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### Perspectives in *Troilus and Cressida*

One of the remarkable features of *Troilus and Cressida* is the complexity of its beginning. This complexity is apparent in the relationship among the title, the Prologue, and the first two scenes. The Prologue announces that the subject of the play is Paris's abduction of Helen, but its title is *Troilus and Cressida*. Indeed the first two scenes introduce the titular characters. By using the title and the first two scenes to focus our attention on Troilus and Cressida, and by also alerting us with the Prologue to the main subject of the play—the abduction of the fair Helen by Paris—Shakespeare immediately establishes a relationship between the titular characters and the public concern. The first two scenes of *Troilus and Cressida*, therefore, are clearly important. But as Kenneth Muir suggests, the first five scenes of the play each have particular significance:

*Troilus and Cressida* . . . is unique even among Shakespeare's works in its changes of viewpoint from scene to scene. In the first scene, for example, every reader and every member of an audience looks at the situation through the eyes of Troilus, in the second through the eyes of Cressida, in the third through the eyes of Ulysses, in the fourth through the eyes of Thersites, and in the fifth through the eyes of Hector. (20)

Muir's insight is valuable and can be usefully applied. The strategy of shifting viewpoints, however, is much more important to structure and meaning than Muir suggests, for Shakespeare uses this strategy not only in these scenes but throughout the play.

Part of *Troilus and Cressida's* difficulty is inherent in its subject matter, the Trojan War, a large and complex subject, which was well known to Shakespeare's audience (Wilson 116). In order to reduce this matter to the two hours' traffic of the stage, Shakespeare presents the problem of the play throughout from the perspectives of several important characters. This procedure is accompanied by related strategies which I shall examine in some detail. T. S. Eliot once remarked that all of Shakespeare's plays are in some way related to each other (207). Since Shakespeare's basic unit of organization seems to be the scene, I should like to take the Eliot assertion a step further: every scene in a Shakespeare play is implied in every other scene.

The parallel structure of scenes in *Troilus and Cressida* has been much discussed (Slights 42-51). I am aware of the dangers in my assertion, but in the difficult *Troilus and Cressida* Shakespeare uses individual scenes to present the problem of the play from the perspectives of characters important to the action; these scenes share features that link them and by doing so ask us, the audience or readers, to make necessary comparisons. Thus the central structural strategy of the play is the recapitulation of the action from different and differing viewpoints (Bache, *Design and Closure* 2).

The structure of the first scene presents the action of the play from Troilus's perspective, as Muir suggests. Act I.i has three stages: Troilus and Pandarus; Troilus alone; Troilus and Aeneas. The "rude sounds" (I.i.89) are the alarms, sounded twice, once before Troilus's soliloquy and once after his soliloquy. The first alarm signifies the exit of Pandarus; the second alarm the entrance of Aeneas. Pandarus leaves; Troilus speaks to himself; Aeneas enters. The design of this scene mirrors the course of Troilus's action in the play. For Troilus begins the scene and the play with Pandarus. Moreover, he begins the scene and the play by resolving not to fight. He ends the scene by going with Aeneas off to battle. Similarly, Troilus ends the play by leaving with Aeneas. From this perspective, Aeneas replaces Pandarus. That Troilus has a soliloquy in the middle of the first scene is important because it foreshadows his sense of abandonment in the middle of the action of the play. Once Cressida is given over to the Greeks, Troilus, in metaphoric terms, will be alone, essentially unable to share his thoughts and feelings with anyone, not even with Pandarus, the fool of Love, or with Aeneas, his comrade in arms. After V.ii, the scene in which Troilus and Ulysses watch Cressida

and Diomedes from the shadows, the most the young prince allows himself to say on the subject is "words, words, mere words, no matter from the heart" (V.iii.108).<sup>1</sup> Although Troilus does not have his heart in the public cause in the first scene, he goes to fight for it. Once Troilus loses Cressida, he discards his heart and goes off to fight, for the only cause he now has is revenge. Thus the first scene presents the essence of his position; the rest of the play will unfold the significance of that position.

The second scene presents the play from Cressida's perspective. And like Troilus in the first scene, Cressida in I.ii has an important soliloquy. The soliloquy presents the essence of her position: "Words, vows, gifts, tears, and love's full sacrifice" (I.ii.287) is how it begins. This list prefigures Cressida's movement in the play and provides a means of understanding her perspective on the action. Cressida begins on the level of words: she tells Pandarus that she is not interested in Troilus. But, she capitulates later in III.ii, the orchard scene and the next scene in which she appears. Cressida moves from words through vows, gifts, tears, to love's full sacrifice. In structural terms, her soliloquy comes at the end of the second scene and foretells the Cressida action in the play: here she is alone; when Troilus gives her over to the Greeks, Cressida will feel essentially alone. From her perspective, she ends as a sacrifice: she is last seen in V.ii with Diomedes, and when in IV.iv Aeneas comes to fetch Cressida, he refers to her as a sacrifice. Troilus ends the play with Pandarus and Aeneas. But Cressida, the Trojan girl begins with words and ends as a lonely sacrifice. And although Troilus believes that Cressida is "Words, words, mere words, no matter from the heart" (V.iii.108), Cressida sees herself as the heartfelt sacrifice of love; we know, however, that she is sacrificed for the public cause (Asp 417). Thus, like the first scene in which we are given the essential Troilus perspective, the second scene presents the essential Cressida perspective. Moreover, as with Troilus in the first scene, the rest of the play will disclose the significance of her perspective. In both cases, the play unfolds the implications of the action through the titular characters.

But these perspectives are couched in and accompanied by metaphors or tropes that provide a qualification of the action. For instance, in the Troilus scene, I.i, the major trope is the process of baking bread, or the patience needed for bread to be made and then eaten. In the Cressida scene, I.ii, the major trope is the procession of soldiers. The method of

baking and eating of bread in I.i may be used to criticize Troilus's action. In his pursuit of Cressida, Troilus is too importunate; he should not act so quickly. Cressida, on the other hand, watches a procession of Trojan soldiers in I.ii. In IV.v, the scene in which Cressida is delivered to the Greeks, Cressida is forced to confront a procession of Greek soldiers. In her movement from watching the Trojan soldiers to confronting the Greek soldiers, Cressida is defined as a sacrifice, a Trojan girl given over to the Greeks for the public cause. Thus the process, the procession, and the list (contained at the beginning of Cressida's soliloquy) are systems at the service of the more general strategy of the presentation of the action from the perspective of different characters.

We may apply Muir's insight to later scenes: III.i, for instance, may be viewed as the play from the perspective of Pandarus. In this scene Pandarus meets first a nameless servant and then Paris and Helen. One general feature of Shakespeare's overall strategy is that a character remains on stage throughout a scene in which his or her perspective is developed, as with Troilus in the first scene and Cressida in the second. But III.i complicates this procedure because it accommodates what I should like to call a prologue-epilogue system. Pandarus is on stage in III.i, but not at the end of the scene, where Paris and Helen remain after he has gone as an epilogue to its action. Whereas the first scene presents the Troilus trope of the process of baking bread and whereas the second scene presents the Cressida trope of the procession of soldiers, the Pandarus scene, III.i, presents a series of important Pandarus tropes that qualify the action and help us to understand its implications.

The scene has three parts: Pandarus and a new character, a nameless servant, speak; Paris and Helen talk with Pandarus; Paris and Helen converse after Pandarus has left. One of the aspects of III.i is the presentation of new characters, the nameless servant and Helen. Pandarus arrives at Priam's palace and is greeted by a man, presumably Paris's servant, in what is a kind of prologue to the entrance of Paris and Helen. The servant uses new language: his idiom is different from that used up to now in the play. He deals in puns or clenches: "Sir, I do depend upon the Lord" (III.i.4); "The Lord be praised" (III.i.8); "You are in a state of grace" (III.i.14). The servant's disdain for Pandarus and indeed for Paris, his master, and Helen is evident. His last words are "Sodden business: there's a stewed phrase indeed!" (III.i.40) Upon these words Paris and Helen enter.

The words of the servant alert the audience to Christian considerations: *Lord, praise, grace* (Kaula 37-38). Although the play is set in a pre-Christian era, we, the audience, know of Christ, praise, and grace; the characters of *Troilus and Cressida* do not. The servant's words imply a Christian church, a setting that, by contrast, qualifies the brothel-like setting and action of III.i (Foakes 51). Thus the episode in III.i between Pandarus and the servant serves a prologue function because it introduces Paris and Helen, as well as the first scene in which Troilus and Cressida appear on stage together (III.ii); it also serves a choric function because it qualifies the action of the scene in terms other than those understood by the characters in the scene. We see the Christian significance of the servant's speech. The words he uses emphasize the danger of uninstructed love, of cupid-love. The words introduce counters to vice and sin. When, later in the scene, Pandarus sings of love to Paris and Helen, we know that his love has been severely qualified by the servant's attitude and words; the Paris-Helen episode is seen as a "sodden business" because of the context established at the beginning of the scene: we are reminded of what we know about *grace, friendship, service, faith*.

Pandarus's first word to Paris in III.i is "fair," a word iterated eleven times in the first seven lines after his entrance:

Pandarus. Fair be to you, my lord, and to all this fair company; fair desires in all fair measure fairly guide them—especially to you, fair queen: fair thoughts be your fair pillow.

Helen. Dear lord, you are full of fair words.

Pandarus. You speak your fair pleasure, sweet queen. Fair prince, here is good broken music. (III.i.42-48)

This "new" prologue reminds us again to be "fair beholders" (26) still, as did the play's initial Prologue. The excessive iteration of the word *fair* forces us to contemplate its significance. This is the only scene in which Helen appears, and as the Prologue announces, Helen and Paris are the reason for the "quarrel." The iteration of the word "fair" in relationship to Helen, therefore, alerts us to the story of the Apple of Discord, the genesis of the Trojan War in which Paris was asked to choose among three fair goddesses: Venus, Juno, and Minerva (Bache, "Affirmation" 449).

But another and equally important reference for "fair" is the image of an Elizabethan fair, which, by means of the iteration of the word "fair," is invoked as a trope and may be used as a means of qualifying the action. The Trojan War is to be seen as an Elizabethan fair, a confusion of animals and busy people, a place that emphasizes buying and selling. Although appearing about a decade after *Troilus and Cressida*, Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* (1614) illustrates that an Elizabethan fair is a place where human beings are treated like commodities, a term used in the Epistle, "A Never Writer, to an Ever Reader," that precedes *Troilus and Cressida* in the Quarto. We may guess that the fair world is a place where someone like Cressida, a second Helen, would likely be devalued. At the end of IV.i Paris comments,

Fair Diomed, you do as chapmen do,  
 Dispraise the thing that they desire to buy;  
 But we in silence hold this virtue well,  
 We'll not commend, that not intend to sell.  
 Here lies our way. (IV.i.76-80)

Diomed is not, we guess, fair, either in complexion or in justice, yet he is behaving like a chapman, a person at a fair, and in this scene he is a fair man. Cressida, who will almost at once enter, is about to become a commodity: she will be used not valued. The main point is that the Trojan War, like an Elizabethan fair, devalues human worth. Thus III.i may be said to revise the Prologue; or, to put it another way, III.i is an epilogue to the first part of the play. Pandarus, who begins the play first with Troilus and then with Cressida, now reenters with Paris and Helen and presents the problem of the play from his perspective as the fool of Love, which qualifies the action in terms of these important tropes.

In any event, III.i, the problem of the play from Pandarus's perspective, is choric. First, it emphasizes the Christian and human implications of the Paris-Helen affair and by implication the Troilus-Cressida action (Troilus and Cressida appear together for the first time in III.ii): we are to behold the sodden business with some detachment. Second, the scene alerts us to the Apple of Discord and to the trope of the Elizabethan fair and their implications for the action of the play. Moreover, in this scene we get a perversion of a church, for, as in *Much Ado About Nothing*, the church may be seen as a brothel, which

is the way we are asked to see the setting and the action of III.i. R. A. Foakes puts it thus:

Helen teases [Pandarus], caresses him, distracts him from his business by continual interruptions, enforcing perhaps the quibble on "quean" in his words as he tries to disengage himself, "Sweet queen, sweet queen, there's a sweet queen i'faith. . . . What says my sweet queen, my very sweet queen?", and so on. She presumably returns to the embraces of Paris as they make him sing his song, "Love, love, nothing but love . . ."; but the love in this scene is nothing more than "hot blood, hot thoughts, and hot deeds", in the words of Pandarus, echoing Paris (III.i.125). The scene is gay and amusing, but the court of Troy is transmuted through this dialogue into a kind of high-class brothel, and love becomes another word for lechery. (53)

Another feature of the first two scenes is that both Troilus and Cressida have soliloquies. Instead of a soliloquy, however, in III.i Pandarus sings a song. Pandarus's song begins, "Love, love, nothing but love" (III.i.110). This is a comment on the essential Trojan position toward the war. Because of the Apple of Discord, the genesis of the Trojan War, the Trojans worship Venus, goddess of love. The Greeks worship Juno and Minerva, goddesses of power and wisdom respectively (Bache, "Affirmation" 449). When Pandarus sings of love, he makes clear the essential Trojan problem: they have love without power or wisdom. This is exemplified by Paris's request of Helen to disarm Hector. Paris ends III.i with these words, "Sweet, above thought I love thee" (III.i.155). He places love above thought just as he values it above power and wisdom.

Like Pandarus in III.i, Achilles is not on stage throughout III.iii, the scene in which Achilles is baited by Ulysses and the Greeks. Still, III.iii presents the problem of the play from his perspective. The scene has three parts: Agamemnon and Calchas; Achilles, Patroclus, and Ulysses; Achilles, Patroclus, and Thersites. The centre of the scene may be considered the play from the point of view of Achilles. Like Cressida in I.ii, who watches a procession of Trojan soldiers, Achilles in III.iii watches a procession of Greek soldiers, which, in turn, is like Cressida in IV.v who confronts the procession Greeks. Thus an equation is established between Cressida, the Trojan symbol of love sacrificed to the public cause, and Achilles, the Greek symbol of power corrupted for the

same cause. The similarity is made sharper when we somewhat surprisingly discover that Achilles is refraining from the battle for love:

Achilles.	Of this my privacy I have strong reasons.
Ulysses.	But 'gainst your privacy The reasons are more potent and heroical. 'Tis known, Achilles, that you are in love With one of Priam's daughters. (III.iii.190-95)

Moreover, the public plot will be resolved when Achilles kills Hector in Act V. The end of Act III, which is the end of a major action, fuses the public and the private plots: the Achilles "plot" is documented but is also qualified by our awareness of the Troilus and Cressida action occurring off-stage. Thus, we are encouraged to view III.iii, the last scene of the third Act, as primarily choric. The focus is not on Troilus and Cressida: the concern is on contextual considerations. Although III.iii portrays the plot action of Achilles and the Greek leaders, this scene serves also to ventilate the positions of Troilus and Cressida (the two lovers are off stage consummating their vows), established in I.i and I.ii. Achilles, standing in the entrance to his tent, remarks, "I'll fight no more 'gainst Troy" (III.iii.56), and this action in III.iii recalls the outside-inside tension of the first Troilus scene (I.i):

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. (I.i.1-5)
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The procession of Cressida's first scene is recalled when the Greeks pass before Achilles. Ulysses uses the procession of Greek soldiers in III.iii to subvert Achilles's attitude toward the war; Pandarus uses the procession of Trojan soldiers in I.ii to subvert Cressida's apparent attitude toward love. The main point is that the action on stage in III.iii not only furthers the public plot and presents the problem of the play from Achilles's perspective but also serves to qualify the private action of Troilus and Cressida.



In IV.v the Trojans—Cressida, Hector, Troilus, Aeneas, Paris—go over to the Greek camp. But since Ulysses is on stage throughout IV.v, the scene may be readily described as the play from his perspective. Although IV.v has no soliloquies, Ulysses's speeches about Cressida and Troilus fill the place of a soliloquy, just as Pandarus's song does in III.i. Now Ulysses responds to Cressida's appearance, for his information about Cressida is understandably limited: he has not seen Cressida protest and grieve in IV.ii and IV.iv, the two scenes in which she both learns of and deals with her imminent exchange for Antenor with the Greeks. Ulysses can act the way he does with Cressida because she has just rejected him. Of the kiss Ulysses would receive from Cressida she says, "claim it when 'tis due" (IV.v.51). His assessment of Cressida is in part, therefore, jealous resentment. Instead of reproving Achilles, Ulysses attacks Cressida. And although he calls her one of the "daughters of the game" (IV.v.63), we should be wary of his conclusion, for as Linda LaBranche has noted, "there is not a shred of evidence in Shakespeare's text to validate Ulysses's sour judgment" (442).

But Ulysses may be as wrong about Troilus as he is about Cressida. He reports what Aeneas has told him about Troilus, but why should Ulysses believe an enemy? Up to this point in the play Troilus has not demonstrated any of the characteristics that Ulysses describes, for the young Trojan is neither "firm of word" (IV.v.97) nor, presumably, as "Manly as Hector" (IV.v.104), as Cressida's reference to the young knight in I.ii suggests. Significantly, however, Troilus *will become* like Hector in Act V, but then Hector will discredit himself there, as he has, in fact, in IV.v. After Troilus turns against Cressida in V.ii, where he and Ulysses watch Cressida and Diomedes from the shadows, he will become as "vindicative [as] jealous love" (IV.v.107). Indeed, Troilus, because he will fight for private reasons, will become more dangerous, more savage than Hector. "What [Troilus] has he gives" (IV.v.101); that is, he has given Cressida, whom he had, away. Ulysses, by identifying Troilus with Hector, performs a "prologue" or choric function: as Hector will be destroyed and the public or war aspect of the play will come to an end, so Troilus will be metaphorically destroyed, and the private or love aspect of the play will come to an end.

At the end of IV.v, Ulysses accompanies Troilus, who has separated himself from the rest of the company. Their conversation serves as a kind of epilogue to the scene. Now Ulysses is with Troilus as Pandarus was

in the first scene. In I.i Pandarus and Troilus discuss Cressida; in IV.v Ulysses and Troilus discuss Cressida. Ulysses has replaced Pandarus at Troilus's side in the play's private, love plot. I should like to suggest further that Ulysses has become, like Pandarus, a fool: he has been reduced to subplot intrigue; all his schemes have come to nothing.

Working a variation on this strategy of presenting the problem of the play from the perspectives of different characters, Shakespeare dramatizes two perspectives and two possible, pre-emptive endings in V.iii, one from Hector's perspective with an epilogue (Troilus and Pandarus), the other from Troilus's perspective with a prologue (Hector and Andromache and Cassandra). Act V, scene iii is thus the play seen from both Hector's perspective and Troilus's perspective. From Hector's perspective the end is an epilogue: from Troilus's perspective it is an end. From Troilus's perspective the beginning is a prologue: from Hector's perspective it simply begins. Thus Troilus, who will continue to fight after Hector's death, is another Hector here and on the battlefield. In IV.v Troilus is spoken of by Ulysses as a second Hector. The centre of the scene is an obligatory confrontation between the "honorable" Hector and the loveless Troilus.

Act V, scene iii is the play from Hector's perspective with a Troilus epilogue just as III.i is the play from Pandarus's perspective with a Paris-and-Helen epilogue, in which Helen is asked by Paris to "unarm" Hector. Act III.iii is the play in Achilles's terms with a prologue by Agamemnon and Calchas and with an epilogue by Thersites. Act V.iii is the play from Troilus's perspective with a prologue by Hector, Andromache, and Cassandra. Hector rejects Andromache, and we see what happens. Unlike Hector, Troilus doesn't have a wife, but he ends up rejecting his frail "mistress." Hector's self-centred honor is played off against Troilus's self-centred revenge. Both Hector and Troilus exemplify the Trojan parable of honor and love devoid of wisdom and power. In I.ii we hear of Hector's insistence, because of his distress at being defeated by Ajax, on fighting Achilles; in V.iii Troilus insists on going into battle to kill Diomedes.

Troilus's speech in V.iii ends with a disregard for heartfelt words and a determination to produce bloody deeds. He does not believe the words of the girl to whom he has given his heart; he believes only her deeds, as he understands them. Cressida does not see Troilus in V.ii. She behaves as she does with Diomedes there and with Troilus here because

she is trapped. Troilus, prompted to believe only what he sees by the loveless Ulysses, is both disregarding Cressida's words in the letter, and, more importantly, forgetting the vows of "truth and plainness" (IV.iv.104) exchanged between them in IV.iv. Because of what he has witnessed in V.ii, the "wisdom" and the "power" of the Greeks have destroyed his love. For Troilus, no end other than killing is possible.

Thersites both begins and ends V.iv with a soliloquy. Since Thersites is on stage throughout V.iv and since V.iv contains Thersites's two soliloquies, this scene may be considered as presenting the problem of the play from his perspective. Moreover, his soliloquies bracket the action in the scene, like a kind of prologue and epilogue. Troilus and Diomedes enter and exit fighting; Hector has a brief encounter with Thersites. The scene thus contains the three Thersites battlefield actions: a soliloquy, a comment on action, a confrontation. As III.i is the play in terms of Pandarus, the fool of love, who is with the good servant and then with Paris and Helen, so V.iv is the play in terms of Thersites, the fool of war, who comments on the major figures of V.iii, Troilus and Hector. We now see Troilus confronting Diomedes, an episode that naturally follows Troilus's rejection of Cressida. The main point is that V.iv extends V.iii: Troilus and Hector have arrived to the battlefield, and their arrival is subjected to the mocking perspective of Thersites.

Thersites's final appearance in the play is in V.vii, where he watches Menelaus and Paris fight and meets Margarelon. Thersites's action in V.vii mirrors his action in V.iv. While Menelaus and Paris are fighting, Thersites provides commentary. The meeting between Menelaus and Paris in V.vii echoes the Troilus-Diomedes meeting in IV.iv, as well as the Hector-Thersites meeting in V.iv. Thus these meetings are a version or an extension of the "meetings" in V.vii. The terms Thersites uses as he comments on the action are not only those of the baiting arena and thus the fair but also of the hunt: "Now, bull! Now, dog! 'Loo, Paris, 'loo!—Now, my double-horned Spartan! 'Loo, Paris, 'loo!" (V.vii.10-11). Hector leaves the stage in V.vi chasing the one in sumptuous armor with the words, "I'll hunt thee for thy hide" (V.vi.31). Thersites's comments refer, therefore, not only to the combat between Menelaus and Paris but also to the off stage action between Hector and the nameless Greek wearing the beautiful armor. Thus V.vii gives us the prominent, identifiable, off stage correlative action, which compares to the Troilus-Diomedes action in V.iv.

Mirroring his meeting with Hector in V.iv, Thersites meets Margarelon in V.vii. In this meeting, Thersites is both discredited and the infection of self-interest in the society is revealed. In V.iv Thersites calls himself a *rascal*, a *knave*, a *rogue*; here, a *bastard*. But Margarelon, a new character, who is Priam's bastard son, enters showing that Priam, the Trojan head of state, is guilty of adultery. The Trojan royal family is deeply flawed. Although he is Priam's son, Margarelon can still fight for an ignoble cause. Margarelon is another double for Hector and Troilus. Thersites is the constant: he is the person who "measures" the others. Troilus and Diomedes are doubles for Paris and Menelaus. Thus Thersites confronts Hector in V.iv and Margarelon in V.vii. The second battlefield confrontation stills the voice of Thersites in the play; after this confrontation, he disappears.

In *Troilus and Cressida* with the Trojan War as problematic subject, Shakespeare's primary structural device is to present the problem from the perspectives of several important characters. This strategy enables him to digest or condense the enormous amount of material that comprises this most celebrated war. As the Prologue notes, we see "what may be digested in a play" (29). The first two scenes present the strategy in its purest form, and the following scenes work variations on the strategy. Each major character is given a scene showing the problem of the play from his or her perspective. As R. A. Foakes points out, "no character is allowed to win sufficient prominence or sympathy to dominate the stage" (45). Scholars and critics have had difficulty with *Troilus and Cressida* for this reason. But by recognizing that this is a deliberate strategy, we discover an important principle of Shakespeare's design (Ellis-Fermor 122). The similarities among these scenes create the inwoven quality of *Troilus and Cressida*.

## NOTE

1. Shakespeare quotations throughout are from *Troilus and Cressida*, The New Arden Shakespeare, ed. Kenneth Palmer (London: Methuen, 1982).

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