost in armes all others so surmount,
That it contents me much to be vncrownd
By one so worthie, and in such account:

And since I am constraind your thrall to be,
I must conforme my selfe vnto my fate,
And cannot hold my pace whereas I see
Ought to preiudge the greatnes of your State,
Which ah! is wounded now with your owne powres,
Whilst this rich Citie is sackt and o’rethrowne,
It is not mine no more, it is yours,
And therefore (Sir) haue pitie of your owne.

Yea, though the losse of such a populous Towne
That’s rich, that’s yours, your mind could nothing moue,
Yet thinke of this that doth import your Crowne;
A piece of policie which time will proue.

The barb’rous Persians borne with stubborne mindes,
Who but for pouertie first followd you,
Their matchlesse worth in armes all Asia findes,
Their feare is fall’n vpon all Nations now,
But if you suffer them in such a sort
T’ enrich themselves with plenteous Lidians spoile,
Not able then their Conquest to support,
The Victor of the vanquisht gets the foile.

1 271: in such a sort: in this way or manner (N.E.D.).
For this will make them wealthie out of measure:
Wealth to confusion many a Countrie leads,
Whilst feebled with delights, in-vilde\(^1\) with pleasure,
No thought of honour harbours in their heads.

Then Cyrus strait approving what he spake,

His soldiery from their pillage were restrain'd,
Pretending first the tenth part for to take\(^2\),
As a rich offering for the Gods ordain'd.

Of our distress, this is the ruthfull\(^3\) storie;
A stranger is possess'd of this Province;

Our King has with the losse of all his glory
Bought breath a while, a poor thing for a Prince.

\textbf{Chorvs.} O wofull people! O unhappy King!

Our ioyes are spoyl'd, his happinesse expyreth,
And no new chance can any comfort bring

To either now, whose fall the Fates conspire.

Go wofull messenger, hold on thy course,
For to haue heard too much, it yrks our eares.

We euer must bewail thy sad discourse,
Accented\(^4\) with sighs, and poyned\(^5\) with teares.

\textbf{Exeunt.}

---

\(^1\) 277: \textit{in-vilde}: “dubbed”. “This seems to be a Scots form of a rare obsolete word, “to invite”, (like Italian \textit{invilare}, given by Florio (1598) “to embase”). The N.E.D. gives only one illustration – Daniel, \textit{Musophilus} (1599), cix. In Scots, ‘wil, wyl’ is common for ‘vile’” (K. & Ch.).

\(^2\) 281: \textit{pretending for to take}: “claiming possession of” (K. & Ch.).

\(^3\) 283: \textit{ruthfull}: lamentable, piteous, rueful. (N.E.D).

\(^4\) 293: \textit{Accented}: heightened, sharpened, intensified (N.E.D.).

\(^5\) 294: \textit{poynted}: “to point” means here ‘to make the proper stops or pauses in something read or spoken (N.E.D.), hence: interrupted by.
What needs me more of my mishap to pause?
Though I haue tasted of afflictions cup,
Yet it may be, the gods for a good cause
Haue cast me downe to raise a thousand vp.
   And neuer let a Monarch after me,
Trust in betraying titles glorious bates¹,
Who with such borrow’d feathers rashlie flee,
Fall melted² with the wrath of greater states;
   O had this pretious wit enrich’d my mind,
Which by experience I haue dearely bought,
Whilst fortune was within my court confind,
And that I could not thinke a better thought.
   Then satsisfide with Soueraignties earst prou’d,
I had disdain’d new dangers to imbrace,
And cloath’d with maiestie, admir’d and lou’d,
Had liu’d with pleasure, and had dide in peace.
   Yet it is wonderfull in any state,
To see a worldling prosper, and not prow’d:
But chieflie we whose fortunes grow so great,
It’s hard for vs to haue our high thoughts bowed.
What could the world afford, or man affect,
Which did not glad my soule whilst I was such?
Who now am past the compasse of respect,
Plagu’d with prosperitie, clog’d³ with too much.

¹ 300: bates: obsolete variant of “baites” (N.E.D.).
² 302: melted: “cause to disappear” or “knock down, properly by a stroke in the side, where the melt or spleen lies“ (N.E.D.).
³ 318: clog’d: burdened, surfeited (N.E.D.).
Long luld asleep with scornfull fortunes lyes,
A slaue to pleasure , drown’d in base delights,
I made a covenant with my wandring eyes,
T’ haue entertain’d them still with pleasant sights.
I held not from my heart none of her wishes,
But wallowing in vaine-glorie this words toy,
Still seru’d with daintie, but suspitious dishes,
My soule was sick with pleasure, faint for ioy.
There wanted nothing that might help to ease me,
All did diuine' my will, ayme at my thought,
And striue to do that which they trow’d would please me,
Which if I but allowd, no more was sought.
What euer come of me was held of waight,
My words were ballanc’d and my lookes were marked,
Those whom I grac’d were had in honour straight,
All speeches in my praises were imbarked’.
I in magnificence exceld all Kings,
Whilst drowsie in securitie I slumbred,
My coffers still were full of pretious things,
My treasure infinite could not be numbred.
I reard rare buildings all embost with gold;
Made ponds for fishes, forrests for wild beasts,
And with transported fancies vncontrold,
Oft spent the day in sport, the night in feasts.

1 328: *diuine*: make out, conjecture, guess (N.E.D.).
2 329: *trow’d*: thought, supposed (N.E.D.).
3 334: *imbarked*: “The metaphor seems to be ‘every speech was wrapped round with praises of me’ – as a tree is completely wrapped round with bark.” (K. & Ch.).
I seem’d t’ usurp the powre that earst was;
340 Made ponds for fishes, forrests for wild beasts,
And with transported fancies vncontrold,
Oft spent the day in sport, the night in feasts.

I seem’d t’ usurp the powre that earst was Ioues,
And of the Elements the course would change,
345 For stately fountaines, artificiall groues,
These were so common, they were not thought strange
With me (what more could any Monarch craue)
In all the parts of pomp none could compare,
My minions gallant, my counsellours graue,
350 My guards were strong, my concubines were faire:
Yea ere my state was cast vpon this shelve,
I wanted nought that could with seeming merites
Breed wonder in the world, pride in ones selfe,
For to puffe vp the flesh and spoile the spirites.
355
Thus pressing with delight the grapes of pleasure,
I quafft with Fortune still sense-pleasing vines,
Till drunke with wealth, and riotous out of measure,
I card not to cousume¹ all Tmolus² mines,
Then wearie to be well, and tir’d of rest,
360 T’ engender discord I th’ occasion sought,
Yet for to cloake t’ ambition of my breast,
Did with deuotion long disguise my thought,
I send of all the Oracles to inquire,
What was to come of this intended warre,
365 Who said as seem’d to second my desire,
That I a mightie Monarchie should marre.

¹ 358: cousume: misprint for “consume”.
² 358: Tmolus mines: see note on V, i, 106.
Those doubtfull words I wresting to my will,
In hope t’ expugne1 th’ imperious Persians powres,
Did ruine quite whilst all succeeded ill.

What many a age had conquer’d in few howres.
And this most wondrous is, because most strange,
I who disdain’d an equall of before,
(What cannot Fortune do, being bent to change)
Must a Superior now serue, and adore?

What eye not fraught with scorne my state surueyes?
Whom Fates haue forc’d for to o’re-liue my shame,
And in my enemies danger2 for some dayes,
But borrowd with the intrest of my fame.

Though this sweet gale of life-bestowing windes,
Would seeme a fauour (so it seemes to some,
Who by the basenesse of their muddie mindes,
Show of th’ ignoble multitude they come)
I scorne vnlike3 my selfe for to be seene,
Though to my comfort this appeard to tend,

As if that all misfortunes past had beene,
A Tragicke entrie to a Comicke end4.

Of all that plague my state the greatest pest
Is a base life, that faints5 from th’ earth to seuer,
And hath in one vnited all the rest,

To make me die each day, and yet die neuer.

---

1 368: *expugne*: to overcome or expel by force of arms; to vanquish, overpower (N.E.D.).
2 377: *in mine enemies danger*: at my enemy’s mercy (N.E.D.).
3 383: *vnlike*: in a manner different from (N.E.D.). What Cræsus means is that he loathes to be seen in a dejected state, since he is no longer a splendid king.
4 386: Another metaphor based on the theatre.
5 388: *faints*: is afraid, flags (N.E.D.).
Life in my breast no comfort can infuse,
An enemies gift could neuer come for good,
It but giues time of miserie to muse,
And bathe my sorrowes in a bitter flood.

Ah! had my breath euanish’d with my blisse,
And closde the windowes that giue light to life,
I had not apprehended as it is
The height of my mishaps that now are rife:
Whist with a thousand sighs I call to mind

The death of Atis and mine owne decay,
My sprite in such perplexitie I find,
That to liues’ passage I would faine make way.

But since I see reseru’d for further spight,
I with sad thoughts must burden yet my soule,

My memorie t’ a melancholious spright,
Of all my troubles shall present a scroule.

Of which while as th’ amount I go to cast,
Th’ enormities’ still numbring of my fate,
I’le whiles looke back vpon my pleasure past,

And by them ballance my (now) haplesse state.

---

1 402: *liues*: life’s

2 408: *enormities*: anomalies.
   The N.E.D. gives under “enormity”: something that is abnormal, an irregularity, extravagance, eccentricity.
CHORVS

Is ’t not a wonder for to see,  
How by experience each man reedes,  
In practiz’d volumes pen’d by deeds,  
Th’ inconstant courses that there bee

Yet whilst our selues continue free,  
We ponder oft, but not apply,  
That pretious oyle¹, which me might buy  
Best with the price of others paines:  
Which as what nought to vs pertaines,

To vs we will not condiscend,  
As if we might the Fates defye,  
While as vntouch’d our state remaines:  
But soone the heau’ns a change may send,  
No perfect blisse before the end.

When first we fill with fruitfull seeds,  
The apt-conceauing womb of th’ earth,  
And seeme t’ expell all feare of dearth,  
With the increase that it may breede,  
Yet dangers do our hopes exceede,

The frosts may first with cold confound  
The tender greens² that dect³ the ground,  
Whose wrath though th’ Aprils smiles asswage,  
It hath t’ abide th’ Æolian rage.,

¹ 3: practiz’d, practised: executed or gone through beforehand in order to acquire proficiency in performance (N.E.D.).
² 7: oyle, oil: cf. the “Oil of Mercy” in medieval religious tradition.
⁴ 21: dect: decked, i.e. covered, adorned (N.E.D.).
Which t’ o’repasse whilst we attend,

T’ haue Ceres\(^1\) wandring tresses bound,
The raines let from their cloudie cage,
   May spoyle what we expect to spend,
   No perfect blisse before the end.

Lo whilst the Vine-trees great with grapes

With nectard liquor striues to kisse
Th’ imbracing Elme not lou’d amisse:
Those clusters loose their comely shapes,
Whilst by the thunder burnd in heapes,
All Bacchus hopes fall down and perish:

Thus many a thing doth fairely flourish,
That no perfection can attaine,
And yet we worldlings are so vaine,
That our conceats we highlie bend,
If fortune but our spring-time sherrish,

Though we haue stormes for to sustaine,
   Ere to the haruest our yeeres ascend,
   No perfect blisse before the end.

By all that in this world haue place,
There is a course that must be runne,

And let none iudge himselfe t’ haue wonne,
Till he haue finish’d first his race.
The forrests through the which we trace,
Breed rauenous beasts that do abhorre vs,
And lye in wait for to deoure vs,

Whilst brambles do our steps beguile.

\(^1\) 25: Ceres: Greek Demeter, the goddess of the earth in its capacity of bringing forth fruits and grain (Enc. Am);
The feare of which though we exile,
And to our marke\(^1\) with gladnes tend:\(^2\)
Then balles of gold are laid before vs,
To entertaine our thoughtes a while,
\[55\]
And our good meaning to suspend,
No perfect blisse before the end.

Behold how Croesus long hath liu’d,
Throughout this spatious world admir’d,
And hauing all that he desir’d
\[60\]
A thousand meanes of ioy contriu’d,
Yet now is suddenly depriv’d
Of all that wealth, and strangely falles;
For euyery thing his sprite appalles;
His Sonnes decease, his Countries losse;
\[65\]
And his owne State which huge stormes tosse:
Thus he, who could not apprehend,
Whilst as he slept in marble walles,
No, nor imagine any crosse,
To beare all those, his breast must lend:
\[70\]
No perfect blisse before the end.

And we the Lydians that design’d
To raigne ouer all that were about vs,
Behold how Fortune flowt vs,
And hath vs utterly resign’d:\(^3\):

\[^1\] 52: marke: a post or other object placed to indicate the terminal point of a race; a goal.
    Often figurative: an object desired and striven for (N.E.D.).
\[^2\] 52: tend: make our way to, move or proceed towards (N.E.D.).
\[^3\] 74: resign’d: abandoned, given up (N.E.D.).
For we that had t’ our selues assign’d
A Monarchie, but knew not how,
That thought to make the world to bow,
That at our forces stood afraid;
We, we, by whom these plots were laid,
To thinke of bondage must descend,
And beare the yoke of others now;
O it is truth, that Solon said,
While as he yet doth breath extend¹;
No man is blest, behold the end.

F I N I S  W. A.

¹ 83: *extend*: has possession of (N.E.D.); hence: As long as he breathes (lives).
1. WORKS OF REFERENCE.


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APPENDIX A

The Ptolemaic World Picture

“This sea-environ’d centred ball” (Chorus of Act I, line 7): see p. 91