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# Troilus and Cressida

*The Cambridge Dover Wilson Shakespeare*

VOLUME 36

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

EDITED BY JOHN DOVER WILSON



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TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

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# TROILUS AND CRESSIDA



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## PREFATORY NOTE

As regards both text and commentary *Troilus and Cressida* sets an editor one of the most difficult tasks in the canon. Dr Alice Walker therefore earns my special gratitude by accepting full responsibility for everything in the present volume except the Stage History, which belongs as usual to Mr C. B. Young.

J.D.W.

My thanks are due to Professor Dover Wilson, who made arrangements for the frontispiece and other facsimiles, and to Mr C. B. Young for ready help with proof-reading. I owe a very special debt to Miss J. R. Bacon and Professor G. D. Willcock for the time they have so generously given to friendly discussion of this edition in all its stages and to reading all in typescript.

A.W.

## INTRODUCTION

We first hear of what is probably Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* in a Stationers' Register entry of 7 February 1603, when James Roberts was conditionally licensed to print a play of this title belonging to the Chamberlain's men.<sup>1</sup> We hear of what is certainly this play in a second entry of 28 January 1609, when 'a booke called the history of Troylus and Cressida' was licensed to Richard Bonian and Henry Walley<sup>2</sup> for, in accordance with this entry, a quarto appeared the same year, attributing the play to Shakespeare.<sup>3</sup> But before the quarto was published the original title-page was cancelled in order to withdraw the statement that the play had been acted 'by the Kings Maiesties seruants at the Globe'.<sup>4</sup> At the same time a preface was added, describing it as 'a new play, neuer stal'd with the Stage' and as the wittiest of Shakespeare's comedies. We are led to infer that it was published against the wishes of the players and the preface closes with a prayer 'for the states of their wits healths that will not praise it'.

This early eulogy seems to have been wide of the

<sup>1</sup> 'in full Court, to print when he hath gotten sufficient authority: the booke of Troilus and Cressida, as yt is acted by my Lord Chamberlens men' (Greg, *Bibliography of the English Printed Drama to the Restoration*, I (1939), item 279).

<sup>2</sup> 'lic. Segar deputy to G. Bucke: a booke called the history of Troylus and Cressida' (Greg, as above).

<sup>3</sup> See facsimile title-pages (frontispiece and p. lvii).

<sup>4</sup> On the two states of the preliminaries (formerly taken as two issues of the quarto) see Philip Williams, 'The "Second Issue" of Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, 1609' (in *Studies in Bibliography*, University of Virginia, II (1949), pp. 25-33).

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mark in the estimate of most later critics, who have found the play less a birth of Shakespeare's brain than an abortion—lacking in dramatic effectiveness, in unity of style and purpose, and in respect for what Homer and Chaucer had treated with such generosity of spirit. Hence it has been doubted whether the play was wholly Shakespeare's: some would exclude the Prologue, others the Epilogue, and others most of Act 5. Many have thought that it was begun about the time of *The Merchant of Venice* and completed *c.* 1602 or even later (*c.* 1606–8). It has been interpreted as a contribution to the War of the Theatres (directed against Ben Jonson), as a political allegory (a mirror for the Earl of Essex), and as the bitter expression of some personal experience.<sup>1</sup> There is even no agreement on the kind of play intended, for the quarto praised it as a comedy and Jaggard classified it as a tragedy; in 1938 O. J. Campbell<sup>2</sup> labelled it a 'comical satire', but in 1940 E. K. Chambers<sup>3</sup> preferred to call it 'a tragedy of disillusionment'.

I. *Comedy or Tragedy?*

This is the first question to be asked, and it seems to me that to see Troilus as a tragic figure is to ignore the many precautions Shakespeare took to preclude a

<sup>1</sup> What the diversity of opinion has been, and still is, can be seen from the New Variorum edition, edited by Hillebrand and Baldwin (1953). Since this gives so recent a survey, it has seemed to me unnecessary to give more than my own interpretation of Shakespeare's aims and I have simply developed some of the views expressed in my review of the New Variorum edition (in *Review of English Studies*, N.S. v (1954), pp. 288–91).

<sup>2</sup> *Comical Satyre and Shakespeare's 'Troilus and Cressida'* (1938).

<sup>3</sup> 'Shakespeare: An Epilogue' (in *Review of English Studies*, xvi (1940), p. 400).

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sentimental interest in the love story. Troilus' infatuation is never allowed to engage our sympathies. There is anticlimax in his first entry, for the heroic temper of the 'Prologue armed' is at once abated by the fretful Troilus, preparing to unarm and apathetic about the quarrel:

Call here my varlet; I'll unarm again:  
 Why should I war without the walls of Troy  
 That find such cruel battle here within?  
 Each Trojan that is master of his heart,  
 Let him to field; Troilus, alas, hath none!  
*Pandarus.* Will this gear ne'er be mended?

Throughout the first scene, the juxtaposition of cliché-packed verse and colloquial prose prepares the audience for Pandarus' role as a comic bias in the love story, and his fatuous and farcical ubiquity keeps it for most of its course on the highroad of broad comedy:

*Pandarus.* Have you seen my cousin?  
*Troilus.* No, Pandarus; I stalk about her door,  
 Like a strange soul upon the Stygian banks  
 Staying for waftage. O, be thou my Charon,  
 And give me swift transportance to those fields  
 Where I may wallow in the lily beds  
 Proposed for the deserver! O gentle Pandar,  
 From Cupid's shoulder pluck his painted wings,  
 And fly with me to Cressid!

(3. 2. 7-15)

That such transports were intentionally ridiculous is deftly conveyed by the simplicity of Pandarus' reply:

Walk here i'th'orchard; I'll bring her straight.

Shakespeare's manipulation of Pandarus throughout this scene—encouraging and expostulating, admiring and instructing, and finally shepherding the lovers to bed—keeps the comic design to the fore with an

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adroitness which is all the more effective because Pandarus is unconscious of his own buffoonery. To see him as fooling with the deliberate aim of relieving the tension<sup>1</sup> is to make him less an object of ridicule in himself than he is.

In conformity with this comic intention, Cressida is immediately shown as anything but the pearl or Daphne of Troilus' fancy. Her trite avowal in the couplets which conclude 1. 2 clinches what Shakespeare has demonstrated throughout this scene—that Cressida is cheap stuff not only in what she says but in the way she says it.<sup>2</sup> Since there went but a pair of shears between uncle and niece in so far as both speak colloquial prose, Alexander, her servant, is used as a foil to Cressida's uncouthness. His elaborate conceit of the husbandman (1. 2. 7-11) and the copiousness of his character of Ajax (1. 2. 19-30) contrast conspicuously with Cressida's bald questions and blunt answers, and when Alexander has served this dramatic purpose he disappears from the Trojan scene. When Troilus later

<sup>1</sup> G. Wilson Knight (*The Wheel of Fire* (1930), pp. 65-7) found Pandarus akin to the Fool in *Lear* and the symptoms of venereal disease (5. 3. 104-5) pathetic. The old Vice is a buffoon in his noisy, hurly-burly manners (Cressida twice rebukes him in 1. 2 for speaking too loudly—ll. 185, 231), and it is not to be supposed that the legacy of diseases he promised in the Epilogue was intended as a recommendation.

<sup>2</sup> Cressida is—as one would expect—something of a chameleon, whose manners and speech take colour from her environment, but it needs the stimulus of flirtation to oil her tongue. She is noticeably unresponsive to Alexander's wit and it is significant that, face to face with Cressida for the first time (3. 2), Troilus for the first time speaks prose. Alexander has to make the same concession in his reply to Cressida's captious and inelegant 'So do all men, unless they are drunk, sick, or have no legs' (1. 2. 17-18).

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asks concerning Helen ‘What’s aught, but as ’tis valued?’ (2. 2. 52), the audience already knows what the answer is in respect of Cressida. She has, in fact, said it:

Men prize the thing ungained more than it is.  
(1. 2. 290)

It is in Hector’s reply to Troilus’ question that Shakespeare clarifies the dramatic significance of Troilus’ infatuation, which, despite its mainly farcical course, springs from a deeper and more far-reaching comic purpose than mere burlesque. In this scene of giddy eloquence (2. 2), the Trojan ship of state proves a bauble boat, driven by every wind but that of reason. Hector is, indeed, more culpable than Troilus, for he abandons what he knows to be prudent and right to satisfy his own obsession—love of honour. The debate (if anything so volatile can be dignified by that name) is a family matter and provides scope for a free exchange of home truths between the Trojan brothers. In this respect, Shakespeare followed tradition.<sup>1</sup> What he adds of significance for the love story is Hector’s warning to Troilus of the dangers of self-will and ‘mad idolatry’:

*Troilus.* What’s aught, but as ’tis valued?

*Hector.* But value dwells not in particular will:

It holds his estimate and dignity

As well wherein ’tis precious of itself

As in the prizer. ’Tis mad idolatry

To make the service greater than the god;

And the will dotes that is attributive

To what infectiously itself affects,

Without some image of th’affected merit.

(2. 2. 52–60)

<sup>1</sup> See note to 2. 2 for an account of the source material for this scene.

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The outcome of Troilus' infatuation is thus foreshadowed not only in Cressida's character but in his own lack of judgement, and however painful his disillusionment may be when he has to reassess Cressida's imagined worth with what it proves to be (5. 2), Shakespeare takes the precaution of deflecting the audience's sympathies by the blunt comment of Thersites—

Will 'a swagger himself out on's own eyes?  
(5. 2. 136)

and by the astringent judgement of Ulysses, who is shocked by his wild generalizations ('What hath she done, prince, that can soil our mothers?', 5. 2. 134) and by his hysterical blindness to reason:

May worthy Troilus be but half attached  
With that which here his passion doth express?  
*Troilus.* Ay, Greek; and that shall be divulgéd well  
In characters as red as Mars his heart  
Inflamed with Venus. Never did young man fancy  
With so eternal and so fixed a soul.  
Hark, Greek: as much as I do Cressid love,  
So much by weight hate I her Diomed.  
That sleeve is mine that he'll bear on his helm.  
Were it a casque composed by Vulcan's skill,  
My sword should bite it. Not the dreadful spout  
Which shipmen do the hurricano call,  
Constringed in mass by the almighty sun,  
Shall dizzy with more clamour Neptune's ear  
In his descent, than shall my prompted sword  
Falling on Diomed. (5. 2. 161-176)

Though one may feel sorry for Troilus, revenge on Diomedes (seeing red instead of seeing reason) will no more restore his shattered illusion than threats of vengeance on Achilles will later bring Hector back to life.

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Through the means of shrewder commentators than the silly Pandarus, Shakespeare makes his satiric purpose clear in this scene, and it is the more pointed because what Ulysses says here expresses his own judgement. The eulogy of Troilus put into his mouth at 4. 5. 96 ff. simply records the opinion of Æneas, and the sum total of Troilus is no more here than the sum total of Hector is contained in Æneas' praise of his valour and modesty a little earlier (4. 5. 78–82).

It is a mistake to think that Shakespeare's anatomy of folly spares the Trojans. They wear the motley with better grace but they are as much the victims of ruling passions as the Greeks. When we first hear of Hector (1. 2. 4 ff.), the shame of having been worsted by Ajax has fouled his temper:

He chid Andromache and struck his armourer;  
(1. 2. 6)

and when he leaves Troy to meet his death at the hands of Achilles (5. 3), he is deaf to every claim but that of 'honour'. There is unconscious irony in his warning to Troilus of the dangers of 'mad idolatry' and again in the condescension of his rebuke to Troilus and Paris a little later (2. 2. 163 ff.) for, after arguing in favour of the law of nature and of nations, which require the return of Helen, what he finally proposes is to keep her,

For 'tis a cause that hath no mean dependence  
Upon our joint and several dignities. (2. 2. 192–3)

Here again, Shakespeare gives an ironic twist to his source by inventing a *volte-face* which makes Hector as vulnerable to satire as the thoughtless Troilus. That most of the Greeks are satirically represented seems not to be in question.



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If a comprehensive comic purpose is kept in mind, what have seemed to many critics inconsistencies in style and temper fall into focus. What superficially resembles the manner of the mid-nineties in the love story proves merely a caricature of devices which had become fair game for ridicule by the turn of the century. In 1. 1, which has often been regarded as early work, Troilus' constant recourse to classical allusion, hyperbole, apostrophe and aposiopesis, his trite similes and ingenuous metaphors, are as intentionally ridiculous as his call to Pandar to pluck Cupid's wings in 3. 2:

Tell me, Apollo, for thy Daphne's love,  
What Cressid is, what Pandar, and what we?  
Her bed is India; there she lies, a pearl;  
Between our Ilium and where she resides  
Let it be called the wild and wandering flood;  
Ourself the merchant, and this sailing Pandar,  
Our doubtful hope, our convoy and our bark.

(1. 1. 100-6)

This is affected and strained calculation, and it was meant to be, for it sterilizes the love story by substituting artifice for ardour. This is why it is both like and unlike the genuinely lyrical vein of the romantic comedies.

In the same way, if we keep a satiric purpose in mind, the closing scenes round off the design as a whole. Dryden was in error when he saw them as 'nothing but a confusion of drums and trumpets, excursions and alarms',<sup>1</sup> for the frenzied Troilus, the honour-seeking Hector, the mean Achilles and the foaming Ajax are not part of the old-fashioned chronicle play symbolism, in which a crooked figure might attest a million, but

<sup>1</sup> 'Preface to *Troilus and Cressida*', 1679 (*Essays of John Dryden*, ed. W. P. Ker, 1, p. 203).

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individuals madly intent on personal ends—an ironic commentary on the chivalric manifesto of the Trojans in 2. 2—

She is a theme of honour and renown (l. 199)

—and the dignified proposition of the Prologue:

Sixty and nine, that wore  
Their crownets regal, from th'Athenian bay  
Put forth toward Phrygia, and their vow is made  
To ransack Troy, within whose strong immures  
The ravished Helen, Menelaus' queen,  
With wanton Paris sleeps—and that's the quarrel.

In the closing scenes the quarrel is remembered only in so far as 'the cuckold and the cuckold-maker are at it', tarred on by the cynical Thersites, who recognizes the scene for the bear-garden it is:

Now, bull! now, dog! 'Loo, Paris, 'loo; now, my double-horned Spartan! 'loo, Paris, 'loo! The bull has the game.  
Ware horns, ho! (5. 7. 10–12)

But this is the only reminder of Helen. Hector is afield 'i'th'vein of chivalry' (5. 3. 32):

*Hector.* What art thou, Greek? Art thou for Hector's match?

Art thou of blood and honour?

*Thersites.* No, no; I am a rascal; a scurvy railing knave; a very filthy rogue.

*Hector.* I do believe thee. Live. (5. 4. 25–9)

Troilus and Diomedes are battling for the sleeve; Achilles is savagely bent on revenge for the death of Patroclus, 'weeping, cursing, vowing vengeance' (5. 5. 31); Ajax 'hath lost a friend, And foams at mouth...Roaring for Troilus' (5. 5. 35–7). The Greeks indeed draw together (5. 5. 44), though not

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from policy or in the common interest but to settle personal scores. Such folly could not end better than it does, nor does Shakespeare ever lead us to suppose that it would. To Ulysses 'the death-tokens' of Achilles' plaguey pride cry 'no recovery' (2. 3. 175-6) and there is nothing to suggest that there was more hope for Troilus, who beats the air as wildly and as vainly for Hector as for Cressida.

Campbell was, I think, right when he labelled the play a 'comical satire', aiming, like Ben Jonson's *Every Man Out of His Humour*, at the correction of manners through the ridicule of folly. No major character except Ulysses is distinguished for wisdom. Agamemnon has dignity and magnanimity, but no judgement. He is in error when he takes comfort from History and attributes the Greek failure to the protractive trials of great Jove (1. 3. 1-30); for, as Ulysses argues, it is not the will of the gods but the self-will of man that thwarts their undertaking—the mischief comes from within and not from without. Nestor's courtesy is unflinching, but his silver tongue is garrulous, tuned first to Agamemnon's argument (1. 3. 31-54) and then to Ulysses' (1. 3. 185-96). Achilles' better parts are eaten up by his pride, and Ajax' vanity is only occasionally alleviated by flashes of generosity. Thersites, though as critically alert as Ulysses, gets more pleasure from vice and folly than wisdom. The Trojans, though superficially more agreeable than most of the Greeks, are just as unserviceable. Priam is ineffective and Troilus is giddy-headed. Paris is kindly but a carpet-knight, dancing attendance on Helen:

I would fain have armed today, but my Nell would not have it so.  
(3. 1. 137-8)

And the honey-tongued Helen cultivates her reputation for charm as sedulously as Hector pursues honour:

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'Twill make us proud to be his servant, Paris;  
 Yea, what he shall receive of us in duty  
 Gives us more palm in beauty than we have,  
 Yea, overshines ourself. (3. 1. 156-9)

It is perhaps not an accident that Antenor, 'one o'th' soundest judgements in Troy whosoever' (1. 2. 191-2), appears in three scenes but is always mute.

The soundest judgement of the Greeks has, by contrast, a great deal to say that is not only memorable but very much to the purpose of 'comical satire'. Into Ulysses' role as commentator, Shakespeare freely poured more ample propositions than the mere purge of individual humours could have accommodated—thereby avoiding as well the rigours of Jonsonian plotting. The play ends with seeming casualness by the simple expedient of giving the antic Pandarus the last word and leaving the correction of folly to the audience's own good sense.

II. *Troilus*

In stressing the precautions Shakespeare took to preclude a sentimental interest in the love story, I am not suggesting that Troilus is insincere (for his proverbial 'truth' is not in question) or without attractive qualities. Face to face with the paltering Cressida, he grows in stature because he is as simple as he professes, and the dignity with which he accepts the news that she must be returned to her father is enhanced by the dramatic irony of her clamorous protests. But even in the lines of moving sincerity with which he accepts their parting (4. 4. 33-48), the imagination is carried away from Troilus by the vivid personifications of Misfortune, roughly jostling the lovers out of the picture, and Time the Robber, hastily fumbling up 'as many farewells as be stars in heaven' into 'a loose adieu'. Nor even here is Pandarus any more ceremonious in his

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rich thievery, for he rushes from the scene with a call for tears to lay his sighs before his heart is blown up by the roots. When Lafeu boasted that he was 'Cressid's uncle, That dare leave two together' (*All's Well*, 2. 1. 97–8), he did what Pandarus was never allowed to do for long in this play—and never without anticlimax.

We should therefore allow for a far greater variety of comic emphasis than Campbell did. Troilus' trepidations while awaiting his first meeting with Cressida (3. 2), from which Campbell drew a picture of 'the educated sensuality of an Italianate English roué' (p. 212), seem to me simply amusing hyperbole—a reminder, like Pandarus' excited interruptions, that the scales are weighted against sentimentality. The scene closes in the same merry vein with Pandarus impatiently clapping up their vows with 'Go to, a bargain made' and hustling them away. Thersites' verdict on Troilus is in this connexion important. To Thersites, Troilus is a 'doting foolish young knave' and a 'young Trojan ass' (5. 4. 3–5). The latter seems to me to put Troilus in a nutshell, and it would be strangely lenient from Thersites if it did not contain the kernel of the truth. To Thersites, there is a difference between Troilus on the one hand and the 'whore-masterly' Diomedes (the son of the game) with the 'luxurious drab' Cressida (the daughter of the game) on the other. The head of the Trojan ass is meant, I think, to be of more serious concern than his heart, and for this reason the Trojan council (2. 2) is more important for the understanding of Troilus than the love scenes.

I have already mentioned two of the significant changes Shakespeare made in dramatizing this scene (Hector's warning to Troilus about 'mad idolatry' and the *volte-face* which makes Hector too a legitimate

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object for satire). Another significant departure from tradition occurs at the beginning of 2. 2 when Troilus darts in, after Hector's first pause, with the fantastic notion that so great a king as Priam is not to be controlled 'With spans and inches so diminutive As fears and reasons' (2. 2. 31-2). This provokes Helenus to the spiteful retort that Troilus snaps at reasons because he is 'so empty of them', and how right Helenus is appears throughout the scene as Troilus slithers from one untenable position to another. In 1. 1. 91-5, Helen was not worth fighting for:

Peace, you ungracious clamours! peace, rude sounds!  
 Fools on both sides! Helen must needs be fair  
 When with your blood you daily paint her thus.  
 I cannot fight upon this argument;  
 It is too starved a subject for my sword.

In 2. 2. 81-3,

                                  she is a pearl  
 Whose price hath launched above a thousand ships  
 And turned crowned kings to merchants.

But as soon as Hector has cast his vote for keeping Helen because their 'joint and several dignities' require it, her value slumps again:

Why, there you touched the life of our design:  
 Were it not glory that we more affected  
 Than the performance of our heaving spleens,  
 I would not wish a drop of Trojan blood  
 Spent more in her defence. But, worthy Hector,  
 She is a theme of honour and renown,  
 A spur to valiant and magnanimous deeds,  
 . . . . .

For I presume brave Hector would not lose  
 So rich advantage of a promised glory  
 As smiles upon the forehead of this action  
 For the wide world's revenue. (2. 2. 194-206)

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Helen is of no account in herself, but merely a carrot to be dangled before the nose of the honour-loving Hector. There is no intentional guile in this, but there is a great lack of responsible argument and much confused thinking.

III. *Shakespeare and the Troy story*

Whether the love story had ever exercised an attraction for Shakespeare seems very doubtful. Before the end of the sixteenth century, Cressida was not merely proverbial for her faithlessness but the wretched warning into which Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid* had transformed her<sup>1</sup>—a slut to be mentioned in the same breath as Doll Tearsheet (*Henry V*, 2. 1. 74–7). Pandar was a common noun (=a bawd) and an epithet of abuse for any disreputable go-between; and Pandarus' fall carried Troilus with it. It needed moonlight to work the spell of Troilus on the Trojan walls, sighing for Cressida (*Merchant of Venice*, 5. 1. 1–6). Elsewhere his fidelity is recalled in the name of Petruchio's spaniel (*The Shrew*, 4. 1. 140); but, so long as Pandarus was remembered, Troilus was no more likely to lose his dubious distinction as 'the first employer of pandars' (*Much Ado*, 5. 2. 31) than Leander his association with the Hellespont. All this Shakespeare turns to rich ironic advantage whenever Cressida<sup>2</sup> and Pandarus put their reputations to the hazard of 'that old common arbitrator, Time', and there is nothing to suggest that he had any quarrel with Time's verdict; for what had

<sup>1</sup> According to Henryson's *Testament*, printed first in Thynne's 1532 Chaucer and regarded in Shakespeare's day as Chaucer's, Cressida was cast off by Diomedes, became a prostitute, and died miserably as a leper in the spital, repentant of her wantonness and a warning to women.

<sup>2</sup> This is why the most memorable lines of 3. 2 (ll. 183 ff.) come (at first sight so unexpectedly) from Cressida.

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always fired his imagination was Troy, not Troilus—Vergil's account of the terror of its destruction rather than Chaucer's tragi-comedians. In *Lucrece*, 1366 ff., *2 Henry IV*, 1. 1. 70 ff., and the Player's speech in *Hamlet*, as well as in many passing allusions, Vergil's picture of the fall of Troy was for Shakespeare the symbol of tragic loss and horror. Troilus' associations were with comedy, but Troy's with tragedy, and Vergil may have supplied the hint for Trojan wrong-headedness which Shakespeare developed in his play. It occurs in *Aeneid*, 11. 40–56, when Laocoon, having accused his fellow Trojans of madness for thinking that the Greeks would so lightly have abandoned the siege ('*quae tanta insania, cives?*'), flung his spear at the wooden horse, confident that it meant treachery:

*et si fata deum, si mens non laeva fuisset,*  
*impulerat ferro Argolicas foedare latebras,*  
*Troiaque nunc staret, Priamique arx alta maneres.*

Had Shakespeare carried his story further, Laocoon could have stepped into his picture of Trojan folly straight from Vergil, even sharing with Hector and Troilus the misfortune of seeing the madness of others rather than his own.

IV. *The Audience*

If Shakespeare had ever contemplated a tragedy on the siege of Troy, the signs are that his attention would have been focused on its fall, and on Priam and Hecuba, instead of on the medieval love story, which had become by his day a thoroughly disreputable business and a theme for scald rhymers.<sup>1</sup> To the instructed, Troilus' associations with the archetype of all pandars must have

<sup>1</sup> Cf. p. xlv, n. 3. It is tempting to speculate that the source of the unidentified verses quoted by Pandarus, 4. 4. 16–20, was one of these ballads.



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seemed fair game for ribaldry—and on account of the play's scurrility and the quarto publishers' retraction of the statement that their play had been acted at the Globe, Peter Alexander<sup>1</sup> suggested that it was written for some festivity at one of the Inns of Court. In spite of the lack of supporting external evidence, the suggestion has been generally accepted as it accords with what is known of Inns of Court tastes. Further, the play requires neither inner stage nor balcony—the latter surprisingly if it was meant for the Globe, since the walls of Troy would seem an inevitable accessory in the Trojan scene, as they are indeed in two contemporary plays dealing with the same material—the Admiral's Company plot of a Troilus and Cressida play<sup>2</sup> and Heywood's *Iron Age*.<sup>3</sup>

What Inns of Court revels might amount to is shown by the one full record available—the Gray's Inn Revels of Christmas 1594.<sup>4</sup> With the consent of the Readers and Ancients, the Termers elected a Prince to govern their 'state' and they amused themselves for the twelve days of Christmas in the conduct of mock state business and entertainments appropriate to a court. The revels are (and were) remembered for the tumults and disorders which disgraced the night when *The Comedy of Errors*<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Peter Alexander, 'Troilus and Cressida, 1609' (in *Library*, IX (1929), pp. 267–86).

<sup>2</sup> The plot, which is fragmentary, was printed by Greg, *Henslowe Papers* (1907), p. 142 and in *Dramatic Documents from the Elizabethan Playhouses* (1931). See also New Variorum, pp. 459–61.

<sup>3</sup> The New Variorum prints extracts, pp. 462–88.

<sup>4</sup> Printed as *Gesta Grayorum* in 1688 and edited by Greg (Malone Society Reprints, 1914). I cite from the latter.

<sup>5</sup> The play is described as 'a Comedy of Errors (like to Plautus his *Menechmus*)', p. 22, and is naturally identified with Shakespeare's.

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was performed; but, apart from this one blot on their scutcheon, the Grayans managed their affairs so much to their pleasure that they would have resumed them after the vacation had not 'the Readers and Ancients of the House, by reason of the Term', removed the scaffolds from the Hall and forbidden them to be built up again.<sup>1</sup>

The 'state' of Gray's Inn in 1594 seems to have had attentive listeners with a keen appreciation of verbal ingenuity and good invention, and it needs no stretch of the imagination to see that a legal audience, trained in the debating of cases, would have found more interest and amusement than the general public in the mockery of the young Trojans in council over the return of Helen. The Gray's Inn revels of 1594 were perhaps more ambitious than the average, since they 'had been intermitted by the space of three or four Years, by reason of Sickness and Discontinuances',<sup>2</sup> and discontinuance for reasons other than the plague was ordered by the Benchers of Gray's Inn's close associate, the Inner Temple, in 1611 'For that great disorder and scurrility is brought into this House by lewd and lascivious plays'.<sup>3</sup> But whatever the level of the entertainment, the object of the traditional revels was amusement—a performance in which any tears shed were more likely to be those of laughter than of grief. A high-spirited audience of young men in the forefront of the revolt against sugared love poetry was not likely to waste an evening's fun in sighing over Troilus. On the other hand, a satire on Misrule (a new kind of comedy of errors) might be expected to appeal to the Ancients.

<sup>1</sup> p. 53.

<sup>2</sup> p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Cited Greg, *The Shakespeare First Folio* (1955), p. 340 n. 8.

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Pandarus makes an obvious bid for ticklish young ears in the legal allusions of 3. 2:

How now! a kiss in fee-farm! (ll. 49-50)

Words pay no debts, give her deeds; but she'll bereave you o'th'deeds too, if she call your activity in question. What, billing again? Here's 'In witness whereof the parties interchangeably'— (ll. 54-7)

Go to, a bargain made. Seal it, seal it. I'll be the witness (ll. 196-7)

and at the end of this scene he directly addresses all young Troiluses in the audience, hoping that they will be as fortunate in their pandars. This is why the rejected Pandarus speaks the Epilogue—a ludicrous appeal for the despised bawd, with promise of a testament as undesirable as Cressida's on his return from the powdering-tub of infamy.

In dedicating *Every Man Out of His Humour* (1600) to the Inns of Court, Jonson addressed them as 'the noblest nurseries of humanity and liberty in the kingdom'. In the 1590's they had fostered the first formal satirists, and a mixture of satire and irony with farce and scurrility would presumably have catered for the tastes of both Benchers and Termers. But, whatever the occasion for which *Troilus and Cressida* was written, it can never have appealed to anything but a limited audience, for burlesque and irony are sophisticated tastes—as Beaumont discovered from the failure of even so simple a piece as *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*.

V. *The Satire*

Though it is not surprising that *Troilus and Cressida* has never been popular in the theatre, it is curious that literary critics take no pleasure in it as a book. This is partly due, I suspect, to the mistake of approaching it through Homer and Chaucer. Such comparisons are

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totally irrelevant. If we accept as dramatically valid Shakespeare's Ulysses, maintaining the responsibility of the individual to 'the specialty of rule'—something no critic seems to have boggled at—then those who neglect this obligation lie open to censure. Hector's honour, consistent with the Homeric code, is personal indulgence, like Achilles' pride, in a society in which individualism was a menace. This was self-will or 'appetite' that could only end in barbarism, like Ajax' refusal to support the common cause when his self-importance made him as unserviceable as Achilles. In rejecting the anachronism of Hector's allusion to Aristotle and substituting 'whom graver sages think' for 'whom Aristotle thought' (2. 2. 166), Rowe struck at a mere twig, for Shakespeare's politically minded Ulysses is as unhomeric as his Achilles, and most unhomeric of all, of course, is that typically medieval accretion, the love story.

In *Troilus and Cressida* Shakespeare exercised, in fact, the same prerogative as medieval writers when they invented and elaborated a love story for Troilus—he interpreted the story of the Trojan war after his own fashion, though it was not entirely a new one. Horace's reflections on the matter were fundamentally much the same:<sup>1</sup>

While you at Rome, dear Lollius, train your tongue,  
I at Praeneste read what Homer sung:

\* \* \* \* \*

<sup>1</sup> *Epistles*, I. 2. 1–2, 6–16. I quote Conington's translation. Erasmus endorses the opinion (*Adagia*, In Stupidos, 'aut regem aut fatuum nasci oportere'): 'Consentaneum est igitur, priscos illos reges, maxima ex parte insigni stultitia praeditos fuisse. . . Tota Ilias, quam est longa, nihil aliud quam quod eleganter scripsit Horatius: "Stultorum regum et populorum continet aestus".' The view was, of course, likely to have a special appeal at a time when the paradox was in fashion.

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The tale that tells how Greece and Asia strove  
 In tedious battle all for Paris' love,  
 Talks of the passions that excite the brain  
 Of mad-cap kings and peoples not more sane.  
 Antenor moves to cut away the cause  
 Of all their sufferings: does he gain applause?  
 No; none shall force young Paris to enjoy  
 Life, power and riches in his own fair Troy.  
 Nestor takes pains the quarrel to compose  
 That makes Atrides and Achilles foes:  
 In vain; their passions are too strong to quell;  
 Both burn with wrath, and one with love as well.  
 Let kings go mad and blunder as they may,  
 The people in the end are sure to pay.  
 Strife, treachery, crime, lust, rage, 'tis error all,  
 One mass of faults within, without the wall.

The passions that excite hare-brained Trojans and beef-witted Greeks ('hot blood', 'distempered blood', 'too much blood and too little brain'—the disorders which afflict the besiegers and the besieged) are the mainspring of Shakespeare's satire to which the love story is subordinated in spite of its importance for the plot. This is why the play does not end with the disillusionment of Troilus, for the more serious thinking belongs to the war theme. In revenge for the Greeks' refusal to free Hesion, the Trojans sent a marauding expedition to Greece to secure a hostage to exchange for her. The rape of Helen thus became the 'quarrel'. Was she worth the cost in lives? Had the Trojans sufficient reason for failing to return her to Menelaus?—or was the quarrel a ludicrous business, a bad cause persevered in from equally bad motives? When Andromache fruitlessly appealed to Hector to unarm and Hector at the same time failed to deter Troilus from tempting 'the brushes of the war', was Hector's engagement to many Greeks (5. 3. 68) any less 'heroi-comical' than Troilus' setting the loss of an arm against the recovery

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of the sleeve? Hector lost his life and Troilus lost his horse—and the latter, like Ajax' horse, may have been the more capable creature.

The juxtaposition of Hector and a horse may seem a crude one, but it is important to remember that there appeared in 1622 the first of a series of mock-heroic rapes—Tassoni's *La Secchia Rapita* ('The Rape of the Bucket'). Hector cuts a fantastic figure when pricking on the Trojan plain—first in encounter with the scurvy Thersites and then with a mute but mobile suit of armour; and although the massed attack on him by Achilles and his Myrmidons was not in accordance with the rules of the tilt-yard, like the rest of the battle scenes its aim was to amuse. Achilles' stratagem of making a massed attack on the unarmed Hector—first crying to his 'fellows' to strike and then to acclaim his victory—is intentionally ludicrous. The couplets show it, and why else should Shakespeare have transferred to Hector's death the circumstances in which (according to tradition) Troilus was slain except that the 'odds of multitude' against a quixotic figure of discredited fiction made the victor and the vanquished more mock-heroical?

'Wars, hitherto the only argument heroic deemed' had been under heavy fire from humanists throughout the sixteenth century. Two essays in the well-known *Adagia* of Erasmus ('dulce bellum inexpertis' and 'aut regem aut fatuum nasci oportere'), which had mustered classical and Christian condemnation of war as brutality and folly, had made a profound impression on responsible opinion at a time when the cost of war was painfully clear to most nations of western Europe; and chivalric conventions (with which the heroic had come to be linked) were challenged long before they finally fell from grace in the 1590s. Ascham's denunciation of the *Morte D'Arthur* as 'open manslaughter and bold