Commentary Project: Z. 392-413

The theme of family runs throughout this passage as Homer explores the bounds of public and private life for the royal family of Troy. This passage breaks down into three main portions: Andromache intercepting her husband Hector, Hector sharing a tender moment with his family, and the first portion of Andromache’s plea to her husband to deter him from battle.

392-ἐὕτε: relat. adv. ‘when’

ἤκανε > ἱκάνω: ‘to come to,’ ‘to reach’

393-ἐμελλε διεξίμεναι: Willcock contends that this shows Hector’s immediate intention to head to the plain rather than searching for his wife (215), while Kirk considers it “inconceivable” that Hector would not attempt to find Andromache after being informed of her location, reading this phrase as suggesting that Hector will eventually pass through the gate and onto the plain (210).

ἐμελλε > μέλλω: ‘to intend, to think of doing, to be about to do’

διεξίμεναι: pres. infin. > διεξέναι, ‘to go out of’

394-πολύδωρος: ‘much giving, richly dowered’ This word occurs 3x in the Il. and Od., with “ἄλοχος πολύδωρος” as a standard formula (TLG). Kirk emphasizes that this refers specifically to Andromache’s substantial dowry gifts rather than her own generosity (211). This word establishes that Andromache’s family is important, as Willcock notes that “the more important the connection, the bigger the gifts” (249).
ἐναντίη > ἐναντίος: ‘opposite’

395-7-Etion’s death during the sacking of Thebe by Achilles is mentioned in Z.416-28. Kirk notes that Andromache’s mother “was captured and later ransomed.” Andromache had come to Troy to wed Hector before the Greeks conquered her father’s kingdom (Kirk 211).

396-Ἡετίων—“repeated from the previous line; it has been attracted into the case of the relative which follows it” (Willcock 248). “An emotive epanalepsis” (Kirk 211).

Πλάκω: “Plakos is thought to have been a spur of Mount Ida, near Troy” (Willcock 248).

ὑλήσσῃ > ὑλῆις: ‘wooded’

397-Κλίκεσσα’: These are not the Kilikes of South Eastern Asia minor (Willcock 249; Kirk 211).

398-ἐχεθ’: pass. impf. > ἔχετο, ‘was married’ (Willcock 248)

Ἔκτορι: dat. of advantage not dat. of agent (Kirk 211)

399-ἀμφίπολος: ‘handmaid’

400-1- Buxton observes that this simile is “so dense and unelaborated” that interpretation is “left wide open,” so the boy could have a star’s radiance or, in keeping with Aeschylean metaphor in which a person compared to a thing is in some way the thing to which he is compared, could be a star, “Astyanax-as-star” (144). Kirk resists such readings which treat Astyanax as a star and which consider Astyanax’s being likened to a fair star as an ill omen in that the comparison links the babe to the robe described as “ἀστήρ δ’ ὁς ἀπέλαμπε,” which Hecuba presents to Athena in her failed supplication in Z.295. Such readings see Hector’s holding the star-like baby while praying that Astyanax grow up to be greater than his father (Z.476-81) as a sign that his prayer, like Hecuba’s, will ultimately be rejected.

Kirk maintains that the star simile adds to the sympathetic quality of the babe in its nurse’s arms rather than portending an ill omen (212).
κόλπω: dat. of place > κόλπος: ‘bosom’
νήπιον ἀυτῶς: ‘just a baby’ (Willcock 248)

Kirk suggests Hector naming his son Scamander after a local river or its god constitutes
“an act of local piety” (212), whereas Astyanax, meaning “ruler of the city” (Willcock 248), is used as a nickname by the Trojans to show respect for Hector (Kirk 212). Benner
suggests that the name Ἐκτόρ may derive from the word ἔχω and “mean ‘upholder or
‘defender’” (277). Scamander may actually be the nickname though, in light of later uses of
the name in X.506 as well as uses of καλέοθςιν at Σ.487 and X. 29 (Kirk 212).

μείδησεν: > μείδάω (originally σμ-), ‘to smile.’ This is the only example in Homer of
μείδησεν occurring outside of the formular usage “ὡς φάτο, μείδησεν,” which appears 12x
in the ll. and Od. (TLG).

This first part of Andromache’s speech to her husband begging him not to return to battle
focuses on her family. This speech picks up on the family theme in the description of
Andromache at lines 395-7. Kirk points out that she uses a great deal of enjambment in this
section, “with internal breaks and continuous overrunning…suggesting excitement and
unhappiness” (213).

μένος: means ‘physical strength,’ but here refers to Hector’s “rash and heroic attitude
[which his] strength gives rise to” (Kirk 214). Kirk points to the similarities between this
speech and the speech Andromache will give following Hector’s death in X.482f, including
the emphasis on the very helpless child, παῖδα τε νηπίαχον (214).

νηπίαχον > νηπίαχος: diminutive of νήπιος ‘childish,’ ‘helpless’
κέρδιον εἶ (κέρδιον + other form of ‘to be’) is a formula occurring 11x Il. and 16x in Od.

Kirk notes that “ἐμοὶ δέ κε κέρδιον εἶ Ἑμείς recur[s] exactly at Od. 2.74” in a speech made by Telemachus (214).

θαλπωρή: ‘comfort’

ἐπίσπης: aor. sub. > ἐφέπω, ‘encounter’

πατήρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ is a formula occurring 8x Il. and 4x Od. (TLG). Benner maintains that this line informed part of a speech by Tecmessa in Sophocles’ Ajax (277):

cαὶ μητέρ’ ἄλλη μοίρα τὸν φύσαντά τε καθεῖλεν, or ‘That fate destroyed my mother and my father’ (lines 514-5).
Works Cited


