

## Helen to Paris

Paris, if only I might have not read what I've read,  
I might indeed retain your good regard as before.  
Now that my eyes have been troubled by your letter,  
I take pride in not replying lightly. (...)  
But if I wished now to cross the bounds of modesty,  
you yourself would be a better reason for my sin.  
Either I'll keep my name forever without stain  
or I'll follow you rather than your gifts.  
While I don't reject them, gifts are always the most acceptable  
when the author of them has made them precious.  
Also, persistent man, I notice what you do now  
when the tables are laid, though I try to pretend  
when you only look at me with your eyes, impudent, bold,  
the gaze which my eyes can scarcely bear,  
and now you sigh, and now you take the cup nearest me,  
and where I drank from, you drink from that place too.  
Ah, how many times I've seen your fingers, how many times,  
giving secret signals, and your eyebrows almost speaking!  
And often I've been fearful lest my husband might see it,  
and I blushed at the signs you didn't sufficiently hide. (...)  
It's also I confess your rare beauty: and a girl  
could want to fall into your embrace.  
But some other might be made happier, without sinning,  
rather than that my honour fall to a foreign lover.  
Only, learn by example to be able to do without beauty:  
virtue is to refrain from self-indulgent pleasures. (...)  
I beg you, stop tearing my heart apart sweetly with your words,  
don't hurt me, whom you say you love:  
but allow me to keep the situation fate has granted,  
and don't shamefully make a prize of my honour. (...)  
Indulge, but secretly! I'm given more freedom  
though not total, because Menelaus is away. (...)  
While it's new, we should fight love's inception the more!  
A fresh flame dies sprinkled with a little water.  
Love is not certain in a guest: it wanders, like himself,  
and, when you think nothing's more certain, vanishes. (...)  
And as Venus favours you, because she triumphed, and holds  
the double trophy through your choice (the apple and her beauty),  
so I am afraid of those other two, if your boast is true,  
who, through your decision, lost their cause:  
I've no doubt, if I followed you, war would be prepared.  
Our love would travel among weapons, alas! (...)  
Let the brave wage war, you, Paris, always love!  
Command Hector, whom you praise, to fight for you:  
your skills are in another kind of battle. (...)