

Comparison of Translations:

(JB) © 2019 by James H. Buckingham
 (CJH) © 2011 by C. John Holcombe (in rhyming verse)
 (JD) by J. Donskersley, 1873 from Project Gutenberg

RACINE'S *ATHALIE*ⁱ*Athalie* 2.5.485-506ⁱⁱ

ATHALIE / ATHALIAH

Mais un trouble importun vient, depuis quelques jours, 485

But a troublesome trouble has been coming in the last few days, (JB)

And yet, for some days past, anxiety (CJH)

A sleepless trouble to arrest the course (JD)

De mes prospérités interrompre le cours.

From my prosperity I will interrupt the course. (JB)

has interrupted my prosperity. (CJH)

Of my prosperity. A dream (why should a dream (JD)

Un songe (me devrais-je inquiéter d'un songe?)

A dream (should I worry about a dream?) (JB)

A dream (why should a dream so make me start?) (CJH)

Disquiet me?) feeds in my heart a pang (JD)

Entretient dans mon coeur un chagrin qui le ronge.

Keeps in my heart a sorrow that gnaws at it. (JB)

awakens some deep sorrow in the heart. (CJH)

That wrings it; everywhere I try to shun it; (JD)

Je l'évite partout, partout il me poursuit.

I avoid it everywhere, everywhere it pursues me. (JB)

I shun it everywhere, but into sight (CJH)

But everywhere it follows me. It was (JD)

C'était pendant l'horreur d'une profonde nuit. 490

It was during the horror of a deep night. (JB)

it thrusts itself, and though an endless night. (CJH)

During the horror of the night profound, (JD)

Ma mère Jézabel devant moi s'est montrée,

My mother Jezebel showed herself before me, (JB)

My mother Jezebel was there in breath (CJH)

My mother, Jezebel, before me stood, (JD)

Comme au jour de sa mort pompeusement parée.

As on the day of her death, pompously adorned. (JB)

as dressed upon that fateful day of death. (CJH)

Apparelled gorgeously, as on the day (JD)

Ses malheurs n'avaient point abattu sa fierté;

Her misfortunes had not beaten her pride; (JB)

Her misadventures had not dimmed the pride (CJH)

Of her decease; misfortunes had not crushed (JD)

Même elle avait encor cet éclat emprunté

She still had that same borrowed shine (JB)

but through a borrowed radiance she tried (CJH)

Her dignity; and even she had still (JD)

Dont elle eut soin de peindre et d'orner son visage, 495

Of which she took care to paint and adorn her face, (JB)

to curb the ravages that years would trace (CJH)

That borrowed tint, with which it was her care (JD)

Pour réparer des ans l'irréparable outrage.

To repair from the years the irreparable outrage. (JB)

across her ornamented, painted face. (CJH)

To bloom and ornament her countenance,

In order to repair the ravages (JD)

«Tremble, m'a-t-elle dit, fille digne de moi.

"Tremble," she told me, "daughter worthy of me. (JB)

'Tremble, you who take my bloodline too,' (CJH)

Of years irreparable. 'Tremble, daughter,

Thou worthy of myself, ' to me she said; (JD)

Le cruel Dieu des Juifs l'emporte aussi sur toi.

The cruel God of the Jews also prevails over you. (JB)
 she said. 'The Jews' harsh god will weigh on you, (CJH)
 'The cruel God of Judah over thee (JD)

Je te plains de tomber dans ses mains redoutables,

I pity you to fall into His formidable hands, (JB)
 and fall you will into his fearsome arms, (CJH)
 Will certainly prevail: I pity thee, (JD)

Ma fille.» En achevant ces mots épouvantables, 500

My daughter." By finishing these terrible words (JB)
 my daughter.' Uttering such wild alarms (CJH)
 My daughter, falling into His dread hands.'
 These fearful words completed, towards my bed (JD)

Son ombre vers mon lit a paru se baisser;

Her shadow ~~has~~ appeared to bend down towards my bed; (JB, corrected)
 across the bed, and bent on darkened space (CJH)
 Her shadow seemed to bend itself, and I (JD)

Et moi, je lui tendais les mains pour l'embrasser.

And I was holding out my hands to embrace her. (JB)
 was shape of one I hastened to embrace, (CJH)
 Held out my arms in order to embrace it; (JD)

Mais je n'ai plus trouvé qu'un horrible mélange

~~But I no longer have found that one horrible mixture~~ (JB)
 Now no longer anything but one horrible mix (JB, corrected)
 but in those arms I found a smeared-out mesh (CJH)
 But only found confusion horrible (JD)

D'os et de chair meurtris, et traînés dans la fange,

Of bones and of bruised flesh, and dragged through the mud, (JB)
 of interdigitated bones and flesh, (CJH)
 Of mangled bones and flesh dragged in the mud, (JD)

Des lambeaux pleins de sang, et des membres affreux 505

From shreds full of blood and from rubbish limbs (JB)

those scraps of blood and frightful body cause (CJH)

And tatters soaked in gore, of hideous limbs, (JD)

Que des chiens dévorants se disputaient entre eux.

That devouring dogs were fighting over among themselves. (JB)

for dogs to tear at with their hungry jaws. (CJH)

That dogs, devouring, fought for with each other. (JD)

ⁱ Jean Racine (1639-1699), French dramatist who mainly wrote tragedies. *Athalie* was his last tragedy, written in 1691. A writer of the pseudo-classical style. Used a rhyming French Alexandrine meter for his verse, 12 syllables/line.

ⁱⁱ Did not plan on translating the original French text, but after a quick scan of the atrocious translations on the Internet, I really had no choice.

All French to English translations are by James H. Buckingham.