

Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*:
Audience Expectation and
Matters of Taste
in Relation to Authorship and the Book

Johann Gregory

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SUMMARY

Questions concerning whether Shakespeare wrote for the stage or the page are a perennial issue in Shakespeare studies. Part of the problem rests on expectations of literature and theatre. These expectations are in fact voiced in Shakespearean drama itself, a drama that often articulates ideas concerning audience expectations. In Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, before Troilus visits Cressida he exclaims "expectation whirls me round". Of all the plays in the Shakespearean canon, variants of "expect" feature most in this play. *Troilus and Cressida* itself scrutinises expectation of a story with famous classical, medieval and contemporary precedents, for a play to be performed by the leading theatre company of the day, and of a play by a playwright who was also conscious of his role as a published author. In the play, characters are frequently staged as spectators or audience members, raising issues relating to expectations, taste, value judgements, and viewpoints. Shakespeare responds to the plays of his contemporaries and, arguably, the political scene as well.

The thesis reworks Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the literary field to gauge the way that Shakespeare's play engages with its theatrical and literary environment, and resituates Bourdieu's work on taste and social distinction to consider how Shakespeare's Trojan play responds to the contingencies of audience expectation. The first chapter considers critical expectations of the play from 1609 to the present; the second chapter focuses on the way Shakespeare stages patrons, performers and especially audience members; the third chapter reads the language of food and taste in the play in relation to developing early modern distinctions about literature and theatre; the final chapter provides a correction to readings of the play that have relied on the unique 1609 quarto preface to the play for understanding the work; this chapter argues that even the play, as staged, presents literary issues, and characters that show an awareness of print culture. Within its own early modern literary-theatrical field, Shakespeare's play is far more *about* elitist tastes than it is elitist itself.

Ultimately, the thesis argues that *Troilus and Cressida* marks Shakespeare's growing confidence as a literary dramatist, not simply as an author whose plays were published as literature, but as a playwright who was capable of using theatre and audience expectation to re-evaluate literary tastes. Broadly positioned, the thesis provides a case study which revises critical expectations of this play in order to situate better Shakespeare's contribution to early modern drama and literature.

DEDICATION

From “Take a Pew”

A very many years ago, when I was about as old as some of you are now, I went mountain climbing in Scotland with a very dear friend of mine. There was this mountain, you see, and we decided to climb it. And so, very early one morning, we arose and we began to climb. All day we climbed. Up and up and up, higher and higher and higher, until the valley lay very small below us and the mist of the evening began to come down and the sun to set. And when we reached the summit we sat down to watch this tremendous sight of the sun going down behind the mountains. And as we watched, my friend very suddenly, and violently, *vomited!*

– Alan Bennett, *Beyond the Fringe*

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Rebecca Lo.

Near the top of Mount Kinabalu, she sat with me when I was sick and we watched the sunrise.

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Imagine my surprise when, in the early stages of my research on *Troilus and Cressida*, I received my Arden II edition through the post, opened the cover, and found written in blue biro: “Warning! This Play is boring + crap”. It was underlined, with an emphatic full stop. However, it wasn’t long before I realised how central questions of expectations, paratexts, pleasure, boredom and body matter were going to be for my thesis.

Besides being a grateful recipient of an Edward Rhys-Price Studentship, I am thankful to a number of family members for financial assistance, including all my grandparents, my mother Angela, and my father Karl (who paid my PhD tuition fees). Of course, their love means more to me. My mother “loves me like rock”. Brockworth with Catherine, Sam and Heather has been an important home from home, as has Caldey Island – thank you Paul. Genevieve and Francesca have been two of the most important companions I have ever had – they also happen to be my sisters.

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I can't thank Irene Morra enough for her supervision; she has been a true guardian of the thesis and a professional mentor in the best sense. I could write a book about my other supervisor; this thesis is certainly an engagement with the work of Richard Wilson – which is perhaps the best thanks that can be offered a supervisor. I am tremendously grateful for the way that he has encouraged me to think critically and historically, and to participate in scholarly debates in my own thesis, in journals and at international conferences. A highlight of this supervision was our attendance at an opera after a conference on *Troilus and Cressida* at Freie Universität, Berlin: appropriately (given my thesis topic), it was Mozart's *The Abduction from the Seraglio* set in the world of a modern brothel. "Ah, that was our best time!" said Frédéric. "Could be? Yes, that was our best time!" said Deslauriers."

Finally, Lucy Menon has enabled me to approach the finishing line, helping me to proofread the final draft and just being wonderful: shine on you crazy diamond!

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A Note on Texts

The following texts are frequently cited in the thesis. References to these texts are provided in parentheses rather than in the footnotes. Unless otherwise stated, quotations from these texts come from the editions below.

Quotations from

Shakespeare's plays and poems (except the *Sonnets*) are from *The Norton Shakespeare: Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard and Katharine Eisaman Maus (New York and London: Norton, 1997), and line numbers are given in parenthesis. References to *King Lear* are from the conflated text unless otherwise stated. This edition is referred to in footnotes as "*The Norton Shakespeare*".

Shakespeare's *Sonnets* are from *The Sonnets and A Lover's Complaint*, ed. John Kerrigan (London: Penguin, 1986), pp. 75-153, and line numbers are given in parenthesis.

Troilus and Cressida are from William Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida: New Cambridge Shakespeare*, ed. Anthony B. Dawson (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Line numbers are given in parenthesis with the abbreviated title "*T&C*" where necessary. This edition is referred to in footnotes as "Dawson (ed.)".

the 1609 quarto of *Troilus and Cressida* are from William Shakespeare, *The Famous Historie of Troylus and Cresseid* (London, 1609), and quire signatures are given in parenthesis.

the 1623 folio are from William Shakespeare, *The First Folio of Shakespeare: The Norton Facsimile*, ed. Charlton Hinman, 2nd edn (London and New York: Norton, 1996), and through line numbers (TLN) are given in parenthesis.

All citations from early modern books are from *Early English Books Online* (EEBO) with the exception of the Shakespeare quartos, which are taken from the British Library's *Treasures in Full: Shakespeare in Quarto* database. These are available at

<<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>> and

<<http://www.bl.uk/treasures/shakespeare/homepage.html>> respectively. The early modern printing of *f* for *s*, *u* for *v*, and *i* for *j* has been silently modernised, as has the writing of "then" for "than".

INTRODUCTION Setting up expectations

“expectation whirls me round”

– Troilus in Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* (3.2.15)

expect, v.

Forms: Also 16–17 **exspect.**

Etymology: < Latin *ex(s)pect-āre* to look out for, await, < *ex* + *spect-āre* to look, frequentative of *spec-ēre* to see. Compare Old French *esperer* (14th cent.) to await.¹

This thesis argues that in its staging and invocation of various ideas of literary and theatrical expectation, Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* offers an invaluable critique of contemporaneous constructions of taste, be they literary, theatrical, social, or aesthetic. In so doing, the play provides a particularly incisive illumination of some of the many tensions that informed and continue to inform value judgements and the expectations of literature and theatre especially.

I. Audience Expectations

No play can work without an audience, but some plays frame their audience more overtly than others. Several early modern plays refer openly to their audience and discuss issues to do with being an audience figure. The characters in the Induction to John Marston’s *What You Will* (1601), for example, discuss the play’s title, its genre, and how the audience might judge the play about to be performed; the character Atticus then says, “Come, we strain the spectators’ patience in delaying their expected delights”.² The idea of audience expectation is also conveyed explicitly in Ben Jonson’s *Everyman Out of His Humour* (1599). In this play, a chorus-audience figure, Mitis, says to Cordatus, described as “The Author[’]s friend”: “in

¹ *OED*, “expect” v.

² John Marston, *What You Will*, in *The Works of John Marston*, ed. A. H. Bullen, 3 vols (London: Nimmo, 1887), II, 317-419, Ind., 96-97. The date in parenthesis after a play’s title refers to the year in which it is estimated to have been first performed unless otherwise stated.

good faith, signior, your author hath largely outstript my expectation in this *Scene*".³ As John Gordon Sweeney notes, the Induction to Jonson's play "examines in detail what the play hopes to accomplish in relation to its audience, that is, both how the spectators are to behave and what the play will offer them in return for their attention and understanding".⁴ Moments like these, sometimes labelled metatheatrical because the characters seemingly step out of the play's drama, show that the idea of audience expectation was a conscious and often articulated concern for early modern playwrights.

In *How Plays Work: Reading and Performance*, Martin Meisel argues that playwrights *apply* their understanding of audience expectation:

Expectations [...] are precisely the stuff that the playwright has to work with: promoting them, teasing them, deceiving them, and finally disappointing or fulfilling them, though often in ways unexpected. What is called plot is usually a matter of anticipation and deferral, resistance and resolution, within a framework of managed expectations.⁵

As Meisel suggests, the playwright can be positioned as considering an audience's potential expectations. The position is analogous to that of critics who, four hundred years after the first performance of a Shakespeare play, might try to re-imagine what initial audiences may have expected. Meisel identifies in *Troilus and Cressida* a deliberate acknowledgement of the former construction in its very refusal to meet conventional expectations:

there is the play whose shape in retrospect implies shapelessness, in that the end eschews resolution, revelation, transformation, the feeling of having arrived. It is not that expectation is here deceived in some surprising reversal; it is ignored or even insulted. [...] I would argue Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* is such a play, as measured by its outcomes.⁶

³ Ben Jonson, *Every Man Out Of His Humour*, in Ben Jonson, ed. C.H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925-52), III (1927), 405-601, 3.8.74-75. Emphasis for all quotations is in the text cited unless otherwise stated. All references to this play are to this edition unless otherwise stated and line numbers are given in parenthesis. In Jonson's *The Staple of News*, "Gossip Expectation" even appears as a choric character; see *The Staple of News*, in Ben Jonson, ed. C.H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925-52), III (1927), 271-382.

⁴ John Gordon Sweeney, *Jonson and the Psychology of Public Theater: To Coin the Spirit, Spend the Soul* (Princeton, NJ, and Guildford: Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 18-19.

⁵ Martin Meisel, *How Plays Work: Reading and Performance* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 18.

⁶ Meisel, p. 154.

Philip Edwards similarly suggests that “[i]n a way [*Troilus and Cressida*] is anti-art, because its very structure is a kind of defiance of the continuity, consequence and unity which the more usual kind of play will provide”.⁷ This reading is implicitly invited at the very start of the play when the Prologue ends by telling the audience, “Like, or find fault, do as your pleasures are, / Now good or bad, ’tis but the chance of war” (Pro., 30-31).⁸

Troilus and Cressida repeatedly alludes to conventional expectations by invoking audience expectation through its language, characterisation and staging. For example, the Prologue is ostensibly nonplussed about audience expectations, saying that the audience must “Like, or find fault”, as the play is performed. He begins by foregrounding the issue of the warriors’ expectations:

Now expectation, tickling skittish spirits
On one and other side, Trojan and Greek,
Sets all on hazard.
(Pro., 20-22)

The Prologue also implicitly relates these expectations to those of the play’s audience: whether the audience “Like, or find fault”, whether they find it “good or bad, ’tis but the chance of war”. Likening “the warfare of Troy to the warfare of spectatorship”, the Prologue shows the play self-consciously making an issue of audience expectation.⁹ The language aligns the “hazard” or chance of the warriors’ expectations coming to pass with the “chance” of the audience’s “expected delights”. In so doing, it suggests that the “chance of war” constitutes both a military risk for the Trojans and Greeks, and some kind of artistic gamble, a testing of audience expectations. The prologue’s personification of expectation as someone who tickles both sides in a game of chance, then, suggests that the play itself will “tickl[e] skittish spirits”.

⁷ Philip Edwards, *Shakespeare and the Confines of Art* (London: Methuen, 1968), p. 97.

⁸ In what follows, the uppercase spelling of “Prologue” refers to the Prologue as a character, whereas lowercase “prologue” simply refers to the words of the prologue. This distinction is important for reading some of the plays by Shakespeare and his contemporaries where the Prologue seems to be a character in his or her own right.

⁹ Kent Cartwright, *Shakespearean Tragedy and Its Double: The Rhythms of Audience Response* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), p. 16.

This language of expectation runs through the play. Indeed, variants of the word “expect” appear more times in *Troilus and Cressida* than in any other play in the Shakespeare canon. “Now *expectation* [...] sets all on hazard” (Pro., 20-22) says the Prologue.

Agamemnon commands Ulysses in the Greek camp: “be’t of less *expect* / That matter needless [...] / Divide thy lips” (1.3.70-72). “What honey is *expected*?” (1.3.83) asks Ulysses.

“I am giddy: *expectation* whirls me round” (3.2.15) exclaims Troilus before he visits Cressida. Diomedes tells Cressida: “save the thanks this prince *expects*” (4.4.116). “There is *expectance* here from both sides” (4.5.146) prompts Aeneas during the combat of Ajax and Hector, who refers to “The *expecters* of our Trojan part” (4.5.156). On the battlefield, Hector later tells Achilles he would have been a fresher man “Had I *expected* thee” (5.6.21).¹⁰

Expectation is important for the characters as represented, but this issue is also key for the play’s self-reflexivity.

If, as Meisel argues, “expectations are precisely the stuff that the playwright has to work with”, it follows that audience expectations are to some extent imagined, consciously or not, during the writing process by the playwright.¹¹ The fact that some of Shakespeare’s plays seem to have been revised following performance or prior to publication also points to the possibility that Shakespeare may have reworked plays following the reactions of his audience.¹² As this thesis will explore, with *Troilus and Cressida*, the playwright’s (personal and professional) interest in audience expectation seems to have found its way into the fabric of the play, its text and implied staging, by a number of means that have not been fully appreciated. *Troilus and Cressida* does not contain a frame narrative with an obvious

¹⁰ Emphasis added.

¹¹ For this thesis, “audience expectation” refers to the audience’s expectation of a performance, while “expectation of audience” refers to expectations about the audience. “Audience expectations” may also refer to readers’ expectations of a printed *Troilus and Cressida* as discussed in Chapter Four.

¹² For the argument that dramatic “authors returned to their texts, or texts were returned to their authors, at any and all stages after composition”, see Grace Ioppolo, *Dramatists and their Manuscripts in the Age of Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton and Heywood: Authorship, Authority and the Playhouse* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 1. For an essay on “Shakespeare as Reviser”, see John Kerrigan, *On Shakespeare and Early Modern Literature: Essays* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 3-22.

audience figure like the beggar, Christopher Sly, who watches the main action of *The Taming of the Shrew*. And yet, in a sense, all the characters in the Trojan play act, like Sly, as “an audience and a spectacle”.¹³

Troilus and Cressida has the reputation for being “Shakespeare’s most puzzling work”, but this thesis argues that the play *deliberately* attempts to trouble its audience, partly by testing the idea of audience expectation.¹⁴ As a simplified analogue, a pictorial example of this testing of the idea of audience expectation can be seen in the early modern woodcut of what looks like a brothel scene (see Appendix I).¹⁵ Besides showing a man and three women drinking and gambling, the background shows an audience figure peering into the room through a window – whether he is a pimp, pander or voyeur remains unclear. Nevertheless, this viewer within the work faces the viewer of the picture in a disconcerting fashion.¹⁶ If the person viewing the picture asks why, or with what expectations, the audience figure within the woodcut is peeping through the window, the question is in a sense reflected back onto the viewer of the picture.¹⁷

Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* employs similar strategies in a more sophisticated fashion; for example, it includes audience figures within the play analogous to the man in the window. The play’s language and staging situate characters themselves as audience figures for performances within the play. Just as the woodcut’s viewer in the background stares into the room and apparently out at the viewer of the picture, so, for example, does Pandarus look on voyeuristically at Troilus and Cressida and then addresses viewers in the theatre audience

¹³ Jean E. Howard, “Introduction to *The Taming of the Shrew*”, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, pp. 133-41 (p. 133).

¹⁴ Peter Hyland, *Shakespeare: Troilus and Cressida: Penguin Critical Studies* (London and New York: Penguin, 1989), p. 1.

¹⁵ See Appendix I: Image from Broadside Ballad: “A Good Throw for Three Maiden-heads”.

¹⁶ Comparisons could also be made to paintings such as Diego Velázquez, *Las Meninas* (c. 1656), Prado Museum, Madrid. This work famously shows viewers apparently looking at the viewer(s) of the picture. For further discussion, see Catherine Belsey, “Desire and the Missing Viewer”, in *Culture and the Real: Theorizing Cultural Criticism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 100-18.

¹⁷ The ballad accompanying the woodcut narrates that the viewer in the window “contrived it / that he heard all this woeing” – so apparently this viewer is the fictive source for the broadside ballad, Martin Parker, “A good throw for three Maiden-heads” (London, 1629), *English Broadside Ballad Archive*; available at <<http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/20149/image>> [accessed 20 September 2011].

in familiar terms. This positioning of audience figures on stage creates potentially disconcerting ideas about audience expectations: the play often seems to identify the (disreputable) onstage characters with the play's theatre audience, suggesting a kind of collusion or complicity in the viewing of the play. Shakespeare often stages audience figures within his plays. This unflattering association of the theatre audience with the play's onstage viewers, however, and the play's apparent refusal to *pander* to obvious audience expectations, is unusual and in need of further consideration.

It is not the project of this thesis to try to re-imagine the exact expectations of any one kind of audience or to provide a theorisation of expectation as epitomised by Jacques Derrida.¹⁸ This thesis seeks to situate in a historical context the way that *Troilus and Cressida* makes audience expectation a theatrical and literary concern. It is the intention of the project to explore how the play frames the idea of audience expectation in relation to research on the play's historical literary and theatrical environment. In so doing, it will argue that Shakespeare uses his play to respond to ideas about audience expectation and the poet-playwright suggested by some of his contemporaries.

II. Expectations of the Matter of Troy

Troilus and Cressida is but one of many early modern works written on Trojan themes.

Indeed, a play with a similar title was produced just a couple of years before Shakespeare's version by the Admiral's Men.¹⁹ As Jonathan Bate asserts,

¹⁸ For example, Jacques Derrida explored expectations in his thinking on the spectres of Marx in relation to those looking out for the Ghost in *Hamlet*; see *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (London and New York: Routledge, 1994). On Derrida's use of Shakespeare here, see Johann Gregory, "Wordplay in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and the Accusation of Derrida's 'Logical Phallusies'", *English Studies*, 94.3 (=Shakespeare and Theory: Special Issue I, ed. François-Xavier Gleyzon and Johann Gregory) (2013), 313-30.

¹⁹ This other play about *Troilus and Cressida* will be discussed briefly in Chapter One and further in Chapter Three.

there is a surviving storyboard of a play by a team of dramatists writing for Henslowe called *Troilus and Cressida*. It's very clear that Shakespeare wrote his *Troilus and Cressida* as a response, as his company's take on a story that had previously been spun in a particular direction by their rivals.²⁰

The fact of this earlier production suggests that at least some of Shakespeare's audience would have already known the story of Troilus and Cressida and Shakespeare's play certainly fits into a context of Elizabethan Troy *plays*. Furthermore, reasonably well-read theatregoers would have had a very good idea of the story from previously published literature.²¹ Because stories of Troilus and Cressida were available in sixteenth-century ballads and dramatized plays, Shakespeare could have assumed that most of his audience would have known something of the story.²²

Representations of Troy myths and Troilus and Cressida stories were readily available to early modern readers. Canonical examples include Homer's *Iliad*, partly translated by George Chapman in 1598; Chaucer's five-book poem *Troilus and Criseyde*, printed in many editions during Shakespeare's lifetime; and the *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*, translated and printed by William Caxton.²³ Beside these works, London's publishers printed all kinds of poems, pamphlets and books that dealt with the tales of Troy and their characters.²⁴

Shakespeare's poem *The Rape of Lucrece* can be considered among these, as well as some of his plays that mention the characters staged in *Troilus and Cressida*.²⁵ As Heather James has

²⁰ Jonathan Bate, *The Genius of Shakespeare*, with 2008 afterword (London, Basingstoke and Oxford: Picador, 2008), p. 345.

²¹ For an early survey, see John S.P. Tatlock, "The Siege of Troy in Elizabethan Literature, Especially in Shakespeare and Heywood", *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 30.4 (1915), 673-770; see also the Chapter One section "IV.ii. Sources and Intertexts", pp. 72-78.

²² For a discussion of these ballads, see Barry Windeatt, "Imitations and Allusions, c.1385-1700", in *Troilus and Criseyde: Oxford Guides to Chaucer* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University, 1992), pp. 360-82, esp. pp. 371-76.

²³ George Chapman, *Seaven Bookes of The Iliades of Homer* (London, 1598); see Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, ed. Barry Windeatt (London and New York: Penguin, 2003); William Caxton (trans.), *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye* (Bruges, c. 1474).

²⁴ For example, Robert Kimbrough notes the "interlude *Thersites* (c. 1562) [in which] Thersites was assumed to be so well known that he is placed in a setting that is outside the *Iliad*", *Shakespeare's "Troilus and Cressida" and its Setting* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), p. 38. See Joannes Ravisius Textor, *A New Enterlude called Thersytes* (London, 1562).

²⁵ In Shakespeare's poem, for example, Lucrece "calls to mind where hangs a piece / Of skilful painting made for [i.e. representing] Priam's Troy", *The Rape of Lucrece*, ll. 1366-67.

explored, the story of Troy was also part of a national origin story for Britain and London, sometimes labelled *Troynovant* in the Brute foundation legend.²⁶

In *An Apology for Actors* (publ. 1612), the playwright Thomas Heywood acknowledges how plays raise awareness of past historical contexts and establish expectations for theatre audiences about their subject matter:

plays have made the ignorant more apprehensive, taught the unlearned the knowledge of many famous histories, instructed such as cannot read in the discovery of all our English chronicles; and what man have you now of that weak capacity that cannot discourse of any notable thing recorded even from William the Conqueror, nay, from the landing of Brute, until this day.²⁷

Heywood's comments underline the currency of the legend of Brute, the famous descendant of the Trojan Aeneas and the supposed eponymous founder of Britain. He also assumes that even the "unlearned" audience can be expected to have some knowledge of the legendary Trojan roots of Britain. This assumption suggests the strength and resonance of the literary and theatrical conventions with which *Troilus and Cressida* could implicitly engage.

These various representations of the Trojan matter in early modern publications and in Shakespeare's plays themselves reveal a rich *variety* of treatments. The monumental publication of George Chapman's translation of Homer attests to the expectation of an elite status for the Trojan legend.²⁸ This status, however, did not preclude the association of the legend with a less exalted tradition. Some of these expectations were established not in literature, but in everyday language and bawdy jests. Helen of Troy may have been known as a paragon of beauty exemplified in Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, for example, but, as *Henry V* suggests, in Elizabethan London any "Doll Tearsheet" might be imagined to have

²⁶ See Heather James, *Shakespeare's Troy: Drama, Politics, and the Translation of Empire* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

²⁷ Thomas Heywood, *An Apology for Actors*, in Brian Vickers, *English Renaissance Literary Criticism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 474-501 (p. 494).

²⁸ George Chapman's prefatorial fashioning of his material is discussed in Chapter Two.

been labelled a “lazar kite of Cressid’s kind” (2.1.69).²⁹ This bawdy tradition nicknamed male pimps or go-betweens as “panders” after Pandarus, while in Shakespeare’s *Taming of the Shrew* the name “Troilus” represents a drooling clinging fop, a suitable name for a spaniel.³⁰ In *Much Ado About Nothing* Benedick calls him “the first employer of panders” (5.2.27) and one of many examples to be found “in a whole book full of [...] quondam carpet-mongers” (5.2.27-28). Similarly, a “merry Greek” was proverbial for someone of loose morals; *Troilus and Cressida* itself refers to this usage when characters anachronistically use the phrase to describe each other.³¹

Troilus and Cressida repeatedly juxtaposes this more bawdy, “trash[y]” (2.1.114), take on the matter of Troy with a more elite tradition. It also includes epic poetry akin to Homer’s *Iliad*, and invokes the so-called “courtly love” chivalric romance of Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*.³² This mixing of “elite” and “low” material leads to potentially challenging consequences for the audience of the play: should the audience expect to consider themselves “fair beholders” (Pro., 26), as addressed by the Prologue, and expect to see “all the gallantry of Troy” (3.1.119-19)? Or are they to be likened, for example, to Helen, the supposed “fair queen” (3.1.39) who is in fact staged as Paris’s “Nell” (3.1.19)? She is presented listening to Pandarus’s bawdy performances and described by Diomedes as a “flat tamèd piece” (4.1.63). According to Thersites, “all the argument is a whore and a cuckold” (2.3.64), and by the end of the play Pandarus will address members of the audience as

²⁹ Faustus refers to “heavenly Helen” (sc. 13, l. 84) and “Sweet Helen” (sc. 13, l. 92) saying that “all is dross that is not Helena” (sc. 13, l. 96) in Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, in *Christopher Marlowe: The Complete Plays*, ed. Frank Romany and Robert Lindsey (London and New York: Penguin, 2003), pp. 341-95.

³⁰ For the “spaniel Troilus”, see Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew*, 4.1.131.

³¹ Cressida refers to Helen as “a merry Greek indeed” (1.2.95), while she troubles Troilus by imagining herself “A woeful Cressid ’mongst the merry Greeks!” (4.4.55). Sebastian also refers to the fool Feste in *Twelfth Night* as a “foolish Greek” (4.1.15). See Terence Spencer, *Fair Greece, Sad Relic: Literary Philhellenism from Shakespeare to Byron* (Athens: Harvey, 1986), esp. pp. 35-43; Spencer speculates that “[t]his conviction about Greek inebriety may have been, in part, encouraged by the popularity of Greek wines in western Europe” (p. 36).

³² C.S. Lewis developed the notion of courtly love with a chapter on Chaucer, and particularly *Troilus and Criseyde*, where he argues that “Chaucer’s greatest poem is the consummation [...] of his labours as a poet of courtly love”, “Chaucer”, in *Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), pp. 157-97 (p. 176).

“traders in the flesh” (5.11.44). In this reading, rather than the expensive Trojan-themed tapestries hung in Tudor courts, the theme of the play is more suited to the wall hangings of a brothel’s “painted cloths” (5.11.44).³³ As Walter Cohen observes, “the play eschews a homogenized outlook”.³⁴ This variety of perspectives leads to a play that foregrounds the varying reputations of the matter of Troy in order to engage with questions of audience expectation and taste.

III. Expectations of Audience

Troilus and Cressida foregrounds the issue of audience expectation within its plot, in which many characters voice their “own” expectations. Helen and Paris, for example, talk about Pandarus’s performance of a love song, while Ajax is outraged by Thersites’ railing. The theatre audience is also referred to at key moments, as when Pandarus turns away from Troilus and Cressida and says to those in the theatre:

And Cupid grant all tongue-tied maidens here
Bed, chamber, pander, to provide this gear
(3.3.188-89)

Such tactics invite a consideration of how closely the expectations of the play’s audience can or should be associated with those of the play’s characters. Pandarus’s final address to the audience has often troubled critics: it seems deliberately to insult the expectations of Shakespeare’s audience. In many of Shakespeare’s prologues and epilogues, audiences could expect to be addressed as privileged viewers, kind gentlemen and gentlewomen. Puck, in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, for example, addresses the audience as “Gentles” (Epi., 7), while the Prologue in *All Is True (Henry VIII)* addresses the “gentle hearers” (Pro., 17). The

³³ See Jill L. Levenson, “Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* and the Monumental Tradition in Tapestries and Literature”, *Renaissance Drama*, n.s., 7 (1976), 43-84, and Sidney Colvin, “The Sack of Troy in Shakespeare’s ‘Lucrece’ and in Some Fifteenth-Century Drawings and Tapestries”, in *A Book of Homage to Shakespeare*, ed. Israel Gollancz (London: Oxford University Press, 1916), pp. 88-99.

³⁴ Walter Cohen, “Introduction to *Troilus and Cressida*”, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, pp. 1823-32 (p. 1827).

Prologue begins *Troilus and Cressida* with this conventional framing of the audience; he addresses them as “you, fair beholders” (Pro., 26). During the course of the play, however, this “fair” flattery is radically inverted. Pandarus-as-Epilogue tells the audience that they can expect him to “bequeath you my diseases” (5.11.54) in two months’ time: the “you” he aligns with “Good traders in the flesh” (5.11.44) and the “Brethren and sisters of the hold-door trade” (5.11.54). Although the audience might expect to be addressed conventionally as “fair beholders”, these final expressions are highly unconventional. This address has contributed to many critical assumptions about exactly what kind of audience Shakespeare was expecting for this play. Kenneth Palmer writes that “[i]t is clear that in the Epilogue Pandarus is teasing his audience”, and, imagining an Inns of Court audience for the play, asks in parenthesis: “Presumably, the young lawyers did not mind being called bawds. Are we to assume that there were also woman in the audience?”.³⁵ As this thesis explains, critical receptions are tied to assumptions about audience expectations. The unconventional nature of the play has led to critics and editors trying to make excuses for it: they situate it away from the Globe at one of the Inns of Court, at some other private venue such as a Cambridge college, or they even see the play as only meant for readers. Some of these assumptions and practices have arguably misled critics in their understanding of the play’s engagement with audience expectation and the plays of Shakespeare’s contemporaries.

The way that *Troilus and Cressida* treats its audience has split critical views. Some argue that the play is elitist and intended for a private audience; others such as Paul Yachnin suggest that it is hybrid “populuxe”, or at least more open to a mixed audience.³⁶ Yachnin’s populuxe argument rests on the premise that Shakespeare’s open-theatre audience knew that the Lord Chamberlain’s or King’s Men performed for royalty and the elite. In this argument,

³⁵ Kenneth Palmer, “Introduction”, *Troilus and Cressida: The Arden Shakespeare*, 2nd ser., ed. Kenneth Palmer (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 1-93 (p. 21).

³⁶ See Paul Yachnin, “‘The Perfection of Ten’: Populuxe Art and Artisanal Value in *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 56.3 (2005), 306-27.

Shakespeare's plays, therefore, offered the public, "popular" theatregoer a *luxury* enjoyed also by the wealthiest patrons, hence a *populuxe* experience. Some, such as E.M.W. Tillyard in 1943, have thought that the play is a deeply conservative creation ultimately expounding an "Elizabethan World Picture", while others have seen it as a provocative and satirical critique of late Elizabethan court fashion and politics.³⁷ Although it could be argued that the overdetermined subject matter of the play lends itself to different expectations, this thesis suggests that this very invocation of a diversity of responses is also intrinsic to the project of the play itself.

IV. Theatre of the Book

The critical heritage on *Troilus and Cressida* acknowledges another kind of audience that is explicitly literary. It is the only Shakespeare play published during the author's lifetime to include an epistle to the reader as well as being the only Shakespeare quarto published in his lifetime to actually refer to him as an "author". This two-page epistle appears to announce a reading version of the play, and, as this thesis will illustrate, it has been the informing source of many expectations and assumptions about the play's audience. The epistle goes out of its way to disassociate the play from a common sort of audience, beginning by saying that the play was "never clapper-clawed with the palmes of the vulger" (¶2^r). It says that the play was "never stal'd with the stage" (¶2^r), situating the play as one either rarely acted, or perhaps as one performed privately.

However, the idea that the public audience and the readership of the printed book would be *radically* different, as apparently argued by the epistle, is questionable. The title page to the first quarto of *Every Man Out Of His Humour*, for example, announced that the

³⁷ These positions are considered in the next chapter; for "Elizabethan World Picture", see E.M.W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture* (1943; London: Peregrine Books, 1963).

text contains “more than hath been Publicly Spoken or Acted”.³⁸ Ben Jonson dedicated the play to the “Gentlemen” of the Inns of Court, but it was still first performed by the Lord Chamberlain’s Men for audiences at the Globe. This suggests that at least some of the Inns of Court men would have already seen the play *publicly* performed: Jonson modestly writes that “When I wrote this Poeme, I had friendship with divers in your societies [i.e. the Inns of Court]. [...] Of them, and then (that I say no more) it was not despis’d”.³⁹ In the dedication Jonson – perhaps despite himself – sees the play’s publication as giving the play “a longer life” rather than a different one; here, he assumes a transition from Globe audiences to Inns of Court readers made possible by print publication. As this thesis will argue, although Jonson did make distinctions between early modern readers of his plays and those who merely watched them, Shakespeare does not seem to have accentuated this difference in his playwriting.⁴⁰

Rather than always focussing on the ways in which expectations of the play’s reading audience may be dissimilar, it is important also to think of how this reading audience may be an extension of the audiences of the theatrical event. That Shakespeare was sensible of the “longer life” that his plays might have, and that he also probably had readers’ expectations in mind while writing the play, has been argued by critics such as Lukas Erne in *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist* and by Douglas Bruster in a recent essay “Shakespeare the Stationer”.⁴¹ Indeed, this idea of audience expectations in terms of a *readership* is discussed within *Troilus and Cressida* itself. In the first act of the play, for example, Nestor describes the viewing of

³⁸ Ben Jonson, *The Comickall Satyre of Every Man Out of His Humor* (London, 1600), A1^r.

³⁹ Ben Jonson, “To the Nobelest Nourceries of Humanity, and Liberty, in the Kingdom: the Inns of Court”, in *Everyman Out of His Humour*, in *Ben Jonson*, p. 421. Of course, the addressed audience, the dedicatees, would not have been the only people who bought the published play.

⁴⁰ As discussed in Chapter Four, Tiffany Stern suggests that early modern books were sold in the theatre to audiences too. See Tiffany Stern, “Watching as Reading: The Audience and Written Text in Shakespeare’s Playhouse”, in *How To Do Things With Shakespeare: New Approaches, New Essays*, ed. Laurie Maguire (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), pp. 136-59.

⁴¹ See Lukas Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, 2nd edn (2003; Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013) and Douglas Bruster, “Shakespeare the Stationer”, in *Shakespeare’s Stationers: Studies in Cultural Bibliography*, ed. Marta Straznicky (Philadelphia, PA: University Of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), pp. 112-31

the combat between Hector and Ajax: “Although particular, [the performance of the combat] shall give a scantling / Of good or bad unto the general” (1.3.343-44).⁴² Nestor places this “spectacle” within the context of a literary reception:

And in such indexes, although small pricks
To their subsequent volumes, there is seen
The baby figure of the giant mass
Of things to come at large.
(1.3.345-48)

The use of this metaphor suggests that expectations of the future “things to come” can be transposed into the play as a “theatre of the book”. As Julie Stone Peters explains, “[a]t the same time that [...] commonplaces hardened the distinction between text and performance, those writing about the dramatic book repeatedly questioned the commonplaces through metaphors of the performing book or the textuality of performance”.⁴³ As this example might suggest, Shakespeare is not only potentially aware of a prospective reading audience; he signals to his theatre audience an active engagement with the idea of readers’ expectations.⁴⁴ In so doing, Shakespeare’s play explores the very nature of literary and theatrical taste.

V. Visualising Expectations as a Matter of Taste

The ambivalence of Shakespeare’s contemporary, Jonson, towards the theatre is well documented.⁴⁵ He often makes a distinction between a theatre audience, which he denigrates, and a valued reading audience. Jonson frequently articulates this distinction in terms of taste. Towards the end of his career, he published an “Ode to himself”; in this poem, Jonson

⁴² See *OED* “Scantling” n., sense 6: “A sample, pattern, specimen. Hence, a sketch, outline, rough draft”. The *OED* cites Nestor’s line from *Troilus and Cressida* as an example of this use. The “index” is the contents page; see Dawson (ed.), pp. 110-11.

⁴³ Julia Stone Peters, *Theatre of the Book, 1480-1880: Print, Text, and Performance in Europe* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 109.

⁴⁴ Cressida’s soliloquy as a sonnet (*T&C*, 1.2.278-91) is a case in point for the play’s literary-theatrical status. For her soliloquy as a sonnet, see Helen Hennessey Vendler, “Shakespeare’s Other Sonnets”, in *In the Company of Shakespeare: Essays on English Renaissance in Honor of G. Blakemore Evans*, ed. Thomas Moisan and Douglas Bruster (Cranbury, NJ and London: Rosemont Press, 2002), pp. 161-74.

⁴⁵ See, for example, Ian Donaldson, *Ben Jonson: A Life* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

condemns the theatre audience in terms that are similar to those of the *Troilus and Cressida* epistle. Referring to the theatre audience, he writes:

Say, that thou pour'st them wheat,
And they will acornes eat:
'Twere simple fury, still, thy selfe to waste
On such as have no taste!⁴⁶

Jonson articulates an expectation of his theatre audience by invoking taste. The language of taste, however, had been vitally important for Jonson as a poet and dramatist. When he moved from writing for the public theatre and began to write for the private Blackfriars theatre in 1600, Jonson created plays that tried to distinguish the tastes of its audience from those of the open theatres. It is this language of taste that *Troilus and Cressida* can be seen responding to in late 1601.

As this thesis will explore, before taste became normalised as a term for aesthetic discernment, it was often used metaphorically, closely associated with judging and testing.⁴⁷ Furthermore, as Elizabeth Swann has recently argued,

in its earliest incarnations “taste” as literary discrimination was understood not simply as a figurative application of a term which had previously been used only to describe a physical sensation, but was rooted in the phenomenal reality of reading and writing as it engaged the senses, particularly gustation.⁴⁸

According to the *OED*, the notion of taste as explicitly denoting the “faculty of perceiving and enjoying what is excellent in art, literature, and the like” was not evident in print until

⁴⁶ Ben Jonson, “Ode to himselfe”, in *The New Inn*, in *Ben Jonson*, ed. C.H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925-52), VI (1938), 383-498 (pp. 492-494, p. 492, ll. 11-14).

⁴⁷ For “taste” as aesthetic judgement in later centuries, see, for example: David Hume (1757), “Of the Standard of Taste”, in *Selected Essays*, ed. Stephen Copley and Andrew Edgar (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp.133-54; Edmund Burke (1759), “Introduction: On Taste”, in *A Philosophical Enquiry*, ed. Adam Phillips (Oxford and New York: Oxford University, 1990), pp. 11-26; and, Immanuel Kant (1790), *Critique of Judgement*, trans. James Creed Meredith, rev. Nicholas Walker (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) which begins, after the introduction, with the section heading “The judgement of taste is aesthetic” (p. 203).

⁴⁸ Elizabeth Swann, “‘Imitation sweet’: Early seventeenth-century commonplace culture and the bibliophagic trope”, Unpublished Paper, *Eating Words: Image, Text, Food Colloquium*, Cambridge, 13 September 2011. On early modern taste, see, for example, Robert Appelbaum, *Aguecheek's Beef, Belch's Hiccup, and Other Gastronomic Interjections: Literature, Culture and Food among the Early Moderns* (Chicago, IL, and London: University of Chicago Press, 2006); Allison K. Deutermann, “‘Caviare to the general’?: Taste, Hearing, and Genre in *Hamlet*”, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 62.2 (2011), 230-55; and Wendy Wall, “Just a Spoonful of Sugar: Syrup and Domesticity in Early Modern England”, *Modern Philology* 104.2 (2006), 149-72.

Milton used it in 1671, and the idea of taste as a “manner of exhibiting aesthetic discernment” (“taste” n.1, sense 8b) did not come about until 1739. The idea of taste as meaning to test or try the quality of something, however, goes back to medieval times, and foretaste has been traced back by the *OED* to as early as 1435 (“foretaste” n.). As discussed below, the *Troilus and Cressida* 1609 quarto epistle uses a language of taste to judge “this authors” (¶2^r) work as the most “witty” (¶2^r) among his plays: it is just one example of the way early modern writers used culinary and gustatory language to describe figuratively artistic creation and, especially, aesthetic appreciation. Using a language of physical taste to describe aesthetic taste was not just a way for early modern writers to be witty, or in this case to describe the playwright as being witty. This language of taste was a way of imaginatively visualising, defining and exploring the expectations and the aesthetic tastes of readers and theatre audiences: reflecting the burgeoning early modern consumer culture of Shakespeare’s day, these audiences were imagined figuratively by writers, if not always as consumers, then certainly as tasters.

This idea of audiences as tasters is exemplified especially in the paratexts of several early modern publications. For example, the translator of Pliny’s *Historie of the World* (publ. 1601) writes in “The Preface to the Reader”:

Well may the newest songs and last devised plaies delight our ears at the first, and for the present ravish our senses; like as horarie and early Summer fruits content our tast and please the appetit: but surely it is antiquitie that hath given grace, vigor, & strength to writings; even as age commendeth the most generous and best wines.⁴⁹

In passing, the translator, Philemon Holland, imagines new songs and the latest plays being appreciated by audiences in the way that fresh delicious fruits are tasted, before suggesting that Pliny’s antique writing is like a mature wine.⁵⁰ In a similar fashion, at the beginning of

⁴⁹ Philemon Holland, “The Preface to the Reader”, in Pliny the Elder, *Historie of the World [...] Translated into English by Philemon Holland Doctor in Physicke. The first Tome* (London, 1601), no quire signatures.

⁵⁰ For the obsolete description “horarie”, the *OED* gives the definition “Lasting only for an hour, or short time; applied to fruits that will not keep” (adj., sense 3.); it is unlikely that Philemon Holland is punning on “whore” as Touchstone is said to have done in *As You Like It* (2.7.24-28).

his critical essay on actors, Heywood imagines the puritanical “seditious sectists” who do not appreciate plays: again using a language of taste, he says these people “grow up like unsavoury tufts of grass, which, though outwardly green and fresh to the eye, yet are they both unpleasant and unprofitable, being too sour for food and too rank for fodder”.⁵¹ In the metaphor, these sectists would not taste good, but the implication in the essay is that they do not have good taste either. Likening plays to a tasty dish, he writes in the third part of the essay that “some will say, this dish might be very well spared out of the banquet. To him I answer: Diogenes, that used to feed on roots, cannot relish a march-pane”, a march-pane being a tasty marzipan biscuit.⁵²

The language of food and tasting in early modern writing was often both gustatory and aesthetic. In early modern drama, this language could relate to both characters’ expectations *in* the play and audience expectations *of* the play. The writer of the 1609 quarto epistle states that *Troilus and Cressida* never became staled with the stage and goes on to suggest that

dull and heavy-witted worldlings, as were never capable of the witte of a Comedie, [...] have found that witte there [i.e. in Shakespeare’s comedies], that they never found in them-selves, and have parted better wittied than they came: feeling an edge of witte set upon them, more than ever they dreamd they had braine to grind it on.
(¶2^r)

Editors have suggested that in this extended metaphor the “brain” acts as a whetstone for an “edge of witte”; however, there is also a provoking secondary sense if the metaphor is more closely associated with the bread-making language in the play and the “stale” of the epistle’s first sentence (see Appendix II).⁵³ In this reading, “braine” ground on the edge of wit takes the place of the expected *grain* which would be ground by the edge of millstones

⁵¹ Thomas Heywood, *An Apology for Actors*, p. 481.

⁵² Ibid., p. 493. In the first folio *Romeo and Juliet*, Peter asks another serving-man to “save [him] a piece of Marchpane” (folio, TLN 574-75) from the banquet. *The Norton Shakespeare* modernises “Marchpane” to “marzipan” (*Romeo and Juliet*, 1.5.6).

⁵³ For a reproduction of the epistle, see Appendix II: Paratexts of the 1609 *Troilus and Cressida* Quarto.

(incidentally also mentioned in the play).⁵⁴ This culinary metaphor fits with the overall style of the epistle which associates the language of food and taste with artistic appreciation, as the next sentence demonstrates: “So much and such savored salt of witte is in his Commedies, that they seeme (for their height of pleasure) to be borne in that sea that brought forth *Venus*” (¶2^r). Like Francis Meres’ famous description of “honey-tongued Shakespeare [...] with his sugred Sonnets”, this publisher’s preface uses the gustatory language to make aesthetic judgements.⁵⁵ In so doing, the epistle visualises or imagines audience expectations as a matter of taste.

VI. Making Distinctions with Taste

The publisher’s preface may respond to the language of taste in the play itself, but in its distinctions about theatre and reading audiences it is closer in tone to the work of Jonson than to that of *Troilus and Cressida* as a whole.⁵⁶ Compare the preface, for example, with Jonson’s first Blackfriars play *Cynthia’s Revels*, where Mercurie says

good men, like the sea, should still maintaine
Their noble taste, in midst of all fresh humours,
That flow about them, to corrupt their streames,
Bearing no season, much lesse salt of goodnesse.⁵⁷

Here good men have “noble taste”, and as this thesis will argue it is Jonson’s linking of good taste with “noble” or sovereign taste that Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* questions.

⁵⁴ Cressida suggests that Hecuba laughed so that her eyes ran over “With millstones” (1.2.26) and moves on to a culinary metaphor in her next utterance.

⁵⁵ Francis Meres, *Palladis Tamia: Wits Treasury* (London, 1598), Oo^v (p. 281).

⁵⁶ As discussed in the next chapter, Zachary Lesser argues for the epistle as a reading of the play in *Renaissance Drama and the Politics of Publication: Readings in the English Book Trade* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 2. Anthony B. Dawson writes in a footnote that the epistle writer also uses Thersites’ term from the play, “clapper-clawing” (5.4.1): “The writer of Q’s prefatory epistle apparently picked up this term and applied it to the noisy applause of a raucous theatre audience”, Dawson (ed.), p. 221.

⁵⁷ Ben Jonson, *Cynthia’s Revels*, in *Ben Jonson*, ed. C.H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925-52), IV (1932), 1-184 (5.1.13-16). All further references to this play are to this edition and line numbers are given in parenthesis.

The epistle and the milieu of print culture help to contextualise the way that *Troilus and Cressida* begins with language that invites the audience to visualise expectations as a matter of taste; and yet, rather than endorsing an elitist view, Shakespeare's play tends to expose the culture of refined "noble taste" to questioning. It does so partly by explicitly presenting expectations using a language of taste.

The framing of audience expectation as a matter of taste is established at the very start of the play. The Prologue explains that "our play / Leaps o'er the vaunt and firstlings of those broils [...] To what may be digested in a play" (Pro., 26, 27-29). Both "broil" and "digested" hold possible early modern connotations of cooking or eating, and this reading is confirmed as the play progresses.⁵⁸ Ulysses, for example, calls Patroclus's playacting in front of Achilles "fusty stuff" (1.3.162); this anticipates the quarto epistle that says *Troilus and Cressida* has never been "stal'd with the Stage" (¶2^r). In Achilles' tent, the hero addresses the "privileged man" (2.3.51), Thersites, as "my cheese, my digestion" (2.3.35-36), perhaps implying that Thersites' performances are like the final course of a meal, the after dinner entertainment.⁵⁹ This idea of a performance as a dish, or at least as something having flavour, is continued in the characters' descriptions of the other actions in the play too, and their experience of these actions.

Characters in the play frequently describe their expectations using a vocabulary of taste. Besides using the metaphor of reading, for example, Nestor also describes the "sportful combat" (3.3.337), proposed by Hector, using the language of tasting. He discusses the repercussions of allowing their best warrior, Achilles, to fight in single combat with Hector:

Yet in the trial much opinion dwells,
For here the Trojans taste our dear'st repute

⁵⁸ Ben Jonson's character Cob speaks of the "first red herring, that was *broil'd* in ADAM, and EVE's kitchin" in the folio *Every Man in his Humour*, in *Ben Jonson*, ed. C.H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925-52), III (1927), 291-403 (1.4.14-15; emphasis added). Shakespeare's Henry V speaks of premeditated crimes as being "chewed, swallowed, and *digested*" (*Henry V*, 2.2.55; emphasis added).

⁵⁹ On the different early modern attitudes towards cheese, see Joan Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England: Phases, Fads, Fashions, 1500-1750* (London and New York: Hambledon Continuum, 2007), pp. 278-83.

With their fin'st palate;
(1.3.338-40)

As Anthony Dawson explains, this is just “[o]ne of the many references to highly refined tasting in the play”.⁶⁰ This language of refined taste in reference to viewing is illustrated later in the play by Troilus. When he imagines his future experience of Cressida, he describes himself as an expectant taster and as an audience member:

I am giddy: expectation whirls me round.
Th'imaginary relish is so sweet
That it enchants my sense – what will it be
When that the wat'ry palate tastes indeed
Love's thrice repurèd nectar? Death, I fear me,
Sounding destruction, or some joy too fine,
Too subtle-potent, tuned too sharp in sweetness
For the capacity of my ruder powers.
(3.2.15-22)

Troilus describes himself tasting “Love's thrice repurèd nectar”. As Dawson notes, the “metaphor soon moves from gustatory to musical sensation”.⁶¹ The metaphoric language, however, also points to a shift from a mere gustatory taste to an aesthetic taste.⁶² His expectations are described using a language of tasting; in this case, this metaphoric language of expectation additionally positions Troilus as an auditor of a musical performance. Troilus can represent his anticipation in terms of “repurèd nectar” and musical performance, and on the surface this represents the character as being refined.

Shakespeare's Trojan play often shows characters as audience members describing their expectations, or their view of a performance, using food imagery. The play does not stage a single banquet and the characters are obviously not supposed to be grocers.

Nonetheless, as Caroline Spurgeon demonstrated in *Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells*

⁶⁰ Dawson (ed.), p. 110. In Act Four the play will stage the single combat where “expectance here from both sides” (4.5.146), Trojan and Greek, will equally apply to the play's audience who want to know “What further [they] will do” (4.5.147).

⁶¹ Dawson (ed.), p. 147.

⁶² This is not to say that there cannot be an aesthetic sense of gustatory taste; see Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, *The Physiology of Taste; Or, Transcendental Gastronomy*, trans. Fayette Robinson (French 1825; Seaside, OR: Merchant Books, 2009) and Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010).

Us, *Troilus and Cressida* contains twice as many food, drink and cooking images as can be found in any other play by Shakespeare (see Appendix III).⁶³ This gastronomic language perpetuates the etymological association between tasting and testing.⁶⁴ For example, Troilus says to Cressida about men in general: “Praise us as we are tasted, allow us as we prove” (3.2.77-79). David Bevington notes that “[t]asted plays on the near-homonym, ‘tested’”.⁶⁵

Troilus’s point is that he wishes to be judged as he is found by Cressida, not as he is assumed or expected to be by others. He positions himself as the dish, and Cressida as taster. C.C.

Barfoot also emphasises the relation between praising and tasting in the play:

Recalling Caroline Spurgeon’s commentary on the food images in *Troilus and Cressida*, one is led to perceive an expressive association between those images and the praise/prize/price cluster and the related concepts of merit and reputation by way of the taste/test overlap.⁶⁶

Barfoot argues that the characters in Shakespeare’s play utilise the language of food to discuss their opinion about others and their reputation. This language of tasting is applicable, though, to both the onstage audience figures and the theatre audience who share the situation of viewing the other characters in the play.⁶⁷ In the case of Cressida and Troilus, for example, the ultimate viewer or taster is not Cressida, but Shakespeare’s audience, given the opportunity to “taste” or test Troilus. A reading of taste in the play, then, needs first to take account of the way that the play stages these characters as audience figures who describe their view of others using the imagery of food: all the characters seem to have a heightened

⁶³ Caroline Spurgeon, “Chart VII” in the appendix “Charts”, in *Shakespeare’s Imagery and What It Tells Us* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), n. p.. This chart is reproduced in Appendix III: “A Pictorial Statement of the Dominant Images in *Hamlet* and *Troilus and Cressida*”.

⁶⁴ The *OED* gives “taste” n1. sense 2a: “A trying, testing; a trial, test, examination” citing *King Lear* “I hope, for my brother’s justification, he wrote this but as an essay or taste of my virtue” (1.2.43-45).

⁶⁵ David Bevington (ed.), *Troilus and Cressida: Arden Shakespeare*, 3rd ser. (London: Nelson and Sons, 1998), p. 234. Dawson notes in his edition of the play that this line might allude “to the biblical adage ‘by their frutes ye shal knowe them’ (Matthew 7:20)”, Dawson (ed.), p. 150. Troilus’s “prove” may pun on the proving of bread too, the baking metaphor being prevalent in the play.

⁶⁶ C.C. Barfoot, “*Troilus and Cressida*: ‘Praise us as we are tasted’”, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 39.1 (1988), 45-57 (p. 54).

⁶⁷ Cf., Shakespeare’s Sonnet 75, for example, where the poetic voice expresses the conceit of viewing and tasting when he says he is “Sometime all full with feasting on your sight, / And by and by clean starvèd for a look” (ll. 9-10).

awareness of each other's reputation, but many of them speak as if they have a discerning sense of taste.

That Shakespeare expected his audience to understand the notion of a matter of taste as being simultaneously gustatory and aesthetic is obvious from *Hamlet* (c. 1600), an important prequel thought to have been staged just a year or two before *Troilus and Cressida*. Hamlet presents his own literary criticism when the players arrive. He asks them to "give [him] a taste of [their] quality" (2.2.414), to rehearse a speech from a play that "pleased not the million" (2.2.418). Hamlet proclaims:

'Twas caviare to the general. But it was – as I received it, and others whose judgments in such matters cried in the top of mine – an excellent play, well digested in the scenes, set down with as much modesty and cunning. I remember one said there was no sallets in the lines to make it savoury, nor no matter in the phrase that might indict the author of affectation, but called it an honest method, as wholesome as sweet, and by very much more handsome than fine.
(2.2.418-26)

Hamlet's comments on this "caviare" play show the playwright responding to the language of taste in Elizabethan literary criticism and in the plays of some of his contemporaries that will be reflected and elaborated in *Troilus and Cressida*.

Hamlet's tasteful pronouncements declare that the play did not meet the expectations of the general audience, the "million"; they did not have a taste for the obscure play that he liked.⁶⁸ Extant in the first quarto version of *Hamlet*, these comments mirror the attitude of characters in Jonson's Blackfriars plays and offer a foretaste of the language of taste utilised to explore and express critical discernment in *Troilus and Cressida*. While Hamlet's views should not be conflated with those of Shakespeare, the scene demonstrates an awareness that authors wrote for audiences that had varying tastes. These tastes could be placed in a hierarchy by people like Jonson and Hamlet, with "the million" lower down and those known for their "judgements" at the top. The idea expressed in this scene – that audiences have

⁶⁸ The *OED* cites this passage from *Hamlet* as the first use of "the million" ("million" n., sense 2b) as a reference to a multitude of people or the masses.

varying aesthetic tastes and expectations – reflects Gabriel Harvey’s note for Shakespeare’s poems and *Hamlet* that he left in his edition of Chaucer: “The younger sort takes much delight in Shakespeares Venus, & Adonis: but his Lucrece, & his tragedie of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, have it in them, to please the wiser sort”.⁶⁹ The discourse of audience expectation is affected by this aesthetic of taste because playwrights have to make implicit judgements about their audiences in order to think, consciously or not, about their expectations, and because some audiences and authors pride themselves on their own aesthetic judgement. In turn, readers and audiences seem to have made judgments about authors, such as Jonson and Shakespeare, using a comparable language of taste.

The notion of describing aesthetic judgement figuratively as gustatory taste in both *Hamlet* and *Troilus and Cressida* prefigures the normalising (that is, non-figurative use) of aesthetic judgement *as* taste during the seventeenth and later centuries. In later periods, this aesthetic sense of taste was applied to artistic objects, but it could also apply to the observation of people. José Antonio Maravall explains how between the Renaissance and the Baroque cultural periods

[t]aste comes to be the criterion of valorization with which a person intuitively and immediately ascertains the value of the contemplated object, whether by his or her spontaneous and natural exquisite qualities or because of the excellent sedimentation that is internalized through the cultivation of sensibility and intelligence.⁷⁰

In this view, taste is either innate in the viewer or it is cultivated in individuals so that they can make sure aesthetic judgements. Shakespeare’s Trojan play does not contain art objects for aesthetic contemplation, and yet the characters themselves are often described as objects

⁶⁹ Gabriel Harvey’s *Marginalia*, ed. G.C. Moore Smith (Stratford-Upon-Avon: Shakespeare Head Press, 1913), p. 232.

⁷⁰ José Antonio Maravall, *Culture of the Baroque: Analysis of a Historical Structure*, trans. Terry Cochran (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), p. 101. Maravall refers to a discussion of judgement and taste in sixteenth-century art theory as formulated in Rudolph Klein, *Form and Meaning: Writings on the Renaissance and Modern Art*, trans. Madeline Jay and Leon Wiesetier (New York: Viking Press, 1979), pp. 161-69.

that might be beheld, judged or valorised. For example, continuing the metaphor of taste, Agamemnon says of Achilles that his virtues

Do in our eyes begin to lose their gloss,
Yea, like fair fruit in an unwholesome dish,
Are like to rot untasted.
(2.3.106-108)

In the play, characters rarely frame their idea of how they will be seen in terms of *one* viewer. On the whole, characters are far more concerned about how they will be seen in relation to a more general audience. Characters do not seem to worry about how good they “truly” (cf. *Hamlet*, 1.2.83) are, but, rather, they are obsessed with how they will be judged in others’ *opinion*, a word that appears more times in this play than in any other by Shakespeare.⁷¹

Reading the later Baroque period, Maravall briefly discusses the importance of taste for thinking about individuals and the multitude as audience:

The opinions of the multitude of common people were presented – by those dealing with it at that time – in terms of a concept that underwent an important alteration during the baroque: taste. The anonymous mass of people act according to their taste, whether they are applauding a theatrical play or exalting the figure of a personage.⁷²

The idea that the exercise of an audience’s “taste” might apply equally to “applauding a theatrical play” as to “exalting the figure of a personage” is discussed even earlier, however, within *Troilus and Cressida* itself. For example, in the important scene in which Achilles and Ulysses, with his book in hand, discuss the issue of reputation, Ulysses says that the author in his volume writes that a man does not know his own parts or qualities “Till he communicate his parts to others [...] [and] behold[s] them formed in the applause / Where they’re extended” (3.3.116, 119-20). Here, the hypothetical “figure of a personage” is exalted with

⁷¹ A search on Ben and David Crystal’s website *Shakespeare’s Words* <<http://www.shakespeareswords.com>> [accessed 2 August 2010] shows that “opinion” occurs ten times in *Troilus and Cressida*, more than any other Shakespeare play. For these occurrences, see T.H. Howard Hill, *Troilus and Cressida: A Concordance to the Text of the First Quarto of 1609* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 213. It may be significant for the history of the play’s first performance and the theme of a *theatrum mundi* in the play that Jürgen Habermas found a correlation between the notion of “public opinion” and the “public sphere”; see Jürgen Habermas, “The Bourgeois Public Sphere; Idea and Ideology”, in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger with Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity, 1989), pp. 89-140.

⁷² Maravall, p. 101.

applause. This conceit suggests the idea of a *theatrum mundi* because the person is described as if he were being applauded.

Appropriately, taste begins to denote an aesthetic appreciation that could apply to art and people in early modern literature. This idea of taste as referring both to aesthetic objects and to human figures is especially apt for a play in which characters are theatrical constructs and literary figures. In *Troilus and Cressida*, however, characters describe each other as books, dishes and actors in a way that emphasises how taste acts as a cover for commodification and commercial exchange. As staged, the play shows actors playing heroes who seem to demonstrate an awareness that their actions *are* staged, open to view, and try to deny the notion that they are being commercialised. The staging of characters in *Troilus and Cressida* suggests the dictum that “All the world’s a stage” (*As You Like It*, 2.7.138), suggesting that people’s actions outside the theatre can also be “staged”. This notion of a *theatrum mundi* suggests that, just as there are theatre audiences, there are also audiences for actions outside the theatre.

The layering of a contemporaneous Elizabethan social world onto received traditions of Troy ensures that what is seen as a matter of taste by the characters of the play has ideological implications for the audience. This is perhaps no more apparent than when Pandarus and Cressida act as audience figures viewing the Trojan soldiers returning in a pageant from the battlefield. After the heroes pass over the stage, the first folio stage direction reads: “*Enter common Souldiers*” (folio, TLN 437). Seeing them, Cressida says, “Here comes more” (1.2.204), but Pandarus exclaims, “Asses, fools, dolts – chaff and bran, chaff and bran! Porridge after meat” (1.2.205). Although Pandarus’s exaltation of the heroes aims to raise Troilus in Cressida’s estimation, his labelling of the common soldiers as “Porridge after meat” points potentially to political implications. If a sovereign or military general, for example, were to employ the same expectation of the common soldiers, the

soldiers' position on the battlefield could be in serious danger: this disregard is evident in Falstaff's joke in *1 Henry IV* when he refers to his men by exclaiming: "Tut, tut, good enough to toss, food for powder, food for powder. They'll fill a pit as well as better." (4.2.58-59). The fact that actors often wore contemporary dress on the stage, especially for smaller parts, would no doubt have enforced the link between the common soldiers of Troy and Elizabethan soldiers.⁷³

In a sense, Shakespeare's play can be seen as a dark artistic reflection on the statement made by Oscar Wilde's aesthete character Gilbert in *The Critic as Artist*: "As long as war is regarded as wicked, it will always have its fascination. When it is looked upon as vulgar, it will cease to be popular".⁷⁴ If *Troilus and Cressida* can be seen as anachronistically contemplating this sentiment, then it should also be noted that the play is concerned with the tastes of those who "regard" war even more than the play demonstrates the potential corruption of those who take part in war itself. On the one hand, there is Troilus saying, in his most chivalrous guise, that Helen is "a theme of honour and renown / A spur to valiant and magnanimous deeds" (2.2.199-200). But on the other, the play shows the figure of Thersites – sometimes played as a war correspondent in modern productions – ridiculing the chivalrous war propaganda and exclaiming that the war is just "a good quarrel to draw emulous factions and bleed to death upon" (2.3.64-65).⁷⁵ Thersites certainly sees the war as vulgar: his view would prompt the question of whether the play itself will not be popular because Shakespeare's audience will find it vulgar. However, his railing is clearly drawing on a tradition of satire which was in vogue at the time. The quarto epistle says that the play was

⁷³ Andrew Gurr and Mariko Ichikawa explain that "[f]or ordinary parts, when hired men played household servants or messengers, ordinary street wear was sufficient, and the players used their own clothes. The company built up its resources of costume or 'apparel' only for parts with a social status well above the player range", *Staging in Shakespeare's Theatre: Oxford Shakespeare Topics* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 54.

⁷⁴ Oscar Wilde, *The Artist As Critic: With Some Remarks Upon the Importance of Doing Nothing*, in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, ed. Vyvyn Holland (London and Glasgow: Collins, 1966), pp. 1009-59 (p. 1057).

⁷⁵ For Thersites as a war correspondent, see Frances A. Shirley, *Troilus and Cressida: Shakespeare in Production* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 27 and p. 124.

“never clapper-clawd with the palmes of the vulger” (¶2^f) and critics have often taken this as evidence that the play itself was not popular. Whether it was popular or not is something about which theatre historians will probably never be sure. Nevertheless, it is telling that the play itself often stages disappointed expectations and troubled audience figures in ways that, along with the publisher’s preface, may well have led critics to *suppose* that the play was unpopular.

The play’s willingness to imagine dissatisfied or manipulative audiences may have been one of the reasons why Dryden rewrote the play with a prologue in which the ghost of Shakespeare addresses the audience, asking them to “Sit silent then, that my pleas’d Soul may see / A Judging Audience once, and worthy me”.⁷⁶ In contrast, rather than asking the audience to “sit back and enjoy the show”, Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* puts audience expectation on the stage by producing characters like Thersites who, in Bridget Escolme’s words, “always appears as a spectator, looking on at other performances, expecting, then demanding, that we watch with him”.⁷⁷ The strategy of framing expectations has the potential to push a complacent audience into uncomfortable situations. Whether the play is meant for a theatre or a reading audience, *Troilus and Cressida* is purportedly orientated towards the “fair beholders” identified by the Prologue. Nonetheless, through the language, staging and characterisation, the play tests the idea of audience expectation. It orientates the audience to share in the tastes of its characters, seemingly offering them few other viewpoints besides the railing of Thersites or the madness of Cassandra. As Escolme suggests in relation to modern-day audiences, even Achilles’ role as “disengaged spectator” holds the potential to challenge “a world that watches wars at a distance”.⁷⁸ However, in testing the idea of audience

⁷⁶ John Dryden, *Troilus and Cressida: Or, Truth Found Too Late* in *The Works of Dryden*, ed. Alan Roper, 20 vols (Berkeley, Los Angeles, CA and London: University of California Press, 1956-89), XIII (1984), 217-355, Pro., 35-36.

⁷⁷ Bridget Escolme, *Talking to the Audience: Shakespeare, Performance, Self* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 46.

⁷⁸ Bridget Escolme, *Talking to the Audience*, p. 49 and p. 50.

expectation rather than merely questioning the *performance* of love and war, the play blurs lines between spectator and performer. In so doing, it tests the expectations of what it means to be in the “audience” in an almost Brechtian sense.⁷⁹

VII. Definitions and Positions

This section is split into a series of subsections which introduce certain points explored further as the thesis progresses.

VII.i. Critical Contexts and Theoretical Frameworks

Troilus and Cressida takes an important part in what was a growing conversation in early modern culture about the expectations of the literary and the theatrical. To analyse and evaluate this contribution, this thesis engages with Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of the literary field. As Richard Wilson observes,

Putting Shakespeare in his place in this way involves reconstructing the author’s creative intentions through a methodology which, unlike naive biographical criticism, locates his position within his entire universe of artistic production. And it is just such an analysis that has been made possible by the theory of the literary field developed by Pierre Bourdieu.⁸⁰

Wilson acknowledges that Bourdieu did not often write about the Renaissance.⁸¹ However, in Bourdieu’s early seminal essay on the “Intellectual Field and Creative Project” (first publ.

⁷⁹ In arguably the first instance of Bertolt Brecht applying the theory of “*Verfremdung*” to his own work, for example, he noted that in a play “[c]ertain incidents [...] should be treated as self-contained scenes and raised [...] above the level of the everyday, the obvious, the expected (i.e. alienated)” in “Notes to *Die Rundköpfe und Die Spitzköpfe*”, in *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. and trans. John Willett (London: Methuen, 1964), pp.100-103 (p. 101). For a recent consideration of the *Verfremdungseffekt* (alienation effect) in relation to Shakespeare, see James O’Rourke, *Re-Theorizing Shakespeare through Presentist Readings* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012).

⁸⁰ Richard Wilson, “The Management Of Mirth: Shakespeare via Bourdieu”, in *Shakespeare in French Theory: King of Shadows* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 123-39 (p. 128).

⁸¹ Richard Wilson, *Shakespeare in French Theory*, p. 129.

1966 in French), he turned to Shakespeare to articulate his field theory.⁸² Bourdieu may indeed have been led to Shakespeare via the German Shakespeare critic, Levin L. Schücking, whose book *The Sociology of Literary Taste* he frequently cites in the body of the essay and in the notes.⁸³ It is beyond the scope of this thesis to trace the lineage of thinking on the literary field or the history of taste from Shakespeare to Bourdieu. The knowledge that Bourdieu drew on Shakespeare for his theory, however, suggests that Shakespeare's plays articulated issues to do with a literary field long before Bourdieu was writing. His theorisation of the literary field as "a field of positions and a field of position takings" is especially relevant in considering the author's position and that of the audience.⁸⁴ Audiences take positions and, like the character of Hamlet, proclaim their literary and theatrical tastes and artistic preferences. In the representation of expectations and the language of taste that characters use, *Troilus and Cressida* can be seen as taking part in negotiating Shakespeare's own position in the literary field.

The work of critics such as Raymond Williams is also valuable in contextualising this necessary consideration of artistic creation in relation to power and economics. In fact, the largest footnote in Bourdieu's early essay on field theory quotes from Williams's *The Long Revolution* on the conditions of Elizabethan theatre:

The Elizabethan theatre ... as an institution was largely created by individual middle class and trading and artisan families, yet in fact was steadily opposed by the commercial middle class and, though serving popular audiences, survived through the protection of the court and nobility.⁸⁵

⁸² Pierre Bourdieu, "Intellectual Field and Creative Project", trans. Sian France, in *Knowledge and Control: New Directions for the Sociology of Education*, ed. Michael F.D. Young (London: Macmillan, 1971), pp. 161-88.

⁸³ Levin L. Schücking, *The Sociology of Literary Taste*, trans. Brian Battershaw (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966). Although this book by Schücking is not strictly on Shakespeare, the playwright is the most cited author according to the book index, and he draws on early modern theatre and, specifically, *Hamlet* several times.

⁸⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed", in *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, trans. and ed. Randal Johnson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), pp. 29-73 (p. 42).

⁸⁵ Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (Harmondsworth and New York: Pelican, 1965), p. 266, quoted in Pierre Bourdieu, "Intellectual Field and Creative Project", trans. Sian France, in *Knowledge and Control: New Directions for the Sociology of Education*, ed. Michael F.D. Young (London: Macmillan, 1971), pp. 161-88 (p. 186).

In its stagings of performances and patrons, *Troilus and Cressida* differs from other Shakespeare plays by offering an implicit but sustained social critique. In keeping with Williams's reading, this portrayal suggests a larger mistrust with the courtly version of national ruling power. In *Troilus and Cressida*, that critique is further articulated through an engagement with the practices of characters in (and writers of) heroic epic and courtly romance as adopted by early modern patrons, courtiers and poets.

Furthermore, Shakespeare's representation of these patrons also critiques those who use taste to *patronise* others. In a subchapter on the conditions of early modern theatre, Williams considers the effect of the reopened private theatres at the start of the seventeenth century:

Where previously the court had protected a popular drama against the commercial middle class, now increasingly, with the growing alienation of the court from the decisive elements in the national life, the drama itself began to change in character. On the one hand, there was an increasing tendency to elaboration and spectacle as formal elements to be consumed and enjoyed, rather than as elements of the dramatic experience itself. On the other hand, and especially in comedy, there is a steady movement [...] in the direction of new interests and new standards, leading naturally to the Restoration comedy of manners.⁸⁶

Williams sees here “the development of the beginnings of the movement to a class drama”.⁸⁷

This thesis argues that *Troilus and Cressida* is not especially taking part in this “comedy of manners”, but that it can be read in relation to “a growing alienation of the court”, especially during the end of Elizabeth I's reign. By representing heroes as *failed* spectacles with pretentious tastes, *Troilus and Cressida* marks an awareness of the dramaturgy of the private theatres and their elitist language of taste, as well as the self-fashioning of those at court.⁸⁸ On a more personal and authorial level, it may also suggest a specific reaction to the elitist

⁸⁶ Raymond Williams, p. 278.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Stephen Greenblatt took “self-fashioning” as his subject in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago, IL, and London: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

criticism voiced against Shakespeare himself by better educated playwrights such as Robert Greene.⁸⁹

The critical debate surrounding the so-called War of the Theatres or Poets' War is such that one critic asked in 2003, "Are we witnessing a terrible 'scholastomachia'?"⁹⁰ Although it is unclear exactly who was thought to have instigated the *Poetomachia*, named by Thomas Dekker, James Bednarz's *Shakespeare & the Poets' War* (2002) is certainly responsible for raising the spectre of the Poets' War, again. Charles Cathcart suggests that Bednarz's "work constitutes a further and significant advance in the integration of his subject into the mainstream of scholarly thinking".⁹¹ However, while he has been praised for bringing the discussion of the Poets' War into sharper focus, some of his arguments have met with a certain amount of scepticism and distrust.⁹²

As some reviewers acknowledge, there is a history to this distrust, which partly rises from the verve with which nineteenth-century critics (sometimes hastily) sought to find topical allusions to dramatists in early modern plays.⁹³ In Matthew Steggle's view "[m]uch of Bednarz's book [...] is the set of related and mutually reinforcing factual propositions which build up the argument that Shakespeare's plays contain reference to and personal satire of Jonson".⁹⁴ Steggle argues that Bednarz often "treats these propositions as if they were fact, without doing justice to the full muddiness of the evidence".⁹⁵ Furthermore, the book's focus

⁸⁹ See Richard Wilson, *Shakespeare in French Theory*, p. 134 and Bart van Es, "'Johannes fac Totum'?: Shakespeare's First Contact with the Acting Companies", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 61.4 (2010), 551-77.

⁹⁰ Henk Gras, "Review: *Shakespeare & the Poets' War* by James P. Bednarz", *Modern Language Review*, 98.4 (2003), 956-960 (p. 960).

⁹¹ Charles Cathcart, *Marston, Rivalry, Rapprochement, and Jonson* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), p. 5.

⁹² See the following book reviews for example: Matthew Steggle, "Review of James Bednarz, *Shakespeare & the Poets' War*", *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 7.3 (2002) 6.1-10; available at <URL: <http://purl.oclc.org/emls/07-3/steg1rev.htm>> [accessed 16 October 2013]; Patrick Cheney, "Review: *Shakespeare & the Poets' War*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 54.1 (2003), 98-103; Ken Jackson, "Review: *Shakespeare and the Poets' War*", *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 33.2 (2002), 501-503; W. David Kay, "Review: *Shakespeare and the Poets' War*", *Modern Philology*, 101.3 (2004), 438-41; and Henk Gras, "Review: *Shakespeare & the Poets' War* by James P. Bednarz".

⁹³ These critics are discussed in Chapter One.

⁹⁴ Steggle, paragraph 5.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, paragraph 5.

on Shakespeare is arguably also disproportionate to the focus that the Poets' War had on Shakespeare. Ken Jackson notes in his review of the book, "the Shakespearean focus [...] seems to inhibit Bednarz from exploring in full the thesis it seems to prove most convincingly: the power of Ben Jonson's art and personality directed the course of early modern drama".⁹⁶ Aside from an argument that rests at times on speculation and very small details, then, Bednarz's book sometimes valorises Shakespeare at the expense of Jonson, when the latter dramatist was clearly a great innovator to whom Shakespeare was responding.

Some might argue that this scholarly debate is a sphere into which even angels would fear to tread. Nevertheless, as Cathart comments, the twentieth-century

scepticism has created the conditions for the neglect of a charged and topical valency to be found in the spoken dialogue of early modern plays, in the paratexts of their print publications, and in the non-dramatic verse of Renaissance playwrights and their associates.⁹⁷

Bednarz's book brings together a critical history of the Poets' War, insights into the relationships between key plays, and a perspective on the authorial differences of early modern dramatists. It is these strengths that inform the arguments put forward in this thesis: while Bednarz's work often deals with particular possible allusions to personal satire, the emphasis of this thesis differs in that it focuses more on the allusions in *Troilus and Cressida* to the artistic programmes developed by Jonson and others, and the implicit or explicit theories about taste, audience and authorship put forward in their plays. Shakespeare, thus, provides a satire on Jonson's satire, rather than on Jonson himself. In this way, Shakespeare as an author nearly always keeps out of the limelight. According to Henk Gras, Bednarz "misses a fundamental issue in the 'war', which is Shakespeare's emphasis on the actor as independent representamen in the theatre [as] against Jonson's stress on the text as sole sign vehicle, and the actor as a parrot".⁹⁸ While recognising certain limitation to the details of

⁹⁶ Jackson, p. 503.

⁹⁷ Cathart, p. 1.

⁹⁸ Gras, p. 959.

Bednarz's argument, Chapters Three and Four of this thesis explore Shakespeare's reaction to Jonson's approach more closely, as it plays out in *Troilus and Cressida*.

Shakespeare's authorship is not put on stage in the way that Ben Jonson's is in plays like *Poetaster*, Jonson's second play for the private theatre.⁹⁹ As this thesis will show, *Troilus and Cressida* registers a crisis in what Williams calls "the elements of dramatic experience". Characters in this play are frequently unsure of themselves as they wrestle with others' expectation of them. Shakespeare's characters are not quite the heroic or chivalric figures one might expect from epic or romance; the representation seems unfixed, "out of joint" (*T&C*, 1.2.24). When the textual and contextual evidence is taken together, Shakespeare's position here in the literary field seems not that of a poet seeking laureate fame and the support of a patron. This relationship between poet and patron was idealised in Jonson's comical satires such as *Poetaster*, one of many ambitious career moves for which he was teased. *Troilus and Cressida* implicitly responds to the ideals of literature and patronage promoted in many of Jonson's plays. A number of poets promoted a view of their own laureate status, but, as this project will suggest, behind the smoke screen of Thersites' noisy railing in *Troilus and Cressida*, Shakespeare "Lies mocking [their] designs" (*T&C*, 1.3.147).

VII.ii. Pause for Thought

In *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, Bourdieu studied how Gustave Flaubert's novel *A Sentimental Education* contributed "to the construction of the literary field as a world apart, subject to its own laws".¹⁰⁰ Shakespearean critics have since begun to emphasise the way early modern playwrights also contributed to a literary field,

⁹⁹ For a collection of differing views on Shakespeare's authorial construction and situation, see Patrick Cheney (organiser), "Forum: The Return of the Author", in *Shakespeare Studies*, 36 (2008) 19-131.

¹⁰⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Cambridge and Maldon, MA: Polity, 1996), p. 48; see Gustave Flaubert, *A Sentimental Education*, trans. Douglas Parm   (French second version 1869; Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

especially in the plays of the Poets' War. An important theoretical essay in this respect is one in which Richard Wilson reads political hesitation in relation to the time of the aesthetic. This relation is one explored by Shakespeare when his plays stage play-within-plays, or in speeches such as that of the First Player in *Hamlet* concerning Priam's slaughter:

So, as a painted tyrant, Pyrrhus stood,
And, like a neutral to his will and matter,
Did nothing.

(2.2.460-62)

Wilson writes that "Shakespeare's image of Pyrrhus' blade hanging as though 'painted' evokes the depiction of Damoclean swords in baroque paintings, where the sinister mimicry of blood in paint prompts the redemptive idea of art as 'an antidote to violence'".¹⁰¹ In brief, Wilson reads "Pyrrhus' pause" (2.2.467) as a moment of aesthetic pause in the face of political and historical decisions. Arguably, Shakespeare promoted this view of his own plays as being outside history – in "a world apart" as Bourdieu puts it. For Wilson, however,

Troilus and Cressida stages Schmitt's observation that while "children and frisky cats play in perfect freedom ... there is in play a fundamental negation of the critical situation. The tragic ends where the play begins".¹⁰²

With its "poetics of deferral", *Troilus and Cressida* is made up of scenes that mostly do not advance the progress of the Fall of Troy, or even Troilus and Cressida's relationship. Instead, it is filled with "'footloose warriors' *killing time*", of scenes that exemplify "the chattering indecisiveness of parliaments and art".¹⁰³

Wilson's main focus is the scene where Hector fights Ajax in single combat in a sporting "maiden battle" (4.5.85). This scene is important for Wilson because it foregrounds the *homo ludens* theme that his essay traces in relation to art and law. However, for this thesis

¹⁰¹ Richard Wilson, "Like the osprey to the fish: Shakespeare and the force of law", in *Law and Art: Justice, Ethics and Aesthetics*, ed. Oren Ben-Dor (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 93-113 (p. 106).

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 99; Wilson quotes from Carl Schmitt, *Hamlet or Hecuba: The Intrusion of the Time into the Play*, trans. David Pan and Jennifer Rust (New York: Telos Press, 2009), p. 40.

¹⁰³ Richard Wilson, "Like the osprey to the fish: Shakespeare and the force of law", p. 105, p. 104, and p. 98. For Shakespearean characters as "footloose wanderers" and "idlers", see Kiernan Ryan, *Shakespeare*, 3rd edn (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2002), p. 123.

the important scenes are those which foreground not simply audience expectation but the expectations of a theatrical event and especially a patronised event. In these scenes, Shakespeare presents patrons/heroes at play, being entertained. Critics have tended to overlook the possibility that these scenes of patronised performance – or moments when these scenes are in turn being debated – constitute those in which Shakespeare can be seen to be most clearly commenting on the status of theatre in the literary and political field. In these scenes of deferred political or narrative action, Shakespeare takes time to work on audience expectations even as he represents his characters as merely playing. Shakespeare's invitation is twofold: on the one hand, he invites his audience to think about patronised performance and court culture more closely; on the other hand, the scenes of character performance invite the audience to consider how characters "act" in the other supposedly non-theatrical scenes. The scenes that this thesis focuses on, therefore, tend on the whole not to be the ones where "something happens", the ones to which critics usually pay most attention. Rather, the thesis reads those scenes of plot deferral or "pause" as showing Shakespeare commenting on literary and theatrical tastes and promoting the *theatrum mundi* theme so important to the irony behind the "action" in the play.

VII.iii. Dating *Troilus and Cressida*

While there has been much debate about the dating of the *Troilus and Cressida* due to the play's complex textual history, the scholarly consensus now points to a date of 1601-2 for first performance. The Oxford editors and Andrew Gurr posit a date of 1602, while Anthony B. Dawson and David Bevington suggest 1601 in their editions, matching James P. Bednarz in his study, *Shakespeare and the Poets' War*.¹⁰⁴ The editors of the *Norton Shakespeare* and

¹⁰⁴ See Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett and William Montgomery (ed.), *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, 2nd edn (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage, 1574-1642*, 4th edn (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.

the *RSC Shakespeare* both suggest 1601-02.¹⁰⁵ This reasoning is based on a variety of evidence, explored in Chapter One and Chapter Four, and briefly rehearsed here.

The play was registered for publication on the 7th of February 1603. *Troilus and Cressida* is not mentioned by Francis Meres in 1598 but the play seems to have been influenced by Chapman's translation, published in that year. As Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen discuss in their RSC edition,

[t]he armed prologue (Folio only) seems to parody that of Ben Jonson's *Poetaster* (performed summer 1601). There are apparent allusions to the play in *Thomas Lord Cromwell* (Chamberlain's Men, registered for publication in August 1602) and Thomas Middleton's *The Family of Love* (?1602-3).¹⁰⁶

Kenneth Muir suggests "[t]here can be little doubt that the 'Prologue armed' (l. 23) is an allusion to the prologue in Jonson's *Poetaster*", and Bevington argues in his Arden edition that all "[t]his evidence points to a date of composition of some version of the play, including the Folio Prologue, in late 1601".¹⁰⁷ As Dawson explores in relation to this evidence, a

possible reference in *The Return from Parnassus*, Part 2, a play acted at Cambridge in 1601-2, supports this dating. [...] Overall, then, the weight of evidence suggests a date in the second half of 1601. Eight years later, styles had changed and the play had no doubt fallen out of the repertoire. Hence the quarto blurb-writer, [...] could claim, incorrectly, that the play was "new" and back up his claim with the statement that it had never been publicly acted.¹⁰⁸

The date of the play is important for this thesis in so far as it helps to consider the theatrical and literary context of the play's inception.

297; Dawson (ed.), p. 7; Bevington (ed.), *Troilus and Cressida*, p. 11; Bednarz, *Shakespeare and the Poets' War*, pp. 273-74.

¹⁰⁵ See *The Norton Shakespeare*, p. 1823 and Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (ed.), *Troilus and Cressida: The RSC Shakespeare* (New York: Modern Library, 2010), p. xxviii.

¹⁰⁶ Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (ed.), *Troilus and Cressida*, p. xxviii. For a discussion of the *Cromwell* and Middleton evidence, see Dawson (ed.), p. 7.

¹⁰⁷ Kenneth Muir, "Introduction", in *Troilus and Cressida*, ed. Kenneth Muir (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 1-40 (p. 5) and Bevington (ed.), *Troilus and Cressida*, p. 11.

¹⁰⁸ Dawson (ed.), p. 7.

The fact that the folio prologue was not published in the quarto does not mean that this prologue was written years later because prologues were often separable occasional texts.¹⁰⁹ As Dawson argues, due to the *Poetaster* reference,

Shakespeare's Prologue must have been written after June or July 1601, though the text itself may have been completed somewhat earlier. [...] The fact that the Prologue only appears in the Folio does not, of course, mean that it was written much later than the rest of the play. It could, however, have been added at the last minute to take advantage of the current vogue for satirical topicality.¹¹⁰

The dating of the play around 1601-02 suggests that critics are right to view the play as the work of a playwright who had been based at the Globe for at least a year or two, and in relation to late Elizabethan culture. This dating places *Troilus and Cressida* after *Hamlet*, *Twelfth Night* and Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels*, and just after his *Poetaster*. It also places the play in a period when, as Lukas Erne argues, Shakespeare realised that "his plays and poems were entering the literary canon", or at least at a time when his plays were being published with his name on them.¹¹¹ Furthermore, the dating suggests that *Troilus and Cressida* falls towards the end of the so-called War of the Theatres, or Poets' War (1599-1601).

VII.iv. *Troilus and Cressida*, ed. Anthony B. Dawson

The "Bibliography" section of Chapter One considers critical reaction to the complex textual history of *Troilus and Cressida*, and the provenance of the two states of the quarto is discussed further in Chapter Four. For ease of reference, quotations from *Troilus and Cressida* in this thesis are normally taken from the edition by Anthony B. Dawson.

References to stage directions, however, are usually taken from the relevant early modern

¹⁰⁹ See Douglas Bruster and Robert Weimann, *Prologues to Shakespeare's Theatre: Performance and Liminality in Early Modern Drama* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2004).

¹¹⁰ Dawson (ed.), p. 6. The Revels edition of *Poetaster* also agree that the *Troilus and Cressida* prologue follows closely on Jonson's play: Tom Cain footnotes that the phrase in the Jonson prologue is "taken up by Shakespeare's *Troil.*", in Cain (ed.), *Poetaster: The Revels Plays* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995) (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 75.

¹¹¹ Lukas Erne, *Shakespeare and the Book Trade* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 232.

printed text, quarto or folio, as are references from the paratextual material of the quarto. Dawson uses the quarto as copy text but occasionally uses folio readings where this seems “necessary or justifiable”, for example, by including the folio prologue.¹¹² Although the decision to use a slightly conflated text may seem controversial, bibliographers themselves now believe that the folio is likely to represent, in a sense, a conflated text itself, either dual copy based on the quarto and a manuscript or quarto marked up from another source.¹¹³ The differences between the quarto and folio, however, are much smaller than in, say, *King Lear* or *Hamlet*, where the differences can affect the representation of the characters. Even the epilogue, which was published in an appendix by the Oxford editors, is extant in both quarto and folio publications. As Dawson argues, “whether one chooses Q or F as copy-text, the resulting editions will, in general terms, be quite similar”.¹¹⁴ As discussed in Chapter One, the provenance of the two quarto and folio publications is unclear and it is not possible to conclusively situate any one text with a particular performance in a specific place, whether at a Inn of Court or at the Globe for example. With this textual situation in mind, this thesis refers to Dawson’s edition but is careful, for example, not to argue for *Troilus and Cressida* as a Globe play following arguments based on bibliographical differences between quarto and folio.

VII.v. The Distinction Between Printer and Publisher

During Chapter Four’s consideration of the theatre of the book, the two states of the published quarto are considered. Part of this reading involves a consideration of the work of

¹¹² Dawson (ed.), p. 251.

¹¹³ See Dawson (ed.), pp. 250-252 and W.L. Godshalk, “The Texts of *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 1.2 (1995) 2.1-54; available at <<http://purl.oclc.org/emls/01-2/godsshak.html>> [accessed 10 May 2011].

¹¹⁴ Dawson (ed.), pp. 251-52.

early modern printers and publishers. It implicitly builds on the research of scholars such as Adrian Johns who show how “the identity of print itself has to be *made*”.¹¹⁵ Johns argues that

it was through the agency of the Stationers that printed materials both came into being and reached their users. The decisions structuring print culture were overwhelmingly Stationers’ decisions, arrived at by reference to Stationers’ perspectives [...]. Knowledge itself, inasmuch as it could be embodied, preserved, and communicated in printed materials, depended on Stationers’ labors.¹¹⁶

This condition of publication means that the shaping of the printed *Troilus and Cressida* may have been affected by the contingencies of advertising, market forces and commodification. Given that the play itself considers print culture (in that its characters use metaphors of print culture and one scene involves a book as a theatrical prop), an exploration of the expectations of the printed *Troilus and Cressida* is especially necessary. The unique epistle to the reader, which sets up further expectations for reading the play, is also a crucial consideration given the complex critical expectations of the play and its audience. Part of this broader consideration rests on the work of the early modern “stationers”.

As Marta Straznicky explains, the

collective term for printers, publishers, and booksellers in the early modern period was ‘stationer’, meaning a practitioner of any of the trades involved in book production, including binding, parchment making, and copying, and after 1557 referring more strictly to a member of the Stationers’ Company, which was incorporated in that year.¹¹⁷

The distinction between printer and publisher is complicated by a number of factors. One of them is that the stationers themselves did not have a specific word for what is now called the “publisher”, another is that publishers sometimes referred to themselves as “printers”.

Furthermore, Peter W. M. Blayney notes that “[m]ost books were published by stationers

¹¹⁵ Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago, IL, and London: University Press of Chicago, 1998), p. 2 (emphasis added).

¹¹⁶ Johns, p. 60.

¹¹⁷ Marta Straznicky, “Introduction: What Is a Stationer?”, in *Shakespeare’s Stationers: Studies in Cultural Biography*, ed. Marta Straznicky (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), pp. 1-16 (p. 1).

whose daily trade was bookselling; a few were published by stationers who were also printers”.¹¹⁸ This situation has led to some confusion among scholars and critics.

The publisher was the person who acquired copy, paid for a book to be manufactured and arranged for its wholesale, so it was this person who had the most at stake in a book’s printing and publication. Blayney suggests that often “the printer bore no more responsibility for procuring or marketing the text than does a photocopier”.¹¹⁹ On the whole, it is the publisher who determines the character of the printed book. In relation to the *Troilus and Cressida* quarto and its two publishers, Zachray Lesser argues that in

deciding to publish Shakespeare’s play and to alter its title page and preliminaries, Bonian and Walley thus seem to be working within a broader relationship with their customers, tailoring their product to meet the commercial demands and, at the same time, shaping demand for similar plays.¹²⁰

This “tailoring” by the publishers is considered in greater detail in Chapter Four, which considers the different decisions the printer George Eld implemented, as probably directed by Bonian and Walley.

One further issue is worth considering here in relation to the distinction between printer and publisher, which is the role of James Roberts who entered *Troilus and Cressida* in the Stationers’ Register in 1603. As mentioned in the notes of Chapter Four, James Roberts was a stationer who secured the right to print playbills in 1574. Roberts also printed Shakespeare plays but he did not publish them. Lukas Erne speculates that given the evidence it seems that

[a]s playbill printer, Roberts may have been close enough to Shakespeare and his fellow actors to agree to buy and enter the plays [in the Register] when asked, but as a publisher who specialized in religious fare, he may have been disinclined to add them to his list.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Peter W. M. Blayney, “The Publication of Playbooks”, in *A New History of Early English Drama*, ed. John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan (New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 383-422 (p. 391).

¹¹⁹ Blayney, p. 389.

¹²⁰ Lesser, p. 4.

¹²¹ Erne, *Shakespeare and the Book Trade*, p. 161.

Roberts, acting effectively as a publisher, entered *The Merchant of Venice*, *Hamlet* and *Troilus and Cressida* in the Stationers' Register during the period 1598-1603. While the earlier plays were published by others, *Troilus and Cressida* was not published until much later, in 1609. This evidence suggests that the play was at least sold for publication in 1603. It will never be known exactly why the play was not published. It may have something to do with the fact that James Roberts was reluctant to publish plays himself, and that he could not find a publisher willing to risk the expense of publication. Douglas Bruster has recently argued, that by 1603 there was a greater demand for printed verse over prose (the play is 30 percent in prose), or simply that by this time there was "an excess of literary goods", availability outstripping demand.¹²² These considerations are important in that they provide several reasons why *Troilus and Cressida* may not have been published earlier, and these have little to do with the notion that the play was particularly unsuccessful at the Globe.

VII.vi. *Troilus and Cressida* as more than an Inns of Court Play

As discussed in Chapter One, in 1928 Peter Alexander put forward the theory that the play would not have been appreciated by usual theatregoers: Alexander asserted that "[i]t is unlikely that this play was ever performed to an audience at the Globe".¹²³ He suggested that "Shakespeare may, however, have written the play for some festivity at one of the Inns of Court".¹²⁴ This idea of the play being written exclusively for one of the Inns of Court was taken up by W.R. Elton in *Shakespeare's "Troilus and Cressida" and the Inns of Court Revels* (2000): he argued that the play fitted a "festive law audience" and that "*Troilus's* allusions would [...] have eluded the capacities of the Epistle's 'vulger'".¹²⁵ Chapter One of

¹²² Douglas Bruster, "Shakespeare the Stationer", in *Shakespeare's Stationers: Studies in Cultural Bibliography*, ed. Marta Straznicky (Pennsylvania, PA: University Of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), pp. 112-31 (p. 120).

¹²³ Peter Alexander, "Troilus and Cressida, 1609", *The Library*, 4th ser., 9 (1928-29), 267-86 (p. 279).

¹²⁴ Alexander, p. 278.

¹²⁵ W.R. Elton, *Shakespeare's "Troilus and Cressida" and the Inns of Court Revels* (Aldershot and Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 2000), p. 168.

this thesis suggests that Peter Alexander may have been taken in by the quarto epistle's advertising strategy which, in its elitism, is not unlike that of W.R. Elton's view of the Globe audience. Undoubtedly, *Troilus and Cressida* does contain legal language and debating scenes which might appeal to law students, but so do other plays by Shakespeare known to have been performed at the Globe.

This thesis argues that, although *Troilus and Cressida* may have been performed at one of the Inns of Court, the play should be seen as part of an ongoing conversation about theatre, literature and audience tastes that playgoers from outside the Inns of Court could have understood. *Troilus and Cressida* is more than an Inns of Court play because it registers Shakespeare's engagement with the elite tastes and perceptions of the "vulgar" in a way that does not necessarily square with an Inns audience. Elton suggests that the play's spectators would "have been such as those who attended licensed and wittily suggestive entertainments, or world-upside-down misrule revels, at London's 'Third University', the Inns of Court".¹²⁶ However, the "wit" of *Troilus and Cressida* is more profound than Elton's revels reading suggests. Dawson notes in his review of Elton's book that "to see the play exclusively, or even primarily, in terms of its burlesque appeal to rowdy students seems to me to miss the force of the play's opalescent emotional tonalities as well as its deeply sceptical awareness of the relation between personal desire and philosophical position-taking".¹²⁷ As Chapter Two explores, the play itself interrogates the theatrical conditions of private entertainments and "position-taking" in a way that could well be appreciated by an audience at the Globe.¹²⁸

Although these inferences may seem to be based on aesthetic grounds, there are material reasons for seeing the play as a Globe play too. At the turn of the century, Shakespeare was invested both financially and artistically in the Globe theatre. As several

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 168.

¹²⁷ Anthony B. Dawson, "Book Review: *Shakespeare's 'Troilus and Cressida' and the Inns of Court Revels*", *Modern Language Review*, 97.2 (2002), 390-91 (p. 391). See also Peter Hyland, "Book Review: W.R. Elton, *Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida and the Inns of Court Revels*", *Early Theatre*, 4.1 (2001), 152-54.

¹²⁸ This audience is considered in greater detail in Chapter Four.

critics have argued, it would be unlikely for Shakespeare, a sharer at the Globe, to write a play exclusively for one of the Inns of Court. Although his play sometimes elides the fact, his company primarily relied on public performance for its financial income.¹²⁹ Given this situation, it would be highly improbable that Shakespeare and his company would *not* aim to produce the play at the Globe. If the theory of an early modern performance of *Troilus and Cressida* at one of the Inns of Court is to be countenanced, then, it is likely that it would have been performed in a public theatre first, just as *Twelfth Night* probably was before being performed at the Middle Temple in 1602. This thesis does not try to prove the provenance of the Trojan play once and for all, but, rather, aims to explore what the ramifications of a public *Troilus and Cressida* might be in relation to the representation of authorship, the book, audience expectation, and matters of taste.

VII. Chapter Summaries

This project is organised into four chapters, all of which aim to elaborate upon the aesthetic and critical implications of Shakespeare's complex engagement with contemporaneous ideas concerning audience expectations and matters of taste, whether literary or theatrical.

Chapter One offers a brief overview of the expectations that critics have articulated concerning *Troilus and Cressida*, showing how issues of audience expectation and matters of taste have been important for thinking about the play. The second chapter acknowledges this focus by itself exploring the way in which *Troilus and Cressida* raises questions about audience expectation. Focussing on the staging of audience figures within the play, it concentrates on Thersites and Pandarus as early modern performers, and also looks at Ulysses and his speeches about Patroclus's performances. With this staging of audience figures,

¹²⁹ These critics are discussed in Chapter One and Chapter Four.

Shakespeare probes the idea of audience expectation and modes of entertainment, reflecting on the position of his own work within a larger theatrical and cultural context.

Chapter Three expands upon this idea of audience expectation by turning to the play's concentrated exploration of taste. Shakespeare, like many of his time, aligns the language of physical taste with literary, theatrical and social tastes. In so doing, he offers a complex response to contemporaneous ideas of taste, distaste and the body in relation to burgeoning theatre and print cultures. The final chapter expands upon the implications of this reading by focussing on the play's own status as a "literary" text. The chapter begins by examining the way that the publisher's epistle and the title pages stage audiences and audience expectations, partly in terms of physical taste. It argues that the publishers employed a language of taste in order to set up expectations, making the play seem more elitist than it ever was. The chapter then moves to look more closely at the language of the book *within* the play; it argues that Shakespeare's response to Jonson's model of possessive authorship shown in plays such as *Poetaster* shows both authors using theatre to explore the literary field and literary taste. The thesis concludes by suggesting that, rather than ultimately following a laureate trajectory, Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* sets out very different expectations for a play as meddling matter, adrift from its author.

Ultimately, the thesis argues that the play marks Shakespeare's growing confidence as a literary dramatist, not simply as an author whose plays were published as literature, but as a playwright who was capable of using theatre and audience expectation to invite his audience to re-evaluate literary taste and his own position in the "order of the field" (*T&C*, 4.5.70)

CHAPTER ONE Critical Expectations of *Troilus and Cressida*

“A hasty survey of the numerous interpretations of *Troilus and Cressida*
may lead one to the despairing conclusion that,
where criticism of this Shakespearian play is concerned,
chaos is come again”

– William B. Toole (1966)¹

“There is expectance here” (*T&C*, 1.5.146)

This chapter will address the critical reception of the play to date.² It will work selectively through the critical heritage, paying attention to the issue of expectations: what critics have expected from the play and how their writing has, in turn, affected the critical heritage and subsequent expectations of the play. This line of enquiry reads the (often unacknowledged) aspect of the play’s critical reception in three sections up until 1959, when there was an unprecedented growth in Shakespeare scholarship. Up until 1959, each section has three thematic subsections and one summary subsection. From 1960 onwards, the review branches out to consider the criticism according to methodological themes. As well as providing a general outline of criticism on the play, then, this chapter aims to assess what critics seem to have expected from the play and to underscore what they may have led other readers and audiences to expect. This chapter will help reflexively to situate and inform the arguments put forward in the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

¹ William B. Toole, “*Troilus and Cressida*”, in *Shakespeare’s Problem Plays: Studies in Form and Meaning* (London, Paris, and The Hague, Netherlands: Mouton, 1966), pp. 198-230 (p. 198).

² For some partial surveys of the critical heritage of *Troilus and Cressida*, see, for example, Harold N. Hillebrand with T. W. Baldwin (eds), “*Troilus and Cressida*”: *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare* (Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott, 1953) (*New Variorum* in future references); Michael Jamieson, “The Problem Plays, 1920-1970: A Retrospect”, *Shakespeare Survey*, 25 (1972), 1-10; Brian Vickers (ed.), *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, 6 vols (Boston and London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974-1981) (abbreviated to *Critical Heritage* in future references); Priscilla Martin (ed.), *Shakespeare: “Troilus and Cressida”: A Casebook* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1976); Jane Adamson, “*Troilus and Cressida*”: *Harvester New Critical Introductions to Shakespeare* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1987); Nicholas Marsh, *Shakespeare: Three Problem Plays* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); and Simon Barker (ed.), *Shakespeare’s Problem Plays: “All’s Well That Ends Well”, “Measure for Measure” and “Troilus and Cressida”* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). See also *World Shakespeare Bibliography Online*; available at < <http://www.worldshakesbib.org/>>.

The very first published critics on *Troilus and Cressida* were jubilantly favourable about the play, but they were trying to sell their 1609 quarto edition. The anonymous “never writer” says: “Amongst all [of Shakespeare’s plays] there is none more witty than this” (¶2^r).

As Zachary Lesser points out,

what has not been stressed is that the preface is also a *reading* of the play. Bonian and Walley are not merely the play’s publishers: when they reconsidered their understanding of the play and inserted the preface, they became the earliest literary critics to publish on Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*.³

As the final chapter of this thesis explores in greater detail, this unique preface raised expectations for early modern readers, but it has also strongly influenced later critical expectations and interpretations of the play. The preface notes *Troilus and Cressida*’s particular wit and intelligence while suggesting an elite status for the play, a reading this thesis aims to examine and qualify.

I. Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century Expectations: “an Age which is more refin’d”

“Shakespeare’s faults arise from richness, not from poverty;
they exceed, not fall short;
his monsters never want a head, but have sometimes two”

– Elizabeth Griffiths on *Troilus and Cressida* (1775)⁴

The publication of John Dryden’s 1679 rewritten version of the play makes no mention of the *Troilus and Cressida* quarto preface. Writing for “an Age which is more refin’d”, Dryden suggests that “the Tragedy which I have undertaken to correct, was, in all probability, one of his first endeavours on the stage”.⁵ However, by 1725 at least, Alexander Pope was able to put Dryden right to a certain extent with the help of the preface:

³ Zachary Lesser, *Renaissance Drama and the Politics of Publication: Readings in the English Book Trade* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 2.

⁴ Elizabeth Griffiths, *The Morality of Shakespeare’s Drama Illustrated* (1775), repr. in *Critical Heritage*, VI (1981), 136-51 (p. 145).

⁵ John Dryden, “The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy”, in *Troilus and Cressida: Or, Truth Found Too Late*, in *The Works of Dryden*, ed. Alan Roper, 20 vols (Berkeley, Los Angeles, CA and London: University of California Press, 1956-89), XIII (1984), 229-50 (p. 247); John Dryden, “The Preface to the Play”, in *Troilus and Cressida: Or, Truth Found Too Late*, in *The Works of Dryden*, XIII, 225-29 (p. 225).

Mr. *Dryden* thinks this one of the first of our Author's plays: But on the contrary, it may be judg'd from the foremention'd Preface that it was one of his last; and the great number of observations, both moral and politick, (with which this piece is crowded more than any other of his) seems to confirm that opinion.⁶

Pope seems to have celebrated the play as thought-provoking for a reader. When Dryden famously rewrote the play for the stage, however, he said that he "undertook to remove that heap of Rubbish, under which many excellent thoughts lay wholly bury'd".⁷ Dryden's neoclassical expectations were part of a growing tendency to find faults in Shakespeare's work.

I.i. Anachronisms and Shakespeare's Elizabethan Troy

Part of this "Rubbish" that Dryden found in the play appears to have been the frequent Elizabethan references and anachronisms. These were not in keeping with late seventeenth and eighteenth-century neoclassical expectations. Jeremy Collier (1698) criticised the playwright for his anachronisms, concerned that "*Shakespear* makes *Hector* talk about *Aristotle's* Philosophy", while John Dennis (1711) added that "[i]n the same Play mention is made of *Milo*, which is another very great Fault in Chronology".⁸ Charles Gildon (1710) discovered "a great many fine Lines in this Piece", but, holding expectations of the play from elsewhere, he thought that Shakespeare had "falsif[ied] the Character of *Achilles*, making him and *Ajax* perfect Idiots"; following Dryden, he also found "fundamental Errors of Plot and Manners".⁹ Pope (1725) was so disturbed by the presence of Hector's anachronism that he blamed its presence on Shakespeare's publishers: whoever included it did not have "the least

⁶ Alexander Pope, "Head-note to *Troilus and Cressida*", in *The Works of Shakespeare* (1725), repr. in *Critical Heritage*, II (1974), 403-18 (pp. 417-18).

⁷ John Dryden, "The Preface to the Play", in *Troilus and Cressida: Or, Truth Found Too Late*, p. 226.

⁸ Jeremy Collier, *A Short View of the Immorality, and Profaneness of the English Stage Together with the Sense of Antiquity upon this Argument* (London, 1698), p. 187. John Dennis, "Letter II.", in *An Essay on the Genius and Works of Shakespeare: with Some Letters of Criticism to the Spectator* (1712), repr. in *Critical Heritage*, II, 286-90 (p. 286).

⁹ Charles Gildon, "Remarks on the Plays of Shakespeare", in *The Works of Mr. William Shakespeare. Volume the Seventh* (1710), repr. in *Critical Heritage*, II, 226-62 (p. 251 and p. 250).

tincture of a School, or the least conversation with such as had”.¹⁰ Lewis Theobald in *Shakespeare Restored* (1726) suggested, at last, that this was the “Effect of Poetick Licence in him rather than Ignorance”.¹¹ Several plays by Shakespeare were censured in the seventeenth century, but critics such as Dryden began a tradition of fault-finding especially with *Troilus and Cressida*; this reading has set a precedent for many later expectations of the play.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, many critics followed Theobald in being slower to fault Shakespeare’s plays, seeing their inconsistencies as part of the conditions of Shakespearean theatre and his artistry. Nevertheless, still concerned with Shakespeare’s anachronisms, George Steevens (1773) noted a line of Nestor’s when he says, “I’ll hide my silver beard in a gold beaver” (1.3.297):

Shakespeare, who so wonderfully preserves character, usually confounds the customs of all nations, and probably supposed that the ancients (like the heroes of chivalry) fought with beavers to their helmets.¹²

Steevens’s observations flag up a number of significant issues concerning expectations. By the late eighteenth century, critics were beginning to be used to, or expect, Shakespeare to “confound the customs”. Whatever Shakespeare thought of classical military armouring, Steevens’s point that in *Troilus and Cressida* the classical warriors fight in quasi-medieval dress is important for understanding the way that the play conflates the medieval Chaucerian love plot with the classical Homeric war plot; this invites the audience to see each part of the story with the expectations of the other.¹³

¹⁰ Alexander Pope, “Preface”, in *The Works of Shakespeare* (1725), repr. in *Critical Heritage*, II, 403-18 (p. 410).

¹¹ Lewis Theobald, *Shakespeare Restored* (1726), repr. in *Critical Heritage*, II, 426-75 (p. 433).

¹² George Steevens and Samuel Johnson, *The Plays of William Shakespeare* (1773), repr. in *Critical Heritage*, V (1979), 510-51 (p. 533).

¹³ Edmond Malone seems more reconciled to a medieval aesthetic in the classical world of Shakespeare’s Trojan play. He later (1790) commented that when Troilus boasts to Cressida “we have, not a Trojan prince talking to his mistress, but Orlando Furioso vowing that he will endure every calamity that can be imagined; boasting that he will achieve more than ever knight performed”, in “f.n. to 3.2.77ff”, in *The Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare* (1790), repr. in *Critical Heritage*, VI, 521-55 (p. 544; emphasis added).

Similar anachronisms, also noted by these critics, point to a play caught up in its Elizabethan moment. In the same edition of Steevens's Shakespeare, there is a commentary on Thersites' line, "How the devil Luxury, with his fat rump and potato finger tickles these together" (5.2.55-56). The commentary explains how the potato "was in our author's time but newly imported from America, was considered as a rare exotic, and esteemed as a very strong provocative".¹⁴ It is noteworthy that this edition should mention this vegetable which "procure[s the] *lust of the body very mightily*" because it is one of the first pieces of criticism to recognise the widespread language of food in the play.¹⁵ The anachronism of the supposedly aphrodisiac potato from America was presumably accepted by Steevens, suggesting that it was becoming expected that something of Shakespeare's time would intrude into the play. The gastronomic language in *Troilus and Cressida* was also picked up by Walter Whiter (1794), although he thought Shakespeare's "rapid imagination" had caused the "unwary Poet" to use the allusions "imperceptibly".¹⁶ What these critics did not realise is that Shakespeare was self-consciously using Elizabethan references and the language of food to respond to emerging ideas about literary taste, as articulated in his own time.

I.ii. Expectations of Tragedy

William Warburton (1747) divided Shakespeare's plays into comedies and tragedies, and each of these genres into four classes, with Class I being the most Shakespearean, and Class IV "certainly not of *Shakespeare*".¹⁷ *Troilus and Cressida* makes it into Class III, nearly disowned. The crisis of legitimation surrounding the play in relation to the author and must have been "bastard begot" (*T&C*, 5.8.7) are palpable in several readings of the play.

¹⁴ George Steevens and Samuel Johnson, *The Plays of William Shakespeare* (1773), repr. in *Critical Heritage*, V, 510-51 (p. 547).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 547.

¹⁶ Walter Whiter, *A Specimen of a Commentary on Shakespeare* (1794), repr. in *Critical Heritage*, VI, 606-13 (p. 611).

¹⁷ William Warburton, *The Works of Shakespeare* (1747), repr. in *Critical Heritage*, III (1975), 223-59 (p. 226).

Warburton's classification is probably symptomatic of *Troilus and Cressida*'s status in the eighteenth century as a play rarely valued by critics and never acted, except in Dryden's "cultivated and improv'd" rewrite.¹⁸ However, there is also the possibility that this crisis of legitimation concerning the play is related to the play's own questioning of what counts as legitimate good taste.

Reading the play with a strict moral awareness, Charlotte Lennox's *Shakespeare Illustrated* (1753-4) criticised *Troilus and Cressida* on several grounds as Dryden had, including the fact that the ending "leaves the Play without a Moral and [is] absolutely deficient in poetical Justice".¹⁹ Lennox states that Cressida

not being punished is indeed an unpardonable Fault and brings the greatest Imputation imaginable upon *Shakespeare*'s Judgement, who could introduce so vicious a Person in a Tragedy and leave her without due reward of her Crimes.²⁰

Lennox's unrelenting reading of *Troilus and Cressida* is typical of much late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century criticism of the play, and it throws up a number of issues concerning expectations. For example, the play was associated with comedy by the 1609 quarto preface writer and published as a history on the quarto title page, but critics persisted in reading the play as a tragedy. This expectation of tragedy was perhaps based on Chaucer's version, in which he addresses his book, "Go, litel bok, go, litel myn tragedye".²¹ It is more likely, however, that it was stimulated by the play's position and running title as a tragedy in the folio publications, and in the genre of Dryden's rewrite. By reading the play as a tragedy as apparently invited by its sources, these eighteenth-century readers found it characterised by faults. In some cases these "faults" with the play are linked to perceived faults in the

¹⁸ Gerard Langbaine, *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets* (1691), repr. in *Critical Heritage*, I, 417-23 (p. 418).

¹⁹ Charlotte Lennox, *Shakespeare Illustrated* (1754), repr. in *Critical Heritage*, IV, 110-46 (p. 132).

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, ed. Barry Windeatt (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 344, Bk. V, l. 1786. This was obviously a fairly well known line because, as Barry Windeatt comments, "this formula is taken over by Lydgate, Hoccleve, James I, Sir Richard Roos, Hawes, Skelton, and various anonymous writers", "Imitations and Allusions, c.1385-1700", in *Troilus and Criseyde: Oxford Guides to Chaucer* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 360-82 (p. 367).

representation of the characters. For example, Dryden had re-written the play as a more conventional tragedy, with Cressida proving her faith to Troilus by killing herself. Reading the play with an expectation of tragedy and Dryden's play, critics saw Cressida in Shakespeare's version as being "unpunished". However, it appears that Shakespeare chose not to represent this punishment, as elaborated in *The Testament of Cresseid* by Robert Henryson; this decision gives weight to the argument that Shakespeare chose not to write a conventional tragedy, thus challenging generic expectations following the dramatist's previous play named after a couple, *Romeo and Juliet*.

In a reading of Shakespeare's use of the classics, Thomas Warton (1781) wrote that "Shakespeare was only a reader by accident [...], and Shakespeare was above the bondage of the classics".²² It might be said that Warton's reading is following a tradition stemming from Ben Jonson's representation of Shakespeare as a *natural* artist; however, when *Troilus and Cressida* is read as a comment on Jonson's own reading and use of the classics, it can be seen that Shakespeare is clearly not the naive playwright that Warton's insight might suggest.²³ Rather, in this play, Shakespeare showed himself to be able to use classical literature without endorsing the elitist tastes that some readers encouraged.

I.iii. Style and Neoclassical Expectations

Shakespeare's language had been an issue for Dryden because he thought it bordered on the amoral, but Samuel Johnson (1765) thought that "[t]his play is more correctly written than most of *Shakespeare's* compositions".²⁴ Referring to this comment, Thomas Tyrwhitt (1765)

²² Thomas Warton, *The History of English Poetry* (1781), repr. in *Critical Heritage*, VI, 304-09 (p. 305).

²³ Ben Jonson's apparent view of Shakespeare is discussed further below.

²⁴ Samuel Johnson, "End-note to *Troilus and Cressida*", in *The Plays of William Shakespeare* (1765), repr. in *Critical Heritage*, V, 55-176 (p. 152); Johnson also notes that "[h]is vicious characters sometimes disgust, but cannot corrupt, for both *Cressida* and *Pandarus* are detested and contemned", "End-note to *Troilus and Cressida*", p. 152.

retorted, “I presume he does not mean in point of *Style*”.²⁵ In a footnote Tyrwhitt states that “[t]here are more hard words, bombastic phrases in the serious parts of this Play than, I believe, can be picked out of any other six Plays of *Shakespeare*”.²⁶ Besides the difficult or distasteful nature of the play’s language, the issue of sincerity has also troubled critics from very early on. Although Tyrwhitt seems sure of what constitutes the “serious parts”, critics have often had difficulty assessing the seriousness of the play and its use of irony. William Guthrie (1766) found parts of the language of *Troilus and Cressida* rather risqué, pointing to a saying of Pandarus’s which “contains a double entendre, which may not be quite decent to explain”.²⁷ Richard Warner (1768) noted – while commenting on *Troilus and Cressida* in a published letter to David Garrick – that “[i]t may in general be observ’d that in *Shakespeare* strict grammar is not always to be expected; he deviates from it perpetually”.²⁸ As these examples of criticism show, those who saw Shakespeare as a genius were willing to allow these deviations (or blame them on his publishers), but, many nonetheless censured him for taking liberties with his sources and for the play’s varied language and tone.

Francis Gentleman (1774) continued to read the play with neoclassical expectations when he provided notes for John Bell’s so-called acting edition of Shakespeare. The actor reasoned that the play contained some “great poetry”, but that overall, based on the expectation that “the great end of drama is, or should be, instruction relished by amusement”,

Troilus and Cressida [...] is a very censurable effusion of dramatic fancy [...], and the plot is so very strangely wound up, that we think it stands but a poor chance of giving either public or private satisfaction.²⁹

²⁵ Thomas Tyrwhitt, *Observations and Conjectures upon Some Passages of Shakespeare* (1766), repr. in *Critical Heritage*, V, 238-43 (p. 242).

²⁶ Tyrwhitt, p. 242; Tyrwhitt goes on to list a number of these “specimens” from the play.

²⁷ William Guthrie, *Johnson reviewed* (1765-6), repr. in *Critical Heritage*, V, 211-30 (p. 229). The unstated double entendre seems to concern Pandarus’s comparison of Cressida and Troilus with a falcon and a tercel: presumably Guthrie saw a pun on “ducks” in “Nay you shall fight your hearts out ere I part you, the falcon as the tercel, for all the ducks I’th’river” (3.2.45-46).

²⁸ Richard Warner, *A Letter to David Garrick* (1768), repr. in *Critical Heritage*, V, 296-303 (p. 301).

²⁹ Francis Gentleman in *Shakespeare’s Plays* (1774), ed. John Bell, repr. in *Critical Heritage*, V, 89-112 (pp. 100-101).

Gentleman follows a Horatian expectation concerning what poetry should do. Ben Jonson, for example, translates Horace's dictum thus: "Poets would either profit or delight; / Or mixing sweet and fit teach life the right".³⁰ The notion that poetry and drama should instruct as well as delight was one that Jonson was fond of voicing. Gentleman's implicit question about who might enjoy Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* is related to the play's own questioning of how people "relish" classical epic and medieval romance, and especially how Jonson promoted his work as being classically legitimate and instructive. This means that the issue of "satisfaction" in relation to audience expectation is raised by the play itself.

By the time of the second edition of *The Plays of William Shakespeare* (1778), edited by Samuel Johnson and George Steevens, Edward Capell had started referring to the Stationers' Register and knew of the reference to the "booke of Troilus and Cresseda as yt is acted by my Lord Chamberleys his servants", recorded 7 February 1603.³¹ This allowed Edmond Malone to mark the play as belonging close to 1602.³² Malone also noticed that Philip Henslowe had advanced money in 1599 to Chettle and Dekker for a "boocke called Troyelles & cresseda".³³ Referring to Malone's evidence, Joseph Ritson and George Steevens (1793) argued that the extant versions of Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* must have either been a play "hastily altered by Shakespeare from an elder piece", or parts of it

³⁰ Ben Jonson (trans.), *Horace, His Art of Poetrie*, in *Ben Jonson*, 11 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925-52), ed. C.H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, VIII (1947), 297-355 (p. 327, ll. 477-78).

³¹ W.W. Greg, *A Bibliography of the English Printed Drama to the Restoration*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939), I, 18. The Stationers' Register will be discussed further in Chapter Four. For Edward Capell, see Paul Baines, "Capell, Edward (1713-1781)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); online edn, Jan 2008 available at <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4589>> [accessed 25 May 2011].

³² See Edmond Malone, "An Attempt to ascertain the Order in which the Plays attributed to Shakespeare were Written", in *The Plays of William Shakespeare*, 2nd edn (1778), repr. in *Critical Heritage*, VI, 189-200 (pp. 189-91).

³³ Philip Henslowe, *Henslowe's Diary*, ed. R.A. Foakes, 2nd edn (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 107. See Edmond Malone, "Emendation and Additions", *The Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare*, 10 vols. in 11 (London: Printed by H. Balwin, 1790), I, pt. 2, 284-333 (p. 319). Edmund G. C. King discusses the eighteenth-century commentaries on this evidence in "Fragmenting Authorship in the eighteenth-century Shakespeare edition", *Shakespeare*, 6.1 (2010), 1-19 (pp. 14-16).

(especially the prologue) must have been “interpolated by some *Kyd* or *Marlowe*”.³⁴ Steevens also declared that he now had a “firm belief” that Pandarus’s epilogue was “the nonsense of some wretched buffoon” who acted the part of Pandarus.³⁵ He thought this could not have been written by Shakespeare because he would not have “wound up his story with a stupid outrage to decency, and a deliberate insult on his audience”.³⁶ Ritson thought that the dubious nature of the play’s tone marked “a very extraordinary instance of our author’s negligence, and the managers’ taste!”³⁷ His comment is a typical reading of the play and its author in terms of their own neoclassical tastes and assumptions about Shakespeare’s audience.

Liv Section Summary in Terms of the Thesis

There are several trends that can be seen in the later seventeenth and eighteenth-century criticism of the play: critics condemned the play’s many anachronisms and noticed its Elizabethan perspectives; they were uncomfortable about designating the play a tragedy, finding faults in the design; and they took issue with the play’s style and tone. The irony, as this thesis will show, is that all these questions to do with literary taste are raised in the play itself. The play self-consciously focuses views of the Trojan matter through an Elizabethan lens. In so doing, Shakespeare explores how all re-presentations are inherently anachronistic and mediated through expectations. The play’s staging of character speeches about design, decorum and expectations *as performances* means that they can be read satirically or ironically by other characters and the theatre audience. *Troilus and Cressida* refuses to take a clearly demarcated tragic course as it questions the tastes and morality of the received tradition.

³⁴ George Steevens and Joseph Ritson “Commentaries”, in *The Plays of William Shakespeare*, ed. Samuel Johnson, George Steevens, and Isaac Reed (1793), repr. in *Critical Heritage*, VI, 576-605 (p. 595).

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 596.

³⁶ George Steevens and Joseph Ritson “Commentaries”, p. 596.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 595.

The editor-critics – implicitly or explicitly – were engaging with the intriguing question: what do we expect from *Troilus and Cressida*? Questions about the play are often tentatively answered by these eighteenth-century critics with reference to the author. This trend continues in the next century when several critics placed a new focus on Shakespeare's authorship and his poetic agency.

II. Nineteenth-Century Expectations: The “double meaning of the picture”

“It is as though we should see Melpomene dancing the *cancan* at a ball of *grisettes*,
with shameless laughter on her pallid lips, and with death in her heart”

– Heinrich Heine on *Troilus and Cressida* (1838)³⁸

During the nineteenth century *Troilus and Cressida* had a number of famous commentators, despite the fact that the play had to wait until very close to the twentieth century before it was performed in anything like Shakespeare's version.³⁹ The play was read through a new Romantic perspective focussing on Shakespeare's authorial agency. In the same period, critics were often puzzled by the play's ironic or satiric tone.⁴⁰ In the wake of modern drama such as Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879), it was not long before *Troilus and Cressida* was also labelled a “problem play”.⁴¹

³⁸ Heinrich Heine, *Sämtliche Werke* (1857-61[trans. based on that of Ida Benecke, *Heine on Shakespeare* 1895]), repr. in *New Variorum*, p. 523.

³⁹ A version of *Troilus and Cressida* closer to Shakespeare version, rather than Dryden's, was performed in Germany in 1898. For a discussion of these early performances in Germany, see the *New Variorum*, pp. 511-515, and Frances A. Shirley, *Troilus and Cressida: Shakespeare in Production* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 7. There may also have been a production of Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* at Dublin's Smock Alley “some time prior to 1700”, David Bevington (ed.), *Troilus and Cressida: Arden Shakespeare*, 3rd ser. (London: Nelson and Sons, 1998), p. 90; see R.C. Bald, “Shakespeare on the Stage in Restoration Dublin”, *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association*, 56.2 (1941), 369-78 (esp. p. 378).

⁴⁰ For the nineteenth-century debate on the composition of the play, see the comments of Harold N. Hillebrand and T.W. Baldwin, “The Date of Composition”, in *New Variorum*, pp. 362-68. There was also correspondence on various bibliographical and interpretative issues concerning *Troilus and Cressida* published in *Notes and Queries* in the latter half of the nineteenth century and later; see, for example, Periergus Bibliophilus, “Misplaced Words in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Notes and Queries*, 1st ser., 1.54 (1850), 368-87.

⁴¹ Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll's House*, in *A Doll's House: The Wild Duck: The Lady from the Sea*, trans. R. Farquharson Sharp and Eleanor Marx-Aveling, rev. edn, rev. Torgrim and Linda Hannås (New York: Dutton; London: Dent, 1958), pp. 1-72.

II.i. Artistic Autonomy and Ironic Detachment

An early proponent of Shakespeare's artistic autonomy and his propensity *not* to be just a crowd pleaser, Schlegel (1808) celebrated Shakespeare's ability to rearrange his source material:

It seems as if he here for once wished, without caring for theatrical effect, to satisfy the nicety of his peculiar wit, and the inclination to a certain guile, if I may say so, in the characterisation. The whole is one continued irony of that crown of all heroic tales, the tale of Troy [...]; but in this double meaning of the picture, he has afforded us the most choice entertainment.⁴²

Schlegel saw the play as producing an ironic "double meaning" in its picture of Troy. He put the play's breaks from convention down to the fact that he thought the play was a literary version, not performed before it was printed in 1609. Nevertheless, Schlegel's implication that Shakespeare may not have been bowing to his audience in the usual way, or that he was writing to create different affects in this play, is typical of the nineteenth-century critics who celebrated the experimental genius of Shakespeare. Nathan Drake (1817) saw the play as "a most perfect *unique* both in its construction and effect", noting its "continued sarcasm" and the way this "ironic copy [...]" stripped the Homeric characters of all their epic pomp".⁴³ The issue of seriousness had preoccupied some eighteenth-century critics such as Tyrwhitt (1765), but it is revisited here with the terms "sarcasm" and "iron[y]". Schlegel and Drake ascribe to Shakespeare's overall artwork the irony and sarcasm that some of the characters use within the play itself. Irony complicates readings of expectations because an ironic portrayal of, say, a Greek hero, simultaneously meets audience expectations and punctures them.

Like Schlegel and Drake, William Hazlitt (1817) took up the notion of ironic detachment. The "ludicrous and ironical are constantly blended with the stately and

⁴² August W. von Schlegel, *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature*, trans. John Black and rev. A.J.W. Morrison (1904), repr. in *New Variorum*, pp. 519-20. In contrast, however, to the idea of the play as a reading version, W.W. Lloyd (1856) pointed out that the fragmented battle scenes "sustain interest and animate the attention" for a theatre audience, *The Dramatic Works of William Shakespeare*, ed. S.W. Singer (1856), repr. in *New Variorum*, pp. 526-27 (p. 527).

⁴³ Nathan Drake, *Shakespeare and His Times* (1817), repr. in *New Variorum*, p. 520.

impassioned”, but in this particular play “Shakespear [*sic*] never committed himself to his characters. He trifled, laughed, or wept with them as he chose”.⁴⁴ Characteristic of many eighteenth and nineteenth-century critics, Hazlitt implies that Shakespeare was rather amoral in his approach to this play, as if he was not doing things responsibly according to literary tastes. Echoing Dryden, he writes of *Troilus and Cressida*:

This is one of the most loose and desultory of our author’s plays; it rambles on just as it happens, but it overtakes, together with some indifferent matter, a prodigious number of fine things in its way.⁴⁵

Overall, Hazlitt implies that Shakespeare was playing with his characters and perhaps his audience too. His point that “it seems to be a matter of perfect indifference whether [Shakespeare] shall be in jest or earnest” suggests that, if there were specific authorial intentions behind the play’s effects, then the dramatist must have been non-committal about being seen as the creator of such effects.⁴⁶

Goethe (1824) still saw the play as being unique in terms of Shakespeare’s authorial agency but he thought that this play was an example of Shakespeare’s genius for refashioning his sources. *Troilus and Cressida*, he said, compared to the *Iliad* as the “Owl” would to the “mighty eagle”.⁴⁷ He meant that there “is neither parody nor travesty” in the play’s construction; he considers the play an “English classic, [...] a happy transposition and translation of the other great work into the romantic-dramatic style”.⁴⁸ He found the play “quite original” and suggested that Shakespeare read his own times, allowing the audience to “see [...] itself reflected in the guise of the ancient story”.⁴⁹ If the play did mark for Paul Stapfler (1880) “the playful recreation with which a great genius amused himself in his

⁴⁴ William Hazlitt, *The Complete Works: Centenary Edition*, ed. P.P. Howe (1930-34), repr. in *New Variorum*, pp. 520-21 (p. 521).

⁴⁵ Hazlitt, p. 520.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 521.

⁴⁷ J.W. von Goethe, *Goethes Werke* (1887-1919), repr. in *New Variorum*, pp. 521-22 (p. 521).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 520.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 521.

lighter moods”, then it was also seen by critics such as Goethe as engaging, at least in a general way, with the literature and drama of its own time.⁵⁰

Heinrich Heine (1838) remarked that the play was “Shakespeare’s most characteristic creation”.⁵¹ Bearing in mind the comments of the past critics, Heine’s proclamation may seem to be counterintuitive. Several critics have thought, before and since, that this is one of Shakespeare’s *oddest* plays. Heine’s statement is provocative, but, if *Troilus and Cressida* defies convention to an extreme, this is not to say that Shakespearean drama does not *characteristically* test conventions and expectations. As Heine observed, “[t]hose who judged *Troilus and Cressida* according to the rules drawn by Aristotle from the best Greek plays, must often have fallen into the greatest perplexity, if not into the most ridiculous blunders”.⁵² The ironic detachment so obvious in *Troilus and Cressida* may be “characteristic” of Shakespeare’s larger ability to play with audience expectations; in so doing, he was able to engage with the tastes and concerns of his contemporary poets in a way that was both creative and critical.

II.ii. Shakespeare’s Satire

Later nineteenth-century critics were unresolved about the function of the play’s satiric content. Charles Knight (1841) also found a “most subtle art” in *Troilus and Cressida*, where the poet takes on a detached prophetic eminence.⁵³ Like Goethe, Knight thought that the play was not simply a “*travestie* of Homer”.⁵⁴ Knight saw Shakespeare, if not taking a moral high ground, then certainly looking “down upon the Homeric heroes from an Olympus of his

⁵⁰ Paul Stapfer, *Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity* (1880 [trans. Emily J. Carey]), repr. in *New Variorum*, p. 528; Stapfer writes, “we are of one mind with Goethe when he said to Eckermann, ‘If you wish to know Shakespeare’s utter freedom of thought, read *Troilus and Cressida*’”, p. 528.

⁵¹ Heinrich Heine, *Sämtliche Werke* (1857-61), p. 523. Heine famously said of the play that “[w]e can acknowledge its great excellence only in general terms; for a detailed judgement we should need the help of that new aesthetics which has not yet been written”, p. 523.

⁵² Heine, 523.

⁵³ Charles Knight, *The Pictorial Edition of the Works of Shakespeare* (1839-42), repr. in *New Variorum*, p. 525.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 525.

own”.⁵⁵ In this reading the author is allowed a position similar to that given to Chaucer’s Troilus; at the end of *Troilus and Criseyde*, Troilus looks down from the heavens to laugh at the follies of those on earth.⁵⁶

For H. Ulrici (1846), the play’s unconventionality was part of Shakespeare’s didactic project. He suggested that “Shakespeare sat down to write his instructive satire on the Homeric hero-life”.⁵⁷ Although Ulrici argued that Shakespeare “could not fail to see and appreciate the beneficial effects which an acquaintance with the high civilization of antiquity had already exercised, and was calculated to have, on further improvement of the mind of Christian Europe”, he also thought that the play acted to warn “the Christian [not to] surrender himself to an exclusive and unquestioning love and admiration of it”.⁵⁸ In Ulrici’s reading, Shakespeare possessed a remarkable power, “a prophetic spirit, which saw with equal clearness through the darkness of futurity as through the mist of the past”.⁵⁹ Ulrici’s comment flags up, again, the topic of moral judgments and the idea of satire as being morally improving; these issues take on an important significance for the play in relation to expectations and the question of its satiric bearing.

In his “Introductory Remarks” on the play in his edition of Shakespeare, G.C. Verplanck (1847) thought that previous critics had largely missed the point:

I suppose that there are very few readers, in the practical and utilitarian world of England and America, who will give the very practical Shakespeare credit for so remote an object as a satire in which so few of his readers or audience could possibly sympathize, and which, in after ages, could escape the observation of Dryden, Johnson, Walter Scott, and even of the sagacious and over-refining Warburton.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ However, Shakespeare had certainly not given any of his characters such a vantage point unless the ignored Cassandra, manipulative Ulysses or the scurrilous Thersites are to be counted.

⁵⁷ H. Ulrici, *Shakespeare’s Dramatic Art*, trans. A.J.W. Morrison (1846), repr. in *New Variorum*, pp. 524-25 (p. 524).

⁵⁸ Ibid..

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ G.C. Verplanck, *The Illustrated Shakespeare* (1847), repr. in *New Variorum*, p. 525. K. Deighton quoted and then rebutted Verplanck in his introduction to an edition of the play stating that “[t]o me nothing could be more unlike Shakespeare than such an intention [to write a satire]. Shakespeare is incidentally a satirist, but he does not propose to himself to write a satire”, “Introduction”, in *Troilus and Cressida*, ed. K. Deighton (London:

In reading the play as a satire that had not gone down well with most of its audience, Verplanck suggested that Shakespeare had created a play that in some ways was bound to upset its audience. In his reading, the play was not a “mock-heroic or burlesque”, but it contained a level of “reality” with “life-like” characters that produced an ironic satire which might not be sympathetic to prevalent literary tastes and, especially, expectations from stylised romance.⁶¹

These readings of the play as a satire fitted with those of historicist critics, such as Josiah H. Penniman (1897) and Roscoe Addison Small (1899), who saw the play as taking part in the fashionable satire of Shakespeare’s contemporaries Ben Jonson and John Marston.⁶² After arguing for a link between Jonson and Alexander’s description of Ajax in the play, Small noted:

I regret to say that I believe, that in several passages the name Ajax is so brought in that it could not fail to suggest to an Elizabethan audience the pun on “A jakes” made popular by Harington’s *Metamorphosis of Ajax*.⁶³

Verplanck’s insight that the play’s satire had been misunderstood by “over-refining” critics is given weight by the fact that his near contemporary in Germany, G.G. Gervinus (1849-50) seemed so bewildered by the play, finding it “uncertain [in] character”. In contrast to Verplanck, Gervinus suggested:

Methuen, 1906), pp. vii-xxxii (p.xxv). Walter Scott commented that Shakespeare left the play in a “state of strange imperfection, resembling more a chronicle, or legend, than a dramatic piece”, in “The Life of John Dryden”, *The Works of John Dryden*, ed. Walter Scott, 18 vols (Edinburgh: Ballantyne, 1808), I, 223.

⁶¹ G.C. Verplanck, *The Illustrated Shakespeare* (1847), repr. in *New Variorum*, p. 525

⁶² Roscoe Addison Small, *The Stage-Quarrel Between Ben Jonson and the So-Called Poetasters* (New York: AMS Press, 1966), p. 169. See also Josiah H. Penniman “*The Return from Parnassus and Troilus and Cressida*”, in *The War of the Theatres* (Boston: Ginn, 1897), pp. 144-51. James P. Bednarz (in *Shakespeare & the Poets’ War* (New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2001), p. 279, f.n. 9) discusses the early reference to “the war of the theaters” in Frederick Fleay, *A Chronicle History of the Life and Work of William Shakespeare* (London: Nimmo, 1886), p. 42; Fleay elaborated his theory of a “three years’ war or contention” during 1599-1601 in *A Chronicle History of the London Stage, 1559-1642* (London: Reeves and Turner, 1890) (p. 119).

⁶³ Small, p. 169. See John Harington, *A New Discourse of a Stale Subject, called the Metamorphosis of Ajax* (London, 1596).

Certainly [Shakespeare] would not have wished to reckon this play among those which hold up a mirror to the age, since it is not even calculated to produce the simplest psychical effect.⁶⁴

Presumably in Gervinus's reading of the play, it had no psychical effect on its audience because – in contrast to Goethe's thinking – he thought the audience was not supposed to see itself in the ancient characters. Critics since Goethe and Verplanck have usually agreed that Shakespeare's play *does* comment on its own time.

II.iii. Shakespeare's Temperament and the Problem Plays

As the *fin de siècle* of the nineteenth century advanced, some critics began to suggest that the play might be the product of Shakespeare's dark mood, rather than the dark times at the end of the sixteenth century. J. Denton Snider (1877) thought that the “negative termination of the play [was] striking [...], resembl[ing] a goodly ship going to pieces amid the breakers”.⁶⁵ “The play”, for Snider, “is literally wrecked”.⁶⁶ For George Brandes (1898), Shakespeare was writing “under the influence of his own times”, but he noted that the wreck of Shakespeare's Trojan play could be traced to the fact that this was “the most despondent period of his life”.⁶⁷ Brandes stated that “seldom has a poet been less good-natured than Shakespeare here”.⁶⁸ The notion that Shakespeare wrote *Troilus and Cressida* in a moment of mid-life-crisis pessimism is one that was to have its proponents in the twentieth century too.

The way that *Troilus and Cressida* defies generic conventions and expectations ensured that Samuel T. Coleridge (c. 1833) found the play too hard to characterise. Lecturing

⁶⁴ G.G. Gervinus, *Shakespeare's Commentaries*, rev. Rudolph Genée (1903 [1849-50 trans. F.E. Bunnètt]), repr. in *New Variorum*, pp. 525-26 (p. 526).

⁶⁵ J. Denton Snider, *Systems of Shakespeare's Dramas* (1877), repr. in *New Variorum*, pp. 527-28.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 528. Sidney Lee (1898) thought the play “the least attractive of the efforts of Shakespeare's middle life” in *A Life of William Shakespeare*, 4th edn (London: Smith, Elder, 1899), p. 227. Barrett Wendell (1894) took a similar view, stating that the play “reveals the sort of inertia which generally marks the minor work of a period when Shakespeare's greater work was doing”, “*Troilus and Cressida*”, in *William Shakespeare: A Study in Elizabethan Literature* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912), pp. 271-77.

⁶⁷ George Brandes, *William Shakespeare*, trans. William Archer, Mary Morison and Diana White (London: Heinemann, 1916), p. 515.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 520.

on *Troilus and Cressida*, Coleridge noted that he “scarcely [knew] what to say of it”; “Indeed”, he continued, “there is none of Shakespeare’s plays harder to characterize”.⁶⁹ Labelling *Troilus and Cressida* a “problem play” with *All’s Well That Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure* and *Hamlet*, Frederick S. Boas (1896) considered the plays’ generic indeterminacies. Boas explained, “dramas so singular in theme and temper cannot be strictly called comedies or tragedies. We may therefore borrow a convenient phrase from the theatre of to-day and class them together as Shakespeare’s problem-plays”.⁷⁰ Boas also saw the play as caught up with its own time because it “illustrates and implicitly condemns the quixotic sacrifice of great national interests to a fantastic code of exaggerated gallantry”.⁷¹ Boas’s “theatre of to-day” refers to that of Henrik Ibsen and George Bernard Shaw, whose plays were labelled problem plays because they emphasised social problems.⁷² The term “problem play” in relation to Shakespeare, therefore, has come ambiguously to mark both a generic or aesthetic indeterminacy and a moral or social questioning. Although, as E.L. Ridsen recently commented, the term “has gone out of fashion now”, it is clear that there has been an enduring practice of reading *Troilus and Cressida* in terms of the way it transgresses genre expectations and treats received traditions ironically.⁷³

⁶⁹ Samuel T. Coleridge, “*Troilus and Cressida*: pagan heroes, Christian warriors”, in *Coleridge’s Writings on Shakespeare*, ed. Terence Hawkes (New York: Capricorn Books, 1959), pp. 247-49, p. 247.

⁷⁰ Frederick S. Boas, “The Problem-Plays”, in *Shakespeare and His Predecessors* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), pp. 344-408 (p. 345).

⁷¹ Boas, p. 379. Edward Dowden (1875) was the first to link *All’s Well That Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure* and *Troilus and Cressida*, classifying them under the heading “Serious, Dark, Ironical”, in *Shakespeare: A Critical Study*, 3rd edn (London and New York: Harper & Brothers, 1906), p.x.

⁷² George Bernard Shaw later likened *Troilus and Cressida* to his problem plays stating that in plays like this one “we find [Shakespeare] ready and willing to start at the nineteenth century if the seventeenth would only let him”, “Preface”, in *Plays: Pleasant and Unpleasant*, rev. edn, 2 vols (New York: Bantano’s, 1906), I, v-xxvii (p. xxii).

⁷³ E.L. Ridsen, “Preface: the Idea of the Problem Play”, in *Shakespeare and the Problem Play: Complex Forms, Crossed Genres and Moral Quandaries* (Jefferson, NC and London: McFarland, 2012), p.1. An exception to the rule, Ernest Schanzer did not think the play problematic enough in a moral sense to be called a problem play for his book, *The Problem Plays of Shakespeare* (New York: Schocken Books, 1963) (see pp. 7-8).

III.iv. Section Summary in Terms of the Thesis

Given the two opposing viewpoints during this century concerning whether or not the play comments on its own time, it appears that if the play does comment on its own time then there must be a self-protective strategy or veil in this critique.⁷⁴ To condemn the ways of the Elizabethan court and its politicians too blatantly, for example, could have landed an artist in trouble, an issue the play reflects on through its own analogous performances. If this was the play that displayed “Shakespeare’s utter freedom of thought” according to Goethe (1825), then nevertheless, as this thesis argues, this freedom must have been situated – for Shakespeare and his audience – within the troubled time of an Elizabethan *fin de siècle* moment and in relation to early modern audience expectations.⁷⁵

The work of nineteenth-century critics tends to demonstrate an impulse to link the strangeness of the play with a dark mood on Shakespeare’s part, and/or with a desire by the playwright to assess the times. Whether they finally value the play, then, comes down to what they expect from Shakespearean drama. Critics either seem to *allow* Shakespeare, as a genius, to write an odd, confused play, or they see that there is an impulse in the play, however indefinite, to challenge the political, theatrical and literary status quo.

III. Critical Expectations from 1900 until 1959: Wars and “subjective reactions”

“The materials of *Troilus and Cressida* are thus more obviously at war than those of any other play of Shakespeare’s”

– Una Ellis-Fermor (1945)⁷⁶

⁷⁴ For arguments by later critics on Shakespeare’s diplomatic tact and discretion, see, for example, Paul Yachnin, “The Powerless Theater”, in *Stagewrights: Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton, and the Making of Theatrical Value* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), pp. 1-24, and Richard Wilson, “Wrapped in a player’s hide: Shakespeare’s secret history”, in *Secret Shakespeare: Studies in Theatre, Religion and Resistance* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 10-43.

⁷⁵ See p. 49, f.n. 50 above for the source of Goethe’s statement.

⁷⁶ Una Ellis-Fermor, *The Frontiers of Drama*, 2nd edn (London: Methuen, 1964), p. 59.

The appreciation of *Troilus and Cressida* saw a sea change by the mid-twentieth century, coinciding with the aftermath of the First and Second World Wars, the first modern performances, and the professionalization of literary criticism and rise of English Literature as an academic discipline.⁷⁷ In his essay on *Troilus and Cressida*, Albert Gérard (1959) considered “the lack of understanding and appreciation which was the only response to this play for three centuries after it was written”.⁷⁸ Realising how the play had come into its own since the wars of the twentieth century, he commented: “It was not until the twentieth century that the particular mood which it illustrates so forcefully became sufficiently familiar to create an audience capable of adequate reaction”.⁷⁹ New interpretations came from readings of the play in relation to its historical and literary context and from a new modernist emphasis on the play as an artwork. However, at the start of the twentieth century the belief continued that the tone of the play was a result of Shakespeare’s darker days. Critics such as Walter Raleigh (1907) thought that in the play “the author, after mocking at love and war and statecraft, mocks also at his own disaffection”.⁸⁰ Perhaps influenced still by thinking of the Romantic era, the expectation was that the play had been a reflection of the bitter disillusioned mood of the playwright.⁸¹

⁷⁷ On the rise of English studies with attention to the teaching of Shakespeare, see D.J. Palmer, *The Rise of English Studies: An Account of the Study of English Language and Literature from its Origins to the Making of the Oxford English School* (London and New York: Oxford University Press for the University of Hull, 1965); see also Terry Eagleton, *The Function of Criticism: From “The Spectator” to Post-Structuralism* (London: Verso, 1984), esp. 65-67.

⁷⁸ Albert Gérard, “Meaning and Structure in *Troilus and Cressida*”, *English Studies*, 40 (1959), 144-57 (p. 157).

⁷⁹ Gérard, p. 157.

⁸⁰ Walter Raleigh, *Shakespeare: English Men of Letters* (London: Macmillan, 1907), p. 117.

⁸¹ On the modernist Shakespeare, see Hugh Grady, *The Modernist Shakespeare: Critical Texts in a Material World* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) and, on Wilson Knight, L.C. Knights and Caroline Spurgeon specifically, see S. Viswanathan, *The Shakespeare Play as Poem: A Critical Tradition in Perspective* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

III.i. The Result of a “spirit of bitterness and contempt”, or an Elite Play?

In his famous *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904), A.C. Bradley noted that Shakespeare must have been in “some unpleasant mood” while writing *Troilus and Cressida*.⁸² In a large footnote, Bradley remarks that

[h]e wrote also in these years [of “deepening darkness”] (probably in the earlier of them) certain “comedies”, *Measure for Measure* and *Troilus and Cressida* and perhaps *All’s Well*. But about these comedies there is a peculiar air of coldness; there is humour, of course, but little mirth; in *Measure for Measure* perhaps, certainly in *Troilus and Cressida*, a spirit of bitterness and contempt seems to pervade an intellectual atmosphere of an intense but hard clearness.⁸³

Echoing Bradley’s perspective, Rudolph Geneé (1905) – apparently speaking from the benefit of having seen an early production of the play in Germany – thought that, however much the writing “arouses our attentive reading, [...] the performance cannot resolve the harsh discord which dominates the whole work”.⁸⁴ Arthur Symons (1907) also noted that in *Troilus and Cressida* “[w]e read life, in this bewildering comment on it, not through the eyes of Shakespeare’s final wisdom, but as Shakespeare, at one point, read life”.⁸⁵

John Palmer (1914) obviously relished debunking the tradition of reading the play in the light of Shakespeare’s mid-life crisis.⁸⁶ Palmer noticed how readers and theatregoers had developed certain expectations about what a Shakespeare play should be like; thinking about the plays *All’s Well That Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure*, and *Troilus and Cressida*, the English-born and raised Palmer commented:

Shakespeare has written a group of plays for which no sincerely English critic has been able satisfactorily to account. They are an offence to his worshippers. Shakespeare, they say, was not himself when he wrote them. Greatest of all as a stumbling-block is *Troilus and Cressida*.⁸⁷

⁸² A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on “Hamlet”, “Othello”, “King Lear”, “Macbeth”*, 2nd edn (London: Macmillan, 1905), p. 186.

⁸³ Bradley, p. 275.

⁸⁴ Rudolph Geneé, *William Shakespeare in seinem Werden und Wesen* (1905), repr. in *New Variorum*, p. 530.

⁸⁵ Arthur Symons, “*Troilus and Cressida*” (1907), repr. in *New Variorum*, pp. 530-31 (p. 531).

⁸⁶ John Palmer, *Comedy: The Art and Craft of Letters* (London: Secker, 1914), p. 18.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

Palmer argued that the fault lay with critics who had not realised that “these plays, far from being a fit of temper, are Shakespeare’s effort to achieve a fit of detachment”.⁸⁸ M.R. Ridley (1935) commented in his edition of the play that “the critics who mount themselves on a moral high horse are only riding for a fall”.⁸⁹ Algernon Swinburne (1918) was one of those English “worshippers”, but even he commented on how early readers of the 1609 quarto must have found the play “something of a shock”.⁹⁰ This would certainly be the case Swinburne argued because, if the “title [...] [filled the] purchaser[’s] mind full of sweet rich fresh humour which he would feel a right to expect from Shakespeare”, then, s/he “could hardly have undergone less than a qualm or a pang of strong disrelish and distaste”.⁹¹ Leo Tolstoy (1900) in fact commented that “[o]nly a man devoid of the sense of measure and of taste could produce such types as Titus Andronicus or Troilus and Cressida”.⁹² Levin L. Schücking (1919) suggested of certain other critics that “the strong ingredient of sensuality in [the play] evidently offends their ‘refined’ taste”.⁹³ The comments of Swinburne, Tolstoy and Schücking again raise the issue of what audiences are to expect, and what critics are to expect about the expectations of early modern audiences. That is, how was the play supposed to work in relation to early modern audience tastes? And what kinds of audience was Shakespeare expecting for his play, whether educated readers, law students, city traders, apprentices, or Globe groundlings?

Influenced by studies in the emerging new bibliography, the issue of the play’s provenance and audience took a fresh turn in 1928 when Peter Alexander focussed on the 1609 quarto epistle in his reconsideration of *Troilus and Cressida*. Reading the play as a

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 19.

⁸⁹ M.R. Ridley, “Preface”, in *Troilus and Cressida*, ed. M.R. Ridley (New York: Dutton; London: Dent, 1935), pp. vii-xvi (p. xiii).

⁹⁰ Algernon Charles Swinburne, *A Study of Shakespeare* (London: Heinemann, 1918), p. 196.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 197.

⁹² Leo Tolstoy, “Shakespeare and the Drama”, in *Shakespeare in Europe*, ed. Oswald LeWinter (Harmondsworth and New York: Penguin, 1970), pp. 216-74 (p. 253).

⁹³ Levin L. Schücking, *Character Problems in Shakespeare’s Plays: A Guide to the Better Understanding of the Dramatist* (London: Harrap, 1922), p. 57.

comedy, as suggested by the epistle, he thought that it was “unlikely that this play was ever performed to an audience at the Globe”, but that “it is excellent fooling for clerks”.⁹⁴ He suggested an Inns of Court audience, noticing that the Lord Chamberlain’s Men had performed for them before, and that “the subject and its treatment point to such an audience; the deliberate flouting of tradition as established by Homer and Chaucer would have been intelligible only to instructed spectators”.⁹⁵ The issue of how much people in the early modern audience would have known about Troy and its traditions was covered more fully by Robert K. Presson’s *Shakespeare’s “Troilus and Cressida” and the Legends of Troy* (1953). Despite showing how the stories of Troy were a feature of popular theatre, he noted in a footnote (after citing the elitist epistle of the quarto): “I accept [the] interpretation that the play was not a popular success”.⁹⁶ Alexander’s suggestion of an Inns setting is controversial because it is based on decisions about the play’s tone and on expectations of audience (and the playwright’s commitments), but this idea has been another resilient tradition in criticism

⁹⁴ Peter Alexander, “*Troilus and Cressida*, 1609”, *The Library*, 4th ser., 9 (1928-29), 267-86 (p. 279). His idea of a private performance was supported by Arthur Sewall in “Notes on the Integrity of *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Review of English Studies*, 19.2 (1943), 120-27. E.K. Chambers did not discount the Inns of Court theory in his early bibliographical study of the play, “*Troilus and Cressida*”, in *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), I, 438-49. In Chambers’ (1907) introduction to the play, he also “wonder[ed] whether it had been produced, like *The Return from Parnassus* itself, at Cambridge. *Hamlet* is shown by the title page of the First Quarto to have been performed there; and the classical subject would have its appropriateness before an academic audience”, “*Troilus and Cressida*”, in *Shakespeare: A Survey* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1925), pp. 191-99 (p. 199). For bibliographical readings, see, for example, W.W. Greg, *The Shakespeare First Folio: Its Bibliographical and Textual History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), pp. 338-50; Jay Leon Halio, “*Troilus and Cressida*”, *Modern Language Notes*, 72.6 (1957), 408-09; Alice Walker, “The Textual Problem of *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Modern Language Review*, 45.4 (1950), 459-64; Philip Williams Jr., “The ‘Second Issue’ of Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*, 1609”, *Studies in Bibliography*, 2 (1949-50), 25-33; Philip Williams Jr., “Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*: The Relationship of Quarto and Folio”, *Studies in Bibliography*, 3 (1950-1), 131-43; and *New Variorum* (1953).

⁹⁵ Alexander, p. 279.

⁹⁶ Robert K. Presson, *Shakespeare’s “Troilus and Cressida” and the Legends of Troy* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1953). For the issues surrounding source material, see also D.E. Jones, “The Development of the Story of *Troilus and Cressida*” (unpublished master’s thesis, Cardiff University, 1953). For other studies examining the play’s engagement with its sources, see, for example, French Haynes, “Shakespeare and the Troy Story”, *Howard College Bulletin: Studies in History and Literature*, 80.3 (1922), 67-131; W.W. Lawrence, “The Love Story in *Troilus and Cressida*”, in *Shakespearean Studies*, ed. Brander Matthews and Ashley Horace Thorndike (New York: Columbia University Press), pp. 187-211; Hyder E. Rollins, “The *Troilus-Cressida* Story from Chaucer to Shakespeare”, *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association*, 32.3 (1917), 383-429; and Harold S. Wilson, “Antithesis: *Troilus and Cressida* and *Timon of Athens*”, in *On the Design of Shakespearean Tragedy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957), pp. 115-56.

of the play. However, Alexander's argument was clearly influenced by the epistle writer. He surmised that

[s]ome one must at the last minute have informed the publishers that the play they had printed had never been performed at the Globe nor indeed before any public audience: the publishers thereupon inserted the new title-page and the preface.⁹⁷

Excited by developments in new bibliography, Alexander took the epistle writer's advertisement in good faith, when, as this thesis will show, there are strong reasons to doubt the veracity of its claims.

III.ii. Historicism and the War of the Theatres

One of the first major books dedicated to *Troilus and Cressida* picked up on its satirical content and its relation to Ben Jonson's plays: Oscar James Campbell's *Comical Satyre and Shakespeare's "Troilus and Cressida"* (1938) read the play in relation to other satirical verse and the satirical plays of Shakespeare's contemporaries.⁹⁸ Campbell agreed with Alexander that an Inns audience seemed likely, stating that "such a play [...] would have been more easily understood and more readily accepted by an audience of barristers than by one gathered in a public theatre".⁹⁹ By 1948, William Elton was relating how Alexander and Campbell "have gathered sufficient evidence to make it highly probable that *Troilus and Cressida* was intended for performance at the Inns of Court".¹⁰⁰ Leslie Hotson (1949) also

⁹⁷ Alexander, p. 126.

⁹⁸ Given the elitist associations of *Troilus and Cressida*, it is not surprising that the play also featured in the Baconian authorship theory as debated in several notes in *Notes and Queries* in relation to Hector's reference to Aristotle; see, for example, H.W. Crundell, "Bacon and *Troilus and Cressida*", 1st ser., 186.10 (1944), 226.

⁹⁹ Campbell's footnote on the Inns of Court theory takes up two thirds of the page. Oscar James Campbell, *Comical Satyre and Shakespeare's "Troilus and Cressida"* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1938), p. 193. See also, Oscar James Campbell, "Troilus and Cressida", in *Shakespeare's Satire* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1943), 98-120. In her moralistic reading of the play, Alice Walker also emphasised the satirical nature of the play in the introduction to her edition, "Introduction", *Troilus and Cressida*, ed. Alice Walker and John Dover Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), pp. ix-xlvi; she also noted in that edition how a reference to "Troilus faith and Cressidas falstie" in a Shakespearean context suggests that the play was performed before 1603, p. xlvii; see I.C. *Saint Marie Magdalens Conversion* (London, 1603), A3^r.

¹⁰⁰ William Elton, "Shakespeare's Portrait of Ajax in *Troilus and Cressida*", *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 63.2 (1948), 744-48 (pp. 745-46). The Inns of Court theory was also supported by George F. Reynolds (1948) who sought to show how the play-text suggests it could have been staged at the Inns without too much difficulty, "Troilus and Cressida on the Elizabethan Stage", in *Joseph*

read the play as being written with a performance at the Inns of Court in mind, but his insistence that the play was *Love's Labour's Won* and his other speculations did not help the argument's credibility.¹⁰¹ Campbell's more cautious intertextual approach, however, has helped critics to consider the play within its historical and theatrical context, and especially the so-called "War of the Theatres", which critics had rediscovered at the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁰²

Alfred Harbage (1952) considered the play in relation to the work of Shakespeare's rivals further, but he argued against Alexander's Inns of Court reading:

The assumption that the play was written especially for the inns of court, now widely current, fails to reckon with the fact that there is no recorded instance before or during Shakespeare's career [...] when a regular play was bought, rehearsed, and acted by a professional company exclusively for a special audience.¹⁰³

Harbage's early comment has been corroborated by more recent thinking on Shakespeare as a company man during this period of writing; nevertheless, Harbage agreed with those who saw the play as responding to those put on in the indoor theatres. He argued that, "[w]hen *Troilus and Cressida* is read with the satirical dramas of the coterie theatres in mind, it seems filled with odd little probings".¹⁰⁴ These were probings not simply to do with coterie theatre; they were also questioning representations of Troy. As John S.P. Tatlock (1916) suggested in his consideration of the play and the Troy legend, "its subject was extremely popular in two

Quincy Adams Memorial Studies, ed. James G. McManaway, Giles E. Dawson, Edwin E. Willoughby (Washington: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1948), pp. 229-38.

¹⁰¹ Leslie Hotson, in "Love's Labour's Won", in *Shakespeare's Sonnets Dated and Other Essays* (London: Hart-Davis, 1949), pp. 37-56.

¹⁰² For the first academic criticism on the War of the Theatres", see p. 52, f.n. 62 above. Abbie Findlay Potts furthered Campbell's intertextual reading in her essay, "*Cynthia's Revels*, *Poetaster* and *Troilus and Cressida*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 5.3 (1954), 297-302. She also read the play in relation to the "courtly code" as suggested by Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* and Baldassare Castiglione's *The Book of The Courtier* in *Shakespeare and The Faerie Queene* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1958), pp. 84-127. On the play's relationship to ideas about hierarchy (as suggested for example in Thomas Elyot, *The Boke Named the Governour* (London, 1531)), see Paul Deutschberger, "Shakespeare on Degree: A Study in Backgrounds", *Shakespeare Association Bulletin*, 17.4 (1942), 200-07.

¹⁰³ Alfred Harbage, *Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions* (Bloomington, IN, and London: Indiana University Press, 1970) esp. pp. 116-19 (p. 116).

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 118. Alvin Kernan argued that "[d]espite certain structural and tonal similarities to the new dramatic satires, *Troilus and Cressida* is not finally a satiric play", *The Cankered Muse: Satire of the English Renaissance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1959), p. 197.

senses – was widely liked, and appealed to the masses”.¹⁰⁵ Kenneth Muir (1957) suggested in his first study of Shakespeare’s sources that the playwright used the “primitive ‘morality’ technique” “of faithful lover, wanton and pandar [...] with extreme sophistication, to exhibit, as it were, the birth of a legend”.¹⁰⁶ One further kind of probing was proposed by G.B. Harrison (1951), who explored the play in relation to the Elizabethan political scene and especially the reputation of the Earl of Essex.¹⁰⁷ This reading would be taken up by new historicists in the future, but here Harrison found the play “faithfully mirroring not only contemporary events but the general *fin de siècle* disillusion which Elizabethans called the melancholick humour”.¹⁰⁸ This historical interpretation seems to have brought readings of the play’s “disillusion” full circle from blaming it on Shakespeare’s personal melancholy back to reading it in the light of the era in which it was written. The reading found a particular resonance during and after the World Wars.

III.iii. War and Modernism

G. Wilson Knight (1930) was one of the first great academic proponents of *Troilus and Cressida*, pointing out that being “analytic, it lends itself easily to philosophic analysis and interpretation”.¹⁰⁹ Arguably “one of the seminal figures in the construction of a Modernist Shakespeare”, Wilson Knight trumpeted the play’s “exquisite” poetry and “dramatic

¹⁰⁵ John S.P. Tatlock, “The Chief Problem in Shakespeare”, *Sewanee Review*, 24.2 (1916), 129-47 (p. 136). Tatlock also writes that “[n]o traditional story was so popular in the Elizabethan age as that of the siege of Troy and some of its episodes”, in “The Siege of Troy in Elizabethan Literature, Especially in Shakespeare and Heywood”, *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 30.4 (1915), 673-770 (p. 673). In this essay Tatlock briefly discusses the Welsh *Troelus and Chresyd* which may have been written around 1600-1610 – see Gwyn Williams, “*Troelus a Chresyd*: A Welsh Tragedy”, in *Person and Persona: Studies in Shakespeare* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1981), pp. 85-113.

¹⁰⁶ Kenneth Muir, “*Troilus and Cressida*”, in *Shakespeare’s Sources: Comedies and Tragedies* (London: Methuen, 1957), pp. 78-96 (p. 81).

¹⁰⁷ G.B. Harrison, “*Troilus and Cressida*”, in *Shakespeare’s Tragedies* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951), pp. 111-30.

¹⁰⁸ Harrison, p. 130.

¹⁰⁹ G. Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire: Interpretations of Shakespearean Tragedy with Three New Essays* (London: 1949), p. 71. George Ian Duthie questioned Wilson’s distinction between “intuitive Trojans” and intelligent Greeks” in “Imaginative Interpretation and *Troilus and Cressida*”, in *Shakespeare* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1951), pp. 88-113.

compression”.¹¹⁰ In the same year that Wilson Knight’s book was first published, George C. Taylor (1930) reviewed recent publications on the play, making the observation that critics and editors “continue to express subjective reactions more freely in regard to *Troilus and Cressida* than any other Shakespearean play”.¹¹¹ The play’s propensity to elicit different “subjective reactions” is one of the reasons that reflecting on critical expectations is so important for considering the play’s relationship to audience expectation. Taylor was especially critical of those who had simply argued, apologetically, that “since the bulk of the material in this play had become *fixed by tradition* Shakespeare found himself compelled to treat it as he did”.¹¹² Taylor thought that the play failed to “preserve that more exact and even balance in regard to the matter which elsewhere [in his earlier comedies] he kept”, but that thankfully this affords “we moderns [...] strong and potent drink”.¹¹³

The play’s apparent excessiveness was more explicitly linked to its gastronomic language in Caroline Spurgeon’s important early study, *Shakespeare’s Imagery and What It Tells Us* (1935).¹¹⁴ Attributing the play’s excessiveness to Shakespeare’s “disillusionment, revulsion and perturbation of nature”, she noticed how *Troilus and Cressida* makes twice as many references to food and cookery than any other play by Shakespeare, closely followed by the language of disease.¹¹⁵ Most of this food, of course, becomes spoiled, with the play often focussing on the “fractions”, “orts”, “fragments, scraps, [...] bits and greasy relics” (*T&C*, 5.2.157-58), rather than on the feast itself. Concerned with what the imagery might tell

¹¹⁰ Hugh Grady, *The Modernist Shakespeare*, p. 75; Knight, *The Wheel of Fire*, p. 71.

¹¹¹ George C. Taylor, “Shakespeare’s Attitude Towards Love and Honor in *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association of America*, 45.3 (1930), 781-86 (p. 781).

¹¹² George C. Taylor, p. 781. Mark van Doren (1939) would later fall foul of both George C. Taylor’s criticisms by remarking that “*Troilus and Cressida* is either Shakespeare’s revenge upon mankind for losing its power to delight him or his revenge upon the theme for refusing to tell him how it should be treated”, *Shakespeare* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2007), p. 173. Hardin Craig also noted how “Shakespeare had no choice, no latitude for manipulation”, *An Interpretation of Shakespeare* (1948), repr. in *New Variorum*, pp. 546-47 (p. 547).

¹¹³ George C. Taylor, p. 786.

¹¹⁴ Caroline Spurgeon, *Shakespeare’s Imagery and What It Tells Us* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935).

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 320. See also Appendix III: Caroline Spurgeon’s “A Pictorial Statement of the Dominant Images in *Hamlet* and *Troilus and Cressida*”.

readers about Shakespeare the author, Spurgeon missed how the language of physical taste in *Troilus and Cressida* is linked to expectations and reactions. Reading Spurgeon and the play, D.A. Traversi (1938) suggested:

Taste is a sense that is at once luxurious, delicate, and transient; also it can be connected, more grossly, with digestion and the functioning of the body. All these things were relevant to Shakespeare's purpose.¹¹⁶

By focussing so intently on the imagery and not reflecting on audience expectations, Spurgeon did not notice how the play seems to foresee the language of taste-as-judgement that critics use to view Shakespeare's work and the play's audiences.¹¹⁷

Besides the language of food and cookery, William Empson (1935) noticed how the language and plots of love and war mixed with each other over the course of the play.¹¹⁸ While Empson refrained from considering the play's language in relation to Shakespeare's artistic project, D.A. Traversi (1939) – self-confessedly influenced by Wilson Knight – sought to explain in an essay how “*Troilus and Cressida* is primarily a dramatic statement of the emotional ambiguity whose resolution was to be the motive of the great tragedies”.¹¹⁹ For Traversi, the lack of order felt by the characters was uniquely matched by the form of the play itself, with both characters and play having a “fundamental uncertainty of purpose”.¹²⁰ W.W. Lawrence, however, thought that the play was not uncertain, but rather displayed authorial detachment, as John Palmer had noted.¹²¹ Reading *Troilus and Cressida* as a problem play, Lawrence (1931) observed that, although the end of the play could be “dramatically [...] weak, psychologically it is strong”.¹²²

¹¹⁶ D.A. Traversi, “The Problem Plays”, in *Approaches to Shakespeare* (London and Glasgow: Paladin Press, 1938), pp. 49-73 (p. 54).

¹¹⁷ Spurgeon's insights are discussed further in Chapter Three.

¹¹⁸ See William Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral: A Study of the Pastoral in Literature* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), pp. 34-42.

¹¹⁹ D.A. Traversi, “*Troilus and Cressida*”, *Scrutiny*, 7 (1939), 301-19 (p. 304).

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 308.

¹²¹ See John Palmer above on p. 57.

¹²² W. W. Lawrence, “*Troilus and Cressida*”, in *The Problem Comedies*, rev. edn. (Harmondsworth and New York: Penguin, 1969), pp. 115-55 (p. 50). See also W.W. Lawrence, “*Troilus, Cressida and Thersites*”, *Modern Language Review*, 37.4 (1942), 422-37. H.B. Charlton found *Troilus and Cressida* “the most baffling problem

Another appreciative book that championed the play was Una Ellis-Fermor's *The Frontiers of Drama* (1945). Writing with the hindsight of the World Wars, her book indicated a new receptiveness to the play which would manifest itself again in later critical works and in post-war theatre:

It is no light matter to suggest that something in any way important to our understanding of the play should have escaped a long succession of commentators. Nor would anyone venture upon doing so today, were it not that our actual experience [...] has thrown fresh light upon the nature and foundations of what we call civilization.¹²³

The two World Wars obviously had a huge influence on the reception of the play, with E.M.W. Tillyard (1943) famously using Ulysses' speech on "Degree" (1.3.83) to open and elaborate his view of "The Elizabethan World Picture", the title of his book.¹²⁴ For Tillyard, the play represented a struggle about ideas and idealism. For Virgil K. Whitaker (1953), the play was "the keystone in the arch of Shakespeare's intellectual development".¹²⁵ *Troilus and Cressida* was being read, then, as "a consciously philosophical play" and "probably the most intellectual of Shakespeare's plays", as S.L. Bethel (1944) put it.¹²⁶ Winifred M.T. Nowottny (1954) and Frank Kermode (1955) argued for the importance of the play's consideration of value in relation to opinion.¹²⁷ These readings were often implicitly linked to the critical

play" in his reading of "The Dark Comedies", in *Shakespearean Comedy* (London: Methuen, 1938), pp. 208-265 (p. 222). Brian Morris argued against the reading of the play being a comedy, saying that the "real reason for considering *Troilus and Cressida* as a Comedy at all seems to be its failure to qualify as a recognizable tragedy", "The Tragic Structure of *Troilus and Cressida*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 10.4 (1959), 481-91.

¹²³ Una Ellis-Fermor, *The Frontiers of Drama*, 2nd edn (London: Methuen, 1964), p. 57. William Walton's post-war opera of *Troilus and Cressida* (1954) with its libretto by Christopher Hassall was ostensibly based on Chaucer's version, but it also emphasised the war story like Shakespeare's play; see the sub-chapter "*Troilus and Cressida*", in Irene Morra, *Twentieth-Century British Authors and the Rise of Opera in Britain* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 54-84, and William Walton, *Troilus and Cressida*, with libretto by Christopher Hassall (London: Oxford University Press, 1954).

¹²⁴ E.M.W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture* (London: Peregrine Books, 1963). See also, E.M.W. Tillyard (1950), *Shakespeare's Problem Plays* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970).

¹²⁵ Virgil K. Whitaker, "*Troilus and Cressida* and *Measure for Measure*", in *Shakespeare's Use of Learning: An Inquiry into the Growth of his Mind and Art* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1953), pp. 194-223 (p. 195).

¹²⁶ S.L. Bethell, *Shakespeare and the Popular Dramatic Tradition* (New York: Octagon Books, 1977), p. 119 and p. 122. I.A. Richards also noted the play's affinities with the philosophy of Plato in I.A. Richards, "*Troilus and Cressida* and Plato", *Hudson Review*, 1 (1948), 362-76 (repr. in I.A. Richards, *Speculative Instruments* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1955)).

¹²⁷ Winifred M.T. Nowottny, "'Opinion' and 'Value' in *Troilus and Cressida*", *Essays in Criticism*, 4.3 (1954), 282-96 and Frank Kermode, "Opinion, Truth and Value", *Essays in Criticism*, 5.2 (1955), 181-87.

expectation, voiced by Alfred Harbage (1947), that the play was “withheld from the general public”.¹²⁸ The intellectual and philosophical were fused in these early twentieth-century readings with the play’s potential to work as a critique of war, especially when the role of Thersites was emphasised. As Theodor Spencer (1942) noted, although “Shakespeare was only giving the members of the audience what they expected” based on previous versions, “they can never before have heard such effectively corrosive railing as this”.¹²⁹ W.H. Auden (1947) commented that “[i]n *Troilus and Cressida* where characters are and remain maniacs and are aware of it, we get the feeling that this is the world, not *a* world”.¹³⁰ As Kenneth Muir suggested in his 1953 lecture on the play, “we may suspect that audiences and critics have been taught by two world wars and by changes in society to see what Shakespeare was trying to do”.¹³¹ *Troilus and Cressida* might be philosophical, but the story could also be grim and disturbing, as these wartime critics could appreciate.

As these critics noticed, Shakespeare contextualises the Trojan War in relation to the disorientating moment and language of war more generally. Placing the language of epic in the context of more modern Elizabethan or even twentieth-century warfare could be disheartening, disrupting preconceptions and expectations of classical heroism and medieval chivalry. Henri Fluchère (1947) appreciated that “[o]ver the two great themes of Love and War situations develop which are the most likely to confuse the reader’s mind”.¹³² L.C. Knights (1951), responding to Fluchère’s comment, noted that

¹²⁸ Alfred Harbage, *As They Liked It: A Study of Shakespeare’s Moral Artistry* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961), p. 164.

¹²⁹ Theodore Spencer, *Shakespeare and The Nature of Man: Lowell Lectures* (New York: Macmillan, 1942), p. 114; see also Theodore Spencer, “A Commentary on *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Studies in English Literature* (Tokyo), 16 (1936), 1-43.

¹³⁰ W.H. Auden, “*Troilus and Cressida*”, in *Lectures on Shakespeare*, reconstructed and ed. Arthur Kirsch (London: Faber, 2000), pp. 166-80 (p. 179).

¹³¹ Kenneth Muir, “*Troilus and Cressida*”, *Shakespeare Survey*, 8 (1955), 28-39 (p. 28).

¹³² Henri Fluchère, *Shakespeare*, trans. Guy Hamilton (London: Longman, 1953), p. 211; his book was largely based on his Aix-en-Provence lectures given during the Nazi occupation, so it is perhaps not surprising that he ended his section on *Troilus and Cressida* by remarking that the play “is the product of a mind which has constantly drawn further away from the peaceful solutions which his age offered him at the outset of his career, and which with growing experience came to be filled with a settled uneasiness”, p. 216.

[t]he material that Shakespeare chose to work on was public property. His audience, he knew, would have preconceived notions about Agamemnon, Ulysses, Helen and the rest. And he weaves these preconceptions into the texture of the play by the simple device of now appearing to endorse them, now turning them upside down. We are rarely quite sure about the judgement we are required to make.¹³³

Knights echoes earlier nineteenth-century critics such as Hazlitt in noticing the way that the play seems to renege on any expected promise concerning the play's direction or mission: critics have been unsure as to what they are "required" to think, what they are meant to expect from the play. The question of what an audience is (or was) to make of the play has led to wildly divergent answers. One thing that post-war critics seem to have been implicitly sure about, however, was that *Troilus and Cressida* played with, and challenged, expectations about epic military grandeur and medieval chivalry.¹³⁴ This critical reception suggests that the play also holds the potential to challenge several conventional expectations of how Shakespeare is to be considered as an author and dramatist.

III.iv. Section Summary in Terms of the Thesis

Impressions about the play from critics in the first part of the twentieth century have been more formative for later readings than many recent critics readily admit. Because there was *relatively* little written about the play until the end of the Second World War, much of what was published seems to have been read by many other later commentators. After noticing the play's differences from Shakespeare's other plays, critics moved on to explain the play's

¹³³ L.C. Knights, "Troilus and Cressida Again", *Scrutiny*, 18 (1951), 144-57 (p. 154); see also, L.C. Knights, "The Theme of Appearance and Reality in *Troilus and Cressida*", in *Some Shakespearean Themes* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1959), pp. 65-83. M.C. Bradbrook was also keen to show Shakespeare as a playwright "refashioning this story" in her essay "What Shakespeare Did to Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 9.3 (1958), 311-19 (p. 312).

¹³⁴ Useful essays and books around this time that noted the way the play raises more general questions to do with judgement and ideas also include: Wilbur D. Dunkel, "Shakespeare's Troilus", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 2.4 (1951), 331-34; Ifor Evans (1952), *The Language of Shakespeare's Plays*, 3rd edn (London: Methuen, 1964); M.D.H. Parker, *The Slave of Life: A Study of Shakespeare and the Idea of Justice* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1955); William R. Bowden, "The Human Shakespeare and *Troilus and Cressida*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 8.2 (1957), 167-177; A.S. Knowland, "Troilus and Cressida", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 10.3 (1959), 353-65; and, Richard C. Harrier (1959), "Troilus Divided", in *Studies in the English Renaissance Drama*, ed. Josephine W. Bennet, Oscar Cargill and Vernon Hall Jr. (London: Peter Owen and Vision Press, 1961), pp. 142-56.

distinctiveness in terms of the play's source material, its ironic detachment, Shakespeare's outlook at the moment of writing, the play's literary and theatrical context, and its intended audience. The play had received its critical inheritance: the label "problem play". Although many of these issues are still open to debate, these readings certainly laid the groundwork for readings of the play and set the terms of academic enquiry. After the Second World War, with a greater frequency of different theatre productions and a splintering of critical approaches in the academy, the critical reception of the play seems to have fragmented to a certain extent. Nevertheless, these early twentieth-century readings continue to set up expectations for later critics, leaving several highly influential perspectives on the play: many of these views on the play have contributed to wider debates about Shakespeare's work in relation to its audience, as discussed in later chapters.

IV. 1960 to the present: "a dazzling variety of response"

"More than any other play by Shakespeare,
Troilus and Cressida is the discovery of the twentieth century"

– Anne Barton (1974)¹³⁵

Due to the greater frequency of writing on the play after 1960, the second half of this chapter will examine the recent criticism according to methodological themes. It will briefly consider critical methodologies individually, although in practice these topics overlap as critics use hybrid approaches or move from one approach to another.

IV.i. Bibliography

"It is the maddening uncertainty of the textual situation
that raises the latent detective in the soul of the editor,
rather than a perception of earth-shaking difference"

¹³⁵ Anne Barton, "Introduction to *Troilus and Cressida*", in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans with J. J. M. Tobin, 2nd edn (Boston, MA, and New York: Mifflin, 1997), pp. 477-81 (p. 477).

“*Troilus and Cressida* is a play of puzzles, in respect of its textual history no less than its interpretation, and any attempt to solve them cannot be other than speculative”, wrote the celebrated bibliographer W.W. Greg in 1955.¹³⁷ After Greg’s work, Robert Kimbrough (1962) even expressed the desire to “absolve” himself for “re-examining the basic bibliographical facts of the play”.¹³⁸ However, Kimbrough’s ideas have been taken up by some more recent editors. His bibliographical essay on the play aimed to

dispel three widely-held misconceptions: that the play failed or was not played publically, that one of the Inns of Court commissioned the play, and that the editors of the First Folio were aesthetically uncertain concerning its place in the work.¹³⁹

Kimbrough’s input was a useful corrective to those who simply followed the quarto epistle to think that the play was supposed to be “a piece of smart cynicism for the sophisticated”.¹⁴⁰

W.R. Elton (1972), however, still echoed Peter Alexander by arguing for a performance at one of the Inns of Court, although Elton also tried to argue (ultimately conjecturally) that the quarto was based on a private manuscript belonging to a member of one of the Inns of Court.¹⁴¹

Gary Taylor (1982) initially agreed with Elton that the play must have been performed at the Inns, arguing that the 1609 quarto was based on foul papers closely

¹³⁶ Dawson (ed.), p. 252.

¹³⁷ W.W. Greg, *The Shakespeare First Folio: Its Bibliographical and Textual History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), pp. 338-50 (p. 139).

¹³⁸ Robert Kimbrough, “The Origins of *Troilus and Cressida*: Stage, Quarto and Folio”, *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 77.3 (1962), 194-99 (p. 194).

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 194. Nevill Coghill, *Shakespeare’s Professional Skills* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1964) argued that the play must have been performed at the Globe, before being revised with the added satirical prologue and epilogue for a 1608 Inns of Court performance. Though his argument has not convinced editors, it has highlighted the supplementary nature of prologues and epilogues. J.M. Nosworthy argued that Shakespeare revised what he had intended to be a tragedy into a satirical comedy for the Inns of Court, “*Troilus and Cressida*: The Multiplicity of Problems”, in *Shakespeare’s Occasional Plays: Their Origin and Transmission* (London: Arnold, 1965), pp. 54-85. E.A.J. Honigsmann provided a detailed evaluation of Alice Walker’s editorial decisions concerning Shakespearean revision in “*Troilus and Cressida*”, in *The Stability of Shakespeare’s Text* (London: Arnold, 1965), pp. 78-95.

¹⁴⁰ Martin Holmes, *Shakespeare’s Public: The Touchstone of His Genius* (London: Murray, 1960), p. 141; for Holmes on *Troilus and Cressida*, see esp. pp. 135-42.

¹⁴¹ W.R. Elton, “Textual Transmission and Genre of Shakespeare’s *Troilus*”, in *Literatur als Kritik des Lebens*, ed. Rudolf Haas, Heinz-Joachim Mühlenbrock and Claus Uhlig (Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1975), pp. 63-82; available at <<http://phoenixandturtle.net/excerptmill/elton.htm>> [accessed 14 November 2009].

associated with a performance at the Inns of Court, and the folio based on revisions made under authorial supervision of a copy of a prompt book made for productions at the Globe.¹⁴²

Taylor altered the traditional bibliographical consensus which, as Anthony Dawson explains, had been to see the quarto “derived from a scribal or authorial fair copy, perhaps specially prepared for a patron [e.g. at the Inns], and F from foul papers which, however, had undergone some amendment”.¹⁴³ Nonetheless, although Taylor did not change his decision on the provenance of the quarto and folio, by the time the co-edited play for the *Oxford Shakespeare* (1987) was published, the Inns theory was not advocated: the editors remark that

[t]here has always been something unsatisfactory about the hypothesis that *Troilus* was written specifically for an Inns of Court audience [...]; entertainments at the Inns of Court generally reveal no predilection for arcane learning or exotic subject matter.¹⁴⁴

Phebe Jensen (1995) argued forcefully that the Oxford edition had been unfair in its editorial decisions concerning *Troilus and Cressida*.¹⁴⁵ For example, she argued that by putting

Pandarus’s epilogue in an appendix and labelling it a “first thought”, the Oxford edition had created a genre hierarchy and that its “interpretive agenda [was] an attempt to limit the importance of the comic and satiric” features in order to foreground the tragic elements.¹⁴⁶

Jensen suggested that Taylor’s approach was an attempt to clear up the “generic clashes”, the flouting of generic expectations, which are in fact “absolutely fitting for a play that explores thematically the instability of so many principles”.¹⁴⁷ For Jensen, then, the editor’s role is not to iron out the artistic creases because the aesthetic principle of the play is “not [to] allow its

¹⁴² Gary Taylor, “*Troilus and Cressida*: Bibliography, Performance and Interpretation”, *Shakespeare Studies*, 15 (1982), 99-136. John Kerrigan (1987) briefly discusses *Troilus and Cressida* in relation to “Shakespeare as Reviser”, in *On Shakespeare and Early Modern Literature: Essays* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 3-22.

¹⁴³ Dawson (ed.), p. 238.

¹⁴⁴ Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor with John Howett and William Montgomery, *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 438.

¹⁴⁵ Phebe Jensen, “The Textual Politics of *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 46.4 (1995), 414-23.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 420.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 422.

audience to be comfortable, generically or in any other way”.¹⁴⁸ The idea that the play deliberately seeks to make the audience uncomfortable is important for considering the play’s negotiations with audience expectation.

Besides W.L. Godshalk’s (1995) survey essay “The Texts of *Troilus and Cressida*”, bibliographical studies over the last couple of decades have tended to use the bibliographical information to address issues such as the book trade, publishing practices, and the way the published quarto promoted itself as a literary object.¹⁴⁹ Editors for the recent Arden and New Cambridge editions, for example, have chosen folio and quarto respectively as the control text, while admitting that both texts have their own strengths and that, as Dawson states, “the differences between the texts we are considering are fairly negligible”.¹⁵⁰ Nonetheless, bibliographical studies have proven how editions matter when it comes to setting up readers’

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 422.

¹⁴⁹ W.L. Godshalk, “The Texts of *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 1.2 (1995) 2.1-54; available at <<http://purl.oclc.org/emls/01-2/godsshak.html>> [accessed 10 May 2011]. These topics will be addressed in Chapter Four. See, for example, Richard Dutton, “The Birth of the Author”, in *Texts and Cultural Change in Early Modern England*, ed. Cedric C. Brown and Arthur F. Marotti (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan Press, 1997), pp. 153-178; Lukas Erne, *Shakespeare and the Book Trade* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), esp. pp. 104-6, 125-8, and Lukas Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, 2nd edn (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), esp. pp. 128-30; Leslie A. Fiedler, “Shakespeare’s Commodity-Comedy: A Meditation on the Preface to the 1609 Quarto of *Troilus and Cressida*”, in *Shakespeare’s “Rough Magic”: Renaissance Essays in Honor of C.L. Barber*, ed. Peter Erickson and Coppélia Kahn (Newark, NJ: University of Delaware Press, 1985), pp. 50-60; Johann Gregory, “Shakespeare’s “sugred Sonnets”, *Troilus and Cressida* and the *Odcombian Banquet*: An exploration of promising paratexts, expectations and matters of taste”, *Shakespeare*, 6.2 (2010), 185-208; G.K. Hunter, “Appendix. Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*”, in *English Drama, 1586-1642: The Age of Shakespeare* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 355-58; John Jowett, “The Material Book”, in *Shakespeare and Text: Oxford Shakespeare Topics* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 46-68; Jeffrey Kahan, “The Title Page of *Troilus* Q1b: A New Reading”, *American Notes and Queries* 14.1 (2001), 10-11; Zachary Lesser, *Renaissance Drama and the Politics of Publication: Readings in the English Book Trade* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); John Pendergast, ““Comedies for Commodities”: Genre and Early Modern Dramatic Epistles”, *English Literary Renaissance*, 38.3 (2008), 483-505; and, Roger Stritmatter, “The Tortured Signifier: Satire, Censorship, and the Textual History of *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Critical Survey*, 21.2 (2009), 60-82.

¹⁵⁰ Dawson, (ed.), p. 251; Dawson argues that the quarto “overall boasts more ‘superior’ readings”, Dawson (ed.), p. 251. See also David Bevington (ed.), *Troilus and Cressida: Arden Shakespeare*, 3rd edn (London: Thomas Nelson, 1998) and David Bevington, “Working with the Text: Editing in Practice”, in *A Concise Companion to Shakespeare and the Text*, ed. Andrew Murphy (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 165-84. The *Folger Shakespeare* (2007) and the *RSC Shakespeare* (2007) editions have also used quarto and folio respectively – although the RSC admits that their choice of the folio was due to their corpus-wide “editorial policy” of favouring the folio; see Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen, “About the text”, in *Troilus and Cressida: The RSC Shakespeare*, ed. Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (New York: Modern Library, 2010), pp. xxii-xxvii (p. xxiii), and Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine, “An Introduction to This Text”, in *Troilus and Cressida: Folger Shakespeare Library*, ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine (New York and London: Washington Square Press, 2007), li-lxv.

expectations. Dawson argues in his discussion of bibliographical readings of the epistle, that “[a]ll evidence is in some way staged; i.e. it only becomes evidence when it is made part of an argument or interpretation”.¹⁵¹ Despite various attempts, there is not sufficient evidence to argue conclusively, for example, that the quarto is based on a private performance and the folio on a public one. Although it is evident that the folio is partly based on the quarto, it is ultimately not clear that the folio text marks an authorial revision of the quarto.¹⁵² With *Troilus and Cressida*, a particular audience cannot be pinned down by linking a particular published text to a theatre performance – although the first quarto publication obviously appeals to, and frames, a distinguished readership.

IV.ii. Sources and Intertexts

“While the matter of *Troilus and Cressida* was old and popular,
the manner was new and fashionable”

– Robert Kimbrough (1964)¹⁵³

Troilus and Cressida seems to respond to a wealth of sources and a rich literary and theatrical tradition. The play’s use of sources is particularly important because it suggests how the play might be engaging for an Elizabethan audience, playing with their expectations. These broader expectations would have been established from earlier plays, cultural references, and, for readers, from their own knowledge of the literary traditions. R.A. Foakes (1963) commented:

I think that the complex of national sentiment about Troy, and the common knowledge of the outcome of the war, affected the way Shakespeare wrote it. He could assume this sentiment and knowledge in his audience, and could expect them to complete what remains incomplete in his play. This extra knowledge no doubt

¹⁵¹ Anthony B. Dawson, “Staging Evidence”, *From Script to Stage in Early Modern England: Redefining British Theatre History*, ed. Peter Holland and Stephen Orgel (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 89-108 (p. 104).

¹⁵² See Dawson (ed.), pp. 250-52.

¹⁵³ Robert Kimbrough, *Shakespeare’s “Troilus and Cressida” and its Setting* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), p. 24.

affected reaction to the play at first, and our extra knowledge affects our critical attitude to the play.¹⁵⁴

Besides this “sentiment” for Troy, studies suggest that the Trojan story was also remarkably popular, Marjorie Garber (2004) commenting that “Troilus and Cressida were for Shakespeare’s audience as much a cliché as Romeo and Juliet are for the present day”.¹⁵⁵ Still, an Elizabethan audience’s expectations concerning sources, and modern popular or scholarly expectations, are bound to have different nuances. To judge how an Elizabethan audience might react to Shakespeare’s play or how an audience could be expected to react by those producing the play, it is therefore important to consider other contemporaneous texts as well.¹⁵⁶ Shakespeare’s *other* plays and poems have much to say about the traditions of Troy which have also offered critics clues.

Robert Kimbrough’s *Troilus and Cressida and its Setting* (1964) attempted an “aesthetic and historical examination” of the play.¹⁵⁷ Ann Thompson (1978) and E. Talbot Donaldson (1985) provided monographs on Shakespeare’s Chaucer, both including chapters on the play and emphasising Shakespeare’s use of the medieval poet.¹⁵⁸ Others have read the

¹⁵⁴ R.A. Foakes, “*Troilus and Cressida* Reconsidered”, *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 32.1 (1963), 142-54 (p. 152).

¹⁵⁵ Marjorie Garber, “*Troilus and Cressida*”, in *Shakespeare After All* (New York: Random House, 2004), pp. 536-62 (p. 540); Garber’s comment may be valid, but the Trojan couple are obviously clichéd in a different fashion. On the awareness of the early modern audience in relation to the play, see Bertrand Evans, “When Degree is Shak’d: *All’s Well* and *Troilus and Cressida*”, in *Shakespeare’s Comedies* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 144-85; John Bayley, “Longing and Homesickness: *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Shakespeare and Tragedy* (London, Boston, and Henley-on-Thames: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), pp. 96-117; and David Margolies, “*Troilus and Cressida*”, in *Shakespeare’s Irrational Endings: The Problem Plays* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 112-37.

¹⁵⁶ John W. Velz notes an early allusion to *Troilus and Cressida* in *Thomas Cromwell* entered in the Stationers’ Register on 11 August 1602; Velz’s suggestion that this allusion “has the ring of a topical reference” supports the argument that “*Troilus* was in the public repertory of the Lord Chamberlain’s Men as early as 1602”, “An Early Allusion to *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Notes and Queries*, 33.3 (1986), 358-60 (p. 359).

¹⁵⁷ Robert Kimbrough, p. 2; for a discussion of theatrical and literary sources, see especially pp. 10-46. See also Robert Kimbrough, “The *Troilus* Log: Shakespeare and ‘Box-Office’”, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 15.3 (1964), 201-09 and Robert Kimbrough, “The Problem of Thersites” *Modern Language Review*, 59.2 (1964), 173-76.

¹⁵⁸ E. Talbot Donaldson, *The Swan at the Well: Shakespeare Reading Chaucer* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1985); Ann Thompson, *Shakespeare’s Chaucer: A Study in Literary Origins* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1978); see also Ann Thompson, “The Characters of Oblivion: Shakespeare Deconstructs Troy” in *Shakespeare: Troilus and Cressida, Acts du Colloque, 9-10 novembre 1990, C.E.R.A.N.* (Lyon: Université Lumière Lyon 2, 1990), pp. 89-104. On Shakespeare, Chaucer and other medieval poets, see also Ruth Julia Briggs, “‘Chaucer...the Story Gives’: *Troilus and Cressida* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*”, in *Shakespeare and the Middle Ages: Essays on the Performance and Adaptation of the Plays with Medieval*

play in relation to sources and Shakespeare's other works such as *King Lear*, *Romeo and Juliet*, the *Sonnets* and *Venus and Adonis*.¹⁵⁹ There have also been a number of source studies especially concerning the classical allusions in the play, while Colin Burrow (2004) explored the use of the Trojan story in humanist education.¹⁶⁰ These studies emphasise the rich literary heritage in which Shakespeare was working when he chose to write *Troilus and Cressida*. Geoffrey Bullough (1966) provided a general guide to Shakespeare's sources in relation to the play in *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, followed by Kenneth Muir's

Sources or Setting, ed. Martha W. Driver and Sid Ray (Jefferson, NC, and London: McFarland & Company, 2009), pp. 161-177; Helen Cooper, "Shakespeare's Chaucer" in *Shakespeare and the Medieval World* (London: Methuen Drama, 2010), pp. 204-34; Frederick D. Dyer, "The Destruction of Pandare", in *Shakespeare Encomium, 1564-1964*, ed. Anne Palucci (New York: The City College, 1964), pp. 123-33; Dorrit Einerssen, "Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*: Tragedy, Comedy, Satire, History or Problem Play?", *Charting Shakespearean Waters: Text and History*, ed. Niels Bugge Handen and Søs Hausgaard (=Angles on the English-Speaking World, 5 (2005)), 45-71; David McInnis, "Repetition and Revision in Shakespeare's Tragic Love Plays" *Parergon*, 25.2 (2008), 33-56; and Barry Windeatt, "Imitations and Allusions, c.1385-1700", in *Troilus and Criseyde: Oxford Guides to Chaucer* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 360-82.

¹⁵⁹ For example, on the play and *King Lear*, see Rosalie L. Colie, *Shakespeare's Living Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974); with *Romeo and Juliet*, see Barbara Heliodora C. de M.F. de Almeida, "Troilus and Cressida: Romantic Love Revisited", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 15.4 (1964), 422-37 and David M. Jago, "The Uniqueness of *Troilus and Cressida*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 29.1 (1978), 20-27; with the *Sonnets*, see Katherine Duncan-Jones, *Ungentle Shakespeare: Scenes from His Life* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2001), and Helen Hennessee Vendler, "Shakespeare's Other Sonnets", in *In the Company of Shakespeare: Essays on English Renaissance in Honor of G. Blakemore Evans*, ed. Thomas Moisan and Douglas Bruster (Cranbury, NJ and London: Rosemont Press, 2002), pp. 161-74; and with *Venus and Adonis*, see John Arthos, "Troilus and Cressida", *The Art of Shakespeare* (London: Bowes & Bowes, 1964), pp. 116-32. For an essay on the play in relation to Dryden's version, see W.W. Bernhardt, "Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* and Dryden's *Truth Found Too Late*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 20.2 (1969), 129-41.

¹⁶⁰ Colin Burrow, "Shakespeare and Humanistic Culture", in *Shakespeare and the Classics*, ed. Charles Martindale and Tony B. Taylor (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 9-32. See also, Colin Burrow, "Introduction", in *Troilus and Cressida*, ed. R.A. Foakes, rev. Colin Burrow (London and New York: Penguin, 2006), pp. xxi-lxiii. On the play in relation to classical precedents, see Reuben A. Brower, "The Pensive Man: *Troilus and Cressida*", in *Hero & Saint: Shakespeare and the Graeco-Roman Heroic Tradition* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 239-76; Agostino Lombardo, "Fragments and Scraps: Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*", in *The European Tragedy of Troilus*, ed. Piero Boitani (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 199-217; Jill Mann, "Shakespeare and Chaucer: 'What is Criseyde Worth?'" *Cambridge Quarterly*, 18.2 (1989), 109-28 (also publ. in Piero Boitani (ed.), *The European Tragedy of Troilus* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 219-42); Charles Martindale and Michele Martindale, "Shakespeare's Troy", in *Shakespeare and the Uses of Antiquity: An Introductory Essay* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 91-120; Theodor Meron, "The Homeric Was Through Shakespeare", in *Bloody Constraint: War and Chivalry in Shakespeare* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 63-96; A.D. Nuttall, "Action at a distance: Shakespeare and the Greeks", in *Shakespeare and the Classics*, ed. Charles Martindale and A.B. Taylor (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 209-22; and John L. Penwill, "Shakespeare's *Iliad*: Homeric Themes in *Troilus and Cressida*", *Iris: Journal of the Classical Association of Victoria*, 19 (2006), 37-53. J.L. Simmons argues that the play shows Shakespeare must have been familiar with Pliny's *Natural History* as translated by Philemon Holland, "Holland's Pliny and *Troilus and Cressida*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 27.3 (1976), 329-32.

revised book, *The Sources of Shakespeare's Plays* (1977).¹⁶¹ Bullough also explored the remains of a “‘plot’ or prompter’s and call-boy’s outline” belonging to the Admiral’s Men that “clearly belongs to a *Troilus and Cressida* play”.¹⁶² Jonathan Bate (2008) argued that Shakespeare’s play must respond to this version; however, even if the play is responding to the *Troilus and Cressida* play of the Admiral’s Men, it is very likely that Shakespeare was not *just* responding to the rival company’s play, as the studies of critics who consider his other sources make clear.¹⁶³

Bate (1993) also explored how a precedent for Shakespeare’s treatment of Ajax and Ulysses could have been found Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*.¹⁶⁴ Shakespeare’s play rarely contains very close verbal parallels with his sources, but there are several possible allusions and plot devices.¹⁶⁵ The consensus of those critics concerned with sources seems to be that, besides Ovid, Shakespeare certainly used Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*, Homer’s *Iliad* (particularly the seven books that George Chapman translated and published in 1598), and William Caxton’s *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye* – significantly the first English language book ever printed. Other books he consulted may include, for example, John Lydgate’s *The Troy Book* (publ. 1513), Robert Henryson’s *Testament of Cresseid* (publ. 1532) which was published as a sixth book to Chaucer’s poem in Elizabethan publications, and Robert Greene’s *Euphues his Censure to Philautus* (1587), among others.¹⁶⁶ Although not all of

¹⁶¹ Geoffrey Bullough, “*Troilus and Cressida*: Introduction”, in *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, ed. Geoffrey Bullough, 6 vols (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; New York: Columbia University Press, 1957-75), VI (1966), 83-111; Kenneth Muir, “*Troilus and Cressida*”, in *The Sources of Shakespeare's Plays* (London and New York: Methuen, 1977), pp. 141-57.

¹⁶² Geoffrey Bullough, “The Lost *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Essays and Studies*, n.s., 17 (1964), 24-40 (p. 25).

¹⁶³ See Jonathan Bate, *The Genius of Shakespeare*, with 2008 afterword (London, Basingstoke and Oxford: Picador, 2008), p. 345, quoted in the thesis Introduction, p. 8.

¹⁶⁴ Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), esp. pp. 109-11.

¹⁶⁵ Barry Windeatt, for example, comments that the “relation to Chaucer’s poem of Shakespeare’s play *Troilus and Cressida* is altogether more elusive, and close verbal parallels between the two texts are hard to find”, *Troilus and Criseyde: Oxford Guides to Chaucer*, p. 377.

¹⁶⁶ John Lydgate’s *Troy Book* was first published as *The Hystorye, Sege and Dystruccyon of Troye* (London, 1513), although manuscripts circulated before this time; Robert Henryson, *The Testament of Cresseid*, in Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Workes of Geffray Chaucer* (London, 1532), Fol. ccxix-ccxx (pp. 457-65); Robert Greene, *Euphues his Censure to Philautus* (London, 1587). See Alexandra Gillespie, *Print Culture and the*

Shakespeare's audience would have read all of these sources, many, if not most, of the audience would have been aware of this literary tradition, and this awareness must have affected audience expectations.

There has also been a strong tradition of reading Shakespeare's sources in relation to his use of satire in the play, the overall consensus being that, in contrast to Campbell's thesis, the play is satirical rather than strictly being a generic satire.¹⁶⁷ Following Campbell's work, however, critics have explored the way that Shakespeare seems to have been influenced by the fashionable comic satire of his contemporaries, especially Ben Jonson and John Marston, and perhaps devised the play partly as a reaction to the highly ostentatious language of George Chapman's *Iliad* translation.¹⁶⁸ Alice Lotvin Birney (1973) reads the play as "risking dramatic form, propriety and success for the sake of its intellectual, socially critical content", while Camille Slights (1974) argues that Shakespeare developed a "tragic satire" in the process of "experimenting with new ways to shape his audience's reactions".¹⁶⁹ The reading of biographical allusions to other authors proved unfashionable in the wake of works such as Roland Barthes' "The Death of the Author" (1967).¹⁷⁰ However, responding to an interest in fictions of authorship and authorial self-presentation, critics such as James P. Bednarz (2001)

Medieval Author: Chaucer, Lydgate, and Their Books, 1473-1557 (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006). A short summary of Shakespeare's sources can be found in Dawson (ed.), pp. 253-61.

¹⁶⁷ See, for example, Bruce Bohrer, "The Privy and Its Double: Scatology and Satire in Shakespeare's Theatre" in *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works, Volume IV: The Poems, Problem Comedies, Late Plays*, ed. Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 69-88; R.A. Foakes, *Shakespeare: the Dark Comedies to the Last Plays: From Satire to Celebration* (London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971); Mark Sacharoff, "The Traditions of the Troy-Story Heroes and the Problem of Satire in *Troilus and Cressida*", *Shakespeare Studies*, 6 (1970 [1972]), 125-35; Mark Sacharoff, "Tragic vs. Satiric: Hector's Conduct in II, ii of Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*", *Studies in Philology*, 67.4 (1970), 517-31; Peter Ure, *Shakespeare: The Problem Plays*, rev. edn (London: Longmans, 1964) and Peter Ure, "*Troilus and Cressida*, II.ii. 162-93", *Review of English Studies*, n.s., 17.4 (1966), 405-09. For a reading of the play in relation to a Menippean satirical tradition, see Edward J. Milowicki, and Robert Rawdon Wilson, "A Measure of Menippean Discourse: The Example of Shakespeare", *Poetics Today*, 23.2 (2002), 291-326.

¹⁶⁸ On Chapman and Shakespeare, see Richard S. Ide, *Possessed With Greatness: The Heroic Tragedies of Shakespeare and Chapman* (Chapel Hill, NC: North Carolina Press; London: Scholar Press, 1980).

¹⁶⁹ Alice Lotvin Birney, "Thersites and Infectious Satire", *Satiric Catharsis in Shakespeare: A Theory of Dramatic Structure* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, CA, and London: University of California Press, 1973), pp. 99-121 (p. 120); Camille Slights, "The Parallel Structure of *Troilus and Cressida*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 25.1 (1974), 42-51 (p. 50).

¹⁷⁰ Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author", in *The Book History Reader*, ed. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, 2nd edn (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 277-280.

have shown a new interest in the “War of the Theatres”, this time reading the satire of the plays as more of a “Poetomachia”, a Poets’ War.¹⁷¹ Although modern critics are more sceptical about some of the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century readings of allusions in the plays to other poets, the description of Ajax by Cressida’s servant Alexander is still often thought to satirise Jonson.¹⁷² This thesis considers the play in relation to the expectations set up by this “Poetomachia” especially because the plays in this war were often explicitly engaging with questions of classical and medieval reception, frequently in terms of authorship and audience taste.

Like the seventeenth and eighteenth-century readers of Shakespeare, a number of modern critics have read the play and its sources in the context of Shakespeare’s artistry. William W. Main (1961) argued that Shakespeare used character amalgams rather than stereotypes: for Main, it is through “these amalgamated characters [that] our expectations are frustrated”.¹⁷³ Howard Felperin (1972) argued that in relation to its sources, *Troilus and Cressida* is “ambivalent toward romance, not scornful of it”.¹⁷⁴ Jill L. Levenson (1976) read the play in relation to tapestries and wall hangings, arguing that despite the familiar subject

¹⁷¹ “Poetomachia”, literally a poet battle, is Thomas Dekker’s term for the dispute mentioned in the preface to his play, *Satiromastix; or The Untrussing of the Humorous Poet* (London, 1602), A3^v. On *Troilus and Cressida* and the Poets’ War, see, for example, James P. Bednarz, *Shakespeare & the Poets’ War* (New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2001); Lisa Hopkins, “Harrington, *Troilus and Cressida*, and the Poets’ War”, in *Italian Culture in the Drama of Shakespeare & his Contemporaries: Rewriting, Remaking, Refashioning*, ed. Michele Marrapodi (Aldershot and Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 127–40; David Farley-Hills, “Portrait of the Iron Age: *Troilus and Cressida*”, in *Shakespeare and the Rival Playwrights, 1600–1606* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 41–71; Johann Gregory, “The ‘author’s drift’ in Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*: A Poetics of Reflection”, in *Medieval and Early Modern Authorship: Swiss Papers in English Language and Literature*, 25, ed. Guillemette Bolens and Lukas Erne (Tübingen: Narr, 2011), pp. 93–106; Russ McDonald, *Shakespeare & Jonson: Jonson & Shakespeare* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press; Brighton: Harvester Press, 1988), pp. 56–96; and Paul Yachnin, “Shakespeare’s Problem Plays and the Drama of His Time: *Troilus and Cressida*, *All’s Well That Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure*”, in *A Companion to Shakespeare’s Works, Volume IV: The Poems, Problem Comedies, Late Plays*, ed. Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 46–68.

¹⁷² See Bevington (ed.), *Troilus and Cressida*, pp. 9–10.

¹⁷³ William W. Main, “Character Amalgams in Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Studies in Philology*, 58.2 (part 1) (1961), 170–78 (p. 178).

¹⁷⁴ Howard Felperin, “The Problem Plays”, *Shakespearean Romance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), pp. 71–96 (p. 77).

matter, “*Troilus and Cressida* disorients its audience from the start”.¹⁷⁵ R.J. Kaufman (1965) proposed that in “its analytic brilliance we follow [*Troilus and Cressida*] as if we were writing the play with Shakespeare”, while Richard Fly (1976) thought that “[w]hat is strikingly unique about *Troilus* is the degree to which Shakespeare comprehends and dramatizes the artist’s inescapable condition as mediator”.¹⁷⁶ Likewise, Mihoko Suzuki (1987) commented that “the dizzying interplay of subtexts bespeaks Shakespeare’s predicament of writing in a tradition that is already overcrowded and over determined”.¹⁷⁷ These approaches, which have seen Shakespeare not as someone merely mining his medieval or classical sources, have noticed how the play reshapes and engages with these source texts: it invites the audience to rethink the ways in which the sources have been received previously. The idea of Shakespeare as a mediator has been taken up by a number of critics, including the new historicist and feminist critics discussed below. Whether consciously or not, these studies of *Troilus and Cressida* begin to shed light on Shakespeare as a writer who engages with possible audience expectations, an author meddling with his source matter.

IV.iii. Philosophy and the Human Condition

“You have both said well,
And on the cause and question now in hand
Have glossed, but superficially – not much
Unlike young men whom Aristotle thought
Unfit to hear moral philosophy”

¹⁷⁵ Jill L. Levenson, “Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* and the Monumental Tradition in Tapestries and Literature”, *Renaissance Drama*, n.s., 7 (1976), 43-84 (p. 79). For a reading of *Troilus and Cressida* as a Mannerist play, see Jean-Pierre Maquerlot, “When playing is foiling: *Troilus and Cressida*”, in *Shakespeare and the Mannerist Tradition: Five Problem Plays* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 118-45.

¹⁷⁶ R.J. Kaufmann, “Ceremonies for Chaos: The Status of *Troilus and Cressida*”, *English Literary History*, 32.2 (1965), 139-59 (p. 159); Richard Fly, “Monumental Mockery: *Troilus and Cressida* and the Perversities of Medium”, in *Shakespeare’s Mediated World* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1976), pp. 27-51. See also Barbara Everett, “The Inaction of *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Essays in Criticism*, 32.2 (1982), 119-39, who comments that “the ‘strangeness in the play is all the more remarkable in that it uses the materials of two of the greatest stories known to the writer and his contemporaries’ (p. 119). In this context of authorial pressure, see also Michael Scovmand, “*Troilus and Cressida*: A Dialogic Reading”, *Charting Shakespearean Waters: Text and History*, ed. Niels Bugge Handen and Søs Hausgaard (= *Angles on the English-Speaking World*, 5 (2005)), 57-71.

¹⁷⁷ Mihoko Suzuki, “‘Truth tired with iteration’: Myth and Fiction in Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Philological Quarterly*, 66.2 (1987), 153-74 (p. 153).

Shakespeare did not simply play with expectations of plot and character. *Troilus and Cressida* also engages with philosophical ideas and, as countless critics have commented, on the human condition itself. The manner in which the play engages with intellectualism often confused earlier critics: as Chapter Three argues, *Troilus and Cressida* refuses to let this engagement with intellectual matter be purely cerebral. A.D. Nuttall (2007) writes that “in this play Shakespeare is more intellectual, more technically philosophical in the full meaning of the word, than in any other”.¹⁷⁸ Nevertheless, the Hamlet-like intellectual quality of the play is qualified by a resignation or refutation of intellectualism as well, as if overthinking brings its own physical sickness. David Hillman (2008) goes so far as to say that the play “is sceptical about the value of literature, sceptical about the value of philosophy, sceptical therefore about the value of the human as such”.¹⁷⁹ John J. Enck (1962) comments that, in its design, the play is “deliberately inhuman”.¹⁸⁰ Nuttall goes on to suggest that despite this intellectualism, “[a]t the same time he presents such exaggerated mental activity as a pathology, a kind of illness” – this especially seems to be the case when it comes to expressing ideas rhetorically.¹⁸¹ Because *Troilus and Cressida* is both deeply intellectual and seemingly anti-intellectual, the play has prompted diverse reactions regarding what expectations it might be constructing in relation to thinking and the human condition. This in turn affects the critical expectations concerning genre and audience that have been brought to bear on the play.

¹⁷⁸ A.D. Nuttall, “Stoics and Sceptics”, in *Shakespeare the Thinker* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 171-220 (p. 207).

¹⁷⁹ David Hillman, “The Worst Case of Knowing the Other? Stanley Cavell and *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Philosophy and Literature*, 32.1 (2008), 1-13 (p. 13).

¹⁸⁰ John J. Enck, “The Peace of the Poetomachia”, *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 77.4 (1962), 386-96 (p. 395).

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 207. Critics’ focus on the language of the play will be discussed below.

A number of critics have read the play in terms of Shakespeare's reliance on philosophical principles, including, of course, those of Aristotle who is mentioned in the play.¹⁸² Another possible philosopher mentioned is the "strange fellow" (3.3.95) that Ulysses reads to Achilles: the reference to this "author[]" (3.3.113) has sent critics on a wild goose chase for the thinker, whether Cicero, Plato, Montaigne or a near contemporary like Sir John Davies or Thomas Wright.¹⁸³ In addition, critics have explored the philosophical importance of value in the play, no doubt spurred by Troilus's question: "What's aught but as 'tis valued?" (2.2.52).¹⁸⁴ Numerous twentieth and twenty-first-century critics have continued to bring their expectations and concerns about morality to bear on the text.¹⁸⁵ Some of these

¹⁸² See, for example, W.R. Elton, "Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 58.2 (1997), 331-37, and Kenneth Palmer (1982), "Appendix III: Aristotle, *Ethics*", in *Troilus and Cressida: The Arden Shakespeare*, 2nd ser., ed. Kenneth Palmer (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 311-20.

¹⁸³ On the philosophical "strange fellow", see Bevington (ed.), p. 365 (Long Note 3.3.96ff), and Anthony Dawson (ed.), pp. 35-38. On Thomas Wright's *The Passions of the Minde* (London, 1601), see Rolf Soellner, "Troilus and Cressida: Fragmenting a Divided Self", in *Shakespeare's Patterns of Self-Knowledge* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1972), pp. 195-214 (esp. pp. 198-99). On the play in the context of Montaigne, see Marcus Nordlund, "Pride and Self-Love in Shakespeare and Montaigne", *Shakespearean International Yearbook*, 6 (2006), 77-98.

¹⁸⁴ See, for example, Carolyn Asp, "Th' Expense of Spirit in a Waste of Shame", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 22.4 (1971), 345-57; Graham Bradshaw, "The Genealogy of Ideals: *Troilus and Cressida*", in *Shakespeare's Scepticism* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1987), pp. 126-63; W.R. Elton, "Shakespeare's Ulysses and the Problem of Value", *Shakespeare Studies*, 2 (1966 [1967]), 95-111; William M. Hamlin, "The Plague of Opinion: *Troilus and Cressida*", in *Tragedy and Scepticism in Shakespeare's England* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 167-83; Terence Hawkes, *Shakespeare and the Reason: A Study of the Tragedies and the Problem Plays* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964); and Rolf Soellner, "Prudence and the Price of Helen: the Debate of the Trojans in *Troilus and Cressida*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 20.3 (1969), 255-63.

¹⁸⁵ See, for example, Howard C. Adams, "'What Cressid Is'", in *Ideological Approaches to Shakespeare: The Practice of Theory*, ed. Robert P. Merrix and Nicholas Ranson (Lewiston, NY, Queenston and Lampeter: Mellen, 1992), pp. 75-93; Ralph Berry, "Shakespeare and Chivalry", in *Shakespeare and the Awareness of Audience* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1985), pp. 109-27; Ralph Berry, "The Problem Plays", in *Shakespeare and Social Class* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1988), 123-41; Elaine Eldridge, "Moral Order in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*: the Case of the Trojans", *Anglia*, 104.1 (1986), 33-44; Kristina Faber, "Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*: Of War and Lechery", *Colby Quarterly*, 26.2 (1990), 133-48; Jean Gagen, "Hector's Honor", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 19.2 (1968), 129-37; David Kaula, "Will and Reason in *Troilus and Cressida*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 12.3 (1961), 271-283; Mary Ellen Rickey, "'Twixt the Dangerous Shores: *Troilus and Cressida* Again", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 15.1 (1964), 3-13; E.L. Ridsen, "*Troilus and Cressida* and the Consummate Anti-Genre", in *Shakespeare and the Problem Play: Complex Forms, Crossed Genres and Moral Quandaries* (Jefferson, NC, and London: McFarland, 2012), pp. 42-65; Leo Rockas, "Lechery eats itself": *Troilus and Cressida*", *A Review of International English Literature (ARIEL)*, 8.1 (1977), 17-32; Alice Shalvi, "'Honor' in *Troilus and Cressida*", *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 5.2 (1965), 283-302; Luke Spencer, "Mediation and Judgement: The Challenge of *Troilus and Cressida*", in *Self and Society in Shakespeare's "Troilus and Cressida" and "Measure for Measure"*, ed. J.A. Jowitt and R.K.S. Taylor (Bradford: University of Leeds Centre for Adult Education, 1982), 80-95; Frederick Turner, *Shakespeare and the Nature of Time: Moral Philosophical Themes in Some Plays and Poems of William*

critics might be criticised for ahistorically or anachronistically judging characters or situations in the play by modern rather than classical or Elizabethan standards, but their writing is certainly testament to the provocative and fractious nature of a play that destabilises any grand expectations of chivalry, heroic status and gender essentialisms.

J. Oates Smith (1967) thought that, “[p]hilosophically, the play must be one of the earliest expressions of what is now called the ‘existential’ vision”.¹⁸⁶ Although the play seemingly questions the notion of a value system as such, it certainly does contemplate the vulnerability of the human body. The play has often provoked opposition concerning its representation of the human, with Harold Bloom (1998) remarking that, though “[m]agnificent in language, *Troilus and Cressida* nevertheless retreats from Shakespeare’s greatest gift, his invention of the human”, while others such as Michael Long (1976) have thought the play contains a “humane” laughter – perhaps because he remembered Troilus’s laughter at the end of Chaucer’s poem.¹⁸⁷ Few critics would agree that the play shows human society in general in a favourable light; and, indeed, one of the reasons the play has seen a renaissance after the Second World War is because it has been recognised as speaking to the *distressed* human condition. In *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, for example, Jan Kott (1964) observed that “*Troilus and Cressida* is from the outset a modern play, a sneering political pamphlet”; so often “war really makes no sense”.¹⁸⁸ A number of critics have discussed the way that appearance or expectations of appearance do not seem to match up

Shakespeare (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1971); and R.A. Yoder, “‘Sons and Daughters of the Game’: An Essay on Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Shakespeare Survey*, 25 (1972), 11-25.

¹⁸⁶ J. Oates Smith, “Essence and Existence in Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Philological Quarterly*, 46.2 (1967), 167-85.

¹⁸⁷ Harold Bloom, “*Troilus and Cressida*” in *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (Fourth Estate: London, 1999), pp. 327-44 (p. 344); Michael Long, “The comedy of *Troilus and Cressida*”, in *The Unnatural Scene: a Study in Shakespearean Tragedy* (London: Methuen, 1976), pp. 102-22 (p. 122).

¹⁸⁸ Jan Kott “*Troilus and Cressida* – Amazing and Modern” in *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* (New York and London: Norton, 1974), pp. 75-83 (p. 78). Similarly, for Karl F. Thompson, the presentation of Ulysses was “a masterly exposition of the practical politician, for like the great ones, Talleyrand, Lincoln, and even Churchill, he arouses precisely the same reactions and, like them, in their time, is ‘politic rogue’ as well as ‘wise, dignified statesman’”, “The Unknown Ulysses”, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 19.2 (1968), 125-28 (p. 128).

with reality, or what is performed in the play.¹⁸⁹ Other critics have also commented on the theme of transience in the play in relation to human experience.¹⁹⁰ Anne Barton (1974) remarked that

[i]n the theatre [*Troilus and Cressida*] demands a dazzling variety of response from its audience, a combination of detachment and involvement, sympathy and criticism, more exacting than is usual with Shakespeare.¹⁹¹

It is this diversity of perspectives invoked in the play that seems to have most lent it to philosophical and existential readings. Nonetheless, the belief in a common humanity also came under scrutiny itself during the twentieth century. Critics such as Terry Eagleton (1967) found *Troilus and Cressida* valuable for seeing the individual in relation to society, with the play suggesting that “reality is a public process”.¹⁹² For this reason, the communicative and performative nature of language in society and the theatre has also been an important interest among critics concerned with this play. This interest is also important in relation to expectations about the status of the author and the play’s emphasis on value judgements.

Barton’s comment that the play “demands a dazzling variety of response from its audience”

¹⁸⁹ See, for example, Douglas Cole, “Myth and Anti-Myth: the Case of *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 31.1 (1980), 76-84; Northrop Frye, *The Myth of Deliverance: Reflections on Shakespeare’s Problem Comedies* (Toronto, Buffalo, NY and London: University of Toronto Press, 1983); Derick R.C. Marsh, “Interpretation and Misinterpretation: The Problem of *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Shakespeare Studies*, 1 (1965), 182-98; and J.C. Oates, “The Ambiguity of *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 17.2 (1966), 141-50. For other critical writing on the human condition in relation to the play, see also Leo Paul S. de Alvarez, “What Is a Man?: A Reading of *Troilus and Cressida*” in *Perspectives on Politics in Shakespeare*, ed. John A. Murley and Sean D. Sutton (Lanham, MD, New York and Oxford: Lexington Books, 2006), pp. 155-195; Vernon P. Loggins, *The Life of Our Design: Organization and Related Strategies in “Troilus and Cressida”* (Lanham, MD, New York and London: University of America Press, 1992); Barry Nass, “‘Yet in the trial much opinion dwells’: The Combat Between Hector and Ajax in *Troilus and Cressida*”, *English Studies*, 65.1 (1984), 1-10; Seema Raizada, “The Fragments of Faith”, in *The Problem Plays of Shakespeare: Double Vision in Character and Action* (Delhi: Sharada Publishing House, 1994), pp. 87-114; and A.P. Rossiter (1961), “*Troilus and Cressida*”, in *Angels with Horns; Fifteen Lectures on Shakespeare*, ed. Graham Storey (London and New York: Longman, 1989).

¹⁹⁰ On the importance of time in the play, see, especially, John Bayley, “Time and the Trojans”, *Essays in Criticism*, 25.1 (1975), 55-73; Northrop Frye, *Fools of Time: Studies in Shakespearean Tragedy* (Toronto and Buffalo, NY: University of Toronto Press, 1967); Peter Hyland, “Time and Theatre” in *William Shakespeare: Troilus and Cressida* (London and New York: Penguin, 1989), pp. 89-94; Clifford Leech, *The Dramatist’s Experience With Other Essays in Literary Theory* (Toronto: Clark, Irwin and Co.; London: Chatto & Windus, 1970), pp. 161-65; and, Wylie Sypher, *The Ethics of Time: Structures of Experience in Shakespeare* (New York: Seabury Press, 1976).

¹⁹¹ Barton, “Introduction to *Troilus and Cressida*”, p. 479.

¹⁹² Terence Eagleton, “*Troilus and Cressida*”, in *Shakespeare and Society: Critical Studies in Shakespearean Drama* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1967), pp. 13-38, p. 14. See also Terry Eagleton, *William Shakespeare: Reading Literature* (Oxford and New York: Blackwell, 1986), pp. 58-63, and Zvi Jagendorf, “All against One in *Troilus and Cressida*”, *English*, 31.3 (1982), 199-210.

highlights the concern with social perspective and subjective response, topics that are not only evinced by the critical heritage of the play, but also examined in the play itself in relation to audience expectation and taste.

IV.iv. Language and Textual Approaches

“it has become *de rigueur* to discern in the play’s verbal and literary self-consciousness a master class in deconstruction *avant la lettre*.”

– Kiernan Ryan on *Troilus and Cressida* (2007)¹⁹³

As Restoration commentators had noticed, the language of *Troilus and Cressida* is often complex, contorted and strange, full of neologisms and Latinate diction. This has contributed to a rich vein of writing on the language of the play, from new criticism to structuralism, poststructuralism and deconstruction.

Readings of the language of the play have been especially interested in the many speeches it contains and the characters’ rhetorical language.¹⁹⁴ Other critics, often with a structuralist bent, have focused on the play’s double language of love and war, and the ways in which these intermingle, often especially concentrating on the linguistic interplay

¹⁹³ Kiernan Ryan, “*Troilus and Cressida*: The perils of presentism”, in *Presentist Shakespeares*, ed. Hugh Grady and Terence Hawkes (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 164-83 (p. 167).

¹⁹⁴ See, for example, Thomas Cartelli, “Ideology and Subversion in the Shakespearean Set Speech”, *English Literary History*, 53.1 (1986), 1-25 and Cartelli, *Marlowe, Shakespeare and the Economy of Theatrical Experience* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), pp. 147-51; Ira Clark, “The Wit of Reflexivity in Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*”, in *Rhetorical Readings, Dark Comedies, and Shakespeare’s Problem Plays* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2007), pp. 81-116; F. Quinland Daniels, “Order and Confusion in *Troilus and Cressida* I.iii”, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 12.3 (1961), 285-91; Glen Dayley, “Beneath the Surface: Motives for Rhetoric and Action in *Troilus and Cressida*: A response to Vernon Logins et al.”, *Connotations*, 11.2-3 (2001-2), pp. 262-71; Robert Grudin, “The Soul of State: Ulyssean Irony in *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Anglia*, 93.1 (1975), 55-69; Peter Hyland, “Language, Style and Rhetoric”, in *William Shakespeare: Troilus and Cressida* (London and New York: Penguin, 1989), pp. 81-89; David Norbrook, “Rhetoric, Ideology, and the Elizabethan Would Picture”, in *Renaissance Rhetoric*, ed. Peter Mack (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1994), 140-64; Katherine Stockholder, “Power and Pleasure in *Troilus and Cressida*, or Rhetoric and Structure of the Anti-Tragic”, *College English*, 30.7 (1969), 539-54; and Patricia Thomson, “Rant and Cant in *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Essays and Studies*, n.s., 22 (1969), 33-56. See Ian Lancashire for an exploration of Shakespeare’s idiolect in the play, “Probing Shakespeare’s Idiolect in *Troilus and Cressida*, 1.3.1-29”, *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 68.3 (1999), 728-67.

generated by the “classical myth [of] the disarming of Mars by Venus”.¹⁹⁵ The paradoxical, ambiguous and equivocal language of the play has also been emphasised, along with the apparent lacunae between action and deeds: “Nothing in *Troilus and Cressida*”, Linda Anderson (1987) suggested, “is clear cut or easy”.¹⁹⁶ As a play set soon before the fall of the walls of Troy, *Troilus and Cressida*, Richard D. Fly (1975) argued, showed “Shakespeare exploit[ing] the overdetermined nature of the characters’ speech to create and sustain a vision of imminent and radical catastrophe”.¹⁹⁷ Other critics such as Beryl Rowland (1970) and E.A.M. Colman (1974) have continued the tradition of finding culinary and bawdy language within the play, often linking them together.¹⁹⁸ These critics implicitly raise the possibility that the culinary and often bawdy language of the characters may be part of the expectant aesthetics of the play.

Critics have also paid attention to the language of visuality in the play.¹⁹⁹ Close to this theme has been the language of identity with poststructuralist critics like Jonathan Dollimore

¹⁹⁵ David J. Houser, “Armor and Motive in *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Renaissance Drama*, n.s., 4 (1971), 121-34 (p. 124). See also Larry R. Clarke, “‘Mars his heart inflam’d with Venus’: Ideology and Eros in Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Modern Language Quarterly*, 50.3 (1989), 209-26; Willard Farnham, “Troilus in Shapes of Infinite Desire”, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 15.2 (1964), 257-64; M.T. Jones-Davies, “Discord in Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*”; or, The Conflict between ‘Angry Mars and Venus Queen of Love’”, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 25.1 (1974), 33-41; Norman Rabkin, “*Troilus and Cressida*: the Uses of the Double Plot”, *Shakespeare Studies*, 1 (1965), 265-82 (revised as “Self Against Self”, in *Shakespeare and the Common Understanding* (New York: Free Press; London: Collier-Macmillan, 1967), pp. 30-79); and William B. Toole, “*Troilus and Cressida*”, in *Shakespeare’s Problem Plays: Studies in Form and Meaning* (London, Paris, and The Hague: Mouton, 1966), pp. 198-230. See, as well, Unhae Park Langis “Debased Concupiscence: Love and Death in Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Early Modern Literary Studies* (forthcoming).

¹⁹⁶ Linda Anderson, “Problem Comedies”, *A Kind of Wild Justice: Revenge in Shakespeare’s Comedies* (Newark, NJ: University of Delaware Press, 1987), pp. 126-68 (p. 144). See also, for example, Tinsley Helton, “Paradox and Hypothesis in *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Shakespeare Studies*, 10 (1977), 115-31; T. McAlindon, “Language, Style, and Meaning in *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association*, 84.1 (1969), 29-41; and Elias Schwartz, “Tonal Equivocation and the Meaning of *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Studies in Philology*, 69.3 (1972), 304-19.

¹⁹⁷ Richard D. Fly, “Cassandra and the Language of Prophecy in *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 26.2 (1975), 157-71 (p. 157). See also Richard D. Fly, “‘Suited in Like Conditions as our Argument’: Imitative Form in Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 15.2 (1975), 273-92.

¹⁹⁸ Beryl Rowland, “A Cake-Making Image in *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 21.2 (1970), 191-94; E.A.M. Coleman, *The Dramatic Use of Bawdy in Shakespeare* (London: Longman, 1974), esp. pp. 117-121.

¹⁹⁹ For readings of perspective and the language of vision in the play, see, for example, Harry Berger Jr, “*Troilus and Cressida*: The Observer As Basilisk”, *Comparative Drama*, 2.2 (1968), p. 122-136; John D. Cox, “The Error of Our Eye in *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Comparative Drama*, 10.2 (1976), 147-71; Anthony B. Dawson, *Indirections: Shakespeare and the Art of Illusion* (Toronto, Buffalo, NY and London: University of Toronto Press, 1978), esp. pp. 75-86; Linda LaBranche, “Visual Patterns and Linking Analogues in *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 37.4 (1986), 440-50; and François Laroque, “Perspective in *Troilus and*

(1984) using the play to stress the discontinuities between language and identity.²⁰⁰ These critics, often using deconstructive approaches, have shown how the play does not only destabilise notions of order and hierarchy, but also shows a crisis with language itself: Gayle Greene (1981) comments that

[a]s the questions of order with which *Troilus and Cressida* is concerned reflect the crisis of values in the late Renaissance, so does its concern with language reflect this background of linguistic revolution.²⁰¹

The revolution was, of course, both a revolution in the late Renaissance *and* in the second half of the twentieth century – although they were manifestly different. Both periods, nevertheless, experienced “a change in attitudes towards language, ‘dissolving’ and ‘loosing’ the bond between word and thing”.²⁰² David Hillman (1997) has been just one of many critics to emphasise the “overwhelming citationality of [Shakespeare’s] material”, while suggesting that in Ulysses’ description of Cressida “[h]er faithlessness is figured *as* the faithlessness of language itself”.²⁰³ The distortion of language was also pursued as a theme by Patricia Parker (1996) who noted the “inflation or bloating that affects both bodies and words in *Troilus and*

Cressida”, in *Shakespeare’s Universe; Renaissance Ideas and Conventions: Essays in Honour of W.R. Elton*, ed. John M. Mucciolo, assisted by Steven J. Dolof and Edward A Rauchut (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1996), pp. 224-42.

²⁰⁰ Jonathan Dollimore, “Emergence: Marston’s Antonio Plays (c. 1599-1601) and Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*”, in *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries*, 2nd edn (London and New York: Harvester, 1989), pp. 29-50; on the language of disjunction in the play, see Lawrence D. Green, “‘We’ll Dress Him Up in Voices’: The Rhetoric of Disjunction in *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 70.1 (1984), 23-40.

²⁰¹ Gayle Greene, “Language and Value in Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 21.2 (1981), 271-85 (p. 272).

²⁰² Greene, “Language and Value in Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*”, p. 272. For other deconstructive readings, see, for example, John M. Kopper, “Troilus at Pluto’s Gates: Subjectivity and the Duplicity of Discourse in Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*”, in *Shakespeare and Deconstruction*, ed. G. Douglas Atkins and David M. Bergeron (New York: Lang, 1988), 149-71; J. Hillis Miller, “‘Ariachne’s Broken Woof’”, *Georgia Review*, 31 (1977), 44-60; and William O. Scott, “Self-Difference in *Troilus and Cressida*”, in *Shakespeare and Deconstruction*, ed. G. Douglas Atkins and David M. Bergeron (New York: Lang, 1988), pp. 129-48.

²⁰³ David Hillman, “The Gastric Epic: *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 48.3 (1997), 295-313 (p. 313). On the topic of citationality, Naseeb Shaheen comments that “*Troilus and Cressida* appears to have a surprisingly large number of biblical references for a play with a classical setting”, noting that rather than quoting directly from the Bible the play contains a number of “striking analogies”, “*Troilus and Cressida*”, in *Biblical References in Shakespeare’s Plays* (Newark, NJ: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1999), pp. 564-579 (p. 565); see also Naseeb Shaheen, “Biblical Echoes in *Troilus and Cressida*,” *Notes and Queries*, 43.2 (1996), 192-93.

Cressida".²⁰⁴ For these critics, the play continually distorts and challenges notions of language as simple communication, often exaggerating and irritating attempts to order language, whether poetically or philosophically.²⁰⁵ As Lars Engle (1993) observed, it is this "semantic instability which has made *Troilus and Cressida* a favourite play of deconstructors".²⁰⁶

IV.v. Marxist, (New) Historicist, and Cultural Materialist Readings

"[C]ritics need to imagine the circumstances
in which classical allusions would inflame rather than glaze the eye;
classics appealed to all because social and political values were at stake"

– Heather James on *Troilus and Cressida* (1997)²⁰⁷

Still with an interest in the language of *Troilus and Cressida*, a number of predominantly Marxist critics read the play in relation to concepts of trade and economics. Raymond Southall (1964) suggested that the play "assesses the weakening feudal relations that had taken place during the sixteenth century by bringing to bear upon a world of romance and

²⁰⁴ Patricia Parker, "Dilation and Inflation: *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Troilus and Cressida*, and Shakespearean Increase", in *Shakespeare from the Margins: Language, Culture, Context* (Chicago, IL, and London: Chicago University Press, 1996), pp. 185-228 (p. 224). For a reading of the "'bifold authority' between language as a symbolic system and language as imaginary *membra disiecta*", see Ann Lecercle, "Words, Wards, Watches: Going-Between in *Troilus and Cressida*" in *Shakespeare: Troilus and Cressida, Acts du Colloque, 9-10 novembre 1990, C.E.R.A.N.* (Lyon: Université Lumière Lyon 2, 1990), pp. 123-40 (p. 134); on the bifold possibilities of *Troilus*'s language, see Timothy L. Matos, "Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* 5.2", *Explicator*, 62.2 (2004), 74-77. Jonathan Gil Harris provides a reading of the play's language of the humours and disease in "Canker/Serpigo and Value: Gerard Malynes, *Troilus and Cressida*", in *Sick Economies: Drama, Mercantilism, and Disease in Shakespeare's England* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), pp. 82-107 (first publ. as "'The enterprise is sick': Pathologies of Value and Transnationality in *Troilus and Cressida*", *Renaissance Drama*, n.s., 28 (2000), 3-37); see also George W. Bentley, "'The poor agent despised': Commercialism and Syphilis in *Troilus and Cressida*", in *Shakespeare and the New Disease: The Dramatic Function of Syphilis "Troilus and Cressida", "Measure for Measure", and "Timon of Athens"* (Berne, New York and Paris: Lang 1989), pp. 41-99.

²⁰⁵ On the problem editors have had with the word-meaning in the play, see Mark Catt, "Renaissance Dictionaries and Shakespeare's Language: A Study of Word-meaning in *Troilus and Cressida*", *Early Modern Literary Studies*, Special Issue 1 (1997), 3.1-46; available online at <<http://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/si-01/si-01catt.html>> [accessed 2 April 2012].

²⁰⁶ Lars Engle, "Always Already in the Market: the Politics of Evaluation in *Troilus and Cressida*" in *Shakespearean Pragmatism: Market of His Time* (Chicago, IL, and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 147-63 (p. 148).

²⁰⁷ Heather James, *Shakespeare's Troy: Drama, Politics, and the Translation of Empire* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 118.

chivalry [...] the powers of personal and social corruption inherent in the appetitive spirit of capitalism”.²⁰⁸ Taking this approach a step further, C.C. Barfoot (1988) argued that

Troilus and Cressida suggests that we trade in selves just as we trade in words, even as we trade in literature, which we conventionally assume is a transmitter, but not inevitably a transmuter, of value and truth.²⁰⁹

This notion that the play engaged with its world, and interacted or transacted with its audience, was taken up in a different way by Joseph Lenz (1993), who considered the “predominant metaphor for the practice of the theatre in Shakespeare’s age [which] was prostitution”.²¹⁰ He read the play as acknowledging that, “like a bawd, [theatre] advertises its product with effeminate gesture and costly apparel; like a prostitute, the motive is the same – money. Thus, the theater is a brothel, a pander, a whore, a way toward debauchery and a site for it”.²¹¹ Arguably, however, Shakespeare’s play shows how these traits are not particular to theatre. Other critics, notably Douglas Bruster (1992), Lars Engle (1993) and Hugh Grady (1996), have concentrated on the economic language at work within the play itself; however, these critics paid less attention to transactions concerning audiences and readers – such as buying a quarto publication, or paying for attendance at the theatre.²¹²

Between the Second World War and the late 1980s, there was a relative paucity of research into the relation of *Troilus and Cressida* to the late Elizabethan period from which the play sprang – partly because there has been such a strong emphasis on the notion of the

²⁰⁸ Raymond Southall, “*Troilus and Cressida* and the Spirit of Capitalism”, *Shakespeare in a Changing World*, ed. Arnold Kettle (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1964), pp. 217-32 (p. 231).

²⁰⁹ C.C. Barfoot, “*Troilus and Cressida*: ‘Praise us as we are tasted’”, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 39.1 (1988), 45-57 (p. 56).

²¹⁰ Joseph Lenz, “Base Trade: Theater as Prostitution”, *English Literary History*, 60.4 (1993), 833-55 (p. 833).

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 852.

²¹² Douglas Bruster, “‘The alteration of men’: *Troilus and Cressida*, Troynovant, and Trade”, in *Drama and the Market in the Age of Shakespeare* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 97-117; Lars Engle, “Always Already in the Market: the Politics of Evaluation in *Troilus and Cressida*”, in *Shakespearean Pragmatism: Market of His Time* (Chicago, IL, and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 147-163; and Hugh Grady, “‘Mad Idolatry’: Commodification and Reification in *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Shakespeare’s Universal Wolf: Studies in Early Modern Reification* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 58-94.

play being “amazing and modern”.²¹³ The notable exception, besides a few source studies that considered the play’s Elizabethan audience, was E.A.J. Honigmann (1985), who rehearsed many conjectures about the play’s provenance, arguing that it may have been “too dangerous” to publish and perform due to its “unintended ‘Essex allusion’”.²¹⁴ Honigmann used a historical approach to make sense of the provenance of the play and its publication. Although critics have often agreed with his dating of the composition of the play in the latter or middle months of 1601, most have not followed the complicated conspiracies he suggested. New historicists such as Eric S. Mallin (1990) have argued that the way that the play seems to allude to the Earl of Essex is far from accidental. For Mallin, the play does not simply demonstrate a “semantic instability”, as Lars Engle had commented, but shows also a historic political instability as it inscribes its own time at the end of the Elizabethan era.

Although Mallin’s case may be at times overstated, he convincingly shows how the play is responding to and engaging with the politics of its own time. He suggests that in this play, Shakespeare “transforms a de facto Elizabethan policy [of emulous factionalism among the courtiers] and its unforeseen consequences into a central plot complication of the Trojan War story”.²¹⁵ Mallin shows how “[b]oth Greek and Trojan camps recollect contemporary

²¹³ See Jan Kott, “*Troilus and Cressida* – Amazing and Modern”, in *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* (New York and London: Norton, 1974), pp. 75-83. An obvious exception would be Paul N. Siegel’s reading of the play as a comment on Elizabethan culture in “Shakespeare and the Neo-Chivalric Cult of Honor”, in *Shakespeare in His Time and Ours* (Notre Dame, IN and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), pp. 122-62 (esp. 138-44).

²¹⁴ E.A.J. Honigmann, “Shakespeare suppressed: the unfortunate history of *Troilus and Cressida*”, in *Myriad-minded Shakespeare: Essays, Chiefly on the Tragedies and Problem Comedies* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 112-29 (p. 118 and p. 125) (first publ. “The Date and Revision of *Troilus and Cressida*”, in *Textual Criticism and Literary Interpretation*, ed. Jerome J. McGann (Chicago, IL, and London: Chicago University Press, 1985), 38-54). On the play’s provenance, see also, Jarold W. Ramsey, “The Provenance of *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 21.3 (1970), 223-40; Ramsey argues that whether the play was performed at the Inns or not, it should (also) be seen as “a legitimate member of the Globe repertory” (p. 240).

²¹⁵ Eric S. Mallin, “Emulous Factions and the Collapse of Chivalry: *Troilus and Cressida*”, in *Inscribing the Time: Shakespeare and the End of Elizabethan England* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, CA and London: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 25-61 (p. 29) (first publ. in *Representations*, 29.4 (1990), 145-79). For a simpler new historicist reading, see Susan Bassnett, “The Fairytale in Crisis: *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Troilus and Cressida* and *All’s Well That Ends Well*”, in *Shakespeare: The Elizabethan Plays* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1993), pp. 154-77. On the play in relation to the Tudors, see also Ian Ward “Illusions of Order”, in *Shakespeare and the Legal Imagination* (London, Edinburgh and Dublin: Butterworths, 1999), pp. 142-68. For a broadly new historicist analysis of the play in relation to the “violent propaganda commissioned by the Tudor bishops throughout the 1590s”, see Joseph Navitsky, “Scurrilous Jests and Retaliatory Abuse in Shakespeare’s

political acts and structures; both sides, and their transactions establish compelling circuits of text and world”.²¹⁶ This new historicist take reads *Troilus and Cressida* in terms of its relation to the cult of Elizabeth and ceremonies such as the Accession Day tilts, as well as to the idea of Essex as an Achillean recluse *and* a chivalrous Hector. Ultimately, for Mallin, the play shows how “the line between chivalry and criminality was frighteningly thin”, and in its fascination with homosocial bonds marks the “ongoing diminution of Elizabeth’s potency”.²¹⁷ This new historicist outlook rescues critics from viewing the play as being symptomatic of Shakespeare’s dark mood (as some nineteenth-century critics suggested), as purely the result of his satiric method, or as simply part of the “low” tradition of the infamous couple and their pander.²¹⁸ The sensitivity to the historical moment also raises further questions about audience expectations because the new historicist thesis suggests that audiences would have responded to the politics of the play in a context of the Elizabethan court struggles and a *fin de siècle* moment.

Heather James (1997) also provides a historical reading of the play, largely agreeing with Mallin, if not always relying on all of Mallin’s historical details. She notes how

[t]he rage mimicked and generated by the play has its roots in the disillusionments of the late Elizabethan period, following the spectacular fall of the earl of Essex, whose ambition and chivalric virtue find their reflection in Shakespeare’s Achilles and Hector, respectively.²¹⁹

Troilus and Cressida”, *English Literary Renaissance*, 42.1 (2012), 2-31 (p. 4). Christopher Tilmouth reads the mercantile concerns of the play in the context of early modern politics and ideas in “Renaissance Tragedy and the Fracturing of Familiar Terms”, *Passion’s Triumph over Reason: A History of the Moral Imagination from Spenser to Rochester* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp.114-56 (see esp. pp. 146-56).

²¹⁶ Mallin, *Inscribing the Time*, p. 38.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 39 and p. 60.

²¹⁸ Mario Domenichelli reads the play as a “hopeless comment on the Elizabethan chivalric revival brought to a sudden end by Essex’s failed revolt and consequent execution in 1601”, Mario Domenichelli, “Voilà la belle mort”: the crisis of the aristocracy in *Troilus and Cressida*”, in *Shakespeare, Italy, and Intertextuality*, ed. Michele Marrapodi (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 59-70 (p. 62).

Steven Marx reads Shakespeare’s development from “a partisan of war to a partisan of peace [between] *Henry V* and *Troilus and Cressida*” as a reflection of “a shift in British foreign policy” in “Shakespeare Pacifism”, *Renaissance Quarterly*, 45.1 (1992), 49-95 (p. 50).

²¹⁹ Heather James, *Shakespeare’s Troy: Drama, Politics, and the Translation of Empire* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 91.

James provides a sophisticated reading of the historicity of Troy and its literature in late Elizabethan England.²²⁰ She shows how “Shakespeare endows the world of the play with partial awareness of the multiple sources that constitute the Troy legend as well as the politics and economics that underwrite the continual reproduction of its characters and events”.²²¹ For James, then, the play is not only inscribed *with* the time, but *inscribes* the time by acting within it, by displaying the *translatio imperii* of the Brutus legend and Troynovant in a different light.²²² James argues that with *Troilus and Cressida* Shakespeare could hold up a “resilient mirror [...] to socially eclectic audiences”; he “invites his audiences to be Hamlets, and to study, mull over, appropriate, and act on his play”.²²³ James’s argument that the play interacts with the audience in theatrical and historical ways puts a new spin on the notion of audience expectation because it sees the play as an invitation, taking part in a cultural poetics that is necessarily political.²²⁴ James’s thesis implies that *Troilus and Cressida* should not be seen as a play written by an author expecting an especially intellectual elite audience, but that it engages with ideas that would have concerned and interested “socially eclectic audiences” in Shakespeare’s time.

In an essay that takes the new historicist approach to the play a step further, Richard Wilson (2011) reads *Troilus and Cressida* alongside *Coriolanus* and *Hamlet* in terms of power and notions of the decision and the aesthetic. Wilson sees the play as “a shot at the Inns of Court, where the play was acted shortly after the lawyers had backed Essex’s coup,

²²⁰ Andrew Griffin reads the historicity of the play in “The Banality of History in *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 12.2 (2007), n.p; available at <<http://purl.oclc.org/emls/12-2/grifbana.htm>> [accessed 20 July 2010].

²²¹ James, p. 90.

²²² Sandra Billington sees the play as an Inns of Court Christmas revel where “Troy is used as one of the humanist exempla from the ancient world to set before modern princes, and in keeping with a satiric denouement to Christmas, the city and the lords in both camps are revealed as hollow poseurs”, “Festive Tragedy: *Troilus and Cressida*, *King Lear*, and *Anthony and Cleopatra*”, in *Mock Kings in Medieval Society and Renaissance Drama* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 198-217 (p. 205).

²²³ James, *Shakespeare’s Troy*, p. 118.

²²⁴ For “cultural poetics”, see Stephen Greenblatt, “Towards a Poetics of Culture”, in *The New Historicism*, ed. H. Aram Veeser (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 1-14.

letting their ‘hot passion’ overrule a ‘true decision’ [2.2.168-72]”.²²⁵ The following chapters of the thesis differ from Wilson’s reading that it is a performance at the Inns of Court.²²⁶ However, they do agree with his reading of *Troilus and Cressida* as critiquing the aestheticisation of politics, showing how this is keyed in Elizabethan culture in relation to medieval courtesy and classical action, reputation and representation.

Cultural materialists have been quick to notice the material nature of Shakespeare’s Trojan play, the way that the matter of Troy is theatricalised while different ideas are reified. Hester Lees-Jeffries (2009) argues that “the verbal, the visual and the material in *Troilus and Cressida* can still take us by surprise by showing that there could be a pun on a thing, or a quibble that is in part material”.²²⁷ She considers the fact that “a seventeenth-century audience might expect the tent [in the play] to be hung with tapestries, or for its entrance to be evoked with a tapestry hanging”.²²⁸ By examining the way “Pandarus instructs his fellow bawds [in the audience] to record his cynical moralizing in their ‘painted cloths’”, for example, Lees-Jeffries’ emphasises the situation in which the Elizabethan performance is caught up in material issues which may indeed have political and artistic implications.²²⁹ Several source studies (discussed above) have noticed how Shakespeare’s play comments on the matter of Troy, but Paul Yachnin (2005) explores the way this representation is caught up in the material, artistic and indeed economic culture of play-going and play-reading.²³⁰ For Yachnin, these “texts are filled with situated meaning-making that reflect the anxieties, aspirations, and community consciousness of the playwrights and the players”.²³¹ In *Author’s*

²²⁵ Richard Wilson, “Like the osprey to the fish: Shakespeare and the force of law”, in *Law and Art: Justice, Ethics and Aesthetics*, ed. Oren Ben-Dor (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 93-113 (p. 108).

²²⁶ Of course, as discussed in Chapter Four, the Inns of Court residents were known to buy Shakespeare’s plays and to see his plays at the Globe, especially before the King’s Men acted at the indoor Blackfriars.

²²⁷ Hester Lees-Jeffries, “A Subtle Point: Sleeves, tents and ‘Ariachne’s Broken Woof’ (Again)”, *Shakespeare Survey*, 62 (2009), 92-103 (p. 92).

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

²²⁹ Hester Lees-Jeffries, p. 101.

²³⁰ Paul Yachnin, “‘The Perfection of Ten’: Populuxe Art and Artisanal Value in *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 56.3 (2005), 306-27

²³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 326.

Pen and Actor's Voice (2000), Robert Weimann explores the “gap between the imaginary, represented world-in-the-play and the visible, audible playing-in-the-world of the playhouse”, noticing how these worlds are “heavily crisscrossed” in the performance.²³² Physical matter – whether it is the fabric of costumes, weapons, actors’ bodies, or the theatre structure – is in a sense something that shows the anachronistic nature of representing the past, a quality that the play foregrounds.

A number of critics have combined historical approaches with an interest in language to consider the many oaths and vows contained in the play, what might be called *Troilus and Cressida*’s promising language. In *Eternal Bonds, True Contracts* (2004), A.G. Harmon suggested that “[t]he contractual elements [of the play] – publicity, value, performance, and contractual tokens, as well as the contractual agent – [...] are perverted”.²³³ Harmon shows how it is not only characters or state discourses that are corrupt but that this corruption works on a micro-linguistic scale as well as on a macro scale. Emily Ross (2008) considered the doomed vows between Troilus and Cressida in relation to customary Elizabethan marriage procedure, while John Kerrigan (2009) has studied the significance and importance of the oaths and vows made in the play in a historical context.²³⁴ The work of these critics fits into a broader critical interest in the contractual language used in Shakespeare’s plays – an often legal or religious concern to which the language of audience expectation is sometimes akin.

For Harmon, in *Troilus and Cressida* “the bargain-and-sale nature of what transpires stains

²³² Robert Weimann, *Author's Pen and Actor's Voice: Playing and Writing in Shakespeare's Theatre*, ed. Helen Higbee and William West (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 55 and pp. 55-56. See also Robert Weimann, “The Actor-Character in ‘Secretly Open’ Action: Double Encoded Personation on Shakespeare’s Stage” in *Shakespeare and Character: Theory, History, Performance, and Theatrical Persons*, ed. Paul Yachnin and Jessica Slight (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2009), pp. 177-93. Terry Hodgson also analyses characterisation in relation to audience expectation, the play and the actors in “Characterization”, in *Shakespeare: “Troilus and Cressida”* (Tirril: Humanities-Ebooks, 2008), Adobe Digital Editions version; available at <<http://www.humanities-ebooks.co.uk>> [accessed 10 February 2013], pp. 52-59.

²³³ A.G. Harmon, “Perfection in Reversion: The Mock Contract in *Troilus and Cressida*”, in *Eternal Bonds, True Contracts: Law and Nature in Shakespeare's Problem Plays* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004), pp. 55-80.

²³⁴ Emily Ross, “‘Words, vows, gifts, tears and love’s full sacrifice’: An assessment of the status of Troilus and Cressida’s relationship according to customary Elizabethan marriage procedure”, *Shakespeare*, 4.4 (2008), 413-37; John Kerrigan, “Shakespeare, Oaths and Vows”, *Proceedings of the British Academy: 2009 Lectures*, 167 (2011), 61-89.

the meaning”.²³⁵ Taken together, Marxists, new historicists and cultural materialists show that *Troilus and Cressida* does not simply reflect past conditions of the Troy story or its historical context: the play holds the potential to transform the Troy myth and an audience’s expectations of history and the present.

IV.vi. Metatheatre and Performance Studies

“*Troilus and Cressida* is probably Shakespeare’s
most daring experiment in defensive self-presentation”

– Elizabeth Freund (1985)²³⁶

Critics such as Hester Lees-Jeffries, Robert Weimann and Paul Yachnin are all interested in the meaning of the *Troilus and Cressida* in relation to the play’s production. They are in fact writing in the wake of critics who have been interested in something which has been labelled the metadramatic, or metatheatrical – that is, the way in which the play comments on itself, and often its own theatricality. Frequently, these critics have utilised different approaches while studying the play’s metatheatre, but it is worth considering them separately here because there have been so many of them, and because they have found *Troilus and Cressida* so fruitful for the study of metatheatre. Although not the first critic to do so, Anne Barton (1962) in *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play* paid attention to what the plays themselves have to say about the theatre: she noticed, for example, that “*Troilus and Cressida* [...] is filled with theatrical imagery, all of it of a kind most unflattering to the stage”.²³⁷ It might be considered unexpected that characters in Shakespeare’s play should comment on the “strutting player, whose conceit / Lies in his hamstring” (1.3.154-55); however, *Troilus and Cressida* seems to be sensible of accusations concerning its own “debased” theatricality. This

²³⁵ Harmon, p. 64.

²³⁶ Elizabeth Freund, “‘Ariachne’s broken woof’: the Rhetoric of Citation in *Troilus and Cressida*”, in *Shakespeare and The Question of Theory*, ed. Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman (London and New York: Methuen, 1985), pp. 19-36 (p. 35).

²³⁷ Anne Barton [née Richter], *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play* (Harmondsworth and New York: Penguin, 1967), p. 162.

upsetting vision is not contained by the play, but, as Chapters Two and Three will examine, may extrude into the audience.²³⁸

In an essay entitled “Illeism With a Difference in Certain Middle Plays of Shakespeare” (1969), S. Viswanathan noticed how several of the characters in *Troilus and Cressida* refer to themselves in the third person.²³⁹ Viswanathan argued that when Cressida says “‘As false as Cressid’” (3.2.176), for example, this creates

a living encounter between the legendary selves of these storied figures of Troy and Greece, their actual selves as the dramatist conceived them, and the actors with their own personalities playing their roles.²⁴⁰

For Neil Powell (1979), this kind of metatheatricity creates the impression that “*Troilus* is a play within a play [where] the audience supplies, and is, the outer audience: hence its peculiar feeling of complicity with the audience”.²⁴¹ How the audience is complicit with the performance of the play is a complicated question, but even if the audience is complicit, there is still the sense, as Jean-Pierre Maquerlot (1995) remarks, that the play is “*foiling* expectation, at all levels of the play’s structure”.²⁴² Rolf P. Lessenich (1977), noticed too how the “frustration of most of the play’s characters is paralleled by the frustration of the

²³⁸ Although not a strictly metatheatrical study, Bertrand Evans’s chapter on *Troilus and Cressida* also showed how the play was “malform[ed]” in its “management of [audience] awareness”, “When Degree is Shak’d: *All’s Well* and *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Shakespeare’s Comedies* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 144-85 (p. 167). Evans’s theory of “discrepant awareness” is discussed in Chapter Two.

²³⁹ On the use of third person pronouns in relation to the language of desire in the play, see Zenón Luis Martínez, “Shakespeare’s Wicked Pronoun: *A Lover’s Discourse* and Love Stories”, *Atlantis*, 22.1 (2000), 133-62.

²⁴⁰ S. Viswanathan, “‘Illeism With a Difference’ in Certain Middle Plays”, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 20.4 (1969), 407-15 (p. 412).

²⁴¹ Neil Powell, “Hero and human: the problem of Achilles”, *Critical Quarterly*, 21.2 (1979), 17-28 (p. 27). For other metatheatrical readings not considered elsewhere in this chapter, see Carolyn Asp, “Transcendence Denied: The Failure of Role Assumption in *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 18.2 (1978), 257-74; Juliet Dusinberre, “*Troilus and Cressida* and the Definition of Beauty”, *Shakespeare Survey*, 36 (1983) 85-95; Richard Hillman, *Self-Speaking in Medieval and Early Modern English Drama* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan Press, 1997), esp. pp. 139-42, and Richard Hillman, “*Troilus and Cressida*: Constructing Genre, Truth, and the Self”, *William Shakespeare: The Problem Plays* (New York: Twayne, 1993), pp. 17-53.

²⁴² Jean-Pierre Maquerlot, “When playing is foiling: *Troilus and Cressida*”, in *Shakespeare and the Mannerist Tradition: Five Problem Plays* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 118-45 (p. 145). For this view, see also the subchapter “*Troilus and Cressida*”, in Nicholas Grene, *Shakespeare, Jonson, Molière: The Comic Contract* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1980), pp. 164-74.

spectators, effected through constant ups and downs of expectation and disappointment”.²⁴³

There seems, according to many critics who have studied the metatheatrical quality of the play, to be a deliberate self-consciousness about the play on the part of the characters as represented and arguably on the part of the author too.

Critics such as Linda Charnes (1989) have postulated that this may be because the “audience [...] knows the outcome of this story and expects to get what it pays for”, but there may be more to it than that.²⁴⁴ Eric Byville (2012) reads Pandarus’s epilogue as

the metadramatic parting shot of *Troilus and Cressida* [that] alludes to the play’s *failure* to produce pleasure and the disappointment of audience members who came to this “performance” expecting to be pleased and instead have been disgusted: “Why should our endeavour be so desired, and the performance so loathed? What verse for it? (5.11.37-39)”.²⁴⁵

Patrick Cheney (2008) argues that in *Troilus and Cressida* Shakespeare can be found “self-consciously combining a capacious array of dramatic forms”, while Gretchen E. Minton (2008) labels this self-consciousness the “metatheatrical anxiety of the play”.²⁴⁶ The interest in metatheatre is important for this thesis, which aims to show how the play is as much *about* audience expectation as it is in the business of engaging its audience.²⁴⁷

²⁴³ Rolf P. Lessenich, “Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*: the Vision of Decadence” *Studia Neophilologica*, 49.2 (1977), 221-32 (p. 227).

²⁴⁴ Linda Charnes, “‘So Unsecret to Ourselves’: Notorious Identity and the Material Subject in Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 40.4 (1989), 413-40 (p. 440).

²⁴⁵ Eric Byville, “Aesthetic Uncommon Sense: Early Modern Taste and the Satirical Sublime”, *Criticism*, 54.4 (2012), 583-621 (p. 602). See also Johann Gregory, “Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*: Visualising Expectations as a Matter of Taste”, in *Shakespeare et les arts de la table: Actes du Congrès organisé par la Société Française Shakespeare*, ed. Pierre Kapitaniak, Christophe Hausermann and Dominique Goy-Blanquet (Paris: SFS, 2012), pp. 47-66; available at

<<http://www.societefrancaishakespeare.org/document.php?id=1705>> [accessed 1 May 2012]. On the epilogue’s use of the “goose of Winchester” (5.11.52) as a possible allusion to the audience’s hissing, see H. Bonheim, “Shakespeare’s ‘Goose of Winchester’”, *Philological Quarterly*, 51.4 (1972), 940-41.

²⁴⁶ Patrick Cheney, “The epic spear of Achilles: self-concealing authorship in *The Rape of Lucrece*, *Troilus and Cressida*, and *Hamlet*”, in *Shakespeare’s Literary Authorship* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 31-62 (p. 60); Gretchen E. Minton, “‘Discharging less than the tenth part of one’: Performance Anxiety and/in *Troilus and Cressida*” in *Shakespeare and the Cultures of Performance*, ed. Paul Yachnin and Patricia Badir (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 101-19 (p. 118).

²⁴⁷ Because this thesis is concerned with the Elizabethan and early Jacobean production of the play on stage and in print, this critical review has not provided an extensive review of critics interested in performance studies; it has only included them in the other sections when they have had an especially useful retrospective bearing on the play’s possible staging practices or its significance in general. This has been most fruitful in discussions of where the play might have been performed and especially in feminist readings of the play (discussed below). For useful histories of *Troilus and Cressida* in modern performance see, for example, *New Variorum*, pp. 505-

Briget Escolme (2005) has provided an important performance-orientated reading of the play, focusing especially on Cressida, where Escolme notes that “[w]e may find ourselves looking at a human being on stage, laughing in comprehension at one moment, the next moment asking ‘who – or what – is that?’ and being asked who we think we are in return”.²⁴⁸ Being aware of the repercussions of “staging” characters and expectations helps literary critics to check their expectations of *Troilus and Cressida*.²⁴⁹ Escolme shows how the metatheatrical can be more than a witty conceit: it is part of the larger significance and experience of the play’s performance in the theatre. As Arlin J. Kiken (1967) argued in her performance-orientated reading, “it is a temptation to gather up this complex, seemingly fragmented play with a single clear idea [...]. But an imposed unity destroys the very complexity that makes the drama so rich”.²⁵⁰ Metatheatrical language and theatrical staging are part of the way the play addresses audience expectations.

IV.vii. Psychological, Feminist and Gender Criticism

“That human nature is not ‘natural’, but is, rather, shaped by social forces and values, is an understanding we have long had in relation to men but one which has been more difficult to grasp with regard to women. *Troilus and Cressida* may seem the last place to look for such insights, informed as it is with a loathing of humanity, an aversion to sex and the physical, and more misogyny than is usual with Shakespeare”

18; Roger Apfelbaum, *Shakespeare’s “Troilus and Cressida”: Textual Problems and Performance Solutions* (Newark, NJ: University of Delaware Press, 2004); Frances A. Shirley, *Troilus and Cressida: Shakespeare in Production* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); and Jan Sewell and Peter Kirwan, “*Troilus and Cressida* in Performance: the RSC and Beyond”, in *Troilus and Cressida: The RSC Shakespeare*, ed. Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (New York: Modern Library, 2010), pp. 155-92.

²⁴⁸ Bridget Escolme, “‘Bits and bitterness’: politics, performance, *Troilus and Cressida*”, in *Talking to the Audience: Shakespeare, Performance, Self* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 24-51 (p. 51). For another useful gender-conscious performance studies reading, see Carol Chillington Rutter, “Designs on Shakespeare: Troilus’s Sleeve, Cressida’s glove, Helen’s placket”, in *Enter The Body: Women and Representation on Shakespeare’s Stage* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 104-41. For recent constructions of Cressida in performance, see Jami Rogers, “Cressida in Twenty-First Century Performance”, *Shakespeare*, forthcoming (first published online 19 April 2013: DOI: 10.1080/17450918.2013.766235).

²⁴⁹ See, for example, Clifford P. Lyons’s consideration of the “thematic emphasis” of the play in relation to the trysting scenes from a staging point of view in “The Trysting Scenes in *Troilus and Cressida*”, in *Shakespearean Essays*, ed. Alwin Thaler and Norman Sanders (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1964), pp. 105-20 (p. 105).

²⁵⁰ Arlin J. Hiken, “Texture in *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Educational Theatre Journal*, 19.3 (1967), 367-69 (p. 367).

– Gayle Greene (1983)²⁵¹

Countless early critics seem to have followed the other Trojan and Greek characters' readings of the men and women in *Troilus and Cressida*.²⁵² After the Second World War, however, the tide did begin to turn on the critics who thought that Cressida was simply "cheap stuff", as Alice Walker (1957) had put it.²⁵³ Barbara Heliodora C. de M.F. de Almeida (1964) argued that "Cressida is no better than Troilus [...] she is also presented as a victim of circumstances".²⁵⁴ But, as Grant L. Voth and Oliver H. Evans (1975) pointed out, "[w]hatever else critics have disagreed about in reading the play, such estimates of Cressida's character [as "a mere prostitute"] have seldom been called into question".²⁵⁵ Carolyn Asp's "In Defense of Cressida" (1977) argued against critics such as Arnold Stein (1969) who had seen Cressida as rather "underrefined".²⁵⁶ Asp suggested that Cressida "embodies the play's central metaphysical question: is value a quality intrinsic in the object or is it a variable, fluctuating with subjective appreciation and perspectives?".²⁵⁷ Besides providing a more sympathetic reading of Cressida, feminist and gender studies of the play have on occasion linked this notion of the characters' perspectives with that of an audience or other critics.

These approaches have especially been interested in the way in which gender distinctions are polarised and collapsed in the play, while others have noted how gender takes

²⁵¹ Gayle Greene, "Shakespeare's Cressida: 'A kind of self'", *The Woman's Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare* ed. Carolyn Ruth Swift Lenz, Gayle Greene and Carol Thomas Neely (Urbana, Chicago, IL, and London: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 133-49 (p. 133).

²⁵² Chris Norris examines the way that critics often take the view point of characters in "Post-structuralist Shakespeare: text and ideology", in *Alternative Shakespeares*, ed. John Drakakis (London and New York: Routledge, 1985), pp. 47-66.

²⁵³ Alice Walker, "Introduction", *Troilus and Cressida*, ed. Alice Walker and John Dover Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), pp. ix-xlvi (p. xii).

²⁵⁴ Barbara Heliodora C. de M.F. de Almeida, "Troilus and Cressida: Romantic Love Revisited", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 15.4 (1964), 422-37 (p. 331).

²⁵⁵ Grant L. Voth and Oliver H. Evans, "Cressida and the World of the Play", *Shakespeare Studies*, 8 (1975), 231-39 (p. 231).

²⁵⁶ Arnold Stein, "Troilus and Cressida: The Disjunctive Imagination", *English Literary History*, 36.1 (1969), 145-167 (p. 149).

²⁵⁷ Carolyn Asp, "In Defense of Cressida", *Studies in Philology*, 74.4 (1977) 406-17 (p. 407); Asp also provides examples of uncomplimentary critical opinion towards Cressida, p. 406, f.n. 1.

on a performative dimension.²⁵⁸ A number of these performances have been considered in terms of the way that actions are gendered in the ideologies traditionally surrounding love and war.²⁵⁹ Considerations of the play especially focussed on masculine gender negotiations and homosociality have been provided by Gary Spear (1993), Daniel Juan Gil (2001) and Robin Headlam Wells (2000), among others: many of these have focused on the emulation rampant in the play, a topic also of interest to René Girard (discussed below).²⁶⁰ Alan Sinfield (2011) recently provided a queer reading of the play, seeing “the sexual potential of various scenarios” in relation to “(what we think of as) homosexual acts”.²⁶¹ Together, these critics implicitly raise questions about the ways in which an audience might be expected to

²⁵⁸ For other feminist or gender concerned writing focussed on Cressida, see, for example, Karen Bjelland, “Cressida and the Renaissance ‘Marketplace’ – The Role of Binarism and Amphibology in Shakespeare’s Articulation of the Troy Legend”, in *Sexuality and Politics in Renaissance Drama*, ed. Carole Levin and Karen Robertson (Lewiston, NY, Queenston and Lampeter: Mellen, 1991), pp. 165-85; Alexander Leggatt, “*Troilus and Cressida*: This is and is not Cressid”, in *Shakespeare’s Tragedies: Violation and Identity* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 84-113; Stephen J. Lynch, “Shakespeare’s Cressida: ‘A Woman of Quick Sense’”, *Philological Quarterly*, 63.3 (1984), 357-68; Laurie E. Maguire, “Performing Anger: The Anatomy of Abuse(s) in *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Renaissance Drama*, n.s., 31 (2002), 153-83; Simon Palfrey, *Doing Shakespeare* (London: Thomson Learning, 2005), pp. 248-68; Claire M. Tylee, “The Text of Cressida and Every Ticklish Reader: *Troilus and Cressida*, The Greek Camp Scene”, *Shakespeare Survey*, 41 (1988), 63-76. For a broader reading of Cressida in relation to a cultural history of Helen, see Laurie E. Magurie, *Helen of Troy: From Homer to Hollywood* (Chichester, Oxford and Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), esp. 93-97.

²⁵⁹ M.M. Burns, “*Troilus and Cressida*: The Worst of Both Worlds”, *Shakespeare Studies*, 13 (1980), 105-30; Marilyn French (1981), *Shakespeare’s Division of Experience* (London: Cape, 1982); Lorraine Helms, “‘Still Wars and Lechery’: Shakespeare and the Last Trojan Woman”, in *Arms and the Woman; War, Gender, and Literary Representation*, ed. Helen M. Cooper, Adrienne Auslander Munich and Susan Merrill Squier (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), pp. 25-42; Richard Hillman, “Love’s Tyranny Inside-Out in the Problem Plays: Yours, Mine, and Counter-Mine”, in *Shakespearean Subversions: The Trickster and the Play-text* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 150-79; Laura Levine, “*Troilus and Cressida* and the Politics of Rage”, in *Men in Women’s Clothing: Anti-Theatricality and Effeminization, 1579-1642* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 26-43; Marianne Novy, “Violence, Love and Gender in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Troilus and Cressida*” in *Love’s Argument: Gender Relations in Shakespeare* (Chapel Hill, NC and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), pp. 99-124; Kristina Faber, “Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*: Of War and Lechery”, *Colby Quarterly*, 26.2 (1990), 133-48; and Barbara E. Bowen, *Gender in the Theater of War: Shakespeare’s “Troilus and Cressida”* (New York and London: Garland, 1993).

²⁶⁰ Gary Spear, “Shakespeare’s ‘Manly’ Parts: Masculinity and Effeminacy in *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 44.4 (1993), 409-22; Daniel Juan Gil, “At the Limits of the Social World: Fear and Pride in *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 52.3 (2001), 336-359; and Robin Headlam Wells, “The Chivalric Revival: *Henry V* and *Troilus and Cressida*”, in *Shakespeare on Masculinity* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 31-60.

²⁶¹ Alan Sinfield, “The Leather Men and the Lovely Boy: Reading Positions in *Troilus and Cressida*” *Shakespeare: A Queer Companion to the Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. Madhavi Menon (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 376-84 (p. 380); see also, Gregory W. Bredbeck, “Constructing Patroclus: The High and Low Discourses of Renaissance Sodomy”, in *The Performance of Power: Theatrical Discourse and Politics*, ed. Sue-Ellen Case and Janelle Reinelt (Iowa, IA: University of Iowa Press, 1991), pp. 77-91. On the friendship between Achilles and Patroclus, see also John Garrison, “Shakespeare and Friendship: An Intersection of Interest”, *Literature Compass*, 9.5 (2012), 371-79.

emulate the characters in the play, or be repelled by this invitation. All these critics discuss the way that the characters in the play are represented as being concerned about how their relationships are perceived by others.

The way that characters judge and desire other characters has often been analysed by critics interested in psychological approaches: these have often been poststructuralists using Freud, Althusser and more often Lacan, sometimes linking characters' desires with those of a theatre or reading audience.²⁶² Thinking on the "visual pleasure" of the play, Barbara Hodgdon (1990) is one of the few feminist critics to ask questions about the possible early audiences for *Troilus and Cressida*, asking rhetorically whether "a female spectator in the Renaissance [would] share a similar outlook [to a modern one]".²⁶³ Gayle Greene (1983) is representative of many feminist critics who have argued that, "by showing Cressida in

²⁶² See Janet Adelman, "'Is Thy Union Here?': Union and Its Discontents in *Troilus and Cressida* and *Othello*", in *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, "Hamlet" to "The Tempest"* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 38-75; Philip Armstrong, "*Troilus and Cressida*: Space Wars", in *Shakespeare's Visual Regime: Tragedy, Psychoanalysis and the Gaze* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2000), pp. 91-134; Alex Arson, *Psyche and Symbol in Shakespeare* (Bloomington, IN, and London: Indiana University Press, 1972), esp. pp. 66-93; Catherine Belsey, "Desire's excess and the English Renaissance theatre: *Edward II*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Othello*", in *Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage*, ed. Susan Zimmerman (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 84-102; Carol Cook, "Unbodied Figures of Desire", *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*, ed. Sue-Ellen Case (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1990), pp. 177-95; Kevin Laam, "Shakespeare and Happiness", *Literature Compass*, 7.6 (2010), 439-51; David McCandless, "*Troilus and Cressida*", in *Gender and Performance in Shakespeare's Problem Comedies* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), pp. 123-66; Marcus Nordlund, "The Problem of Romantic Love: Shakespeare and Evolutionary Psychology", in *The Literary Animal: Evolution and the Nature of Narrative*, ed. Jonathan Gottschall and David Sloan Wilson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2005), pp. 107-25; Stephen A. Reid, "A Psychoanalytic Reading of *Troilus and Cressida* and *Measure for Measure*", *Psychoanalytic Review*, 57.2 (1970), 263-82; James O'Rourke, "'Rule in Unity' and Otherwise: Love and Sex in *Troilus and Cressida*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 43.2 (1992), 139-58, and James O'Rourke, "Love and Object-Cathexis in *Troilus and Cressida*: Just One of Those Things", in *Re-Theorizing Shakespeare through Presentist Readings* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 79-104; Emil Roy, "War and Manliness in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*", *Comparative Drama*, 7.2 (1973), 107-20; Valerie Traub, "Invading bodies / bawdy exchanges: disease, desire, and representation", in *Desire and Anxiety: Circulation of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 71-87; Douglas B. Wilson, "The Commerce of Desire: Freudian Narcissism in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* and Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*", *English Language Notes*, 21.1 (1983), 11-22; and Slavoj Žižek, *In Defense of Lost Causes* (London and New York: Verso, 2008), esp. 26-29 and 80-82.

²⁶³ Barbara Hodgdon, "He Do Cressida in Different Voices", *English Literary Renaissance*, 20.2 (1990), 254-286 (p. 258). See also Johann Gregory and Alice Leonard, "Assuming Gender in *Hamlet* and *Troilus and Cressida*: 'Are we to assume that there were women in the audience?'" *Assuming Gender*, 1.2 (2010), 44-61 and Linda Charnes, "'So Unsecret to Ourselves': Notorious Identity and the Material Subject in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 40.4 (1989), 413-40. Virginia Mason Vaughan provides a more new historicist reading in, "Daughters of the Game: *Troilus and Cressida* and the Sexual Discourse of 16th-Century England", *Women's Studies International Forum*, 13.3 (1990), 209-20.

relation to the men and society who make her what she is, [Shakespeare] provides a context that qualifies the apparently misogynistic elements of her characterization”.²⁶⁴ The topic of desire has been linked to the Trojan matter through Helen of Troy and others for centuries, but in Shakespeare’s play this desire is undercut by a more local Elizabethan awareness.

René Girard (1974, 1985 and 1991) – who as Jonathan Gil Harris remarks “returns repeatedly” in his writing to *Troilus and Cressida* – thought that Shakespeare was “promoting two separate, unequal, and incomparable readings of his play”.²⁶⁵ One reading is the “nonmimetic” and “sexist” reading which Girard thinks is ultimately “an illusion of a nonmimetic *jealousy*”.²⁶⁶ The other reading sees the “author [having] woven his mimetic interaction [...] skilfully into the old plot”.²⁶⁷ Girard is keen to read the mimetic desire, rather than a Freudian desire, at work in this play. He prefers the second “enlightened reading”; for those who endorse this reading, Girard suggests, “our feeling of complicity with the author will be intense and will greatly add to our enjoyment of this most mischievous play”.²⁶⁸ Although the idea that the audience is only complicit with the “enlightened reading” and that there are exactly two readings may be put under scrutiny, Girard’s argument that Shakespeare was working in resistance to a dominant reading or “old tale” is useful, and supports the notion that Shakespeare was working under a great weight of audience expectation.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁴ Gayle Greene, “Shakespeare’s Cressida: ‘A kind of self’”, *The Woman’s Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare* ed. Carolyn Ruth Swift Lenz, Gayle Greene and Carol Thomas Neely (Urbana, Chicago, IL, and London: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 133-49 (p. 145).

²⁶⁵ On the way that René Girard “returns repeatedly” to *Troilus and Cressida*, see Jonathan Gil Harris, *Shakespeare and Literary Theory: Oxford Shakespeare Topics* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 36-41 (p. 37). René Girard (1991), “Lechery and War: the Subversion of the Medieval Troilus and Cressida”, in *A Theatre of Envy*, 2nd edn (Leominster and New Malden: Gracewing, 2000), pp. 136-40 (p. 139).

²⁶⁶ Girard, *A Theatre of Envy*, pp. 138-39.

²⁶⁷ Girard, *A Theatre of Envy*, p. 138.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 139.

²⁶⁹ See also René Girard, “The Plague in Literature” in “*To double business bound*”: *Essays on Literature, Mimesis, and Anthropology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp. 136-154 (first publ. in *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 15.5 (1974), 833-50); René Girard, “The Politics of Desire in *Troilus and Cressida*” in Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman (London: Methuen, 1985), pp. 188-209; René Girard (1991), “A Woeful Cressid’ mongst the Merry Greeks”: The Love Affair in *Troilus and Cressida*”, in *A Theatre of Envy*, 2nd edn (Leominster and New Malden: Gracewing, 2000), pp. 121-35; René Girard, “These Men’s Looks: Power Games in *Troilus and Cressida*”, in *A Theatre of Envy*, pp. 141-51; René Girard, “O

Feminist and psychological approaches to the text have helped to highlight the many connections between character expectations and audience expectations, breaking down nineteenth-century notions of a fourth wall in the theatre. Readings that have seen the play as staged at one of the Inns of Court have read the play as tailored for men. But, aside from the fact that women were also often present at Inns of Court performances, recognising that the play was probably written knowing it would be staged at the Globe means that Shakespeare would have been aware that the production would be seen through the audience expectations of both men and women, and that both groups would be aware of the other one: this likelihood has important implications when characters are staged as a gendered audience.

IV.vii. Presentism

“The play does not only apprehend the presentness of the past;
it also anticipates the pastness of the present”

– Kiernan Ryan on *Troilus and Cressida* (2007)²⁷⁰

In their introduction to the collection of essays entitled *Presentist Shakespeares* (2007), Hugh Grady and Terence Hawkes began to define presentism by starting “with what it’s not”.²⁷¹

They argued that

if the alternative [to new historicism and cultural materialism] is to deal with the plays in blissful ignorance of their historical context, to impose on them, as many teachers seem unthinkingly to do, some kind of absurd contemporaneity with ourselves, usually justified by windy rhetoric about the Bard’s “universality”, then perhaps historical specificity of some sort is desirable. The new materialism’s apparently simple focus on objects is a case in point. Yet inevitably it tends to remain fixed and strangely fixated on objects as such in a practice that threatens to replicate rather than critique what Marx called the fetish of commodities.²⁷²

Pandarus!: *Troilus and Cressida* and the Universal Go-between”, in *A Theatre of Envy*, pp. 152-59; René Girard, “Pale and Bloodless Emulation: The Crisis of Degree in *Troilus and Cressida*”, in *A Theatre of Envy*, pp. 160-66; René Girard, “A Universal Wolf and a Universal Prey: the Founding Murder in *Troilus and Cressida*”, in *A Theatre of Envy*, pp. 227-33.

²⁷⁰ Kiernan Ryan, “*Troilus and Cressida*: The perils of presentism”, in *Presentist Shakespeares*, ed. Hugh Grady and Terence Hawkes (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 164-83 (p. 182).

²⁷¹ Hugh Grady and Terence Hawkes, “Introduction: Presenting presentism”, in *Presentist Shakespeares*, ed. Hugh Grady and Terence Hawkes (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 1-5 (p. 1).

²⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

For Grady and Hawkes, presentism uses “crucial aspects of the present as a trigger for its investigations” in a way that warns against fanatically reading a play in relation to its historical context in order to elucidate its meaning.²⁷³ Nevertheless, as many critics have observed, characters in *Troilus and Cressida* are seemingly fixated on objects, and even in the first publication of the play, the epistle writer imagined Shakespeare’s comedies in relation to “Commodities” (¶2r). In the final essay in the volume, “*Troilus and Cressida*: The perils of presentism”, Kiernan Ryan provides a reading of the play from a presentist perspective which is, at the same time, appreciative of both historical difference and the play’s ability to “project a future beyond the one the present is creating for itself”.²⁷⁴ For Ryan (who could perhaps be described better as a futurist than a presentist), “Shakespeare’s drama at full stretch is not only ahead of his time, but so far ahead of ours that it foresees its own demise”.²⁷⁵ Ryan’s approach, in effect, imagines a *long durée* in which Shakespeare’s play is both distanced from, and a part of, the present.

In the opening of his essay, Ryan suggests that “Dryden’s tasteful mutation gives us the measure of the original’s delinquency and determination to vex its audience”.²⁷⁶ If, as Ryan implies, *Troilus and Cressida* does manage to vex more modern audiences, as it may well have its original ones, it would seem that there is something in the matter of the play – something about the way the play addresses expectations – that vexes them. This would not necessarily be because audiences today are the same as they were when the play was written, but because the play’s situation, language and plot hold the potential to aggravate different audience members. While this first thesis chapter has provided a reflexive chance “to put

²⁷³ Ibid., p. 4.

²⁷⁴ Kiernan Ryan, “*Troilus and Cressida*: The perils of presentism” in *Presentist Shakespeares*, ed. Hugh Grady and Terence Hawkes (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 164-183 (p. 183); see also Kiernan Ryan, “‘Here’s fine revolution’: Shakespeare’s Philosophy of the Future”, *Essays in Criticism*, 63.2 (2013), 105-127 (esp. 112, 117-19). For a reading of the play from a presentist perspective, see also Linda Charnes “The Two Party System in *Troilus and Cressida*”, *A Companion to Shakespeare’s Works, Volume IV: The Poems, Problem Comedies, Late Plays*, ed. Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 302-315.

²⁷⁵ Ryan, “*Troilus and Cressida*: The perils of presentism”, p. 183.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 165.

one's cards on the table", as Grady and Hawkes put it, regarding the influences of extant writing on the play, it has also shown that *Troilus and Cressida* has the potential to generate rich and divergent meanings.²⁷⁷ Critics who have read the play more overtly in relation to their own experience of drama or politics, for example, have often seen the play in a very different light to those who have read the play in relation to its medieval and classical sources. Some critics have read the play with both these sets of expectations in mind. This critical sense of local application *and* of the *longue durée* of the play's Trojan matter is probably analogous to that of early modern audience members; they would have seen the play from their own "presentist" perspective, while being aware that there was a larger backstory.

V. What to expect: "Shakespeare's neglected masterpiece"

"Much of the effect of the play depends on expecting what you do not get"

– A.P. Rossiter on *Troilus and Cressida* (1961)²⁷⁸

The propensity of the play to generate "a dazzling variety of response[s]" may well be the very nature of language and performance.²⁷⁹ Nonetheless, the mixed reception that *Troilus and Cressida* has received over the centuries suggests that this play was built with the understanding that people would put their own expectations into it, and that soon enough these expectations would be teased and teased out. The fear of undecidability concerning the author's intentions that critics such as Hazlitt seem to exhibit is not unlike that suggested by Michel de Montaigne in relation to his cat: "When I am playing with my Cat, who knowes whether she have more sporte in dallying with me, than I have in gaming with hir?"²⁸⁰

Reading the reception of *Troilus and Cressida*, it is as if some critics and audiences fear their

²⁷⁷ Hugh Grady and Terence Hawkes, "Introduction: Presenting presentism", p. 4.

²⁷⁸ A.P. Rossiter, "*Troilus and Cressida*", in *Angels with Horns; Fifteen Lectures on Shakespeare*, ed. Graham Storey (London and New York: Longman, 1989), pp. 129-51 (p. 131).

²⁷⁹ Barton "Introduction to *Troilus and Cressida*", p. 479.

²⁸⁰ Michel de Montaigne, *The Essayes or Morall, Politike and Millitarie Discourses of Lo: Michael de Montaigne*, trans. John Florio (London, 1603), Z4^v (p. 260).

tastes and expectations are teased by Shakespeare. When the play is considered in relation to the early modern scene, there is reason to believe that Shakespeare *was* involved in a cat-and-mouse game with his contemporary poets and audiences in a “poetomachia” concerning literary tastes and expectations of theatre.

Shakespeare’s engagement with expectation means that the play obliquely *critiques in advance* the way it will be valued by audiences. Although Dryden resurrected Shakespeare as a ghost to provide an authoritative prologue for his rewritten version, Shakespeare’s play comes with a Prologue who announces that he greets the audience, but “not in confidence / Of author’s pen or actor’s voice” (Pro., 24). As Shakespeare’s play began, it flagged up the issue of audience expectation, but the implication, even then, was that – whatever the expectation – audiences would just have to like or suffer it, because

Like, or find fault, do as your pleasures are,
Now good or bad, ’tis but the chance of war.
(Pro., 30-31)

The Prologue says that the play leaves its reception to chance, but *Troilus and Cressida* is more controlled in its initial management of expectations than Shakespeare’s Prologue would have audiences believe.²⁸¹ Slavoj Žižek (2011) recently suggested that “*Troilus and Cressida* [is] Shakespeare’s neglected masterpiece, his weirdest play, effectively a postmodern work *avant la lettre*”.²⁸² To see the play as a masterpiece rather than a failure is to recognise that despite the language of failure that pervades the play the text still represents an underlying sense of purpose or artistic construction: it holds the potential to test audience expectations, even as it eschews a final moral, message or perspective by seeming at times purposeless and

²⁸¹ Shakespeare’s authorial strategy seems to be even more self-effacing than the courtly act of “sprezzatura”; although the term “sprezzatura” marking an “ease of manner, [or a] studied carelessness” was not used in English until the twentieth century (*OED*, *Sprezzatura*, n.), Baldesar Castiglione’s *Il Cortegiano* (1528) was known to Shakespeare’s contemporaries. See George Bull, “Introduction”, in Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of The Courtier*, trans. George Bull (London and New York: Penguin, 1967), pp. 9-19 (esp. pp. 13-14).

²⁸² Slavoj Žižek, “Wicked meaning in a lawful deed”: Shakespeare on the Obscenity of Power”, *Shakespeare After 9/11: How a Social Trauma Reshapes Interpretation*, ed. Matthew Biberman and Julia Reinhard Lupton (Lewiston, NY, Queenston and Lampeter: Mellen, 2011), pp. 81-100 (p. 87).

fragmentary. Characters in the play do not explicitly discuss audience expectation in the obvious way that characters in the induction scenes of Ben Jonson's plays explicitly do, for example; however, *Troilus and Cressida* foregrounds the importance and predicament of expecting – awaiting, looking out. Although many critics have thought that the play is bent on simply disrupting audience expectations, this thesis responds by arguing that the play is also *about* audience expectations: Shakespeare uses expectations to challenge received ideas about literature and theatre, redefining the value of his own work and that of his acting company. The next chapter considers the ways in which *Troilus and Cressida* invites the theatre audience to consider the issue of expectation by *staging* audiences.

CHAPTER TWO Staging Audience and the Trojan Scene

“The prating tavern haunter speaks of me what he lists;
they print me and make me speak to the world,
and shortly they will play me upon the stage.”

– Earl of Essex in a letter of 12 May 1600 to Elizabeth I¹

“Antony
Shall be brought forth, and I shall see
Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness
I’th’ posture of whore.”

– *Antony and Cleopatra* (5.2.214-17)

The end of the sixteenth century and the start of the seventeenth saw London dramatists engaged in an intensified consideration of the value of theatre. This reflection involved the representation of characters as fictional poets and performers in the drama, but also allusions to living dramatists and real theatres and their audiences. With its staging of patrons, performers and audiences, *Troilus and Cressida* can be seen as part of Shakespeare’s engagement with the plays of his contemporaries and the conditions of theatrical performance around 1601.

In *Shakespeare & the Poets’ War*, James Bednarz explores this theatrical scene:

In this cultural moment of intense self-reflexivity, audiences as well as poets and players were subjected to a unique dramatization of theater, so that even though Jonson’s Tucca is a soldier in *Poetaster* he is afraid of going to the theater because he fears being parodied.²

As Bednarz explains, “Dekker’s Tucca in *Satiromastix*, an imitation of an imitation, voices the same concern”.³ A response to Jonson’s *Poetaster* (1601) at Blackfriars, Thomas Dekker’s *Satiromastix* (1601) seems to have been performed uniquely by both the Lord

¹ Quoted in Tom Cain, “Introduction”, in Ben Jonson, *Poetaster: The Revels Plays*, ed. Tom Cain (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995), pp.1-60 (p. 41); in future notes, this edition is referred to as “Cain (ed.)”. All references to the play are to this edition unless otherwise stated and line numbers are given in parenthesis.

² James P. Bednarz, *Shakespeare & the Poets’ War* (New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2001), p. 30.

³ Ibid.

Chamberlain's Men at the Globe and by Paul's Boys at the cathedral theatre. Dekker's play is clearly a response to Jonson's work and the new vogue for satire:⁴

A Gentleman, or an honest Cittizen, shall not Sit in your penny-bench Theaters ... but he shall be Satir'd and Epigram'd upon, and his humour must run upo'th Stage: you'll ha' *Every Gentleman in's humour*, and *Every Gentleman out on's humour*.
(4.2.52-57)

Written around the same time as *Satiromastix*, Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* is less obvious in its handling of this theatrical context, but in its staging of patrons, performers and especially audience figures, this play can be seen obliquely responding to and critiquing the audience expectations that Jonson was trying to establish for theatre, and satire especially. In this play, Shakespeare was obviously influenced by Jonson's humoural plays and the fashion for satire; however, *Troilus and Cressida* also examines (and implicitly invites its audience to question) some of the assumptions about patronised performance and the reception of theatre that Jonson's plays had recently promulgated. An analysis of Shakespeare's engagement with audience expectation, therefore, requires a consideration of the literary and theatrical fields in which he was working.

I. Bourdieu and a Literary-Theatrical Field

Pierre Bourdieu's field theory is useful for working through the ways in which Shakespeare positions *Troilus and Cressida* in the cultural and political field of its time. Bourdieu considers the idea of a "literary and artistic field" in terms of cultural production and "a field of positions and a field of position takings".⁵ For Bourdieu, this "field" view enables critics to

escape from the usual dilemma of internal ("tautegorical") reading of the work (taken in isolation or within the system of works to which it belongs) and external (or "allegorical") analysis, i.e. analysis of the social conditions of production of the producers and consumers which is based on the – generally tacit – hypothesis of the

⁴ Quoted in Bednarz, *Shakespeare & the Poets' War*, p. 30. See Thomas Dekker, *Satiromastix; or the Untrussing of the Humorous Poet* (London, 1602), H2^r.

⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production", in *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, trans. and ed. Randal Johnson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), pp. 29-73 (p. 42).

spontaneous correspondence or deliberate matching of production to demand or commission.⁶

Although the term “literary field” has become almost ubiquitous in literary studies, a minority of critics concerned with early modern literature have been explicit about the use of Bourdieu’s work. The idea of a field of production is valuable for thinking about the way a play interacts with its audience, drawing on – and even positioning itself in relation to – audience expectations.

As Bourdieu attests, the idea of the literary and artistic field helps to improve on the charismatic image of artist activity as pure, disinterested creation by an isolated artist and the reductionist vision which claims to explain the act of production and its product in terms of their conscious or unconscious external functions, by referring them, for example, to the interests of the dominant class, or, more subtly, to the ethical or aesthetic values of one or another of its fractions, from which the patrons or audiences are drawn.⁷

Bourdieu’s view helps to provide a more holistic reading of a work. Historical distance means that it is not always possible to produce the field work that Bourdieu did in his reading of twentieth-century social tastes in France. Nevertheless, this does not preclude the possibility of using his theory for reading a Shakespeare play. As Richard Wilson comments,

for literary criticism, the attraction of [Bourdieu’s] reflexive model is in providing a methodology which breaks the deadlock between formalist and materialist, internal and external, theories of the artwork, by revealing how every play or painting contains within itself the totality of its context.⁸

This project joins the idea of a literary field explored in Bourdieu’s *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* with the idea of a theatrical field in order to negotiate the flexible distinction between a play as literary artefact and a play as theatrical performance.⁹

In reading *Troilus and Cressida* in terms of a hybrid “literary-theatrical field”, it aims to

⁶ Bourdieu, “The Field of Cultural Production”, p. 34.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Richard Wilson, *Shakespeare in French Theory: King of Shadows* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 12.

⁹ Pierre Bourdieu sometimes uses the term “literary (etc) field” because he was not just writing of a literary field, but also, as he explains, “artistic, philosophical [and] scientific” ones, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Cambridge and Maldon, MA: Polity, 1996), p. 214. In this chapter, “literary-theatrical field” is employed because – as this thesis will argue – Shakespeare’s work traverses fields of theatre and literature in defining ways.

identify the way that, in writing the play, Shakespeare was involved in a cultural production that was both theatrical and literary.

Bourdieu often refers to theatre in his work; he invokes H.S. Becker to explain the idea of a literary and artistic field:

For Becker, “works of art can be understood by viewing them as the result of the co-ordinated activities of all the people whose co-operation is necessary in order that the work should occur as it does”. Consequently the inquiry must extend to all those who contribute to this result, i.e. “the people who conceive the idea of the work (e.g. composers or playwrights); people who execute it (musicians or actors); people who provide the necessary equipment and material (e.g. music instrument makers); people who make up the audience for the work (playgoers, critics, and so on)”.¹⁰

In terms of critical reading of Shakespearean drama, this field view means bearing in mind a literary-theatrical field that includes actors, playwrights, musicians, audiences, patrons, censors, theatre-managers, prompters, stagehands, and even, as this thesis will argue, poets, printers, publishers, booksellers and readers. As a sociologist, Bourdieu is also interested in the scientific evidence of a field; however, Bourdieu’s close reading of Gustave Flaubert’s *A Sentimental Education* in *The Rules of Art* provides a programme for critiquing the literary-theatrical field of a Shakespeare play.¹¹

Perhaps not coincidentally, *Troilus and Cressida* is one of only two Shakespeare plays mentioned in Bourdieu’s *magnum opus* on the literary field.¹² *Troilus and Cressida* is particularly alert to its early modern literary-theatrical field. This sensitivity includes those parts of the field thought to be more remote from the theatre than actors and the playwright, the obvious cultural producers; for example, in a wider view, members of the printing press, readers, audiences and even other playwrights were all involved in “producing”

¹⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, “The Field of Cultural Production”, pp. 34-5, quoting H.S. Becker, “Art Worlds and Social Types”, *American Behavioural Scientist*, 19.6 (1976), 703-19 (pp. 703-4).

¹¹ Gustave Flaubert, *A Sentimental Education*, trans. Douglas Parm   (French second version 1869; Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

¹² Bourdieu also refers to Freud’s reading of the casket scene in *The Merchant of Venice* in relation to notions of art and money, noting how the notion of pure art is often associated with that of pure love, *The Rules of Art*, p. 24. Bourdieu’s reference to *Troilus and Cressida* is discussed in Chapter Four.

Shakespeare's plays as they are now seen or read.¹³ Furthermore, historical audiences, patrons and other authorities such as the Master of the Revels would have affected the conditions in which the poet-playwrights worked. Some artworks will be more alert to their own artistic field than others, but this play's heightened metatheatricity suggests a special sensitivity to the literary-theatrical field. In its literary and theatrical negotiations, *Troilus and Cressida* encourages its audience to think specifically about the theatre of the Trojan scene, and to contemplate their own expectations of that material.

II. Plays-within-Plays and the *Theatrum Mundi*: Staging Audiences

To think critically about *Troilus and Cressida* in terms of early modern audience expectations presents the difficulties of critical expectations, historical distance, the composition of the audience, and the sometimes ethereal nature of expectations themselves.¹⁴ Although the historical expectations of audiences will often remain conjectural, the text of *Troilus and Cressida* itself invites a consideration of audience expectation, especially given its context within early modern theatre and the Poets' War specifically. Phyllis Rackin suggests that "Shakespeare's strategy, in play after play, works to implicate the audience in the action and to transgress the comfortable demarcation between stage and audience".¹⁵ As this chapter argues, *Troilus and Cressida* offers a particularly strong example of such tendencies. It is ultimately this staged engagement with ideas of performance, spectatorship, and authority that enables Shakespeare to dramatize a subtle and involved response to the literary-theatrical field. Shakespeare's plays invite their audience to be more self-reflexive about their role

¹³ The role of the printers and the press is discussed in Chapter Four.

¹⁴ As Phyllis Rackin cautions, "[a]ttempts to deal with audience response raise the ghosts of critical fallacies long dead, which spring up from the cellarage to warn us: the responses of Shakespeare's original audience are inaccessible to any closer knowledge than learned conjecture. The responses of any actual modern audience are conditioned by all sorts of factors extraneous to the text. An ideal audience is a difficult and dubious hypothesis. Criticism based upon a critic's own responses is inevitably singular and partial; Shakespeare's audience was plural and heterogeneous", "The Role of the Audience in Shakespeare's *Richard II*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 36.3 (1985), 262-81 (p. 281).

¹⁵ Ibid.

when audiences are staged – by making characters into performers or by representing them as audience figures. The language of *Troilus and Cressida* constructs its characters as spectators or members of an audience. It also represents the characters' understanding of others as members of an audience.¹⁶ As subsequent chapters will explore, this foregrounding of the staging of spectatorship and performance enables Shakespeare to offer an implicit response to the rhetorical and aesthetic strategies of his contemporaries.¹⁷

Several of Shakespeare's plays stage a play-within-a-play: for example, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, and *Hamlet*.¹⁸ Alvin B. Kernan suggests that on one level these interior entertainments encourage theatre audiences to become more reflective about their role as spectators or as audience members: "By looking at images of themselves on the stage [...] an audience could become self-conscious about its own role in making theatre work and learn the importance of simple good theatrical manners".¹⁹ Laurie Maguire suggests that "[o]ne of the ways [plays] can train [audiences] is by putting them on stage, dramatising right and wrong reactions".²⁰ The motivation behind this staging of audiences may not always be simply didactic: the onstage audience of the interior plays has the potential to parallel and disrupt the perspective of the theatregoer. This metatheatrical device can have repercussions for ideas about a *theatrum mundi*. As Kernan notes, the audiences within such a play are, on the whole,

totally unaware of their own status as actors, totally sure of their own reality, and completely insensitive to the fact that they have their existence only in plays which,

¹⁶ The final chapter will consider the way that this staging of audience may also affect an audience that reads the play.

¹⁷ For the idea of "staging spectatorship", see, for example, Joanne Rochester, *Staging Spectatorship in the Plays of Philip Massinger* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010).

¹⁸ The mechanicals stage *Pyramus and Thisbe* in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Pageant of the Nine Worthies* is presented in *Love's Labour's Lost*, and *The Mousetrap* is performed in *Hamlet*.

¹⁹ Alvin B. Kernan, "Shakespeare's and Jonson's View of Public Theatre Audiences", in *Jonson and Shakespeare*, ed. Ian Donaldson (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1983), pp. 74-88 (p. 84).

²⁰ On this training of the audience, see also Laurie Maguire, "Minding the Gap: Making Meaning in the Theatre", British Academy Lecture, 9 May 2011, pp. 1-16 (p. 4); available at <<http://www.britac.ac.uk/events/2011/shakespeare.cfm>> [accessed 1 July 2011].

while they maintain illusion more effectively, are no more real than the oftentimes silly and ineffective plays-within-the-play which they are watching.²¹

For Kernan, these staged audiences can be seen as “images of the actual audience”, and, in consequence, the theatre audience is “forced to see [that we] are only players unselfconsciously playing the roles of Smith and Jones in a larger play we arrogantly title *Reality*”.²² All the same, the question of how “unselfconsciously” people play roles is a rather moot point with Shakespeare. The theme of *theatrum mundi* is not announced overtly in *Troilus and Cressida*, as it is in *As You Like It* and *The Merchant of Venice* for example.²³ The protagonist apparently fights against this *topos* in *Hamlet* saying that he has “that within which passeth show” (1.2.85). In *Troilus and Cressida*, however, this theme is taken further with characters either exploiting the idea of a *theatrum mundi* for their own ends or becoming despairingly conscious of it.

The play’s exploration of what Kernan calls a “theatrical metaphysic”, thinking about the theatrical field, dramatizes the characters coming to terms – successfully or not – with their (theatrical) roles in Troy. The play itself situates its own action in relation to its audience and other literature and theatre set in Troy, the Trojan scene. In its staging of spectatorship and audience within this Trojan scene, *Troilus and Cressida* troubles the role of audiences as witnesses, conspirators, tasters, consumers, ill-humoured patients and potential victims.²⁴ This exploration of the concept of audience, and especially audience expectation, in *Troilus and Cressida* shows Shakespeare testing the literary-theatrical field at the turn of the century.

²¹ Kernan, “Shakespeare’s and Jonson’s View”, p. 85.

²² Ibid.

²³ Jaques exclaims “All the world’s a stage” (2.7.138) in *As You Like It*, while in the opening scene of *The Merchant of Venice* Antonio says “I hold the world but as the world, Graziano – / A stage where every man must play a part” (1.1.77-78).

²⁴ The term “trouble” to describe the agency of the play echoes the use of this term in both the scandalous trouble of Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity*, 2nd edn (London and New York: Routledge, 1999) (cf. pp. xxix-xxx), and the “powerful trouble” (4.1.18) of the Witches in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*.

III. The Performances of Thersites and Pandarus, and Their Audience

Troilus and Cressida contains a number of performances or “scene[s]” (Pro., 1 and 1.3.174) within the play that create onstage audiences. It also contains several moments where characters are asked to perform in ways that create an onstage audience. As Laurie Maguire notes,

there is not a single Elizabethan play that does not show us a spectator commenting or interpreting or reacting emotionally to what they have seen or heard. This is not an exaggeration but a loose interpretation of inset drama.²⁵

These representations of staged spectators are important for considering how the play negotiates conventions concerning spectatorship in relation to expectation. As critics have found, the language of *Troilus and Cressida* is often highly visual.²⁶ This language works with the staging of characters as viewers to amplify the association between staged spectators and expectant theatre audiences.

Three of the most overtly staged performances in the play, where everyone on stage seems to appreciate the action as a performance, include: Thersites’ “rail[ing]” (2.3.19) near the tent of Achilles and Patroclus; Pandarus’s singing to Helen and Paris (3.1); and Thersites’ “pageant of Ajax” (3.3.268) at Achilles’ tent. The scenes show the characters themselves involved in a staged performance, or, in early modern language, an “entertainment”. These three scenes, to which this chapter will return, all dramatize a field of cultural production for the particular performance they contain; for example, Thersites takes on the role of a court jester giving private performances for Achilles and Patroclus, and Pandarus provides a “performance” (3.1.44) for Helen and Paris, as if they are his sovereign patrons. Furthermore, as discussed towards the end of the chapter, Patroclus is described by Ulysses as a boy-player performing for Achilles. The way these performances and their audiences represent a literary-theatrical field within *Troilus and Cressida* has repercussions for thinking about the play as a

²⁵ Maguire, “Minding the Gap”, p. 4.

²⁶ See Chapter One: IV.iv. Language and Textual Approaches.

whole in terms of its own position in the field. These different performances are nuanced in terms of the relationship between the patrons / audience figures and the performers in ways that are especially significant in relation to other late-Elizabethan plays. Playwrights such as Ben Jonson, for example, had tried to curry favour by staging characters performing deferentially towards the sovereign patron. The entertainments within *Troilus and Cressida*, therefore, can be read as a comment on this practice.

The first overtly staged performance shows Shakespeare representing a satirist and a coterie audience. Thersites' railing is understood by Achilles and Patroclus as a theatrical performance; they see it as existing within a tradition of satire and fooling. As Achilles makes expressly clear to Patroclus (and thus to the theatre audience), "Thersites is a privileged man" (2.3.51). Achilles means that Thersites is a fool by profession, "privileged" or licensed to be more outspoken. The framing of Thersites' actions *as* performance is further enhanced by Patroclus' invitation to Thersites to act; he sees him outside the tent and says "Good Thersites, come in and rail" (2.3.19). This sense that Thersites is providing a performance is furthered by Achilles who, on seeing Thersites, exclaims: "Art thou come? Why, my cheese, my digestion, why hast thou not served thyself in to my table so many meals?" (2.3.35-37). Just as cheese forms part of an after dinner dish, so the implication is that Thersites' actions are habitually part of an after dinner treat, an entertainment.²⁷ Thersites' railing, therefore, stages Achilles and Patroclus not just as viewers or auditors, but as an audience, even a coterie that delights in satire and mockery. As explored in relation to taste in the next chapter, this invocation of satire also implicitly invokes the "comical satire" that Ben Jonson had inaugurated in the build-up to *Troilus and Cressida*.²⁸ In relation to the literary-theatrical

²⁷ Anthony Dawson notes that cheese was "[t]raditionally eaten at the end of a meal as an aid to digestion", Dawson (ed.), p. 128.

²⁸ Ben Jonson's *Every Man Out of His Humour* (1599), first performed at the Globe, was advertised as a "Comicall Satyre" on the title page of its first publication (London, 1600), A1^r. Jonson went on to write two other comical satires – *Cynthia's Revels* (1600) and *Poetaster* (1601) – acted by the Children of the Chapel

field of its inception, this genre was, as Ian Donaldson suggests, “a remarkable challenge not just to [Jonson’s] theatrical rivals [...] but also – with far greater bravery – to civil and ecclesiastical authority as well”.²⁹ Shakespeare’s scene offers the viewers of *Troilus and Cressida* a satire of private theatre, theatres newly opened with satires written by Jonson and John Marston.³⁰

In a major scene at the start of Act Three, characters are framed as audience again. This time, the staged performance has a more courtly setting. Following a performance by court musicians, Pandarus interrupts Helen and Paris’s listening: “Fair prince, here is good broken music” (3.1.41-42). Paris exclaims: “You have broke it, cousin, and by my life you shall make it whole again – you shall piece it out with a piece of your performance” (3.1.43-44). Paris puns on Pandarus’s use of the term “broken”, meaning “music in parts” (3.1.17) to suggest that Pandarus will have to provide a performance to fix the musical entertainment. When Pandarus finally does sing and play, then, his actions are staged as a theatrical performance – he is acting *as if* he was a court musician.³¹ He asks one of the musicians to “give [him] an instrument” (3.1.81-82) and says “I’ll sing you a song now” (3.1.89-90), establishing Helen and Paris as the audience. Like the musicians, Pandarus is not singing a song primarily for his own amusement; Helen says beforehand, “we’ll hear you sing certainly” (3.1.52) and commands, “Let thy song be love” (3.1.94).³² Helen and Paris are, in a

Royal at Blackfriars, although the term “comical satire” was not added to the title-pages until the folio edition; see Cain (ed.), p. 62.

²⁹ Ian Donaldson, “Global Satire 1598-1601”, in *Ben Jonson: A Life* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 145-74 (p. 153).

³⁰ The reference to Thersites’ “mastic jaws” (1.3.73) has been read as a reference to John Marston and his play *Histrionastix* (c.1599; London, 1610); see Bednarz, *Shakespeare & the Poets’ War*, p. 47 and Bednarz, “Writing and Revenge: John Marston’s *Histrionastix*”, *Comparative Literature*, 36.1/2 (2002), 21-51 (p. 50).

³¹ On the significance of music in Shakespeare’s work, see David Lindley, *Shakespeare and Music: Arden Critical Companions* (London: Thomson Learning, 2006). Lindley comments that “[i]t is one of the play’s many ironies that the only character that we actually see singing is not a ‘merry Greek’ but the Trojan Pandarus”, p. 120. On Shakespeare and music, see also Joseph M. Ortiz, *Broken Harmony: Shakespeare and the Politics of Music* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2011) and Lucy Munro, “Music and Sound”, in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theatre*, ed. Richard Dutton (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 543-59.

³² With the line “Love, love, nothing but love” (3.1.97), Paris seems to suggest the song to be sung, unless Pandarus’s song is improvised from this first line. As Dawson notes, “Paris presumably starts the song for

sense, privileged spectators who can request the performance. This scenario is similar to that in *Hamlet* when the Prince asks the travelling players for “the murder of Gonzago” (2.2.514-15), and that in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* when Theseus is able to “Make choice” (5.1.43) of what will be performed for the evening’s entertainment.

Helen and Paris form an elite audience, and yet, as the scene seems to show, the music could also be appreciated – as the servant makes clear – by those “that love music” (3.1.23). This scene suggests other spectators for Pandarus’s performance – the servant who, as Dawson notes, “presumably remains throughout” and the musicians who lend Pandarus an instrument.³³ This extra audience, often disregarded by critics, puts the “primary” audience of Helen and Paris in a different perspective. Pandarus’s performance is apparently heard by the couple who are watched by the musicians and the servant, who are in turn observed by the theatre audience. As Dawson suggests, the “use of extras as onlookers can add to the pronounced voyeurism of the scene”.³⁴ Music is sometimes part of a different cultural field of production from that of the theatre because it could be performed by special musicians at court. Nevertheless, when these court musicians are represented on stage this specialist field is evoked by the theatrical field: this insight has interesting repercussions for the play considering that music is mentioned so often in relation to order and disorder.³⁵ The potential for this scene – and others in the play – to order the seemingly disordered action by presenting an audience *with an audience* will need to be considered further. In this music room scene, though, Shakespeare uses his “public” play to stage a private patronised performance. Ostensibly, the performance is arranged for the sovereign viewers, but the

Pandarus, though he might simply be indicating which song he wants, or what the musicians are to play”, Dawson (ed.), p. 143.

³³ Ibid., p. 140.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ On music in relation to order, see, for example, Ulysses’ famous speech, including the lines “Take but degree away, untune that string, / And hark what discord follows” (1.3.109-10). As well as staging the more usual musicians, Shakespeare’s plays could also present court musicians; see the Hautboys, for example, in *All Is True* (*Henry VIII*) (1.4.).

presence of the other musicians (and possibly the servant) invites the scene to be “eyed awry” (*Richard II*, 2.2.19) by Shakespeare’s theatre audience.

Finally, Thersites’ performance of an entertainment in Act Three adds a new dimension to the kind of performances presented in the play by implicitly foregrounding the issue of a *theatrum mundi* and the larger political scene in Troy. Rather than simply railing at his onstage audience as he did in earlier scenes, Thersites announces, “I will put on [Ajax’s] presence: let Patroclus make demands to me, you shall see the pageant of Ajax” (3.3.266-67). Again, Thersites is unmistakably “the fool” (3.3.236), but this time Patroclus apparently acts in a liminal space – half audience and half actor taking part in the dialogue. This scene presents Thersites as a court-jester impersonating Ajax, and the onstage performance shows an actor playing Thersites impersonating Ajax. Again, Achilles is the primary audience for Thersites’ acting, while the theatre audience watches at a further remove. Thersites’ impersonation, as a performance, is particularly appropriate for a play in which Greeks and Trojans seem continually (and bizarrely) to be impersonating themselves, as a part of the Trojan *theatrum mundi*.³⁶ Here, Thersites satirises Ajax in the way that Tucca fears he will be parodied in Jonson’s *Poetaster* and Dekker’s *Satiromastix*: the irony, though, as the next chapter explores, is that Ajax’s self-importance was probably represented as being like Jonson’s. Taken together, these performances in *Troilus and Cressida* deserve special attention for the way that they offer the audience a chance to reconsider the work of Shakespeare’s contemporaries, and especially that of Jonson. These scenes implicitly invite the theatre audience to reflect on the value of Shakespeare’s own drama in relation to “courtly” performance and private performance more generally.

³⁶ On the characters’ concern with their own identity, see Linda Charnes, “‘So Unsecret to Ourselves’: Notorious Identity and the Material Subject in Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 40.4 (1989), 413-40.

IV. Performing Speeches: Expectations of Orators

The new satires at the private theatres often denigrated the public theatre, and even theatre more generally. Critics such as Anne Barton have noticed how the language of *Troilus and Cressida* often evokes theatrical imagery; like some of the comments in plays put on at the private theatres, this imagery is often “unflattering to the stage”.³⁷ The question of how one is viewed is both of vital importance for the characters in the play within their Trojan *theatrum mundi* and significant for a theatre audience who watch them. Often in *Troilus and Cressida* actions are described *as if* they were a performance – that is, those who take part in the Trojan War are described as if they are taking part in a play. When Calchas pleads for his daughter, for example, he uses a personification that could suggest the theatre prompter: “Th’ advantage of the time prompts me aloud / To call for recompense” (3.3.2).³⁸ Before considering in greater detail the performances of Thersites and Pandarus and how they are viewed, it is worth examining Shakespeare’s implied theory in this play: all human actions can be seen as theatrical.

When the Greek camp is first staged, Agamemnon and Nestor make speeches before Ulysses responds. After four and a half lines of flattery which makes it quite clear – in case anyone in the theatre audience does not know – that Agamemnon is supposed to be the “great commander” (1.3.55), Ulysses says,

Besides the’applause and approbation
 The which [*To Agamemnon*] most mighty for thy place and sway,
 And thou [*To Nestor*] most reverend for thy stretched-out life,
 I give to both your speeches, which were such
 [.....]
 As venerable Nestor, hatched in silver,
 Should, with a bond of air strong as the axle-tree
 On which heaven rides, knit all the Greekish ears
 To his experienced tongue.
 (1.3.59-62, 65-68)³⁹

³⁷ Anne Barton, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play* (Harmondsworth and New York: Penguin, 1967), p. 162.

³⁸ On the prompter or “book-holder” during performance, see Tiffany Stern, *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* (Oxford: and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 94-98.

³⁹ The stage directions are in square brackets in Dawson’s edition.

Within the world of the play, the Greek leaders' speeches are not literally a theatrical performance. As Ulysses' language suggests, however, they all sound like performers. In fact, the term "applause" appears far more times in this play than in any other by Shakespeare.⁴⁰ These references to applause and approbation are necessarily metatheatrical in a staged context.⁴¹ Whether Ulysses paralinguistically applauds Agamemnon and Nestor or not by clapping like an audience member, his vocalisation of the words "applause and approbation" implicitly constructs Ulysses retrospectively as an audience figure for their speeches.

Shakespeare uses the set speeches to compare different levels of performance. Ulysses' own speech is itself perhaps the most theatrical, and not just in terms of the fact that Ulysses can be played by an actor in the theatre: he is also shown to be performing in relation to an audience by giving a speech and by being flattering to those higher in command.⁴² Shakespeare's earlier plays, such as *Julius Caesar* and *Hamlet*, explored the way that a speech was a kind of performance, and this was almost taken for granted by writers in a time when grammar schools and universities regularly required students to practise their public

⁴⁰ In keeping with the *theatrum mundi* theme of the play and the concern with reputation, the term appears five times in *Troilus and Cressida* (1.3.59; 1.3.64; 1.3.178; 2.3.185; 3.3.119). The word never appears more than once in any other play, and – including those in *Troilus and Cressida* – only fourteen times in total; this evidence is based on a word search of Ben and David Crystal's database *Shakespeare's Words*; available at <<http://www.shakespearewords.com>> [accessed 10 July 2012].

⁴¹ In Ben Jonson's *The Magnetic Lady*, for example, the actors say in an induction scene that the author of the play does not care about "common approbation", while Richard Brathwait's book, *Ar't Asleepe Husband?*, describes a gentleman usher showing "Play-bils [...] to his Lady with great devotion; and recommends some especiall one to her view, graced by his owne judicious approbation" – Ben Jonson, *The Magnetic Lady*, in *Ben Jonson*, VI (1938), 499-597 (p. 511, Ind., 123), quoted in Tiffany Stern, *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 93; Richard Brathwait, *Ar't Asleepe Husband?* (London, 1640), M2^r (p. 163), also quoted in Stern, *Documents of Performance*, p. 52. For discussion of approbation in terms of the monarch's and a theatre's audience, see also David Schalkwyk, "Proto-nationalist Performatives and Trans-theatrical Displacement in *Henry V*", in *Transnational Exchange in Early Modern Theater*, ed. Robert Henke and Eric Nicholson (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 197-214 (pp. 202-04).

⁴² As Dawson notes, the "rhetoric of Ulysses' preliminary speech is so excessively balanced and deferential that it seems slightly mocking of the venerable leaders to whom it is addressed", Dawson (ed.), p. 97.

speaking by acting out plays.⁴³ As Thomas Heywood explained in his *An Apology for Actors* following his time at Cambridge, the use of (often classical) plays in education

is held necessary for the emboldening of their junior scholars, to arm them with audacity against they come to be employed in any public exercise [...] and makes the bashful grammarian [...] a bold sophister [...] able to moderate in any argumentation what so ever.⁴⁴

This pedagogical tradition emphasised the performance of speeches especially. Heywood writes that with this training, concerning “rhetoric, [drama] not only emboldens a scholar to speak but instructs him to speak well, and with judgments to observe his commas, colons and full points”.⁴⁵ The idea of the speech as a rather theatrical performance in itself is, of course, demonstrated when Hamlet meets the players and says: “We’ll have a speech straight. Come give us a taste of your quality” (2.2.413-14).⁴⁶ In *Troilus and Cressida*, Ulysses does not just deliver a speech; he also describes Nestor as a captivating speaker with a “bond of air” (1.3.66) between speaker and auditor. That Nestor proves ironically to be a somewhat repetitive and longwinded orator in the play, giving “stretched-out” (1.3.61) speeches, hints at Shakespeare’s deliberate testing of expectations about the elite status of these characters and the literary tradition that they come from.

The question of how theatrical Ulysses’ words are is complicated by the fact that he is ostensibly giving a practical military assessment of the situation in Troy. On the one hand, the theatre audience is invited to see the other Greek characters as *merely* hearers in a council of war, but on the other hand these characters are seen as the audience of a performance taking place in Shakespeare’s literary theatre, echoing Ulysses’ role in past plays and literature. The first folio version includes a reaction from Agamemnon before Ulysses

⁴³ Speeches are represented as performances in *Julius Caesar* when Brutus and Antony speak to the plebeians in the Forum (3.2.). Speech as performance is discussed in relation to *Hamlet* below.

⁴⁴ Thomas Heywood, *An Apology for Actors*, in Brian Vickers, *English Renaissance Literary Criticism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 474-501 (p. 489).

⁴⁵ Heywood, *An Apology for Actors*, p. 489.

⁴⁶ In the *mise-en-scène* of the theatre, the Elizabethan actor plays an actor in Elsinore who gives a speech as if he were Aeneas, who was performing for Dido.

continues with the main part of his speech; this is absent from the quarto. This response heightens the sense that Ulysses is performing because Agamemnon compares Ulysses' speeches with hypothetical performances by Thersites:

Speak, prince of Ithaca, and be't of less expect
That matter needless, of importless burden,
Divide thy lips, than we are confident
When rank Thersites opes his mastic jaws
We shall hear music, wit, and oracle.
(1.3.70-74)

Agamemnon suggests that Ulysses should speak freely because no one should expect to hear unimportant words from Ulysses, just as no one should expect to "hear music, wit, and oracle" from Thersites. This is the first reference in the play to Thersites, the "privileged man" (2.3.51), someone whose job is, according to Achilles, to perform.⁴⁷ Agamemnon compares Ulysses' speech to the performances of Thersites. This association invites the audience to see Ulysses' speech as a performance.

A closer examination of this passage shows the play emphasising the theory of a *theatrum mundi*. Agamemnon's words frame the Greek listeners as an audience because Ulysses' speech is not simply Ulysses talking: the speech is compared – by association – with Thersites' hypothetical performances. The performances Agamemnon imagines include: musical performance, perhaps as performed by Pandarus later in the play; "wit" might simply mean intelligence, but as the performance of the fools in Shakespeare's plays explore, and Thersites demonstrates, being witty is inherently theatrical; likewise, although "oracle" might simply mean prophecy, the term also connoted performance.⁴⁸ Later, Nestor accuses Ajax of

⁴⁷ Even in George Chapman's translation of Book II of the *Iliad*, published before Shakespeare's play, Thersites is called a "rayling foole", *Seaven Bookes of The Iliades* (1598), in *Chapman's Homer: The Iliad*, ed. Allardyce Nicoll with a new preface by George Wills (Princeton, NJ and Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 501-39 (p. 533, Bk. II, l. 266). Perhaps influenced by Shakespeare's version, Chapman's 1611 complete *Iliad* expands on Thersites' role as a jester saying that "anything with which he could procure / Laughter he never could containe. He should have yet bene sure / To touch no kings. T'oppose their states becomes not jesters' parts", *Homer's Iliads in Chapman's Homer*, pp. 1- 499 (p. 51, Bk. II, ll. 183-85).

⁴⁸ The performance of the "wit" in the quarto epistle to the play will be discussed in Chapter Four. In a play-within in *Histrionastix* (1599), the figure of Pride says to some lawyers, "Are not you Lawyers, from whose reverend lippes / Th'amaxed multitude learne Oracles", John Marston, *Histrionastix; or, The Player Whipt*

imitating Achilles – who presumably imitates Thersites’ “slander[ous]” (1.3.194) performance – by “railing on our state of war / Bold as an oracle” (1.3.192-93). This language suggests that an oracle was supposed not only to possess wisdom, but also to be outspoken.⁴⁹ That Ulysses may be performing here, with the onstage auditors framed by the play as a theatre audience, makes the scene metatheatrical. The play’s Elizabethan theatre audience is not only privy to the actions on stage: the other characters are situated as approximating the theatre audience’s position, as if both audiences have “Greekish ears” (1.3.67). The staging of Ulysses’ speech contributes to the theme of a *theatrum mundi*. It demonstrates that an appreciation of theatricality contributes to a larger awareness of people’s actions, even when the expectation is that these serious wartime situations are non-theatrical.

The framing of the speeches in the Greek camp as set-piece performances lends a certain irony to the whole proceeding. This is an irony that in fact characterises the speeches within the play, undercutting the received expectations of the Trojan matter and other more literary material. Classical and medieval literature had already established expectations for audiences about the speeches of certain characters such as Nestor and Ulysses. Nestor was known for giving advice while Ulysses had a reputation for being a smooth talker. This tradition is evident in Shakespeare’s *The Rape of Lucrece*, for example, where the narrative voice refers to “sly Ulysses [who] / Showed deep regard and smiling government” (ll. 1398-99). Likewise, Richard Duke of Gloucester says in *3 Henry VI* that he will “play the orator as well as Nestor, / Deceive more slyly than Ulysses could” (3.2.188-89). Similarly established expectations are evident in Shakespeare’s plays for characters such as Achilles, Agamemnon,

(London, 1610), D1^r (all further references to this play are to this edition and quire signatures are given in parenthesis). In this context, Pride’s words suggest that the lawyers are good orators that can amaze their audience, rather than simply being able to see into the future. The *OED* cites this use of “oracle” as a figurative sense meaning “[a]n utterance of great wisdom, significance, or import; an opinion or declaration regarded as authoritative and infallible” (“oracle” n., sense 7).

⁴⁹ Ironically, Shakespeare’s plays often stage oracles that *are not* listened to properly, such as Cassandra in *Troilus and Cressida* or the Soothsayer in *Julius Caesar* who tells Caesar to “Beware the ides of March” (1.2.19).

Cressida, and Helen.⁵⁰ The portrayal of the characters in the play can often be read ironically: for example, the play includes Nestor giving speeches, but these same speeches noticeably ramble on and the sage character is ridiculed by others. Shakespeare's play thus simultaneously meets audience expectations *and* punctures them through irony. In so doing, it invites audience members to question their assumptions about the Trojan scene and the larger expectations established by the literary-theatrical field.

Shakespeare's play shows how the Trojan scene is overdetermined. In 1601, it was overdetermined because so much had been written about it and because it was valued for different ideological reasons – for example, for showing courage, courtesy and what happens when order is not respected.⁵¹ Surprisingly, however, his play *does not rely* on previous texts to establish audience expectations of characters' reputations. As Bertrand Evans explains, “with the partial exception of *Troilus and Cressida*, (where he openly trades on our knowledge of what name and fame Cressida would hold afterwards) Shakespeare prefers not to presume upon extra-dramatic knowledge held by the audience”.⁵² The early scenes quietly construct audience expectations for those who had not perhaps read the literature or seen the *Troilus and Cressida* production by the Admiral's Men. For example, before the audience meets Thersites, he is described by Agamemnon as “rank Thersites” (1.3.73); before Ajax appears, Cressida's servant, Alexander, provides a character sketch of him (1.2.17-26); prior to Achilles being staged, his status is discussed by Cressida and her uncle (1.2.210); and again, in the first Greek camp scene (1.3.), the adjective “great” is continually used for both

⁵⁰ See the subchapter “The ‘Matter of Troy’ in the Canon”, in Robert Kimbrough, *Shakespeare's “Troilus and Cressida” and its Setting* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), pp. 39-46.

⁵¹ These traditions are still voiced by characters in the play, although they are often put under strain. Jonathan Bate discusses the example of Michael Portillo quoting the Ulysses speech on degree at the Conservative annual dinner; like Ulysses who later quotes from a book, Bate writes that the Conservative politician used “[q]uotation [...] selectively to support a particular position” of order and hierarchy, *The Genius of Shakespeare*, with 2008 afterword (London, Basingstoke and Oxford: Picador, 2008), p. 188.

⁵² Bertrand Evans, *Shakespeare's Tragic Practice* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 53. Likewise, in his study of Shakespeare and audience, Arthur Colby Sprague (1935) argues in a chapter on “Preparation and Surprise” that “Shakespeare build[s] [...] on the knowledge he has himself imparted”, *Shakespeare and the Audience: A Study in the Technique of Exposition* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1966), pp. 133-59 (p. 145).

Agamemnon and Achilles by Ulysses and Nestor. All of this hints at an essential tension between the informing expectations of the literary-theatrical field and the playwright's ironic drama. The way the early scenes set up the conventional expectations before exposing them to irony supports the argument that Shakespeare envisioned a public performance for his play with a diverse audience at the Globe.

V. Retelling Patroclus's Actions and Achilles' Reactions

So far, the performances by Thersites, Pandarus and Ulysses have been considered in relation to other characters' expectations of them, and a theatre audience's reception of the play in terms of the expectations of the Trojan matter. However, Ulysses' performance in the Greek camp scene is also significant in relation to the literary-theatrical field and the national politics of theatre: in a speech that dissects the politics of the Greek army, Ulysses blames the unrest among the Greeks on the performances that Patroclus produces and Achilles enjoys. Ulysses establishes Achilles as an audience figure, while again inadvertently positioning the other Greek leaders as audience members to Ulysses' recreation of Patroclus's performance. Ulysses tells the other leaders that Patroclus "pageants us" (1.3.152) with "imitation" (1.151) and "ridiculous and silly action" (1.3.149). For Ulysses, these performances, and their support by the audience, undermine the position and actions of the Greek leaders. Ulysses' report represents Achilles' tent as a kind of indoor playhouse with satirical performances in which Patroclus "acts [Agamemnon's] greatness" (1.3.159). According to Ulysses, Patroclus "puts on" Agamemnon's "topless deputation" (1.3.152),

And like a strutting player, whose conceit
Lies in his hamstring and doth think it rich
To hear the wooden dialogue and sound
'Twixt his stretched footing and the scaffoldage –
Such to-be pitied and o'er-wrested seeming
He acts thy greatness in;
(1.3.154-59)

Ulysses goes out of his way to make Patroclus's imitations theatrical, even describing the metaphor of the "strutting player" with an extra theatrical dialogue sounded by his footsteps.⁵³ The reference in turn stages Achilles as an audience figure. Like Mark Antony in *Julius Caesar*, Achilles is known, then, for liking plays and appreciating theatre; but here Achilles becomes, importantly, the patron of the performance.⁵⁴

Shakespeare uses the situation of this reported patronised performance to invite his audience to consider the politics of a play's reception more closely. According to Ulysses, Achilles, as patron, is ultimately to blame. Ulysses argues that it is Achilles' encouragement of Patroclus's performance that has spread dissension among the Greeks, or in Elizabethan humoural language, a "sickness" (1.3.141). However, rather than just recreating Patroclus's performance, Ulysses re-enacts Achilles' reactions too, seemingly spreading the "sickness" further:

At this fusty stuff
The large Achilles, on his pressed bed lolling,
From his deep chest laughs out a loud applause
Cries "Excellent! 'Tis Agamemnon right;
Now play me Nestor: hem, and stroke thy beard
As he being dressed to some oration".
(1.3.162-67)

Ulysses' story suggests that Patroclus plays Nestor "dressed to some oration" for Achilles. In the theatre, the story provides a metatheatrical commentary on the actor who actually plays Nestor. That Nestor ought to be played as being laughable and long in the tooth is suggested by Hector's non-recognition of him, with Aeneas having to fill in with "'Tis the old Nestor" (4.5.201), and all the other signs given by Ulysses' language that describes Nestor's "stretched-out life" (1.3.61). This presentation of how Achilles reacts to the performance of Nestor may lend support to an audience's ironic view of Nestor in *Troilus and Cressida*, but

⁵³ Dawson notes that "[t]he image is doubly theatrical since it imagines the interplay between actor's foot and wooden stage as itself a kind of melodramatic dialogue", Dawson (ed.), p. 102.

⁵⁴ Caesar says that Cassius "loves no plays, / As thou dost, Antony" (*Julius Caesar*, 1.2.204-05) and later Brutus says that Antony "is given / To sports, to wildness, and much company" (2.1.188-89).

this link does not mean that Shakespeare is associating the conditions of performances in Achilles' tent with the performance of his play at the Globe: in fact, arguably the staging of Achilles as a patron of a private theatre experience means that Shakespeare makes a distinction between the private theatre and the public one of the Lord Chamberlain's Men.

In *Inscribing the Time*, Eric S. Mallin suggests that in scenes like the performances for Achilles, "*Troilus and Cressida* encrypts the theatre's assault on authority".⁵⁵ According to Mallin, "Achilles, irresistibly imitable, analogously spreads subversion both factional and theatrical".⁵⁶ For Mallin, then, the performances in Achilles' tent are in a sense a "picture in little" (*Hamlet*, 2.2.349-50) of the play itself. In Bourdieu's terms, the theatrical field of Achilles' theatre can be seen to transgress or trouble by disturbing the "field of power" which contains it.⁵⁷ Critics who follow Mallin's new historicist reading could be led to position the play as a private performance, perhaps at one of the Inns of Court; Shakespeare's company had not started playing at Blackfriars in the early 1600s, and critics agree that it is improbable that the play would be performed in front of Elizabeth.⁵⁸ In this reading, the audience of an Inn of Court might see their reflection complementarily in Achilles as audience. Looking at Achilles and Ulysses' report, Mallin argues that the play "encrypts" the danger of theatre to authority:

Determined to prove insubordination, Ulysses hilariously recites the send-up of Nestor and Agamemnon that Patroclus performs for the Achilles faction [...]. What Ulysses actually demonstrates, however, is the subversive communicability of Achilles' local theater. The indignity to which Patroclus and Achilles subject the Greek council in their coterie playhouse becomes an irresistible script for Ulysses' outrageous performance; rebelliousness infectiously, dramatically reproduces itself.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Eric S. Mallin *Inscribing the Time: Shakespeare and the End of Elizabethan England* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, CA and London: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 25-61 (p. 34).

⁵⁶ Mallin, *Inscribing the Time*, p. 34.

⁵⁷ See Bourdieu's subchapter "The Field of Cultural Production and the Field of Power", in "The Field of Cultural Production", pp. 37-40.

⁵⁸ As Peter Alexander put it, Elizabeth I "would not have had *Troilus and Cressida* at Court. Nor would Shakespeare have presented it there: he had wisdom enough to play the fool", "*Troilus and Cressida*, 1609", *The Library*, 4th ser., 9 (1928-29), 267-86 (p. 278).

⁵⁹ Mallin, *Inscribing the Time*, p. 34.

The staged performance clearly invites the play's audience to rethink the subversive potential of performance, but this does not necessitate that the place of the performance be a "coterie playhouse" or even one of the Inns of Court. It is more likely that Shakespeare is comparing his plays and theatre to the plays put on in the private indoor theatres, or with some of the exclusive performances put on at country houses.

The way the "subversive" theatre is reported is an important feature of this staging of audience expectations in Shakespeare's play. As the play later alerts its audience, Ulysses is a Machiavel who should not be trusted. For example, Ulysses tries to disassociate himself from the "ridiculous and silly action" (1.3.150) of Patroclus; and yet, it is possible that he has also been part of the audience in Achilles' tent. If not, Ulysses must have been peeping through the tent, have learnt of the performances through his spies, or have simply made up the whole action. Rather than showing the "subversion" of the theatre *per se*, Ulysses' story demonstrates the vulnerability of the theatrical performance and those associated with it – that is, the potential for the performance to be re-presented or re-appropriated by others. For the cultural producers (the actors and dramatists), this episode demonstrates the "subversive communicability" that was most detrimental to their own autonomy. This apparent disparaging of these coterie performances seems to fit the play to a more public audience. As David Bevington notes, "we should not assume that public audiences would not have been fascinated by its mordant dramatization of hotly contemporary issues".⁶⁰ Anthony Dawson similarly observes in his edition that "modern critics [...] are probably underestimating the Globe audience, which was after all capable of responding to the complexities of *Hamlet* or *King Lear*".⁶¹ The question of who the play was meant for will be discussed further in later chapters. Irrespective of this concern, in its staging of performers with their audience, *Troilus*

⁶⁰ David Bevington, "Introduction", in *Troilus and Cressida: Arden Shakespeare*, 3rd ser., ed. David Bevington (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1998), pp. 1-117 (p. 6). This edition is referred to subsequently as "Bevington (ed.)".

⁶¹ Dawson (ed.), p. 8.

and *Cressida* shows that the question of who is in the audience and where the play is staged is important for thinking about the power or “subversive communicability” of that performance.

VI. Disinterested Theatre: “sinister application” and the “living Instance”

How a play might be interpreted and how this interpretation might be applied to contemporary people or politics were issues debated vigorously within early modern drama at the turn of the century. The issue would also no doubt have been on the minds of the Lord Chamberlain’s Men after they had been asked to perform a *Richard II* play on the eve of the Earl of Essex’s failed *coup d’état* in February 1601.⁶² Afterwards, the Chamberlain’s Men were questioned in court, although they were soon welcomed to perform for Elizabeth on the night before the Earl’s execution. This was the same year that Shakespeare was probably writing *Troilus and Cressida*.

In *Poetaster* (1601), Ben Jonson worries about the problem of interpretation. In the play, the poet Virgil tells Augustus Caesar that

’Tis not the wholesome sharp morality
Or modest anger of a satiric spirit
That hurts or wounds the body of a state,
But the sinister application
Of the malicious ignorant and base
Interpreter, who will distort and strain
The general scope and purpose of an author
To his particular and private spleen.
(5.3.132-39)⁶³

⁶² For a re-evaluation of the Essex Rising and this request performance, see Paul E. J. Hammer, “Shakespeare’s *Richard II*, the Play of 7 February 1601, and the Essex Rising”, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 59.1 (2008), 1–35. For an early new historicist reading of the theatre in relation to the Essex Rising and Elizabeth I, see Stephen Greenblatt, “Introduction”, *The Power of Forms in the English Renaissance*, ed. Stephn Greenblatt (Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1982), pp. 3-6.

⁶³ For this play in relation to the Essex rebellion, see Cain (ed.), pp. 40-44 and Tom Cain, “‘Satyres, That Girde and Fart at the Time’: *Poetaster* and the Essex Rebellion”, in *Refashioning Ben Jonson: Gender, Politics and the Jonsonian Canon*, ed. Julie Sanders, Kate Chedgzoy and Susan Wiseman (New York: St. Martin’s Press; Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1998), pp. 48-70. Cain speculates that “*Troilus and Cressida* may have been withdrawn from performance in case of “application”, Cain (ed.), p. 44.

Jonson extends Virgil's concern about his poetic awareness to invoke the theatre audience of his own satire. For Jonson, *Poetaster* is itself a satire containing a "wholesome sharp morality", as Virgil put it. Shakespeare embodies a "satiric spirit" in the form of Thersites and Patroclus's parodies, although it is questionable how "wholesome" this satire is.⁶⁴ The play does not mimic Jonson's comical satire exactly, but contains within it characters such as the boy-player Patroclus whose theatre could be seen to share an analogous situation to the "private" performances of Jonson's plays by the Children of the Chapel Royal at Blackfriars.⁶⁵ In *Poetaster*, the children put on the "presence" of the Augustan poets Horace, Ovid and Virgil, and the "poetasters" Rufus Laberius Crispinus and Demetrius Fannius who implicitly stand for the Elizabethan playwrights Marston and Dekker.⁶⁶ Jonson's play is in fact all about impersonation: the boy actors play classical poets; characters dress-up as others; and other characters arguably stand for Elizabethan poet-playwrights. Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* stages impersonations too, but it foregrounds the political implications of "sinister application", not simply as a matter of taste with poetasters and "ignorant and base / Interpreter[s]", but as something that really could "wound[] the body of a state". In Shakespeare's account, the dangerous interpreter is not the "ignorant and base" one, but rather a person in power, like the clever and politic Ulysses.

With its concerns of patronage, satire and licensed fooling, there is a discernible concern with the early modern literary-theatrical field at work in *Troilus and Cressida*. In the

⁶⁴ For the satire of the "melancholy Jaques" (*As You Like It*, 2.1.26) in relation to Ben Jonson's satire, see James P. Bednarz, "Shakespeare in Love: The Containment of Comical Satire in *As You Like It*", in *Shakespeare & the Poets' War* (New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2001), pp. 105-31.

⁶⁵ Thersites later refers to Patroclus as a "boy" (5.1.14) in contrast to his reputation in the *Iliad* where he is older than Achilles. Alan Sinfield explains that "[i]n *The Iliad*, though of lower rank, he is elder of the two and is entrusted with the mentoring of Achilles", "The Leather Men and the Lovely Boy: Reading Positions in *Troilus and Cressida*", *Shakespeare: A Queer Companion to the Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. Madhavi Menon (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 376-84 (p. 379). Achilles refers to Hector as a "boy-queller" (5.5.45) after he has killed Patroclus. Thersites has other names for Patroclus too, such as "Achilles' brach" (2.1.103), "Achilles' male varlet" (5.1.15) and "his masculine whore" (5.1.17) which seem to position Patroclus as Achilles' "little eyas[]" (*Hamlet*, 2.2.326).

⁶⁶ See James P. Bednarz, "'Impeaching Your Own Quality': Constructions of Poetic Authority in *Poetaster* and *Satiromastix*", in *Shakespeare & the Poets' War*, pp. 203-24.

case of the reported performances by Patroclus, the scene is dangerous because his performances parody political figures within the world of the play, Nestor and Agamemnon. This kind of lampooning in an early modern theatre would have been a grave taboo if Patroclus *was* an early modern actor – as the actors of Thomas Middleton’s later comic satire *A Game of Chess* (1624) discovered when they put on a play full of chess pieces that appeared to represent political figures of the day.⁶⁷ The vulnerability of the poet or player is similarly voiced elsewhere, for example in what critics believe to be a veiled reference to Christopher Marlowe’s death in *As You Like It*. Touchstone comments:

When a man’s verses cannot be understood, nor a
man’s good wit seconded with the forward child, understand-
ing, it strikes a man more dead than a great reckoning in a
little room.

(3.3.9-12)

Famously killed in an argument about the bill or “reckoning”, Marlowe may in actuality have been assassinated at the request of the authorities: in the positioning of this cryptic memorial in *As You Like It*, the man’s death is imagined as the death of an author.⁶⁸ The ambiguity of the lines’ “application”, however, is typical of the lengths to which Shakespeare went to protect himself from the Ulysses-like audience members and powerful “patrons” of his time.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Richard Dutton notes that “[n]o play of the Elizabethan/Jacobean period generated more comment than *A Game at Chess*”, “Appendix: Documents Relating to *A Game at Chess*”, in Thomas Middleton, *Women Beware Women and Other Plays: Oxford English Drama*, ed. Richard Dutton (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 310-16 (p. 310).

⁶⁸ The lines echo Barabas’s when he talks about “Infinite riches in a little room”, Christopher Marlowe, *The Jew of Malta*, in *Christopher Marlowe: The Complete Plays*, ed. Frank Romany and Robert Lindsey (London and New York: Penguin, 2003), pp. 241-340 (1.1.37). For a recent discussion of these lines, see Richard Wilson, “‘The words of Mercury’: Shakespeare and Marlowe”, *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Contemporary Dramatists*, ed. Ton Hoenselaars (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 24-53 (esp. p. 42). For a spirited consideration of Marlowe’s death, see Charles Nicholls, *The Reckoning*, 2nd edn (Chicago, IL, and London: Chicago University Press, 2007). For a more cautious view of Marlowe’s death, see Contance Brown Kuriyama’s chapter “At Trim Reckoning”, in *Christopher Marlowe: A Renaissance Life* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), pp. 120-41.

⁶⁹ For Shakespeare’s secretive defensiveness, see Richard Wilson, *Secret Shakespeare: Studies in Religion, Theatre and Resistance* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), and also Richard Wilson, “The Management Of Mirth: Shakespeare via Bourdieu”, in *Shakespeare in French Theory: King of Shadows*, pp. 123-39.

Troilus and Cressida still engages with the issue of the theatre being used for political or subversive means, albeit in a subtle manner. In the play, Ulysses *uses* theatre performance for extraneous means. Although it would have been dangerous for Shakespeare's play to make such an explicit connection to contemporary political contexts, those who convicted Essex and the members of his faction for treason used the evidence of a patronised theatrical performance as part of their prosecution. As critics such as Paul Yachnin have explored, Shakespeare went out of his way to suggest that his theatre was *not* subversive, and yet this play shows an awareness that the fact of a performance could be used to condemn others.⁷⁰ Paul Hammer, for example, suggests that the prosecution used the *Richard II* play to condemn the supposed patron, Sir Gelly Meyrick:

Despite all the modern scholarly attention devoted to the play performed on 7 February 1601, it would seem that the Elizabethan authorities regarded the play of insufficient importance to pursue those who actually arranged its performance, made only a limited effort to investigate the players involved, and played fast and loose with the evidence in order to pin the blame on the doomed Meyrick.⁷¹

Francis Bacon wrote in the report of the case:

That the afternoon before the Rebellion, *Merricke*, with a great company of others, that afterwards were all in the Action, had procured to bee played before them, the Play of the deposing of King *Richard*, the second.
Neither was the play casuall, but a Play bespoken by *Merrick*.⁷²

The political context of this “bespoken” performance at the start of the year means that the staged performances in *Troilus and Cressida* and the issue of patronised performance would have taken on a topical resonance when the play was first produced.

Read in the light of the Essex Rising, *Troilus and Cressida* seems to be playing an edgy game with the expectations of theatre. Patroclus's private performances, encouraged by Achilles, created the “envious fever / Of pale and bloodless emulation” (1.3.134-35) that so

⁷⁰ See Paul Yachnin, “The Powerless Theater”, in *Stage-Wrights: Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton, and the Making of Theatrical Value* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), pp. 1-24.

⁷¹ Hammer, p. 20.

⁷² Francis Bacon, *A Declaration of the Practises & Treasons Attempted and Committed by Robert Late Earle of Essex and his Complices, Against her Maiestie and her Kingdoms* (London, 1601), K2^v.

troubles the Greek camp, according to Ulysses. But, if anything, it is not Achilles' private theatrical entertainment (which is after all described simply as a kind of after dinner "cheese" by Achilles), but Ulysses' actions and strategies that exacerbate the problem of emulation. Nestor reports, following Ulysses, that "in the imitation of these twain [Patroclus and Achilles] [...] many are infect" (1.3.185-86): he continues his report, saying that Ajax "keeps his tent like [Achilles]" (1.3.191) and employs Thersites satirically to "match us in comparisons with dirt" (1.3.195). However, when Ajax and Thersites are finally shown together, Ajax is not interested in Thersites' fooling and Ajax is not half as "self-affected" (2.3.222) as he later becomes through Ulysses' (mis)direction. Expectations of audience and theatre are thus not fixed by the play, but they are nonetheless negotiated by characters within it. Achilles professes to enjoy a closed private performance in his tent which has little apparent consequence outside, while Ulysses and Nestor argue that these performances are "infect[ing]" (1.3.188) the body politic. Patroclus is implicated as the troubling performer, but the audience-patron Achilles who humours him is, in Nestor's and Ulysses' eyes, far more responsible. In *Troilus and Cressida*, then, what a theatre audience is to expect from a play is complicated by performances and negotiations within the play itself.

Shakespeare offers a further consideration of custom-made performances with Thersites' railing for Achilles. Although Ulysses might argue otherwise, Thersites' first performance for Achilles appears to be rather disinterested in the sense that Thersites' railing is not necessarily politically motivated: Achilles agrees to understand Thersites' performance as that of a "fool" (2.1.74). In this reading, Achilles' explanation of Thersites' performance fits with Paul Yachnin's thesis that Shakespeare actively promoted the notion that his theatre was politically powerless. Ulysses recognises him as an entertainer when he tells Nestor that "Achilles has inveigled [Ajax's] fool from him" (2.3.82), but the Machiavellian does not outwardly subscribe to the view that Achilles' theatre is powerless. Ulysses' understanding of

the performances, as represented, have interesting historical implications given early modern ideas about theatre, especially in relation to the figure of Achilles. This is because the Greek hero was often associated with the Earl of Essex at the turn of the century.⁷³ The correspondence of literary characters to political figures was not just a political issue, but also caught up with authorial positioning in the literary and theatrical fields.

Where Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* contains the possibility of topical allusions, George Chapman's publication of his translation of the *Iliad* was much more obvious in its suggestion of contemporary application and authorial self-fashioning. *The Seaven Bookes of the Iliades of Homere, Prince of Poets* (1598) contains a six-page dedication with the title:

TO THE MOST HONORED now living Instance of the Achilleian vertues eternized by
divine HOMERE, the Earle of ESSEX, Earle Marshall &c.⁷⁴

In this dedication, Chapman refers to Essex as "Most true Achilles (whom by sacred prophetic Homere did but prefigure in his admirable object[...])".⁷⁵ Chapman suggests that his patron, Essex, is practically a reincarnation of Achilles, a vessel containing his spirit, or even that Essex is the "true *Achilles*" and Homer's Achilles simply a precursor. He confirms this analogy in his *Achilles Shield* (1598), which also contains a dedication: "TO THE MOST HONOURED EARLE, EARL MARSHALL".⁷⁶ Essex is a "living Instance" of the Achillean character. The danger of this analogy is that Achilles, while being a brave fighter and strategist in Homer's *Iliad*, is also something of a rebel, sometimes refusing to fight and disregarding the orders of the general, Agamemnon. Shortly after Chapman published the dedication, life imitated art and the Earl got into serious trouble with his sovereign, Queen Elizabeth: "By the time Shakespeare had completed *Troilus and Cressida*, probably in late 1601," writes David Bevington, "Essex had been arrested and executed for treason [...]. The

⁷³ For more on Essex in relation to *Troilus and Cressida*, see Mallin, *Inscribing the Time*, pp. 25-61.

⁷⁴ George Chapman, *Seaven Bookes of The Iliades*, in *Chapman's Homer*, p. 503.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 504, ll. 60-61.

⁷⁶ Chapman, *Achilles Shield* (1598), in *Chapman's Homer*, pp. 541-58 (p. 543).

connection between Essex and Achilles was a familiar one in England from 1594 onwards; so too were analogies of Burghley and then Cecil to Nestor and Ulysses”.⁷⁷ Dawson argues that it “strains credibility” that Shakespeare could not have “realised the possible allegorical connections”.⁷⁸ Dawson’s rather Bourdieuan reading is that it is “more likely the playwright knew what he was about, and he was to some extent testing the relative autonomy of the players in the entertainment market place”.⁷⁹ Seen in this light, the staged performers and onstage audiences in *Troilus and Cressida* take on a much more antagonistic significance. The positioning of these scenes displays a heightened sense of the stakes in the theatrical-literary field. While Shakespeare’s play implicitly suggests that the play is *not* the thing to blame when it comes to political subversion, these inset dramas do explore how vulnerable theatre could be to the ulterior motives of patron-politicians.

VII. Powerful Courtly Audience: Thersites as Court Jester

In Richard Wilson’s reading of “Shakespeare via Bourdieu”, he notes that “one of the most outstanding myster[ies] of Shakespearean drama [is] that London’s most successful commercial entertainment occludes its actual locale, by consistently staging scenes of aristocratic patronage, rather than holding a realistic mirror up to [...] the metropolitan playhouse”.⁸⁰ By not staging such a mirror, as Jonson consistently did in the prologues and epilogues of his private theatre plays, Shakespeare transforms the commercial conditions of his own theatre. It has often been noted that the set-piece plays-within-plays that Shakespeare stages are nearly all court performances. Stephen Orgel writes that

⁷⁷ David Bevington (ed.), p. 14 and p. 18. The complexity of topical allusion is considered in David Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics: A Critical Approach to Topical Meaning* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: Oxford University, 1968).

⁷⁸ Bevington (ed.), p. 18.

⁷⁹ Dawson (ed.), p. 12.

⁸⁰ Richard Wilson, *Shakespeare in French Theory*, p. 123.

[d]ramas at court were not entertainments in the simple and dismissive sense we usually apply the term [...]; and to participate in such a production involved far more than simply watching a play [...]. At these performances what the rest of the spectators watched was not a play but the queen at a play, and their response would have been not simply to the drama, but to the relationship between the drama and its primary audience, the royal spectator.⁸¹

Troilus and Cressida stages “entertainments” with a similar courtly audience, with Patroclus and Thersites performing for “Lord Achilles” (2.3.17) (who frames Thersites as a court-jester, a “privileged man”), and Pandarus performing for the “sweet queen” and “Fair prince” (3.1.41), Helen and Paris. In these scenes, the public theatre audience is also given the chance to see royalty “at a play”.

Commenting on Orgel’s reading of court performance, Harry Berger writes that “[i]f these are two audiences Shakespeare wrote for, they surely are not the only two, since he wrote about them as well as for them”.⁸² Berger was thinking about readers as a third audience – a focus in Chapter Four of this thesis. Aside from this concern, though, Berger’s comment that Shakespeare writes *about* his audience is complicated by the fact that his plays *do not* usually stage public theatregoers, unlike those of his contemporaries.⁸³ In the Induction to *Bartholomew Fair*, Jonson went out of his way to demarcate the theatrical conditions in which the play was originally staged; however, Shakespeare seems to have been reluctant to stage the conditions of the literary-theatrical field so mimetically.⁸⁴ Instead, Shakespeare creates fictitious performances and represents audiences that *might* map onto his theatre or the work of other actors, authors and companies. Berger, thinking on the more courtly plays-within-plays, suggests that “Shakespeare wrote self-satisfying artifacts which,

⁸¹ Stephen Orgel, *The Illusion of Power: Political Theater in the English Renaissance* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, CA and London: University of California Press, 1975), pp. 8-9.

⁸² Harry Berger Jr., *Imaginary Audition: Shakespeare on Stage and Page* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, CA and Oxford: University of California Press, 1989), p. 155.

⁸³ For a reading of the way early modern plays represent playgoing, see Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare’s London*, 3rd edn (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁸⁴ The Induction to *Bartholomew Fair* is discussed briefly in Chapter Four, p. 236.

viewed awry, become self-consuming representations of the self-satisfying experience”.⁸⁵

Berger is arguing that the readers of the play can make up another (but not necessarily secondary) audience of the play, implied by the play’s textuality. When these readers see the entertainments “awry”, they can find another layer to the play. Arguably, though, the staging of these courtly performances within *Troilus and Cressida* seems to ask the *theatre* audience to look “awry” too as the play takes an ironic view of the Trojan scene and patronised performance.

The idea that there might be an affiliation between the performances for the patrons (Achilles, Paris and Helen) within *Troilus and Cressida* and Elizabethan court performance, would have been dangerous in Shakespeare’s time when the play’s satirical elements are considered. And yet, at this time of the Poet’s War, the audience expectation for topical allusions and satirical impersonations – as voiced by the Tucca characters, for example – adds weight to this association of inset drama with performances put on for powerful patrons.⁸⁶ In *Troilus and Cressida*, this expectation is apparent when Achilles defends Thersites’ political satire because he is a “privileged man” (2.3.51), a licensed theatrical fool.

Theatre historians have suggested that Thersites was played by the new fool, Robert Armin, who had recently published a book *Foole Upon Foole* (1600) all about fools maintained by gentlemen; Armin’s acting would add a contemporary context to Thersites’ fooling.⁸⁷ Thersites leaves Ajax because he dislikes his patronage. The cause of their disagreement is partly, it seems, that Ajax is not interested in Thersites’ railing and is more

⁸⁵ Berger, *Imaginary Audition*, p. 155

⁸⁶ On the anachronistic nature of Shakespearean drama, see Phyllis Rackin, “Temporality, Anachronism, and Presence in Shakespeare’s English Histories”, *Renaissance Drama*, n.s., 27 (1986), 101-23, and Phyllis Rackin, “Anachronism and Nostalgia”, in *Stages of History: Shakespeare’s English Chronicles* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 86-145.

⁸⁷ Robert Armin, *Foole Upon Foole; or, Six Sorts of Sottes* (London, 1600); Robert Armin had another book published that year: *Quips Upon Questions; or, A Clownes Conceite on Occasion Offered* (London, 1600). Bart van Es also recently argued that Armin would have played Thersites in his chapter “Robert Armin”, in *Shakespeare in Company* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 163-94. Dawson notes that Ulysses’ line to Achilles – “The fool slides o’er the ice that you should break.” (3.3.216) – seems to be an allusion to Armin’s *Foole Upon Foole*, Dawson (ed.), 164.

inclined to make him act as a menial servant. When they first appear on stage, Ajax is bent on sending Thersites to “learn [him] the proclamation” (2.1.17). Thersites continues to rail at Ajax, who then starts to beat him. Robert Armin was, according to biographers, “[p]hysically slight, possibly even stunted”.⁸⁸ This would have made him suitable to play Thersites, who was described in Chapman’s (1598) translation of the *Iliad* as being lame: “Starcke-lame he was of eyther foote; his shoulders were contract / Into his brest and crookt withal”.⁸⁹ As Skura speculates of a hunchbacked Richard III,

it may have been Armin’s Richard-like physique – squat, ugly, doglike – and his gift for projecting multiple identities that inspired Shakespeare to create the series of creatures occupying the same theatrical space that he had first staked out for Richard.⁹⁰

These roles included, according to Skura, “Thersites, Lavatch, and *Lear*’s Fool”.⁹¹ If Armin did play Thersites, this circumstance would have given an added poignancy to the vulnerability of Thersites-as-actor.⁹² When Achilles comes to find out what all the fuss is about, Ajax explains, “I bade the vile owl go learn me the proclamation, and he rails upon me” (2.1.82-83). Thersites responds, “I serve thee not. [...] I serve here voluntary” (2.1.84, 86). In response to Thersites’ railing, Ajax even threatens to “cut out [his] tongue” (2.1.100). Thersites walks off saying that he “will keep where there is wit stirring and leave the faction of fools” (2.1.106-07). His nonchalance is striking in a context of patronised performance, but perhaps more understandable in the light of the conditions of commercial theatre.

⁸⁸ Martin Butler, “Armin, Robert (1563–1615)”, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2012); available at <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/647>> [accessed 2 April 2012].

⁸⁹ George Chapman, *Seaven Bookes of The Iliades*, in *Chapman’s Homer*, p. 532, Bk. II, ll. 211-12.

⁹⁰ Meredith Anne Skura, *Shakespeare the Actor and the Purpose of Playing* (Chicago, IL, and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 74.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Ironically, in *Iliad* apocrypha Achilles is said to have later killed Thersites with a punch to the face when Thersites railed too much at him. See Anon. “The Aethiopis [A Summary]”, in *Hesiod, The Homer Hymns and Homerica*, trans. Hugh G. Evelyn-White, rev. edn (London: Heinemann; Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1936), pp. 507-509 (p. 507), and *Quintus Smyrnaeus: The Fall of Troy*, trans. Arthur S. Way (London: Heinemann; New York: Macmillan, 1913), p. 61, Bk. I, ll. 740-43, where the narrative voice says that “So railed he long and loud: the mighty heart / Of Peleus’ son leapt into flame of wrath. / A sudden buffet of his restless hand / Smote ’neath the railer’s ear”.

The scene is ostensibly about social relations in the Greek camp and yet it also dramatizes the concerns of actors and playwrights within the Elizabethan theatrical field who could be vulnerable to the wills of their audiences and court patrons. Skura posits a psychological reason for the vulnerability of the actor who exposes his body on the stage: “[p]erformance in this sense means exposure of the most intimate – and most primitive – aspect of self to the scrutiny of others”.⁹³ Thersites’ exposure earlier on in the play to the beating by Ajax, the auditor of his railing, prefigures the exposure of the heroes and the heroine Cressida later in the play to the view of an audience: in the *theatrum mundi* of the play, both hero and actor are vulnerable to their audience, and especially to the audience’s expectation of them. As Orgel explains, “[i]n the public world of Renaissance Europe [...] actors were traditionally considered itinerants, a step above beggars and highwaymen”.⁹⁴ This vulnerability is registered by the violence of the “beef-witted lord” (2.1.9-10) Ajax and his threat to cut out Thersites’ tongue. There are similar problems in *King Lear* for the Fool who is potentially in grave danger from the power-hungry Goneril who thinks the “all-licensed fool” (1.4.175) “insolent” (1.4.176), and wishes that he would “hold his tongue” (1.4.170).⁹⁵ Thersites’ position under Ajax offers a rather slapstick example of the more serious Elizabethan problem for actors and writers because working in the literary-theatrical field could so easily produce an “art made tongue-tied by authority” (Sonnet 66, l. 9).

Orgel balances the low expectations of an actor’s status with the notion that “[i]n the court world, the same actors became Gentlemen, the King’s Servants, or the Queen’s Men”.⁹⁶ This tradition of patronage might be seen as the ostensible reason for Thersites to feel “privileged”. His reluctance to be a gofer servant may just be part of his character; however,

⁹³ Skura, p. 12.

⁹⁴ Orgel, *The Illusion of Power*, p. 1.

⁹⁵ As some critics and audiences have noticed, the Fool is strangely absent from the final acts of *King Lear*.

⁹⁶ Orgel, *The Illusion of Power*, p. 1. For a book volume on patronage studies in relation to early modern theatre, see Paul Whitefield White and Suzanne R. Westfall (eds), *Shakespeare and Theatrical Patronage in Early Modern England* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

it could equally register an Elizabethan actor's reluctance to be *merely* a servant. Officially, the players were the servants of their patron, the Lord Chamberlain. The likely context of a public performance for *Troilus and Cressida* means, however, that in effect the true patrons – if any could be identified – comprised the larger audience in the theatre. Although, like most Shakespeare plays, this condition of production is not obviously registered within the play, within the new corporation of the Globe and the commercial theatre, the actor, especially a principal player like Robert Armin, is neither beggar nor simply a lord's man.⁹⁷ In an unprecedented way for an entertainer, he is his own master, or at least part of a team, the principle actors having economic shares in the Globe: perhaps Armin could allude to this new security and situation when Thersites insists that he “serve[s] here voluntary” (2.1.86). Like the previous clown Will Kempe, whom Armin replaced, he can leave when he wishes (within reason). With this remark about serving voluntarily, Thersites is represented as quite an independent performer, not tied to his patron in the way that he might have been under a medieval patronage system.

Thersites' satirical cheek towards his own stage audience, then, may be “licensed” in the sense that he is like an Elizabethan fool or jester, but how this translates to the play's stance towards its own audience is complex. The character who apparently addresses the audience more than any other (and thus becomes a spokesperson for the play) is one who takes up “bastard” positions, being “in everything illegitimate” (5.8.8-9).⁹⁸ The question of cultural legitimacy was one that Jonson raised when he represented “poetasters”, but it must also have been an important consideration for these actors and poet-playwrights at the commercial theatres generally as they “pursued their own interests, laying claim to a kind of

⁹⁷ Bart van Es points out that “many actors retained their membership of guilds” and so “[t]he notion that they had ‘forsaken’ their occupations [...] is misleading”, *Shakespeare in Company* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 9

⁹⁸ Alison Findlay argues that “[t]he play purportedly locates Thersites and the transgression of cultural laws as a demonic ‘other’ but in fact it reveals the origin of such debasements within the dominant order”, *Illegitimate Power: Bastards in Renaissance Drama* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1994), p. 69.

incipient artistic autonomy”.⁹⁹ Bourdieu considers the new-found freedom that authors had in comparison with earlier times:

To win the approval of a patron and of the aristocratic public the writer was obliged to conform to their cultural ideal, to their taste for difficult and artificial forms, for the esotericism and classical humanism peculiar to a group anxious to distinguish itself from the common people in all its cultural habits. In contrast the writer for the stage in the Elizabethan period was no longer exclusively dependent on the goodwill and pleasure of a single patron.¹⁰⁰

It is true that, as a shareholder at the Globe, Shakespeare was not reliant on a single patron in the way that some other poets had been; and yet, the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, while they pursued their own interests, were still reliant on the general goodwill of the aristocracy in the face of criticism from the city fathers and the ecclesiastical authorities. Many of the satirical plays performed by companies ostensibly patronised by the aristocracy were not performed in front of the highest aristocrats, but were instead performed for larger audiences, whether at the open theatres such as the Globe or the indoor theatres such as Blackfriars. In return for Jonson casting aspersions on cultural capital of the “poetasters”, Shakespeare’s play raises the question of the cultural legitimacy of Jonson’s satire itself. As the next chapter explores, Jonson tries to legitimate his comical satires by emphasising satire’s classical origins and suggesting that satire can enact a comedic cleansing of the theatre and the body politic. In contrast, with Thersites’ railing and Patroclus’s parodies of classical figures, Shakespeare writes a satirical play without the resolution of comedy, thus suggesting that satire is often diseasing and contagious: in so doing, *Troilus and Cressida* questions Jonson’s legitimisation of his comical satire genre.

⁹⁹ Dawson (ed.), p. 12.

¹⁰⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, “Intellectual Field and Creative Project”, trans. Sian France, in *Knowledge and Control: New Directions for the Sociology of Education*, ed. Michael F.D. Young (London: Macmillan, 1971), pp. 161–88 (p. 162).

VIII. Pandarus's "courtly" and "cunning" Audiences: Discrepant Awareness

In Jonson's comical satires, the sovereign often rescues ill-humoured figures. *Troilus and Cressida*, however, ask questions about sovereign audiences as role models. Thersites' disrespectful attitude towards his masters is paralleled in a revealing scene between a servant and Pandarus that opens Act Three, just before Pandarus's musical performance. This scene shows Shakespeare exploring different attitudes to and expectations of theatrical and musical performance, or what might be seen as the performing arts more generally. The scene provides an example of the way that Shakespeare often stages a master-servant relationship where each character has a different awareness of a situation or topic. The stage direction printed at the end of the second act reads "Musicke sounds within" (folio, TLN 1478). The servant plays the role of the clownish servant figure, not to be confused with the court jester. Such clown figures often appear in Shakespeare's plays, memorably the gravediggers in *Hamlet* who equivocate with those in authority. In response, Hamlet exclaims that "The age is grown so picked that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier he galls his kibe" (5.1.128-30). That scene shows the peasant outsmarting the courtier. The anonymous servant in *Troilus and Cressida* takes on a similar equivocating role in relation to authority.

Whereas in *Hamlet* the conversation is about Ophelia's grave, this scene with Pandarus shows two characters in a discussion that recognises discrepant attitudes towards the arts. The servant deliberately misinterprets Pandarus's use of the words "depend" (3.1.5), "Lord" (3.1.5), "know" (3.1.12) and "grace" (3.1.14), which frustrates Pandarus. His exasperation continues as the servant deliberately plays with language and, indeed, with ideas about audience:

PANDARUS What music is this?

SERVANT I do but partly know sir: it is music in parts.

PANDARUS Know you the musicians?

SERVANT Wholly, sir.

PANDARUS Who play they to?
 SERVANT To the hearers, sir.
 PANDARUS At whose pleasure, friend?
 SERVANT At mine sir, and theirs that love music.
 PANDARUS Command I mean, friend.
 SERVANT Who shall I command, sir?
 PANDARUS Friend, we understand not one another. I am too courtly
 and thou too cunning. At whose request do these men play?
 SERVANT That's to't indeed sir. Marry sir, at the request of Paris my
 lord, who is there in person, with him the mortal Venus, the heart-
 blood of beauty, love's invisible soul.
 (3.1.16-30)

In this scene, the “cunning” servant plays with the “courtly” expectations that Pandarus has concerning performance and audience. Pandarus questions the servant because he wants to know if the music is being played for Paris and Helen. The answer he is hoping for from his question, “Know you the musicians?” is presumably, “Yes – they are Paris’s musicians”. He is not expecting to hear the servant say he knows them “wholly”: Pandarus’s expectation fits with the courtly convention of the musicians being the servants – even the possessions – of their lord. That Pandarus holds this expectation about the identification of the performers with their courtly patron-audience is suggested by Pandarus’s next questions, “Who play they to?” and, “At whose pleasure, friend?”. Pandarus is not interested in who the musicians are, but rather to whom they belong. This courtly expectation is emphasised when Pandarus says, whose “Command I mean”, and, finally, “At whose request do these men play?”. The scene places Pandarus as someone who sees the music field, and probably the field of art in general, as something that is inherently patronised.

The wit of the scene, however, is produced by the fact that the servant has a view of the art field as being much more autonomous. For the servant, the musicians play for “the hearers” at the servant’s own “pleasure” and “theirs that love music”. What the servant describes are not the conditions of a court performance at all, but rather the conditions of a public performance – even an idealised field of cultural production for a public *Troilus and Cressida* perhaps. This reading of the play as working towards a more autonomous literary-

theatrical field is strengthened by the Prologue, who flags up the issue of pleasure when he tells the audience to “do as your pleasures are” (Pro., 30). The conversation between the servant and Pandarus is not simply a witty interlude; it draws attention to an idea patterned through the play: different audiences bring heterogeneous expectations to a performance. These diverse expectations concern not only the significance of the content of the work – its title, subject matter or style – but also the motivations and power behind the performance and the reading or appreciation of it within its field of production. In the scene outside Helen and Paris’s private music room, Pandarus’s “courtly” audience expectations are juxtaposed with one more “cunning”. The other scenes in the play hold a similar potential to allow audiences to see different viewpoints juxtaposed. The play foregrounds the different possible interpretations of the Trojan matter and the literary-theatrical field, ones where a “courtly” expectation is ironically contrasted with one more “cunning”.

Pandarus’s musical performance is an example of the use of what Bertrand Evans calls “discrepant awareness”, where characters on stage have different expectations from the theatre audience.¹⁰¹ In this scene, the archetypal pander performs a Cupid song to Paris and Helen. Their attraction to each other will ultimately exacerbate the downfall of Troy, but here Pandarus sings apparently as a double diversion: he finally offers to provide diverting entertainment in order to divert Helen and Paris from the issue at hand. Paris says “I spy” (3.1.80), suggesting that he has worked out why Pandarus is trying to make Troilus’s excuses for being absent from dinner, but Pandarus quickly agrees to perform a song, following Helen’s sovereign expectation that he must sing for her. As Dawson notes, “Pandarus finally consents to sing evidently to shift the course of the conversation away from Troilus’ tryst with Cressida”.¹⁰² The motivation behind this performance, then, is not exactly what it might seem to the onstage audience. This *interested* performance can be likened to that of *The*

¹⁰¹ Bertrand Evans, *Shakespeare’s Comedies* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 44.

¹⁰² Dawson (ed.), p. 142.

Mousetrap in *Hamlet*, where the Prince hopes to *use* the play to “catch the conscience of the King” (3.1.582). It shows Pandarus using the musical performance to distract his audience from what he apparently wants to hide.

The scene’s interestedness, the way the performance *acts* on its onstage audience, is also relevant in terms of the use of theatre by patrons (as discussed above in relation to the Essex Rising) and the poet-sovereign relationship suggested in some of Jonson’s comical satires. Pandarus’s decision to sing about Cupid in order to distract the onstage audience offers an uncanny echo of the situation in which a song is performed in Marlowe’s *Dido Queen of Carthage*.¹⁰³ At the end of the second act of Marlowe’s play, Cupid, disguised as Aeneas’s son Ascanius, tells Venus he will “play his part” (2.1.332), rather like a boy player. This action involves Cupid touching Dido’s “white breast with [an] arrow head [so] / That she may dote upon Aeneas’ love” (2.1.336-37). Cupid, however, first performs a song in order to ingratiate himself with the Queen. Like Helen of Troy in Shakespeare’s play, Dido asks for a song.¹⁰⁴ Following the performance, Dido asks, “No more my child, now talk another while, / And tell me where learn’dst thou this pretty song” (3.1.26-27). Cupid, pretending to be Ascanius, says, “My cousin Helen taught it me in Troy” (3.1.28). As Martin Wiggins has recently argued, the play is likely to have been performed around the same time as *Doctor Faustus*, in 1588, but was printed later, in 1594.¹⁰⁵ There is an anachronistic intertextuality here concerning the plays and their classical sources of the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*: the Trojan matter of *Troilus and Cressida* comes before the Carthaginian time of *Dido, Queen of Cathage*, but Marlowe’s play was performed in the theatre before Shakespeare’s probably was. Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* seems to evoke these

¹⁰³ Robert E. Wood missed this echo in his essay on the “many parallels” between the two plays, “The Dignity of Morality: Marlowe’s *Dido* and Shakespeare’s *Troilus*”, *Shakespeare Studies*, 11 (1978), 95-106 (p. 99).

¹⁰⁴ The lyrics of Cupid’s song were never printed in an early modern edition of the play.

¹⁰⁵ Martin Wiggins, “When did Marlowe write *Dido, Queen of Carthage*?”, *Review of English Studies*, n.s., 59.4 (2008), 521-41.

previous plays and poems, just as the scene in *Hamlet* had done when the Prince asked the actor to speak of “Aeneas’ tale to Dido” (2.2.427).¹⁰⁶

However, Shakespeare evokes these past plays of the literary-theatrical field – and their onstage audiences – only to play the expectations of one against the other. An earlier example of these conflicting expectations of drama can be seen in *Hamlet* when Polonius undercuts the First Player’s performance of Aeneas’s tale to Dido with: “This is too long” (2.2.478). Similar moments in the Trojan *theatrum mundi* of *Troilus and Cressida* have important consequences for the way that the play situates its audience in relation to expectation. As Robert S. Miola explains,

[t]he ancient and venerable story of the Trojan War in *Troilus and Cressida* shows humanity at its worst, irrational, brutish, and self-destructive. Shakespeare never rests content with received texts and traditions; he always revises them, reworks their context, combines them with other elements, turns them inside out or upside down.¹⁰⁷

Nowhere is this recontextualising on Shakespeare’s part more apparent than with this play. In Marlowe’s play, Dido, as an audience member, is in a sense a tragic figure ensnared by the gods and love; this process is reified as Cupid’s song. In Shakespeare’s play, Paris and Helen seem not to realise the (in)appropriateness of Pandarus’s song to their own situation.

To use Bertrand Evans’s expression, there is a discrepant awareness between how the characters might be thought to view their situation and how a *knowing* theatre audience views the scene; such an audience might have gained this awareness from reading and seeing other plays, or, even, after merely seeing the first two acts of *Troilus and Cressida*. Troilus says of Helen in the previous act, “She is a theme of honour and renown, / A spur to valiant and magnanimous deeds” (2.3.199-200). As Jane Adamson argues, however, “the clash between those heady abstractions and fervid urgencies of the council debate and this scene’s feather-

¹⁰⁶ Marlowe’s play is sometimes thought to be the play referred to by Hamlet as the “caviare play”. James Shapiro argues that “the Player’s speech [...] unmistakably recalls Aeneas’ Speech to Dido in Marlowe’s play”, *Rival Playwrights: Marlowe, Jonson, Shakespeare* (New York and Oxford: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 127.

¹⁰⁷ Robert S. Miola, *Shakespeare’s Reading: Oxford Shakespeare Topics* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 163.

brained cosy-nested trivialities is extreme”.¹⁰⁸ Given the discussion of Helen in the Trojan debate scene, it might be expected that Helen and Paris would be represented in a more favourable light together. However, Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* had already established a theatrical critique of the representation when Helen of Troy was conjured by Mephistopheles, perhaps only to be played by a devil in disguise.¹⁰⁹ Based on the literary expectations of Helen representing “the heart-blood of beauty” (3.1.29-30) and the expectations established in the early scenes of *Troilus and Cressida*, Helen’s representation may be similarly disappointing. As Jan Kott envisions,

[In Shakespeare’s] Troy we meet smart courtiers with their small talk. [...] Paris kneels at Helen’s knees as in a courtly romance. Page boys play the lute or the cither. But Paris calls the lady from a medieval romance simply – “Nell”. Lovely Nell, Greek queen and the cause of the Trojan War, cracks jokes like a whore from a London inn.¹¹⁰

The audience, based on the build-up to this scene within the play alone, may well ask incredulously, following Faustus, “Was this the face that launched a thousand ships, / And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?” (*Doctor Faustus*, sc. 13, ll. 90-91).¹¹¹ Shakespeare goes further, however, by having Troilus rephrase the question:

Is she worth the keeping? Why she is a pearl,
Whose price hath launched above a thousand ships
And turned crowned kings to merchants.
(2.2.81-2)

This new staging of a commercial Helen is another example of the way Shakespeare’s play provides the expected matter of Troy while presenting this material with a different awareness.

¹⁰⁸ Jane Adamson, *Troilus and Cressida: Harvester New Critical Introductions to Shakespeare* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1987), p. 77.

¹⁰⁹ See Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, in *Christopher Marlowe: The Complete Plays*, ed. Frank Romany and Robert Lindsey (London and New York: Penguin, 2003), pp. 341-95 (sc. 13, ll. 81-109). All further references to this play are to this edition and line numbers are given in parenthesis.

¹¹⁰ Jan Kott, “*Troilus and Cressida* – Amazing and Modern”, in *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* (New York and London: Norton, 1974), pp. 75-83 (p. 76).

¹¹¹ The question appears in a new light during Lavatch’s song in *All’s Well That Ends Well*: “‘Was this fair face the cause’, quoth she, ‘why the Grecians sacked Troy?’” (1.3.62-63).

The music room scene is not integral to the plot of the play, but it does offer the audience an ironic view of the Trojan matter. King Priam's comment in the Trojan debate scene that Paris speaks "Like one besotted on [his] sweet delights" (2.2.143) prefigures the saccharine scene and Pandarus's musical performance:

Love, love, nothing but love, still love, still more!
 For O love's bow
 Shoots buck and doe.
 The shaft confounds
 Not that it wounds
 But tickles still the sore.
 These lovers cry, O, O, they die,
 Yet that which seems the wound to kill
 Doth turn "O, O" to "ha ha he",
 So dying love lives still.
 "O, O" a while, but "ha ha ha"
 "O, O" groans out for "ha ha ha" – Heigh-ho!
 (3.1.99-110)

Ostensibly, the scene stages Helen and Paris as audience figures for this song and, perhaps surprisingly, their audience expectations seem to be fulfilled. Paris does not react like King Claudius in *Hamlet* who, interrupting the performance, stands up exclaiming, "Give me some light. Away" (3.2.247). Helen seems to enjoy the performance, saying, "In love, i' faith, to the very tip of the nose" (3.1.111). In contrast, the pander's bawdy song – with its onomatopoeically orgasmic "O"s and "ah"s – is a travesty of Petrarchan love poetry, Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, and even the pastoral madrigal that the Marlovian Cupid might have sung in *Dido, Queen of Carthage*.¹¹² A theatre audience member need not have read this literature in order to appreciate the impiety of Pandarus's song because its lyrics also deride Troilus's high-soaring poesy (from the earlier scenes), which was itself exaggerating previous love-poetry. However, the Cupid-song, like many lines in the play, only thinly veils the theme of sexual gratification that is easily read in the text by those in the

¹¹² As Tiffany Stern comments, "[t]hat the song is about dying for love – dying, here, meaning to have an orgasm – is pointedly ironic: the sore, the wound, the killing, and the groans are sexual in the song, but are also reminders of the Trojan war in which Helen has no interest, and that is being waged for her", *Making Shakespeare: From Stage to Page* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 108-09.

audience (onstage or in the theatre), who know that Pandarus “meant naughtily” (*T&C*, 4.2.38).

Of course, as this song is part of a music-field that impinges on (or is represented by) theatre, the position of the song can also be read as being about an audience’s gratification in general, their pleasure, desire and disappointments. Although it is difficult to say exactly how the song might be produced in an early modern theatre, the overblown lyrics suggest that Pandarus’s song would be seen as debased entertainment, rather than part of the highbrow culture that other writers on Troy (or even Shakespeare in *The Rape of Lucrece*) might have led the audience to expect to find the couple enjoying.¹¹³ The inclusion of the Cupid-song visibly signifies more about the Elizabethan audience and the literary-theatrical field than it does about a Trojan couple. In a sense, the play “eat[s] up [it]self” (*T&C*, 1.3.124), or at least the expectations of the Trojan scene. In so doing, *Troilus and Cressida* stages both the discrepant awareness of the different characters and new discrepant expectations that audiences might have of this material in the future.

IX. Fair Addresses to the Audience: Paint and Rhetoric

Troilus and Cressida especially appears to question the often ingratiating aspect of patronised performance, as previously exemplified by Jonson in his (and his characters’) addresses to his distinguished readers and audience members. There is, for example, an echo between the Prologue to the play who addresses the theatre audience directly as “you, fair beholders” (Pro., 26) and Pandarus whose employs this language *ad absurdum* with a “complimental assault” (3.1.35) on Paris and Helen:

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,

¹¹³ Shakespeare’s *The Rape of Lucrece* contains several stanzas where Lucrece reflects on her situation in relation to a “skilful painting” (ll. 1367) of Troy, a piece of fine art.

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...
 (3.1.37-41)

As Dawson notes, Pandarus's fair language is "pushed almost to absurdity", but the fact that Pandarus premeditates such a "complimentary assault" makes it difficult to say whether this absurdity is supposed to be obvious to the onstage audience of Pandarus's address or not.¹¹⁴ Like many of the lines in this scene, however, these are also prefigured by the characters' earlier words. In the first scene of the play Troilus exclaims:¹¹⁵

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.
 (1.1.83-85)

Helen's fairness, viewed as a reification of the warrior's efforts and the production of flattery for the patron, is, therefore, a "deadly theme" (4.5.181) because it dazzles audiences from seeing the human cost of the war. Before his musical performance, Pandarus's flattery in effect supports the grim conditions of the war by apparently valuing the foundational issue (or person) on which the war is based. Pandarus's apparent valuing of his sovereign audience, when it is not viewed ironically, perpetuates the war propaganda: this ironic representation of the valuing of Helen and Paris needs to be considered in relation to the larger question of what to expect from Trojan matter.

Pandarus's fair words refigure expectations for the way that a performance can flatter its audience. It is usual in Shakespeare, for example, for comic scenes to compliment their audience members by making them a party to the dramatic ironies of the characters' predicament or by scapegoating certain characters to bear the brunt of the laughter:

Malvolio's fate in *Twelfth Night* is a classic Shakespearean example of this scapegoating that

¹¹⁴ Dawson (ed.), p. 140.

¹¹⁵ Pandarus also discusses fair Helen early in the play when he comments of Cressida, "Because she's kin to me, therefore she's not so fair as Helen; an she were not kin to me she would be as fair o'Friday as Helen is on Sunday" (1.1.70-72).

gives the audience a privileged or discrepant awareness.¹¹⁶ In *Twelfth Night*, probably the last comedy Shakespeare wrote before *Troilus and Cressida*, the audience may feel awkwardly complicit in Malvolio's scapegoating, but by the end of the play Feste the fool will still sing on behalf of the players to the audience with the lyrics, "we'll strive to please you every day" (5.1.395). Aside from the Prologue's labelling of the audience as "fair beholders" (Pro. 26), however, *Troilus and Cressida* is decidedly ambiguous and sometimes overtly antagonistic in its relation to its audience. On the whole, it does not reflect the audience flattery that Pandarus outwardly shows to his courtly audience.

Pandarus's fair language is in fact not only like the fair flattery of theatre prologues or verbose courtiers. His language is also reminiscent of the book prefaces of a literary field in which the reader is frequently addressed in self-deprecating terms. Sycophantic prefaces to patrons and readers had become so normal during Shakespeare's lifetime that John Taylor the Water Poet mocked the convention in his own preface to *Laugh, and Be Fat*, first published in 1612:

To the Reader.

Reader, I doe not come upon you with the old musty Epithites of Honest, Kinde, Courteous, Loving, Friendly, or Gentle: The reason is; I am not acquainted with your qualities; and besides, I am loth to belye any man. But if you be addicted to any of the aforesaid vertues, I pray let mee finde it in your favourable Censure, and so I leave you to laugh and lie downe. Bee fat.¹¹⁷

Although Taylor does not hold up the adjective "fair" as one of the "aforesaid virtues", he might easily have done.¹¹⁸ Shakespeare's plays, in their few prologues and epilogues, on the whole tend to flatter their audience, as was the Elizabethan custom. The only other use of the

¹¹⁶ See, for example, René Girard, "O, What a Deal of Scorn Looks Beautiful: Self Love in *Twelfth Night*", in *A Theatre of Envy*, 2nd edn (Leominster and New Malden: Gracewing, 2000), pp. 106-11 (p. 111).

¹¹⁷ John Taylor, "Laugh, and Be Fat", in *All The Workes of John Taylor The Water-Poet, Being Sixty and Three in Number, Collected into One Volume by the Author* (London, 1630), pp. 69-80 (p. 69); this pagination is complicated by the fact that the book was printed in parts by four printers.

¹¹⁸ Unlike predictable prefaces, Taylor does *not* obviously flatter his reader. He was usually more willing than other poets to admit that he was writing to a public audience. See Johann Gregory, "The Publicity of John Taylor the Water-Poet: Legitimizing a Social Transgression", in *Transmission and Transgression in Early Modern England*, ed. Sophie Chiari and Hélène Palma (forthcoming 2014).

term “fair” for the theatre audience in prologues or epilogues in Shakespeare is at the end of *Henry V*, when in the last line the epilogue asks the audience to accept or be pleased with the play “In your fair minds” (Epi., 14). Shakespeare seems to have used the term sparingly as an audience address in his plays, as if aware, like Taylor, of the preposterousness of calling a diverse group of people “fair”.

The act of calling an audience or reader “fair” – Pandarus’s flattering term for his quasi-audience and the Prologue’s description for the theatre audience – is often associated with painting in Shakespeare’s writing, no doubt demonstrating the closeness of the field of painting to the literary-theatrical field.¹¹⁹ Not only does Troilus say that the warriors “paint” Helen fair when they fight for her in *Troilus and Cressida*, Shakespeare’s *Sonnets* contain several references to painting when they address the so-called “fair youth”. In Sonnet 83, the poetic voice says, “I never saw that you did painting need, / And therefore to your fair no painting set” (ll. 1-2). The idea of painting here has associations of (theatrical) make-up, but this line is also glossed by Katherine Duncan-Jones as “falsely profuse rhetoric”, just the kind of “complimental assault” that Pandarus envisages before he entertains Paris and Helen.¹²⁰ Sonnet 82 also talks of “The dedicated words which writers use / Of their fair subject” (ll. 3-4). This pun on “dedicated” refers to a committed writer and to an author’s dedication, such as that of John Taylor. Earlier in the play, Pandarus jokingly says that if Cressida “be fair ’tis the better for her; an she be not, she has the mends in her own hands” (1.1.62-63). Pandarus suggests that she can paint herself fair with make-up.¹²¹ However, he actually goes out of his way to paint Cressida to Troilus in glowing colours – in a rhetorical and painterly sense.

¹¹⁹ Evidence that these fields really did overlap in obvious ways can be found in the fact that the Earl of Rutland paid Shakespeare for the design and Richard Burbage for the “painting and making” of an *imprese* to be borne by him at “a tourney at Court marking the King’s Accession day”, S. Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare: A Compact Documentary Life*, rev. edn (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 272.

¹²⁰ Katherine Duncan-Jones (ed.), *Shakespeare’s Sonnets: The Arden Shakespeare* (London: Thomson Learning, 1997), p. 276.

¹²¹ For the significance of make-up on the early modern stage, see Farah Karim-Cooper, *Cosmetics in Shakespearean and Renaissance Drama* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), especially the subchapter “Painting the Queen”, pp. 58-61.

Pandarus's "fair" flattery epitomises one strain of *Troilus and Cressida*, which is to push the rhetorical painting or colouring of the Greeks and Trojans to breaking point: by the end of the play, Pandarus will abuse the audience, exclaiming "Good traders in the flesh, set this in your painted cloths" (5.1.1.44). The play thus incorporates the artistic field of painting into the literary-theatrical field, but reproduces the polar opposites of that patronised field. *Troilus and Cressida* pits the idea of "fair" patronised painting and performance against his theatre which did not *have to* play such a deferential game with its theatre audience.

Viewing court culture askew, Shakespeare thus ironically paints Paris and Helen as the "gilded butterflies" (*King Lear*, 5.3.13) that Lear hopes to laugh about with Cordelia:

Lear promises Cordelia they will

laugh
At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too,
Who loses and who wins; who's in, and who's out.
(5.2.12-15)

Lear's dream is idyllic in the supposed simplicity of Lear and Cordelia's role: all they will do is sit around and relax, laughing at the flitting about of brightly clothed or costumed courtiers and talking gossip.¹²² In *King Lear* this idea remains bittersweet wishful thinking, but in *Troilus and Cressida* the music-room scene shows Paris and Helen in these very roles, relaxing and gossiping about the others. However, their pleasure in Pandarus's performance and each other's company is overshadowed for the theatre audience by the context of its production – the battle outside the Trojan walls. Soon after, Pandarus asks for the "court news", enquiring, "who's afield today?" (3.1.117). Paris responds:

Hector, Deiphobus, Helenus, Antenor, and all the gallantry of

¹²² *The Norton Shakespeare* glosses "gilded butterflies" as "Gaudy and ephemeral courtiers; trivial matters", thus acknowledging this issue of clothing or costume, p. 2545. Cementing the link between clothing and costume, the early modern tourist, Thomas Platter, reported that "[t]he play-actors are dressed most exquisitely and elegantly, because of the custom in England that when men of rank or knights die they give and bequeath almost their finest apparel to their servants, who, since it does not befit them, do not wear such garments, but afterwards let the play-actors buy them for a few pence", quoted in S. Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare: A Compact Documentary Life*, p. 134.

Troy. I would fain have armed today, but my Nell would not have it so.

(3.1.118-20)

In *King Lear* the imagined scene is a distraught man's dream – a dream of autonomy from sordid events – but in *Troilus and Cressida* Helen and Paris's pastime is enjoyed at the expense of the so-called "gallantry of Troy" who are fighting for Helen, here ironically nicknamed "Nell" by Paris. The *OED* marks this passage as its earliest instance of the term "gallantry", giving the definition "Gallants collectively; gentry, fashionable people".¹²³ To listen to Paris speak, an audience could be forgiven for thinking that the prince is missing out on a fashion parade of "gilded butterflies" or a pageant, but by the end of the play this courtly picture of battle is displaying conspicuous cracks. R.A. Foakes notes of this moment that "Shakespeare brilliantly conveys through the language of this scene a sense of luxury, idleness, and love as *hot thoughts, and hot deeds*".¹²⁴ Pandarus's performance is, according to classical and romance sensibilities and expectations, outrageous. But Paris and Helen in their courtly relaxation seem to miss the irony of their situation: they are relaxing and playing while others give their energies and even their lives to maintain them. Thus, *Troilus and Cressida* critiques the valorising of the courtly aesthetic on the grounds that this aesthetic glosses over the sordid realities of war and battle: the play surreptitiously suggests that some courtly patrons live in a dream world that does not match the reality of the world around them.

X. Looking Towards Matters of Taste in the Literary-Theatrical Field

Troilus and Cressida does display the courtly aesthetic of heroic deeds and quasi-medieval honey-sweet lovers that audiences may well have expected, but it does so ironically, making the audience painfully aware of the discrepancies at play. In the later *King Lear*, the notion of

¹²³ *OED* "gallantry", n., sense 1.

¹²⁴ R.A. Foakes (ed.), *Troilus and Cressida: New Penguin Shakespeare* (London and New York: Penguin, 1987), p. 190.

laughing at “gilded butterflies” will be the fruitless hope of an aggrieved father when Edmund will finish Lear’s verse line with the simple yet dramatically charged imperative: “Take them away” (5.3.19). In *Troilus and Cressida* the “ceremonious courtiers” (1.3.235) that use rhetoric to paint themselves and others “fair” are, in fact, sick and diseased at their core; and the play not only shows this, but stages Thersites as a railing performer to demonstrate the degradation of others and to impersonate them. The elite characters in the play may “mock the time with fairest show” (*Macbeth*, 1.8.81) in order to perpetuate their courtly position and humanise the bloody war they are engaged in, but this fair show has an unstable basis, being in such close proximity to the “revolted fair” (5.3.185) of rotting bodies and immoral actions. This discrepancy is what Achilles’ speech to Patroclus exposes when he says of Hector at the very start of Act Five:

I’ll heat his blood with Greekish wine tonight,
Which with my scimitar I’ll cool tomorrow.
Patroclus, let us feast him to the height.
(5.1.1-3)

On Essex’s return from Ireland *without* “rebellion broachèd on his sword” (*Henry V*, 5.0.32), Elizabeth I refused to renew the Earl’s monopolies on the taxing of sweet wines.¹²⁵ Much of his courtly luxury was in fact financed by this commercial income. Such ironies were clearly not lost on working people. While the elite promoted a conservative idea of taste as exclusive and privileged, others such as Shakespeare realised that this view of taste repressed the work (or the blood, sweat and tears) that went into a war, and into theatrical and economic production. How an audience is to appreciate this commercial play thus becomes an issue fraught with matters of taste – the topic of the next chapter.

¹²⁵ Paul J.E. Hammer explains that “[t]he battle for, and within, Essex’s mind was settled when Elizabeth refused to renew his sweet wines lease on 30 October. Essex was ruined and all that remained was desperation”, “Devereux, Robert, second earl of Essex (1565–1601)”, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2008; available at <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7565>> [accessed 23 June 2013].

CHAPTER THREE Matters of Taste and Body Matter

“Sir, he hath never fed of the dainties that are bred in a book.
 He hath not eat paper, as it were, he hath not drunk ink.
 His intellect is not replenished, he is only an animal,
 only sensible in the duller parts,
 And such barren plants are set before us that we thankful should be,
 Which we of taste and feeling are, for those parts that do fructify in us more than he.”

– Nathaniel in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* (4.2.24-29)

“a strangely embodied shadow of the classical heroic ideal”

– Bruce Bohrer on *Troilus and Cressida* (2003)¹

I. Affecting Taste

Troilus and Cressida is preoccupied with dramatizing its engagement with the “matter” of taste. The language of food and cooking is used in the play to make distinctions about characters, ideas, and actions. In the play, this language emphasises the preferences of characters and audiences, their tastes and powers of discernment. During the early modern period, physical taste is often affiliated with literary, theatrical and social tastes. Taste thus operates in an aesthetic sense, but Shakespeare’s play suggests that taste also works in a way close to Bourdieu’s notion of its being a marker of social distinctions. As this chapter examines, Shakespeare exaggerates the association between physical and aesthetic taste to invite the audience to reflect on the matter of Troy and the theatre of love and war. In so doing, he implicitly invites the early modern audience to confront the literary-theatrical field of the play’s inception, to think about the Trojan heritage, and to contemplate courtly and elitist cultural ideologies.

Questions of theatrical affect and effect are the subject of much of Shakespeare’s own drama: he metatheatrically stages plays-within-plays and scenes-within-scenes to show how

¹ Bruce Bohrer, “The Privy and Its Double: Scatology and Satire in Shakespeare’s Theatre”, in *A Companion to Shakespeare’s Works, Volume IV: The Poems, Problem Comedies, Late Plays*, ed. Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 69-88 (p. 73).

audiences react – often in ambiguous ways.² *Troilus and Cressida* challenges the distance between the play and the audience. The play stages a language of aesthetic taste that it suggests is ultimately *not* separate from its own theatrical body. The matter of Troy becomes for *Troilus and Cressida* a test case for taste and expectation, challenging audiences to rethink the Trojan story and see what they can stomach, what they prefer and how they position themselves.

II. Tastes of the Theatrical-Literary Field of 1599-1601

It cannot be accidental that the issues of preference, discernment, and taste are explored in the play: as James P. Bednarz argues, *Troilus and Cressida* is responding to the plays of the so-called Poets' War (see Appendix IV).³ For Bednarz, the play's "specific referentiality is focused more explicitly on the politics of Elizabethan theatre than on the theatre of national politics".⁴ Although Shakespeare's critique arguably works both ways, the view that the play is responding closely to the plays and writers of 1599-1601 certainly goes some way to explain the satirical tone of *Troilus and Cressida*, its distrust of sentimentality, and its focus on reputation, legitimation and taste. As Bednarz explains,

[m]odern criticism has trivialized the Poets' War by characterizing it as either a series of personal vendettas or a publicity stunt designed to generate a profit. It would be

² For example, Hamlet tries to "catch the conscience of the King" (3.1.582) with *The Mousetrap*, attempting to gauge how the King is affected by seeing a murder committed on stage. In contrast, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* appeals to the idea of *not* ultimately affecting the audience: when Puck tells the audience, if the "shadows have offended" (Epi., 1), "Think [...] / That you have but slumbered here, / While these visions did appear" (Epi., 2-4). With this exhortation, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* appears to corroborate the notion of a theatrical fourth wall. For the "recent 'affective turn'" in literary studies, see Katharine A. Craik and Tanya Pollard, "Introduction: Imagining Audiences", *Shakespearean Sensations: Experiencing Literature in Early Modern England*, ed. Katharine A. Craik and Tanya Pollard (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1-25 (p. 4).

³ James P. Bednarz reads *As You Like It*, *Hamlet* and *Troilus and Cressida* as Shakespeare's "Poets' War trilogy", *Shakespeare & the Poets' War* (New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2001), p. 18. The plays of the Poets' War for Bednarz include, for example, Ben Jonson's comical satires *Every Man Out of His Humour* and *Poetaster*, John Marston's *Histriomastix; or, The Player Whipped*, *Jack Drum's Entertainment*, and *What You Will* and Thomas Dekker's *Satiromastix*. See "Chronology of the Poets' War", in *Shakespeare & the Poets' War*, p. 9, reproduced in Appendix IV: James P. Bednarz's "Chronology of the Poets' War".

⁴ Bednarz, *Shakespeare & the Poets' War*, p. 263

wrong, of course, to exclude either of these motives as a contributing factor [...]. But, more important, the Poets' War involved a debate on the theory of literature.⁵

The idea that the Poets' War was in a sense *about* literature is easier to comprehend in relation to Bourdieu's concept of a literary field. The debate of the Poets' War was not just about literary theory *per se*, but rather about literary and theatrical taste, about the preferences and expectations of authors, audiences, patrons and actors that conditioned the theatrical-literary field. This field often involved the "personal vendettas", the "publicity" and the need to "generate a profit", but in the plays of the Poets' War these commercial and aesthetic considerations became part of the subject of theatre. Shakespeare's engagement with the Poets' War was usually implicit rather than explicit, perhaps more tactful than that of some of his contemporaries. However, *Troilus and Cressida* does pick up on many of the hotly contested issues of the Poets' War, such as the value of the satirist, legitimacy, merit, reputation, and people's tastes and expectations.

Bednarz identifies Ben Jonson's *Poetaster* (1601) as one of the plays in the Poets' War that Shakespeare was responding to with *Troilus and Cressida*. However, Shakespeare's play must also have been responding to the now lost *Troilus and Cressida* play performed by the Admiral's Men in 1599. Although there is not very much known about this play, the remaining evidence helps to recognise Shakespeare's contribution within the literary-theatrical field, especially in terms of audiences' tastes and expectations. By 1601, when the Lord Chamberlain's Men planned to perform *Troilus and Cressida*, it was the Admiral's Men that had the reputation for staging Troy plays, with Henslowe's diary noting the plays: *Troy* (1596); *Troy's Revenge, or the Tragedy of Polyphemus* (1599); a *Troilus and Cressida* play (1599); and *Orestes Furens, or The Tragedy of Agamemnon* (1599).⁶ As well as responding

⁵ Bednarz, *Shakespeare & the Poets' War*, p. 263, p. 103.

⁶ See Philip Henslowe, *Henslowe's Diary*, pp. 47-121, and "Appendix I", in Andrew Gurr, *Shakespeare's Opposites: The Admiral's Company, 1594-1625* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 201-73. Dates in parenthesis for these plays refer to entries in Henslowe's diary, not necessarily

to the apparent vogue or taste for comical satires performed by the boy players at the indoor theatres, then, Shakespeare and his company were also responding to the apparently successful “classical” tragedies put on by the Admiral’s Men at the Rose. More information about this Rose *Troilus and Cressida* may help to ascertain why Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* seems to be a generic hybrid, part comical satire and part historical tragedy.

These Rose Troy plays are lost, but Henslowe’s *Diary* records that either Henry Chettle, Thomas Dekker, or both, were paid to write them.⁷ A fragment of a plot of a *Troilus and Cressida* play belonging to Henslowe’s company is still extant and it is thought that this must correspond to the 1599 play.⁸ Although it appears that only the second quarter and fourth quarter of the plot remain (possibly missing the very end), Geoffrey Bullough made a number of observations regarding the play. He notes such instances as the inclusion of Cressida in a scene “wth Beggars”, suggesting that the Admiral’s play relied on Henryson’s sequel to Chaucer’s poem. In this sequel, Cressida is punished with leprosy and begs, with others, for alms from Troilus; he does not recognise her.⁹ Bullough argues that the evidence, such as it is, suggests that the Admiral’s Men produced a play from the “Trojan point of view”.¹⁰

The play was loosely episodic in structure but was planned with some thought for balance between characters, continuity in theme, dramatic variety, and contrast in tone [...]. It contains no Thersites and no obvious clown [...]. The end of Cressida must however have been poignant and moral, certainly not satiric. What we know of Dekker suggests that he would not mock at heroism or love. His epic scenes would

performance dates. In Gurr’s “Appendix I”, *Troy* is no. 54, *Troy’s Revenge, or the Tragedy of Polyphemus* is no. 122, *Troilus and Cressida* is no. 124, and *Orestes Furens, or The Tragedy of Agamemnon* is no. 125.

⁷ It appears that Henry Chettle was paid for *Troy’s Revenge, or the Tragedy of Polyphemus*, both were paid for *Troilus and Cressida*, and that Dekker and possibly Chettle, too, were paid for *Orestes Furens, or The Tragedy of Agamemnon*. See plays no. 122, 124 and 125 in “Appendix I”, in Andrew Gurr, *Shakespeare’s Opposites*, pp. 201-73.

⁸ See, for example, Geoffrey Bullough, “The Lost *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Essays and Studies*, n.s., 17 (1964), 24-40, and Andrew Gurr, *Shakespeare’s Opposites*, p. 243.

⁹ Robert Henryson, *The Testament of Cresseid*, in *The Poems of Robert Henryson*, ed. Robert L. Kindrick (Kalamazoo, MI: Western Michigan University, 1997), pp. 147-85; Troilus thinks “That he sumtime hir face befor had sene, / Bot scho was in sic plye he knew hir nocht” (ll. 500-01).

¹⁰ Bullough, “The Lost *Troilus and Cressida*”, p. 38.

have a simplified Marlovian loftiness [...] and Cressida on her last appearance might well utter sentimental truisms.¹¹

The plot outline and circumstantial evidence point towards a historical-tragedy.

Generalisations about the style of the plays put on by the Admiral's Men are not very helpful, but in Shakespeare's time it does appear that the Rose and Henslowe's Fortune had something of a reputation for staging bombastic speeches and extended stage-fighting, and, after Marlowe, a "decidedly conservative citizen attitude to love and marriage".¹² As Andrew Gurr has recently argued, however, "[o]ne substantial feature of the old-fashioned plays that the *Diary* makes evident is how many proved popular enough to have sequels written for them".¹³ This theatrical success certainly seems to have been the case with the Troy plays performed by the Admiral's Men. At the turn of the century, there were officially only two major theatre companies acting in the public theatres. As Gurr argues, "[t]heir reception included an automatic process of cross-reference by their audiences [and] an intimate closeness shared by the two repertories".¹⁴ With the Lord Chamberlain's Men, then, Shakespeare seems to have responded to the Admiral's Men version "with an unromantic, unsentimental and unheroic bias", something closer in tone to the satires of Jonson and John Marston performed in the indoor theatres.¹⁵ Shakespeare was responding to the comical satires performed by the boy players by showing the pretentiousness of that genre while still catering to those who obviously had a taste for the "late innovation" (*Hamlet*, 2.2.320).¹⁶ In

¹¹ Bullough, "The Lost *Troilus and Cressida*", p. 38.

¹² Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, 3rd edn (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 179; for more on the tastes of audiences in relation to the different theatres, see "The evolution of tastes", in Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, pp. 143-223.

¹³ Gurr, *Shakespeare's Opposites*, p. 182.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

¹⁵ Bullough, "The Lost *Troilus and Cressida*", p. 40.

¹⁶ Critics have read this line as a comment on the newly opened children theatres; for example, see Bednarz, "Ben Jonson and the 'Little Eyases': Theatrical Politics in *Hamlet*", in *Shakespeare & the Poets' War*, pp. 225-56.

his version of *Troilus and Cressida*, he implies that there were “Fools on both sides” (1.1.84).¹⁷

A production of *Troilus and Cressida* by the Admiral’s Men in 1599 suggests that Shakespeare’s version was not simply responding to the perceived chivalry of Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde* or the heroics of Chapman’s *Iliad*: it was also saying something about the rival production. The tone and trajectory of Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*, then, were not about simply undermining medieval precedents or destabilising a classical tradition: the play was thinking through the way that theatregoing had become a matter of taste. Shakespeare’s new Globe theatre was an obvious competitor with the Rose theatre. Shakespeare’s company also shared (and competed for) audiences with Henslowe’s new theatre (the Fortune built in 1600) in the northern suburbs, and the boy players at Paul’s and Blackfriars in the City. As Gurr explains,

[f]ashions were under such constant pressure to change that they were several times compared to fashions in clothing, and it is difficult to see how much of the change was a consequence of tastes evolving and how much was due to more material factors such as changes in playhouse conditions.¹⁸

Early modern authors, actors and audiences would have been aware of these changes in tastes and playhouse conditions: these tastes even became a subject of the drama. If one kind of theatre wanted to comment metatheatrically on the tastes of another theatre audience, it would be easier for a larger public theatre to represent an indoor theatre, rather than the other way around. This consideration may offer one material reason as to why companies with public theatres were often represented in plays as travelling players performing at court. The public theatres, like the Globe, were in a better position materially to represent or parody the tastes of those who attended more private performances. Nonetheless, it seems to have

¹⁷ Bullough, “The Lost *Troilus and Cressida*”, p. 40.

¹⁸ Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare’s London*, p. 195.

usually been the indoor theatres that – in trying to be more distinguished – enjoyed ridiculing the expectations and tastes of the audiences at the public theatres.

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* seems to touch on this ridicule and the theatrical scene when Rosencrantz reports that the children of the indoor theatres “are now the fashion, and so be-rattled the common stages (so they call them) that many wearing Rapiers are, affraide of Goose-quils, and dare scarce come thither” (folio, TLN 1388-91). Similarly, Guildenstern reports in the first quarto that “the principle publike audience that / Came to them are turned to private playes, / And to the humour of children” (E3^r).¹⁹ The “humour” of the children is an allusion to Jonson's comical satire which began with *Everyman Out of His Humour* (1599), and continued with *Cynthia's Revels* (1600) and *Poetaster* (1601). However, Jonson was not the only poet-playwright writing satires for the indoor theatres at this time. Marston wrote *Histrionastix; or, The Player Whipt* (1599), which also comments on the public theatres and the tastes of the audience that attended them: he seems to have taken Shakespeare's device of the Mechanicals' performance in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (c. 1595) to satirise the public theatre itself. In Marston's play the mechanicals perform a short *Troilus and Cressida* interlude (see Appendix V).²⁰

Marston's short play-within-a-play is particularly important for thinking about Shakespeare's contribution to the literary-theatrical field and its preoccupation with the tastes and expectations of audiences. The interlude has been largely overlooked by critics of Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*. Probably written by Marston revising an older morality play, it is thought that *Histrionastix* was performed around 1599, by the Children of Paul's at the cathedral theatre for which Marston was writing.²¹ According to Bednarz, *Histrionastix*

¹⁹ The prose is erroneously printed as verse in the first quarto: William Shakespeare, *The Tragicall Historie of Hamlet, Prince of Denmarke* (London, 1603).

²⁰ The interlude is reproduced in Appendix V: *Troilus and Cressida* in *Histrionastix*.

²¹ It is possible that *Histrionastix* was performed at one of the Inns of Court as well: see, Philip J. Finkelpearl, “John Marston's *Histrionastix* as an Inns of Court Play: A Hypothesis”, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 29.3 (1966), 223-34; Finkelpearl, *John Marston of the Middle Temple: An Elizabethan Dramatist in His Social*

instigated the so-called Poets' War: "When Shakespeare writes in *Hamlet* that 'there was for a while no money bid for argument unless the poet and player went to cuffs in the question' [(2.2.3439-40)], he is thinking of the vogue created by *Histrionmastix*".²² In Act Two of the six-act play, "Sir Oliver Owlet's Men" are invited to provide some entertainment during dinner.²³ Like a more disreputable version of the Mechanicals in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, these travelling players include "Belch the Beard-Maker", "Gutt, the Fiddle-string-maker" (B1^r) and also an outspoken "Gulch" (B4^v) – their names matching the stomach-turning distasteful theatre they supposedly produce.²⁴ Also in the company are "Incle, the Pedler" and "Maister *Posthast[e]* the Poet" (B1^r), a man pretending to be "a Gentleman scholler [...] though this summer season [he is] desperate of a horse" (C3^r). The scene provides an example of an indoor theatre company (Paul's boys) representing a more public "citizen" theatre company. Owlet's Men are asked to perform for the lords, just as the companies from the public theatres were invited to play at court. Although the company they portray is ostensibly Sir Oliver Owlet's Men, the obvious implication is that they are a parody of a public theatre company.

It may even be that *Histrionmastix's Troilus and Cressida* is a direct send-up of the *Troilus and Cressida* production of that year by the Admiral's Men. Bullough suggests that the "hit [at Owlet's Men] was possibly at Dekker and Chettle's recent piece".²⁵ Whether Marston was responding at Paul's with a comment on the "drolleries" of the Admiral's Men at the Rose is not as important as the way that an appreciation of taste is articulated in this

Setting (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), pp. 119-24; and W. Reavley Gair, "John Marston: a theatrical perspective", *The Drama of John Marston: Critical Re-Visions*, ed. T.F. Wharton (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 27-44.

²² Bednarz, *Shakespeare & the Poets' War*, p. 93.

²³ John Marston, *Histrionmastix; or, The Player Whipt* (London, 1610), B4^v. Further references to this play are to this edition and page signatures are given in parenthesis.

²⁴ The *OED* gives at least two appropriate definitions for "gulch": "To swallow or devour greedily. Also with *down, in, up*" (v1. sense 1) and "A glutton or drunkard" (n1.), citing Ben Jonson's *Poetaster*, where Tucca uses the term to describe Histrio, Ben Jonson, *Poetaster*, ed. Tom Cain (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 3.4.141; this edition is referred to as "Cain (ed.)" in the notes.

²⁵ Bullough, "The Lost *Troilus and Cressida*", p. 39.

scene concerning the story of Troilus and Cressida and the literary-theatrical field.

Histrionastix was not printed until 1610, but, as a play that seems to comment on the literary-theatrical field at the turn of the century in such an explicit way, it would be surprising if Shakespeare had not heard about it. Either way, the scene provides an example of the elitist attitudes that Shakespeare was potentially up against and invoking. Like the Mechanicals' *Pyramus and Thisbe*, the language of *Troilus and Cressida* is a blend of high rhetoric and unintentionally incongruous poesy. The Prologue proudly proclaims:²⁶

Troilus was a true lover; I know [n]one truer than he:
And *Cressida* that dainty dame, whose beauty faire & sweet,
Was cleare as is the Christall streame, that runs along the street.
(C4^r)

As Bednarz comments, "Marston's criticism [of the Admiral's Men's dramaturgy] is summarized in the Italian aristocrat Landulpho's rebuke when the players try to pass off Posthaste's drivel to an elite audience".²⁷ Landulpho's comment does not use the language of physical taste exactly – as Shakespeare does in *Troilus and Cressida* – but it does make distinctions about the material and the way it is portrayed:

Most ugly lines and base-brown-paper-stuffe
Thus to abuse our heavenly poesie,
That sacred off-spring from the braine of Jove,
Thus to be mangled with prophane absurds,
Strangled and chok't with lawlesse bastards words.
(C3^v)

In writing these lines, Marston might have been quoting from Philip Sidney's *An Apology for Poetry* (1595): "[o]ur Tragedies and Comedies [...] observ[e] rules neither of honest civility nor of skilful poetry".²⁸ Sidney lamented that contemporary plays abound in "gross absurdities [...] with neither decency nor discretion [...] by their mongrel tragic-comedy

²⁶ The abbreviation "*p^e*" used for "the" in the final line of the quotation has been modernised.

²⁷ Bednarz, *Shakespeare & the Poets' War*, p. 96. Bednarz sees the play-within as a comment on Anthony Munday's playwriting, who, nonetheless, wrote for the Admiral's Men; see Bednarz, *Shakespeare & the Poets' War*, pp. 94-96.

²⁸ Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry or The Defence of Poesy*, ed. Geoffrey Shepherd, rev. ed. R.W. Maslen, 3rd edn (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 110, ll. 28-29.

obtained”.²⁹ Significantly for Shakespeare’s play, both Sidney and Marston’s Landulpho mark out the poor taste of the productions by showing them to be “bastard” or “mongrel” – that is, illegitimate.³⁰

The language of *Troilus and Cressida* is mocked by the lordly audience figure, Landulpho, as being both ugly and lawless. The bad poetry is not only “ugly” and like toilet paper, but is also seen as abusive, profane and lawless. It mangles, strangles and chokes “heavenly poesie”. This play of “absurds” is thus an affront to those with better tastes within the play, even as it was presumably included in *Histrionastix* to amuse and flatter its “elite” indoor audience.³¹ Lord Mavortius in the staged audience comments, “I see (my Lord) this home-spun country stuffe, / Brings little liking to your curious eare” (C4^f). The *OED* records that the early modern word “curious” held a sense now obsolete: “Careful as to the standard of excellence; difficult to satisfy; particular; nice, fastidious: *esp.* in food, clothing, and matters of taste”.³² Mavortius is, then, essentially saying that Landulpho is an audience member with good taste. When Cressida, in medieval romance fashion, tells Troilus to wear her “skreene” in his helmet in order to “make thine enemies lame”, Landulpho responds that this is “lame stuff indeed the like was never heard” (C4^f). Landulpho distinguishes himself as one with a discerning early modern taste.³³ The *Troilus and Cressida* scene shows just how high the stakes were for a Troilus and Cressida play in terms of audience expectation and matters of taste. In the context of the rival theatres, these stakes would have been especially high following a popular but moralistic Admiral’s Men production and the satire on “base” public theatre produced at the more elitist indoor theatres.

²⁹ Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, p. 112, ll. 1, 4, 6.

³⁰ Landulpho and his language of distinction might be compared to Armado in Shakespeare’s *Love’s Labour’s Lost* who is said to be a “refined traveller” (1.1.161), one who apparently uses “high-born words” (1.1.171).

³¹ The question of how elite these private theatre audiences really were in comparison to the public theatres is a moot point. See Gurr, “Social Composition”, in *Playgoing in Shakespeare’s London*, pp. 58-94.

³² The *OED* gives examples for this sense of “curious” (adj., sense 2a) from c. 1380 to 1821.

³³ However, even within *Histrionastix*, there is some hesitancy about the legitimacy of Landulpho’s reading of the entertainment as a whole: the other lord, Philarcus, exclaims in an aside that ends the Second Act that “[t]he Italian Lord is an Asse, the song is a good song” (D1^f).

III. “Taste Classifies” – Pierre Bourdieu

The *Troilus and Cressida* of *Histrionmastix* is in a sense all about taste and class distinctions, between the attempts of the “base” (C3^f) actors to produce a play using a literary theme, and the lordly audience that dismiss it as beneath its refined tastes.³⁴ As Bourdieu writes in the preface to *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, “[t]aste classifies, and it classifies the classifier”.³⁵ Bourdieu’s thinking on taste as socially constituted is helpful for considering Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* and its engagement with audience expectations and the literary-theatrical field. “Social subjects”, Bourdieu explains,

classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed.³⁶

For Shakespeare as a dramatic writer, the manner in which characters distinguish themselves in their choices and actions gives those characters significance for the theatre audience. This theatre of discernment is also a means by which he can channel and explore audience expectations of character, action, and the play more generally. Working in the literary-theatrical field in a space between the traditional Trojan plays by the Admiral’s Men and the new comical satires of the indoor theatres, Shakespeare stages in *Troilus and Cressida* a play where many of the characters seem gripped by the distinction between what is distinguished and what is vulgar.

Taste is, as Bourdieu would argue, a case of positions and position taking, informed in relation to others and a sense of one’s own position. “Like every sort of taste”, writes Bourdieu,

[aesthetic disposition] unites and separates. Being the product of the conditioning associated with a particular class of conditions of existence, it unites all those who are the product of similar conditions while distinguishing them from all others. And it

³⁴ Mavortius warns the lordly audience, “My Lords, your entertainment is but base, / Courser your cates, but welcome with the best” (*Histrionmastix*, C3^f).

³⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), p. xxix.

³⁶ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p. xxix.

distinguishes in an essential way, since taste is the basis of all that one has – people and things – and all that one is for others, whereby one classifies oneself and is classified by others.³⁷

The problem for Bourdieu in his research for *Distinction* – which involved several different questionnaires about different people’s valuation and appreciation of different objects and artworks – was that the interviewees questioned were not always transparent about their judgements: they often answered with what they thought they *ought* to say.³⁸ This decision to second-guess the questioner in order to enhance the way that one is seen reflects a larger phenomenon of the way that aesthetic appreciation is performed in communities. Thus, if a group or person associated with social or cultural legitimacy distinguishes and appreciates a certain kind of art, then under certain circumstances, others will assume it has value.³⁹ This phenomenon is critiqued and travestied in the story of the Emperor’s New Clothes, for example, where everyone says they appreciate the sovereign’s new clothes until a child from outside the game – a spectator within the story – breaks the spell by voicing the fact that the Emperor is not wearing anything at all.⁴⁰ Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* invites its audience to take on a more complex version of the role played by the child in the fairy tale. The play critiques both the Chaucer/Henryson story of Troilus and Cressida as a Boethian-fated tragedy and the view of the Admiral’s Men who apparently represented the story following the traditional reception of medieval and classical literature without trying to show up the resultant discrepancies. Ultimately, *Troilus and Cressida*, like the story of the Emperor’s New Clothes, exposes the politics of any sovereign view or taste.

³⁷ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p. 49.

³⁸ On the “strategies of bluff” that interviewees sometimes demonstrate, see Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p. 88. Commenting on his fieldwork, Bourdieu also noticed how “[b]ourgeois respondents particularly distinguished themselves by their ability to control the survey situation”, *Distinction*, p. 170.

³⁹ The legitimacy of the sovereign to distinguish something is represented *ad absurdum* in *Hamlet* when the Prince discusses the shape of the clouds with Polonius (3.2.343-51).

⁴⁰ Similar to *Troilus and Cressida*, everyone in Hans Christian Andersen’s tale of “The Emperor’s New Clothes” is concerned about how others will see them in relation to their judgement; apparently, the exception is the child: “No one would let anyone else see that he couldn’t see anything, for if he did, they would have thought that he was not fit for his job, or else that he was very stupid. [...] ‘But Daddy, he’s got nothing on!’ piped up a small child”, “The Emperor’s New Clothes”, in *Hans Anderson’s Fairy Tales*, trans. L.W. Kingsland (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 86-92 (p. 92).

While characters within the play are troubled by the question of legitimation, Shakespeare stages hybrid versions of the Trojan story in his emphatically *Elizabethan* play.⁴¹ Within the play, the “bastard” (5.8.7) Thersites relishes the chance to expose the war-story, railing that “all the argument is a whore and a cuckold” (2.3.64). Shakespeare has Thersites rail in a satirical vein that *the story and the heroes* are in effect “base-brown-paper-stuff”, as Landulpho labelled the Owlet’s *Troilus and Cressida*. Thersites refuses to see the war as a “theme of honour and renown” (2.2.199) and as a catalogue of “valiant and magnanimous deeds” (2.2.200). This perspective fits with that of the play as a whole which, as Heather James puts it, provides a “self-conscious mishandling of the Troy legend’s cultural ambition”.⁴² *Troilus and Cressida* tends to demystify the war, the story and its chivalric values and hierarchies by using ideas of taste and distaste to question authenticity, traditional expectations and judgement. As James explains, “[s]orting through the tradition, Shakespeare selects the least reputable versions of characters and events and heightens their unsavoury aspect”.⁴³ The “unsavoury” is not just metaphorical, however; Shakespeare’s literalises the heroes as both ethically and physically unsavoury: “Shakespeare dishes up the events and exemplars of the Troy legend as ‘greasy orts’ not ‘caviar to the general’”.⁴⁴

The language of food and cooking is used by critics to describe the play, but it is also used by characters within the play itself. Bourdieu analyses the relationship between food and aesthetic appreciation:

[i]t is no accident that even the purest pleasures, those most purified of any trace of corporeality [...], contain an element which, as in the “crudest” pleasures of the tastes of food, the archetype of all taste, refers directly back to the oldest and deepest experiences, those which determine and over-determine the primitive oppositions –

⁴¹ Shakespeare had been influenced himself by Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde* in his own Boethian tragic love play, *Romeo and Juliet*; for a recent article on this influence, see David McInnis, “Repetition and Revision in Shakespeare’s Tragic Love Plays”, *Parergon*, 25.2 (2008), 33-56.

⁴² Heather James, *Shakespeare’s Troy: Drama, Politics, and the Translation of Empire* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 97.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

bitter/sweet, flavourful/insipid, hot/cold, coarse/delicate, austere/bright – which are as essential to gastronomic commentary as to the refined appreciation of aesthetes.⁴⁵

Characters in *Troilus and Cressida* continually voice their judgements by using a language of food and taste that includes many of the terms Bourdieu highlights: “*bitter* disposition” (4.1.49), “*sweet* Pandarus” (1.1.80), “*hot* digestion” (2.2.6), “*coldly* eye[ing]” (1.3.229).⁴⁶ The play also has several equivalent terms such as “fresh” (Pro., 14) and “stale” (2.2.79). These expressions are used in both a physical sense *and* an aesthetic sense in *Troilus and Cressida*. In the play, characters use the semantics of food in different ways. At times, they sublimate the body in ways that would often be called “refined” by the end of the seventeenth century; at others, they re-engage the body in relation to judgement-as-taste and audience expectation. As Joan Fitzpatrick explains, “theories of food and drink and choices about eating and drinking encode economic circumstances, social aspirations, national identity, physical health, and self-worth”.⁴⁷ The language of food and cooking is used in *Troilus and Cressida* to engage with ideas about social distinctions, aesthetic appreciation, and the traditional expectations of Troy.

IV. Food and the Body

Food seems to be on everyone’s mind in *Troilus and Cressida*. Given the concern with distinction in the play, it is not surprising that this preoccupation with food tends to be articulated more in terms of taste than hunger. Fitzpatrick comments that on the whole “our health concerns in the last 50 years have been about quality not quantity. This contrasts with the preceding 350 years when most people were underfed”.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, in *Troilus and Cressida* food is nearly always associated with taste – characters’ discernment, judgement

⁴⁵ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, pp. 72-73.

⁴⁶ Quotations are to the first instance of the words in the play with emphasis added.

⁴⁷ Joan Fitzpatrick, *Food in Shakespeare: Early Modern Dietaries and the Plays* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), p. 10.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

and preferences. Within the play, many of the characters use the language of food rhetorically to “season” (1.2.217) conversation or in order to persuade. In some cases it seems that characters think they are being tasteful; at others, the language of food is distasteful, excessive and seemingly out of place. When taste is not associated with food precisely, then it is usually connected to the process of cooking and anticipation. Throughout the play, food imagery and characters’ tastes foreground judgements in complex ways.

W.R. Elton explains that Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* has “been estimated [to contain] twice as many images of food, cooking and related matters as in any other of its author’s works”.⁴⁹ Elton does not provide a reference for this estimate, but he is probably referring to the work of Caroline Spurgeon. In *Shakespeare’s Imagery and What It Tells Us*, Spurgeon uses a chart to produce “a pictorial statement of the dominating images in *Hamlet* and *Troilus and Cressida*”.⁵⁰ She focuses on two semantic fields: “Food, Drink, & Cooking”; and, “Sickness, Disease, & Medicine”. As she demonstrates, there are an “extraordinary number of food and cooking images in *Troilus*, which dwarfs all others of their kind throughout the plays, showing how much the poet’s imagination ran on this subject in this play”.⁵¹ Spurgeon explains that the “same two groups of images run though and dominate both plays, disease and food; in *Hamlet* the first is predominant, and in *Troilus and Cressida* the second”.⁵² In the Trojan play, according to Spurgeon, “fourteen characters make use of images of food, taste or cooking, and [...] there are no less than forty-four such images in the play”.⁵³

For Spurgeon, the use of food imagery “tells us” that food ran through “the poet’s imagination”, that *Hamlet* and *Troilus and Cressida* “were written near together”, and that

⁴⁹ W.R. Elton, *Shakespeare’s “Troilus and Cressida” and the Inns of Court Revels* (Aldershot and Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 2000), p. 135.

⁵⁰ Spurgeon, title for “Chart VII” in the appendix “Charts”, in *Shakespeare’s Imagery and What It Tells Us* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), n. p.; see thesis Appendix III.

⁵¹ Spurgeon, note to “Chart VII” in the appendix “Charts”, n.p..

⁵² Spurgeon, *Shakespeare’s Imagery*, p. 320.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 323.

the plays were written “at a time when the author was suffering from disillusionment, revulsion and perturbation of nature, such as we feel nowhere else with the same intensity”.⁵⁴ Spurgeon’s latter assumption is in danger of locating the significance of the food and disease imagery squarely in Shakespeare’s temperament – the fact that at the age of “thirty-eight or thirty-nine” he developed a “sensitive digestion and a disgust of over eating”.⁵⁵ However, in keeping with Fitzpatrick’s notion of food “encoding” social aspirations, and the importance of food for Bourdieu’s mapping of social judgements, it becomes apparent that food and cooking imagery is doing more work in *Troilus and Cressida*.⁵⁶ As well as helping to characterise Shakespeare’s protagonists, the language of food foregrounds the issue of taste in terms of audience, anticipation, judgement, pleasure and even disgust.

In her reading of the play, Spurgeon itemises images of “seething, stewing, mincing, baking, larding, stuffing, broiling, basting, brewing, frying, kneading, boiling and stirring the ingredients for a pudding”.⁵⁷ As Spurgeon notes, the kinds of cooking are described “sometimes at considerable length, as in the metaphors on grinding the wheat, bolting, leavening, kneading, making the cake, heating the oven, baking and cooling, carried on with expert knowledge by Pandarus and complete understanding by Troilus in the opening of the play”:

A “crusty batch” (of bread), cheese served for a digestive, or mouse-eaten and dry, an addled egg, a pie, porridge after meat, a dish of fool (stewed fruit crushed with cream), a fusty nut, a hard sailor’s biscuit, fair fruit rotting untasted in an unwholesome dish, and greasy remnants of food, are, in addition, all pressed into service; as are also hunger, appetite, ravenous eating, digestion, fasting, feeding, tasting, drinking up the lees and dregs of wine, tossing off a toast, sauce, flavouring, salt, sweet and sour.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Spurgeon, p. 320.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 121.

⁵⁶ Fitzpatrick, *Food in Shakespeare*, p. 10. Part of Bourdieu’s work in *Distinction* is to “reconnect[] the elaborated taste for the most refined objects with the elementary taste for the flavours of food”, p. xxiv; see also, Bourdieu, *Distinction*, pp. 71-72 and pp. 191-99.

⁵⁷ Spurgeon, p. 323.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

These references are all the more extraordinary when it is considered that, unlike many of Shakespeare's other plays, there are no banquet scenes actually staged in *Troilus and Cressida*. These gustatory images therefore invoke a language of taste more than they support narrative events.

Troilus and Cressida juxtaposes the images of cooking and food with distasteful ones of disease and decay. The play includes references to "ulcer[s]" (1.1.49), "gash[es]" (1.1.58), "bleed[ing]" (1.1.106), "jaundice" (1.3.2), "choking" (1.3.27), being "sick" (1.3.133), "fever" (1.3.134) "withered brawns" (1.3.298), "boils" (2.1.4), "botchy cores" (2.1.5), "a loathsome scab", "mouldy" (2.1.95) wits, "infectious" (2.2.59) affectations, "blood [...] madly hot" (2.2.115-6), "brain-sick raptures" (2.2.122), "hot passion of distempered blood" (2.2.169), "Neapolitan bone-ache" (2.3.15), "corpse[s]" (2.3.27), "lazars" (2.3.28), "serpigo" (2.3.66), and a greasy and gelatinous Achilles as a proud lord "that bastes his arrogance with his own seam" (2.3.169); Ulysses is concerned that they should not "enlard his fat-already pride" (2.3.179).⁵⁹ Michael Dobson argues that "[a]lthough in conventional Western drama food usually functions primarily as a social signifier kept within the fictitious world of the play, food, and, even the discussion of food, can trigger actual physical responses of its own in audiences, some of them intrusively negative".⁶⁰ This notion that the play can generate a "physical response" is probably another reason for the frequency of food and culinary images in the play. It is the emetic potential of performance that Orsino refers to metaphorically in *Twelfth Night* when he opens the play with the lines:

If music be the food of love, play on,
Give me excess of it that, surfeiting,
The appetite may sicken and so die.
(1.1.1-3)

⁵⁹ These discomfiting references are taken from the first two acts of the play alone.

⁶⁰ Michael Dobson, "'His Banquet is Prepared': Onstage Food and the Permeability of Time in Shakespearean Performance", *Shakespeare Jahrbuch: Bühne und Bankett*, 64 (2009), 62-73 (p. 62).

Shakespeare's Trojan play reveals experimentation with audience expectations in ways that invite both physical and mental responses. *Troilus and Cressida* invites a bodily reaction to the drama, working through excited and disappointed tastes and expectations. In so doing, it links – through the language of taste – the expectations of the characters with those of the audience members themselves.

For a play sometimes thought to be elitist or written exclusively for an Inns of Court audience, it is surprising that *Troilus and Cressida* seems to insist on the imagery of *common* foodstuffs. Although many of the characters in the play are interested in discretion and that which is refined, critics have not noticed that there is actually a minimal number of references to expensive tastes in food, unlike the “caviare” (2.2.418) and “capons” (3.2.86) of *Hamlet* for example. Although Thersites mentions the newly imported exotic aphrodisiac potato (5.2.55), generally *Troilus and Cressida* uses images of more common food, like bread, “cheese” (2.3.35), “fruit” (2.3.108), “egg[s]” (1.2.116), “chaff and bran” (1.2.205), “porridge” (1.2.205), and a sailor's “biscuit” (2.1.34).⁶¹ This use of food imagery contrasts, for instance, with the poetry of Shakespeare's rival, Jonson, who often went out of his way to show his (expensive) tastes.⁶² The absence of these elite foodstuffs in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* may seem puzzling given that the play has sometimes been thought to be “the most difficult and elitist of all his works”.⁶³ Shakespeare may not have had experience of the richest dishes but his knowledge of other privileged topics (such as legal language and

⁶¹ Pandarus uses the word “cake” (1.1.14), but it is clear from the context that he is talking about baking bread. References are to the first instance of the food mentioned in the play.

⁶² The poetic voice of Ben Jonson's “Inviting a Friend to Supper”, for example, mentions several “scarce” (l. 15) “fowl” (l. 15), such as “partridge, pheasant, wood-cock [...] and godwit” (ll. 18-19), which the host says he will promise to get, even if he “lye[s]” (l.17) about it: “Inviting a Friend to Supper”, in *Epigrams*, in *Ben Jonson*, ed. C.H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925-52), VIII (1947), 21-89 (pp. 64-65). The host in the poem conspicuously displays his rich taste in foodstuffs such as game, “olive[s], capers” (l. 10) and “Limons” (l.13). The host's wishful choices complement his interest in the classical elite literature of the authors he invokes – Virgil, Tacitus, Livey, Horace and Anacreon (ll. 21-22 and 31). This name dropping of classical authors is not dissimilar to the *Troilus and Cressida* epistle writer (discussed in the next chapter) who says that the play “deserves such a labour, as well as the best Commedy by *Terence* or *Plautus*” (¶2).

⁶³ Harold Bloom, “*Troilus and Cressida*”, in *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (Fourth Estate: London, 1999), pp. 327-44 (p. 327).

learned sources) suggests that he would have been able to make a display of rich tastes in food if he had wished.⁶⁴

Two reasons for this confinement of food allusions in *Troilus and Cressida* to simple fare offer themselves. These comparatively simple foodstuffs enforce the play's larger strategy of showing Troy as a decidedly Elizabethan scene: nothing, for example, makes Pandarus more apparently mundane and colloquial than his detailed knowledge of the baking process displayed at the start of the play.⁶⁵ The association aligns Pandarus more with an Elizabethan pimp – like Pompey in *Measure for Measure* – than with the courtly Pandarus of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*.⁶⁶ The relatively simple foodstuffs, however, also acknowledge Shakespeare's usually heterogeneous audience.⁶⁷ The plays written by Jonson for Blackfriars worked to distinguish its select audience from the “sinners i' the suburbs” (*Poetaster*, 3.4.199) who went to the public theatres. The Globe, where Shakespeare was writing, had a much more varied audience, made up of law students who also went to Blackfriars, and less well-to-do people who may have also gone to the Rose or the Fortune.⁶⁸ Rather than using the language of food and taste to make certain audience members feel more distinguished, the play tends to use food to eradicate the differences: everyone eats; everyone drinks; and everyone has a body. Shakespeare's strategy of visualising expectation as a matter of taste works as a theatrical tactic for engaging (and repelling) an audience of

⁶⁴ Robert Appelbaum shows Shakespeare's sensitivity to the social aspects of food in *Aguecheek's Beef, Belch's Hiccup, and Other Gastronomic Interjections: Literature, Culture and Food among the Early Moderns* (Chicago, IL, and London: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

⁶⁵ Dawson notes that this imagery of baking probably has sexual connotations, as “seems clear from Justiniano's remarks in Dekker and Webster's *Westward Ho* (1604): ‘Why should I long to eate of Bakers bread onely, when theres so much Sifting, and bolting, and grinding in every corner of the Citty; men and women are borne, and come running into the world faster than coaches doe into Cheap-side uppon *Symon and Judes* day’”, Dawson (ed.), p. 79, quoting from Thomas Dekker and John Webster, *Westward Ho*, in *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, ed. Fredson Bowers, 4 vols (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1953-61), II (1955), 311-403 (p. 335, 2.1.169-73).

⁶⁶ On Pandarus's reputation, see Ann Thompson, *Shakespeare's Chaucer: A Study in Literary Origins* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1978), pp. 64-65.

⁶⁷ This is the more “socially eclectic audience[]” that Heather James imagines for the play in *Shakespeare's Troy: Drama, Politics, and the Translation of Empire* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 91.

⁶⁸ See Andrew Gurr's subchapter “Social composition: who went where”, in *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, pp. 69-84.

different people. By using simple foodstuffs known to all, he ensures that the semiotics of physical taste in the play are not exclusive. At a time when taste as discernment of food, people or literature is seen as coterminous with the body, *Troilus and Cressida* represents the body as both a common possession and socially situated.

Shakespeare does not just use the language of food to embellish or “season” the poetry within the play. Instead, this language works to show characters thinking through their own expectations, judgements and distinctions. Throughout the play, Shakespeare invites an association between the characters’ tastes and expectations and those of the theatre audience itself. Expectations are articulated by characters as a matter of *physical* taste from very early on in *Troilus and Cressida*. Besides the references to cooking and digestion in the prologue to the play (discussed in the Introduction), the first scene of the play stages Pandarus talking to Troilus, who anxiously anticipates a time when he will be able to “come to Cressid” (1.1.89). Pandarus uses the metaphor of baking in order to explain the patience that Troilus ought to show. Pandarus says that “he that will have a cake out of the wheat must tarry the grinding” (1.1.14-15), and then, “tarry the bolting” (1.1.17), “tarry the leavening” (1.1.19), “the kneading, the making of the cake, the heating of the oven and the baking” (1.1.21-23). Troilus “must stay the cooling too or [he] may chance burn [his] lips” (1.2.23-24). The extended metaphor likens the baking of the bread to a lover’s anticipation. Like many of Pandarus’s comparisons, the metaphor is rather overwrought, but, like the play’s prologue, the example does set up the expectation – early on in the play – of seeing expectations in terms of taste and food.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ The prologue is discussed in the Introduction, p. 20.

V. Humours and Matters of Taste

The question of how tasteful an audience might find a play filled with the language of taste, food and the body is one that *Troilus and Cressida* seems to invite its audience to ask from early on. The second scene of the play contains a short dialogue between Cressida and her servant, who also delights in using the language of food and cooking. The servant, called “Alexander” (1.2.39) by Pandarus, gives a character sketch of Ajax which is so long and seemingly extraneous that it has puzzled critics for centuries. E.K. Chambers, for example, comments that the sketch is “unnecessarily elaborate for its place” and “has not much relation to the character of Ajax as depicted in the play”.⁷⁰ This is a fair observation when the play is considered outside of the context of the Poets’ War. However, this character sketch is a deliberate parody of Ben Jonson’s style. The character sketch, as Bednarz notes, is “[o]ne of the revolutionary sub-genres that Jonson developed in comical satire”.⁷¹ Bednarz explains that in this sketch Shakespeare uses a Jonsonian device in order to parody Jonson himself by making the servant’s description of Ajax correspond ridiculously to Jonson’s own self-portrait as Criticus in *Cynthia’s Revels*.⁷² This was Jonson’s first play for the reopened Blackfriars in 1600. What Bednarz does not pay attention to, however, is the way that *Troilus and Cressida* also exposes the pretentious streak in the humours-plays written by the “Humorous Poet”, as he would become known.⁷³ In his invocation of the language of the humours, Shakespeare pushes the language of taste and distaste to an extreme.

⁷⁰ E.K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), I, 70, also quoted in Bednarz, *Shakespeare & the Poets’ War*, p. 38.

⁷¹ Bednarz, *Shakespeare & the Poets’ War*, p. 36.

⁷² On the relationship between Jonson and his character Criticus, see Bednarz, *Shakespeare & the Poets’ War*, pp. 160-64.

⁷³ The first published title of Thomas Dekker’s play which responds to Jonson’s authorial persona(s) is *Satiromastix; or, The Untrussing of the Humorous Poet* (London, 1602). For the early modern humours, see, for example, Lily B. Campbell, “This Little World. Man as Microcosm”, in *Shakespeare’s Tragic Heroes: Slaves of Passion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930), pp. 51-62, and Helen Ostovich, “Introduction”, in Ben Jonson, *Every Man Out of His Humour*, ed. Helen Ostovich (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2001), pp.1-95, esp. pp.13-15. Taste complicates the language of the humours (which looks into the body) because taste is so often social and outward looking.

In writing humoural plays, Jonson had, as Bednarz suggests, “attempted to create a visionary theatre of social catharsis capable of fulfilling the highest expectation for drama”.⁷⁴ Shakespeare’s comment on the *affective* didacticism of humoural drama is tempered by the playwright’s own use of satire and the language of food and the body in *Troilus and Cressida*. Shakespeare’s satire on Jonson’s satire is emphasised as such, for an aware Elizabethan audience at least, in the character sketch of Ajax:

This man, lady, hath robbed many beasts of their particular additions; he is valiant as the lion, churlish as the bear, slow as the elephant, a man into whom nature hath so crowded humours that his valour is crushed into folly, his folly sauced with discretion. There is no man hath a virtue that he hath not a glimpse of, nor any man an attain but he carries some stain of it. He is melancholy without cause and merry against the hair; he hath the joints of everything, but everything so out of joint that he is a gouty Briareus, many hands and no use, or purblind Argus, all eyes and no sight.
(1.2.16-26)

Although, as Chambers comments, this description seems “unnecessarily elaborate”, it is on another level representative of the work’s engagement with the literary-theatrical field of its creation. As Bednarz notes, “Shakespeare’s parody of Criticus/Jonson creates a disjunction in *Troilus and Cressida* between two sets of meanings, one self-contained within the opaque plot and another superimposed on it as a semi-autonomous node of literary allusion”.⁷⁵ Bednarz sees this “secondary semiotics” as being comprehensible in terms of the theatrical context, and as “originally devised for an audience that had intimate knowledge of the Poets’ War”.⁷⁶ It is worth considering the bipartite reading of this scene because it has implications for the way the play is read as a whole in terms of audience expectation and taste.

The fact that the servant is given the opportunity to report the qualities of Ajax creates divisions of awareness even on the “self-contained” level of the plot. He discusses Ajax at great length and in such an indiscriminate, lengthy fashion that he provokes his own ridicule for speaking in bad taste: “They say he is a very man *per se* and stands alone”, the servant

⁷⁴ Bednarz, *Shakespeare & the Poets’ War*, p. 7.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 38.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

says of Ajax (1.2.15). As Dawson notes, this portrayal suggests that Ajax is “one of a kind, in a class of his own”, but in his description Cressida’s servant stands alone at this point in the play for being outstandingly verbose.⁷⁷ The metatheatrical working of distinction or taste in relation to Jonson is not as class-based as it is on this “self-contained” level, however. On the metatheatrical level, those in the know are the theatre audience members or readers who have a greater understanding of the literary-theatrical field and can appreciate that this scene is not just about Ajax, but about Jonson, his characterisation, and his artistry. This audience the play envisions is not necessarily an elite one, but rather one whose *taste* has been *acquired* through other plays. The notion that the best or most discerning audience might not be elite is foreign to the audiences of the plays-within-plays of *Histrionomastix* or *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* where the lords apparently always have the better taste; these lords appear to believe their good taste is innate.⁷⁸ The character sketch of Ajax suggests a theatrical in-joke, part of the literary-theatrical field at its most autonomous.

Troilus and Cressida considers tastes that do not make sense in relation to the expectation of a courtly patron, but that do fit in relation to the work of other authors such as Jonson. Shakespeare’s involvement with Jonson’s comical satire is more reflexive than it might at first appear. As Bednarz notes,

by contesting the logic of self-justification central to Jonson’s humanist program, Shakespeare highlighted a crisis of legitimation in late Elizabethan drama. Although

⁷⁷ Dawson (ed.), p. 84. Cressida’s servant is often called “Alexander” by editors, following Pandarus’s salutation directed towards him: “Good morrow, Alexander” (1.2.39). However, this may be one of Pandarus’s patronising ironic jokes; Pandarus probably dismisses the servant – referred to simply as “Man” in the quarto and folio – by suggesting he is being too *great*, getting above his station. This is the only moment in the play where the servant is apparently named. It would be appropriate for this name to be a joke given the jokes concerning Ajax and “Alisander the Conqueror” (5.2.566-67) in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* during *The Pageant of the Nine Worthies*. Dawson notes in his edition that “[s]ince Alexander does not speak for the rest of the scene, and the banter between Pandarus and Cressida implies his absence, it is reasonable to have him exit somewhere here, probably as a result of a gesture from Pandarus, who has private matters to discuss with his niece. Note too that the F stage direction at 241 indicates that Pandarus exits alone, and Cressida is clearly alone onstage for her soliloquy at the end of the scene; hence Alexander must exit somewhere before Pandarus”, p. 86.

⁷⁸ Bourdieu considers the “upperclass propriety which treats taste as one of the surest signs of true nobility and cannot conceive of referring taste to anything other than itself” in the chapter “The Aristocracy of Culture”, in *Distinction*, pp. 3-89 (p. 3).

Jonson had claimed for himself a pivotal role as the arbiter of cultural judgement, Shakespeare negated the first principles on which he had grounded his perspective – the conviction that he was capable of obtaining a knowledge of truth.⁷⁹

The character sketch is not just about Ajax, or even just a caricature of Jonson. Instead, the sketch suggests a destabilising of the comedy of humours that always sets up a Criticus/author figure as the social arbiter of moral and cultural judgement, the authority on taste. In contrast to Jonson's authorial self-fashioning, Ajax/Jonson, nicknamed the "Humorous Poet" in the subtitle to the 1601 *Satiromastix*, is invoked as a man "so crowded with humours that his valour is crushed into folly, his folly sauced with discretion" (1.2.19-20). Dawson notes that in the description Ajax's "valour is mixed with (literally, squeezed into) folly and his folly flavoured with discretion".⁸⁰ Shakespeare uses the language of food and cooking to ridicule Jonson's use of humoral theory to legitimate his comical satire and its reading of society and others' poetry.

For good measure, Shakespeare critiques Jonson's elitist classicism too: he invokes classical monsters to compare Ajax to, but he deforms them (and by extension Jonson) as a "gouty Briareus" (1.2.24) and a "purblind Argus" (1.2.25). It should be noted that Shakespeare's use of these classical figures does not work to ostracise any non classically-trained audience members; the servant even explains incidentally that Briareus has "many hands" (1.2.25) and that Argus is "all eyes" (1.2.25). In later life, Ben Jonson would frequently mock Shakespeare's tastes, saying, according to William Drummond, that "Shaksperr wanted Arte", and that Shakespeare could not "rule" his own "wit".⁸¹ Perhaps Jonson was right: in the play, it seems Shakespeare could not resist making Ajax call out in Jonson's idiom, "I'll let his humours" (2.3.196). Dawson notes that the Ajax character sketch

⁷⁹ Bednarz, *Shakespeare & the Poets' War*, p. 50.

⁸⁰ Dawson (ed.), p. 84.

⁸¹ Ben Jonson, *Conversations with Drummond*, in *Ben Jonson*, ed. C.H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925-52), I (1925), 129-78 (p. 133), and Ben Jonson, *Timber; or, Discoveries*, in *Ben Jonson*, VIII (1947), 555-649 (p. 584); see also Bednarz, *Shakespeare & the Poets' War*, p. 26.

is “the first of many descriptions of the various Homeric heroes that mock their heroic pretensions”; however, it is also an early example of the jibes in the play in which Shakespeare seems to tease others’ literary pretensions, asking questions about audience expectations and judgements.⁸²

VI. Viewing Tastefully

Soon after the Ajax character sketch, the expectations of audiences and their judgements are explored more explicitly in terms of physical taste. Cressida and Pandarus are staged *as audience* in a “pageant scene”. Act One Scene Two invites the theatre audience to share in the debate between Cressida and Pandarus on expectations and taste because the play stages the very troop parade they discuss.⁸³ When Cressida and Pandarus “stand up” (1.2.151) to view the Trojan soldiers returning from the field, Pandarus asks if Cressida would like to “see them as they pass toward Ilium” (1.2.152). Cressida’s reply, “at your pleasure” (1.2.154), though a conventional courtesy, also mirrors the Prologue’s words to the play’s audience: “do as your pleasures are” (Pro., 30). Pandarus says, “Here, here, here’s an excellent place, here we may see most bravely” (1.2.155-56). As the “processional scene”, as Dawson calls it, draws to a close, “*common Souldiers*” (folio, TLN 437), according to the folio stage direction, are seen to pass by. Cressida exclaims, “Here comes more” (1.2.204), but Pandarus retorts, “Asses, fools, dolts – chaff and bran, chaff and bran! Porridge after meat! [...] Ne’er look, ne’er look, the eagles are gone; crows and daws, crows and daws!” (1.2.205-7). Just as Pandarus invited Troilus to view Cressida in terms of baking bread, so here the soldiers are viewed in corporeal terms, in terms of physical taste and food. The animal language only

⁸² Dawson (ed.), p. 85.

⁸³ Some modern productions only show Cressida and Pandarus on stage, but the stage directions at least imply that the troops probably would have been seen by an Elizabethan theatre audience too; see Frances A. Shirley, *Troilus and Cressida: Shakespeare in Production* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 104-05.

reinforces the classification of chaff and bran as “common”, non-essential for those with a refined taste. According to Pandarus, seeing crows and jackdaws after eagles have passed by is like having the porridge (soup) after the main course.⁸⁴ The language of food makes the soldiers seem unheroic through the association with ordinary food, but it also turns them into something quite unappreciated, a common commodity that might be bought or sold.⁸⁵ The language of food is used to make social distinctions about the soldiers: Pandarus sees the common soldiers as unrefined.

When Cressida teases Pandarus by saying that Achilles is “a better man than Troilus” (1.2.211-12), he responds by again linking corporeal taste with distinction or value judgements. This scene shows how audience members can put tastes into a hierarchy, as Hamlet does when discussing the caviar play.⁸⁶ The language that Pandarus uses emphasises problems of viewing and perspective in relation to attitude and judgement – keyed as physical taste in the play. Pandarus is always a bit of a snob when it comes to working people. He says that Achilles is “A drayman, a porter, a very camel” (1.2.212), and responds to Cressida with:

“Well well?” Why, have you any discretion, have you any eyes? Do you know what a man is? Is not birth, beauty, good shape, discourse, manhood, learning, gentleness, virtue, youth, liberality, and such like, the spice and salt that season a man?
(1.2.214-17)

Pandarus’s questioning works on several different levels. From a theatrical point of view, there is the irony that Cressida is played in the Elizabethan theatre by a boy-player, so the question has a metatheatrical irony that foregrounds the way that gender and the self are performed. But the question is also one that implicitly invokes the theatre audience, with Pandarus emphasising the “eyes” that look on a man. Pandarus uses the words “look” and

⁸⁴ Porridge is “thick soup. Seeing other soldiers after Troilus is like having the soup after the main course”, Dawson (ed.), p. 92.

⁸⁵ Pandarus’s food imagery that describes the soldiers as a commodity echoes the commodification of the soldiers by the Prologue who says that “The princes [have] their ships / Fraught with the ministers and instruments / Of cruel war” (Pro. 2-5); these same “barks [...] disgorge / Their warlike freightage” (Pro. 12-13), the Greek soldiers. There are also “common soldiers” in George Chapman’s translation of the *Seaven Bookes of The Iliade* (1598), in *Chapman’s Homer: The Iliad*, ed. Allardyce Nicoll with a new preface by George Wills (Princeton, NJ and Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 501-39 (p. 530, Bk. II, l. 140).

⁸⁶ This passage in *Hamlet* is discussed in the Introduction, pp. 23-24.

“looks” eleven times during the warriors’ pageant, reinforcing the voyeurism of the scene. Pandarus asks Cressida-as-spectator – and by association the theatre audience – “have you any discretion [...]?” (1.2.214). Early on, the play builds on a connection between this discretion and looking on the part of the characters and the audience. The language of visuality here foregrounds the way that judgement-as-taste is mediated through social commentary, depending on perspectives. In a play where characters find it ironically difficult to recognise each other, the heroes are not obviously heroic.⁸⁷ Their heroism in this scene depends in large part on Pandarus’s praise and commentary.

This experience of discernment and looking is associated relentlessly by Pandarus with physical taste, as if he is determined to describe social value and aesthetic taste in terms of physical taste. The values to be judged best by those with the “soundest judgements” (1.2.163) are the “spice and salt that season a man” (1.2.217). In effect, Pandarus is saying that if Cressida cannot recognise Troilus’s worth then she cannot have good taste. In this scene Cressida, and implicitly the audience, is asked by Pandarus to view the warriors as “gallant [men]” (1.2.181), “prince[s] of chivalry” (1.2.194) and “admirable” (1.2.201). This audience expectation is set up by the play’s prologue and was already established by literary precedents such as Chaucer’s poem and probably the Admiral’s Men’s production too; however, the expectation for “gallantry” (3.1.118) is systematically undercut by the play as it unfolds. Those reputed “princes orgulous” (Pro., 2), as the Prologue describes them, are presented in the course of Shakespeare’s play as being “distaste[ful]” (2.2.66).⁸⁸ The apparent disagreement between Cressida and Pandarus works to show that physical taste and taste-as-judgement are just as fraught with problems of perspective and legitimation as the sense of seeing. This issue of legitimation makes the metaphor of viewing as tasting – demonstrated

⁸⁷ For example, Aeneas either pretends not to recognise Agamemnon or actually does not recognise “the high and mighty Agamemnon” (1.3.34) when he visits the Greek camp with a message.

⁸⁸ As Dawson notes, “orgulous”, meaning “proud”, “occurs in Caxton, but was already archaic in 1600”. The term can be found frequently in descriptions of “orgulous knyght[s]” in late medieval texts; see Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, ed. Stephen H.A. Shepherd (New York and London: Norton, 2004), p. 44, Bk. II, l. 22.

when Pandarus speaks of salt and spice – all the more significant in the play. Shakespearean drama, as something watched, famously meditates on the problem of visibility, but these scenes in *Troilus and Cressida* suggest that taste, like vision, is also mediated and social.⁸⁹

The social aspect of judgement and taste is explored further as the scene progresses: Cressida pits her view against Pandarus's, recycling his language of taste. Even before the play begins in earnest to critique the presentation of the Trojans and Greeks as chivalric warriors and courtly gentlemen, Cressida teases Pandarus about a presentation that relies so heavily on the language of physical taste and visual recognition. Cressida responds to Pandarus by stretching the language of taste, answering his question (about whether she knows what a man is) with: "Ay, a minced man, and then to be baked with no date in the pie, for then the man's date is out" (1.2.218-19). Cressida's joke involves many double entendres. She suggests that to be a man made up of all these ingredients listed by Pandarus is to be a minced pie, "made up entirely of bits and pieces".⁹⁰ She extends the metaphor further by suggesting that to be made up of all these attributes without having a core would be like being a pie made up of "spice and salt" (1.2.217), but no fruit. Cressida figures this fruit as a "date" (1.2.219), a possible innuendo to describe Troilus's sexual potency: with no date in the pie, no essence, Troilus is both sexually lacking and out of date.⁹¹ Pandarus responds by exasperatedly exclaiming: "You are such a woman – a man knows not at what ward you lie" (1.2.220-21). He seems to make judgements about Cressida based on her discernment of others. Theatre audiences also make judgements about characters based on what the characters say about others. The staging of the pageant scene sets up the expectation, from Act One, that audiences should judge – or, metaphorically, taste – the characters, just as the audience figures, Pandarus and Cressida, do within the play.

⁸⁹ On Shakespeare and visibility, see Chapter One: IV.iv. Language and Textual Approaches.

⁹⁰ Dawson (ed.), p. 92.

⁹¹ See Dawson (ed.), p. 92.

Troilus and Cressida also invites audiences to think about the way that pronouncements about taste, such as Pandarus's, are not only socially mediated, but can also be performed and said with ulterior motives. At the end of the scene, Cressida directly calls Pandarus "a bawd" (1.2.241) – the occupation for which his name had become synonymous in early modern times.⁹² In soliloquy, though, she confesses that she sees "more in Troilus thousandfold [...] / Than in the glass of Pandar's praise" (1.2.244-45). The audience learns that Cressida's articulated discernment, the distinctions she has made about herself as a viewer of Troilus, has constituted a social performance in front of Pandarus. At the pageant, Cressida and Pandarus show the way that tasteful pronouncements and judgements can be performed: judgements are socially constructed by the context *and* these judgements can often be said *for effect*. The view that judgements are socially mediated is supported by Cressida's soliloquy which frames Pandarus's judgement of Troilus and the others as being like a vision rhetorically created in a mirror or "glass" (1.2.245). Although she does not endorse Pandarus's language of taste, Cressida suggests that she is actually more discerning than Pandarus. The staging of the soliloquy leaves the audience members viewing Cressida without the mediation of Pandarus: nonetheless, the audience's judgement will be based on their own socially mediated expectations and commitments.

Praising and tasting are important in the play both in terms of the way that characters see each other, and in the manner in which audience members view the characters. Though speaking about Troilus in her soliloquy, Cressida is quick to make judgements about men in general: she "hold[s] [...] off" (1.2.244-45) because "Men prize the thing ungained more than it is" (1.2.249). This leap from the particular instance of Troilus to the general analysis of men is typical of much of the language in the play: many of the characters make speeches that compare their perceptions of certain characters to ways of making judgements about

⁹² Philip Sidney, for example, commented how "we now use [Pandarus's] name to signify [his] trade[]", *An Apology for Poetry*, p. 91.

people more generally. Audiences are invited to listen to characters as they judge others, often in terms of testing and tasting. This rhetorical strategy on the part of the characters – where they describe prizing or valuing people in particular and general terms – invites the audience to reflect on expectations, tastes and judgements more widely. This invitation is exemplified in Troilus’s comment to Cressida about men in general: “Praise us as we are tasted, allow us as we prove” (3.2.77-79). Audiences are implicitly encouraged to test or taste characters based on their own expectations and preferences. The language of physical taste in *Troilus and Cressida* foregrounds the judgements that characters formulate by making aesthetic taste a matter of physical taste: this process ultimately invites the audience to reflect on the way that they have preferences and make distinctions both independently *and socially*.

VII. Distaste and Disgust: Pills and Purgatives

The language of physical taste also has a further role to play. Whereas Pandarus tends to foreground the tasteful by praising and prizing the princes, his mirror opposite in the Greek camp, Thersites, is more invested in distaste – abusing and devaluing others. By including language that evokes images of disgust and distaste, *Troilus and Cressida* represents the characters as feeling disgust – the obvious example being Troilus’s disgust when he sees Cressida with Diomedes and remarks on

The fractions of her faith, orts of her love,
The fragments, scraps, the bits and greasy relics
Of her o’er-eaten faith...
(5.2.157-59)

However, this device also works to encourage the theatre audience to question the usual valorisation of the heroes and the concerns of the Troy story. According to the *OED*, the first extant reference to disgust in English comes from Florio’s 1598 translation of the Italian word *Disparére*. Florio translated the term as: “a disopinion, a diversitie in conceit. Also a

disgust or unkindness. Also not to seem”.⁹³ As the *OED* notes, “disgust” came into the English language through “distaste”: “This and all the cognate words appear after 1600. They are not used by Shakespeare”.⁹⁴ Florio translates *Sgusto* as “disgust, distast, unkindnes, dislike”.⁹⁵ David Hillman comments that “[c]ritics of *Troilus and Cressida* tend to discuss its two salient imagistic strands – those of disease and of eating – separately. But the two are repeatedly intertwined in the play: they are twin manifestations of a pervasive ‘appetite’”.⁹⁶ In this view, the disgusting, *diseasing*, language of the play is not so separate from the language of taste, then, and the Elizabethan etymological link confirms their proximity – it is just this association which leads to inevitable class/taste quips, such as “the people are revolting”.⁹⁷

Hillman writes in “The Gastric Epic: *Troilus and Cressida*” that, although critics have noted an “alimentary obsession” in the play, “a distinct pattern emerges when we examine its figurative trajectory through the course of the play”.⁹⁸ Hillman argues that this trajectory moves from “culinary preliminaries” (Pandarus’s baking for example) all the way through a meal until the “rancid leftovers” and “Pandarus’s stomach turning-epilogue”.⁹⁹ Although these images of sweet and rancid foodstuffs may be slightly more mixed than Hillman admits, his argument does show how the language of food parallels an eating trajectory from cooking / anticipation, to tasting / eating, to satiety and sickness. For Hillman, the play is thus “a bulimic play, one that evokes in its audience (as has often been noted in a general way) a

⁹³ “Disparère”, in John Florio, *A Worlde of Wordes; or Most Copious, and Exact Dictionarie in Italian and English, Collected by John Florio* (London, 1958); available at <<http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/florio1598/131.html>> [accessed 30 July 2012].

⁹⁴ See the etymology section for “disgust, n.” in the *OED*.

⁹⁵ “Sgusto”, in John Florio, *A World of Wordes*; available at <<http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/florio1598/393.html>> [accessed 30 July 2012].

⁹⁶ David Hillman, “The Gastric Epic: *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 48.3 (1997), 295-313 (p. 306).

⁹⁷ This line is used, for example, in the film directed by Mel Brooks, *The History of The World, Part I* (20th Century Fox, 1981). In the French Revolution scene, the Count de Monet says: “It is said that the people are revolting”, to which King Louis XVI responds: “You said it! They stink on ice!”.

⁹⁸ David Hillman, “The Gastric Epic”, pp. 303-4.

⁹⁹ David Hillman, “The Gastric Epic”, p. 304.

reaction akin to the figurative nausea of the imagistic trajectory”.¹⁰⁰ Hillman comments that, given this upsetting action of disgusting the audience by working on the “digestive systems of its spectators”, there is “little wonder that it was apparently ‘never stal’d with the Stage’ in Shakespeare’s time, and that audiences still find it somewhat unpalatable”.¹⁰¹ As Hillman’s remark demonstrates, critics have often thought that the play disappointed original audiences; this idea seems to rely on the notions that the play both disappoints expectations and disgusts audiences. However, the disappointment of characters’ expectations in the play, and the imagery of disgust, *may not* finally necessitate a disappointed audience. The correlation between the expectations, disappointments and tastes of characters and audience members is a complex issue that deserves further attention. It becomes all the more pressing in relation to disgust: as the first chapter of this thesis has shown, critics and audiences have often been disgusted with *Troilus and Cressida*.

Shakespeare’s play responds to the comical satires of Jonson where the critic figure, the supreme social arbiter of taste, within the play tries to cleanse others of their social or artistic ailments. By the end of each play, the socially distasteful figures are comedically purged of their problems. In Jonson’s *Poetaster*, for example, Horace provides emetic pills for the “poetasters” Rufus Crispinus and Demetrius Fannius. When they are brought before Augustus Caesar, Horace says:

Ay. Please it great Caesar, I have pills about me,
Mixed with the whitest kind of hellebore,
Would give him a light vomit that should purge
His brain and stomach of those tumorous heats
Might I have leave to minister unto him.
(5.3.385)

Horace then explains to Crispinus that “They are somewhat bitter, sir, but very wholesome” (5.3.396). Horace’s pills stand for Jonson’s comical satire in general, of course: he claimed

¹⁰⁰ David Hillman, “The Gastric Epic”, p. 304.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. Hillman quotes from the *Troilus and Cressida* quarto epistle discussed in the next chapter.

his satires offered an emetic catharsis and that “My books have still been taught / To spare the persons and to speak the vices” (*Poetaster*, Apologetical Dialogue, 71-72). In *Poetaster*, though, Jonson acknowledges that he aimed to “try if shame could win upon ’em” (Apologetical Dialogue, 87), referring to Dekker and Marston. In his play, Horace’s pills fill Demetrius and Crispinus with disgust and force them to vomit up the strange neologisms penned by Dekker and Marston in previous plays. Virgil then recommends that they “taste a piece of Terence: suck his phrase / Instead of licorice” (5.3.528-29). He goes on to suggest that they avoid certain poets who “are meats / Too harsh for a weak stomach”, and provides the further warning that they should not read “High Homer” (5.3.535) “without a tutor” (5.3.532). In response, Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* revels in taking Jonson’s supposedly tasteful language to task: his Homeric response contains more neologisms than nearly any other Shakespeare play, and its language of disgust critiques Jonson’s use of classical precedents to valorise his own “tasteful” authorship by using such a “parallel” (Apologetical Dialogue, 93) comparison.¹⁰²

Shakespeare’s Trojan play shows how the language of good taste is in fact predicated on an associated language of bad taste. Even though Hillman suggests that the play moves on a trajectory from heightened expectation towards disgust, the language of distaste still threatens early on in the play. Given the play’s propensity to flag up issues of judgement, reputation and valuing, it should not be surprising that the term “esteem” is shot through *Troilus and Cressida*.¹⁰³ However, in its very first instance esteem is associated with physical taste; and, in this case, with bad taste. Speaking of Helen, Pandarus says that Troilus

¹⁰² On the plays neologisms, see T. McAlindon, “Language, Style, and Meaning in *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 84.1 (1969), 29-41 and the ensuing debate by Mark Sacharoff and T. McAlindon, “Critical Comment in Response to T. McAlindon’s ‘Language, Style, and Meaning in *Troilus and Cressida*’”, *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 87.1(1972), 90-99.

¹⁰³ In the play the term “esteem” appears in its variants five times, joint first for the number of appearances in the canon with *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Results are based on a search on Ben and David Crystal’s database *Shakespeare’s Words*; available at <<http://www.shakespeareswords.com>> [accessed 10 March 2012].

“esteems her no more than I esteem an addle egg” (1.2.115). The belittling comparison resonates with the many references to “fusty stuff” (1.3.162) and other stale things that are too old in the play. Cressida replies, “If you love an addle egg as well as you love an idle head, you would eat chickens i’ the shell” (1.2.117-18).¹⁰⁴ The connection in early modern times between a tasteful object, person or artwork and physical taste means that a play which contains these distasteful images is in danger of creating disgust in its audience.¹⁰⁵ The imagery they suggest connotes “abortiveness” as Bevington notes, but also something stale and sickening.¹⁰⁶ The addled egg also works as an emblem of disappointed expectation, on the part of the hen, a chick that might have hatched, or a person that might have eaten the egg. This scene shows the unsettling potential that food can have. But it also sets up an association between disgust and disappointment which will be probed further in the play, both in terms of the characters’ expectations of others and love and war, and in terms of the audience’s expectations of the matter of Troy.

Given the inclination for characters to employ words that evoke disgusting imagery, it is not surprising that Shakespeare uses “distaste” for the first time ever in *Troilus and Cressida*. The word appears in its variants three times in the play and once each in *Othello*, *King Lear* and *Timon of Athens*, where “distaste” appears not as a gustatory metaphor, but in the visual spectator-sense to mean viewing with dislike: Flavius reports to Timon that “After distasteful looks [...] / They froze [him] into silence” (*Timon of Athens*, 2.2.206, 208).¹⁰⁷ However, in its use of “distaste”, *Troilus and Cressida* forces home the corporeality of taste and perception more generally. So, for example, during the Trojan council scene, Troilus

¹⁰⁴ David Bevington notes in his edition that expressions such as “[a]s good be an addled egg as an idle bird” were proverbial, David Bevington (ed.), *Troilus and Cressida: Arden Shakespeare*, 3rd ser. (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1998), p. 146. This edition is referred to subsequently as “Bevington (ed.)”.

¹⁰⁵ For this connection, see the Introduction, pp. 19-29.

¹⁰⁶ Bevington (ed.), p. 146.

¹⁰⁷ Goneril uses “distaste” in the *King Lear* published in the first folio (folio, TLN 521) to describe Lear’s possible reaction to her decisions, and Iago uses “distaste” in *Othello* to describe Othello’s dark imaginings “Which at the first are scarce found to distaste” (3.3.331).

speaks hypothetically, asking “how may I avoid, / Although my will distaste what it elected, / The wife I chose?” (2.2.65-67). This hypothetical situation is soon framed in terms of food and the body when he observes

We turn not back the silks upon the merchant
When we have soiled them, nor the remainder viands
We do not throw in unrespective sieve
Because we now are full.
(2.2.69-72)

Again, people are commodified as silks and food in a way similar to commercial advertising. By making the body seem to be so integral to the language of appreciation and judgement, *Troilus and Cressida* “profoundly addresses the question of the relation between language and the body”.¹⁰⁸ Shakespeare foregrounds the *matter* of taste.

This concern with language and the body in the play crosses issues to do with expectation and taste and the affiliated discourses of desire, pleasure, disappointment and disgust. During the council scene, Priam points out that Paris “speak[s] / Like one besotted on your sweet delights: / You have the honey still but these the gall” (2.2.142-44). This is an example of the way that the sweet and bitter language of physical taste seems to align with the sexual language in the play; this language is also one of sweet anticipation and galling disappointment. Winfried Menninghaus notes how Shakespeare’s plays sometimes contain “a pre-Kantian notion of disgust” where “*sex disgust* and *sex nausea* are the ‘natural’ fate of male desire”.¹⁰⁹ So, Menninghaus explains, the “highest praise [Shakespeare] can accord Cleopatra thus centres on her ability to avoid sexual satiety – and hence satietory disgust – through the art of endless variation”.¹¹⁰ From this perspective, the opposite of desire and variation is satiety and tedious familiarity. Paris seems unwittingly to exhibit this sense of satiety when he declares to Helen that Pandarus “eats nothing but doves, love, and that begets

¹⁰⁸ David Hillman, “The Gastric Epic”, p. 309.

¹⁰⁹ Winfried Menninghaus, *Disgust: The Theory and History of a Strong Sense* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003), p. 28.

¹¹⁰ Menninghaus, p. 28.

hot blood, and hot blood begets hot thoughts, and hot thoughts beget hot deeds, and hot deeds is love” (3.1.112-14). That Paris calls Helen “love” in the same breath only confirms the idea that this love could be attributed to Helen – that Paris sees Helen as “hot deeds”. In a sleight of hand, though, the play is also providing variation *for the audience* by staging notorious characters and well-known Petrarchan tropes in a new satirical strain. In this reading, making the play conform to familiar audience expectations of the characters could be potentially unvaried and dull for an early modern audience that desires entertainment: it is the shift in the style of *Troilus and Cressida* in relation to its precedents and, as a response to Jonson’s comical satire, that makes the play potentially more exciting and disconcerting in the light of the early modern literary-theatrical field.

VIII. “Lowness of diction also destroys grandeur” – Longinus

When Chaucer wrote *Troilus and Criseyde*, he was one of the first poets to translate Petrarchan tropes into English romance.¹¹¹ These metaphorical tropes are renegotiated in Shakespeare’s version by the language that Troilus and Cressida use. When Cressida learns that she is to be “changed for Antenor” (4.2.88), she responds to Pandarus’s request for moderation with:

Why tell you me of moderation?
 The grief is fine, full, perfect that I taste
 And violenteth in a sense as strong
 As that which causeth it. How can I moderate it?
 If I could temporise with my affection,
 Or brew it to a weak and colder palate,
 The like allayment could I give my grief.
 My love admits no qualifying dross,
 No more my grief in such a precious loss.
 (4.4.2-10)

¹¹¹ Chaucer was one of the first poets to translate “Petrarch and Petrarchism[s]” into English when he incorporated his poetics into *Troilus and Criseyde*; see, for example, William T. Rossiter, *Chaucer and Petrarch* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2010), p. 1.

Cressida describes her sense of grief in terms of taste and, apparently, cooking. On the one hand, Cressida's language seems to be more mundane than Hamlet's, for example, with her emphasis on brewing and dilution.¹¹² On the other hand, the language of taste works to construct distinctions, using taste to make almost scientific psychological assertions about her feelings. The body features strongly in Cressida's reading of her own psyche. In the play, though, this perception represents more than just the early modern understanding of humoral psychology – it shows how the language of taste works to make distinctions. The language of taste is far more than metaphorical here: it helps to characterise Cressida's predicament in a way that seems to prefigure the scientific and taste-concerned language so favoured by Enlightenment thinkers.

Cressida's outburst might be relatively un-affected, but when Troilus enters and uses similar language in a flight of fancy, the rhetorical use of taste begins to collapse. As Dawson notes, Troilus "adopts the language of purity and dilution that Cressida introduced before his entrance".¹¹³

TROILUS Cressid, I love thee in so strained a purity
 That the blest gods, as angry with my fancy,
 More bright in zeal than the devotion which
 Cold lips blow to their deities, take thee from me.
 CRESSIDA Have the gods envy?
 PANDARUS Ay, ay, ay, ay, 'tis too plain a case.
 (4.4.23-28)

The irony concerning Troilus's invoking of the gods, however, is that – unlike in Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid* and Homer's *Iliad* – in Shakespeare's story (like Chaucer's version to an extent), the gods are markedly absent.¹¹⁴ Troilus's explanation that the gods are envious of

¹¹² Cressida's explanation of her grief, for example, is significantly different from Hamlet's when Queen Gertrude asks him to "cast [his] nightly colour off" (*Hamlet*, 1.2.68). Hamlet describes his emotions in the language of playacting, saying that those that *seem* make "the actions that a man might play" (1.2.84), but that he has "that within which passeth show" (1.2.85).

¹¹³ Dawson (ed.), p. 179.

¹¹⁴ As Theodor Meron points out, "departing from his sources, Shakespeare neutralizes the gods as actors. As a result, the heroes of *Troilus and Cressida* [...] [are] stripped of the convenient option of blaming the gods for their misfortune and their behaviour", *Bloody Constraint: War and Chivalry in Shakespeare* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 93.

his “fancy” thus becomes something of an excuse. The loftiness of Troilus’s language with its divine and sweet rhetoric of refinement and purity does not match his mundane existence in the play. Shakespeare’s Troilus also fails to keep up the elevated style of Chaucer’s Troilus; his language is always in danger of slipping back into the mundane. With their mixing of elevated and low diction, Troilus’s speeches lend themselves to an ironic reading more obviously than Cressida’s less exaggerated language.

Troilus goes on to expound the cruel fate of the situation by personifying “chance” (4.4.32) or “time” (4.4.41) as someone who is a trickster or “robber” (4.4.41). His elevated language soon takes on a mercantile tone as he imagines them “buy[ing] each other” (4.4.39) in the past with “many thousand sighs” (4.4.38), and now having to “sell [them]selves / With the rude brevity and discharge of one” (4.4.39-40). Although in a play like *Romeo and Juliet* the lovers’ quasi-sublime language might have been swallowed whole by an audience, here, “after so many [...] speeches spent” (2.2.1), Troilus’s language becomes “strained” (4.4.23) in a negative fashion. There is only time for “one” (4.4.40) sigh according to Troilus, presumably his own. As Dawson notes, “Troilus seems more concerned with rhetoric than Cressida in this speech [...]. His attitude has contributed, in several recent productions, to Cressida’s dawning awareness that he may not measure up to her expectations”.¹¹⁵ By the end, Time (or rather Troilus’s rhetoric) will have stolen all the opportunity for potential goodbye kisses they might have shared and “scants [them] a single famished kiss / Distasted with the salt of broken tears” (4.4.45-46). Troilus’s language leaves them scant (i.e. starved) with only one kiss, which itself is famished and distasted.

The scene leaves options for an audience’s imagination, or the actors playing the roles, as to how over-the-top Troilus is being here, and what Cressida makes of Troilus’s rhetoric. What the effect is of this use of the language of taste may depend upon the

¹¹⁵ Dawson (ed.), p. 179.

audiences' own tastes and expectations. The scene *may* be appreciated by one kind of audience as sublime poetry and by another as a hyperbolic attempt by Troilus to justify the situation. However, it is possible that the ambiguity of Troilus's language is such that any theatre audience might imagine Cressida herself having to interpret it. Ultimately, it is the ambiguity of Troilus's "affectation" (4.4.6) that makes the psychological predicament for Cressida more apparent, in spite of the ostentatious rhetoric. The scene works on two mutually inclusive levels. On the one hand, it makes Cressida's predicament more lifelike by inviting the audience to imagine her expectations of Troilus and his language. On the other, the scene travesties previous versions of the story by showing the characters' language to be affected and unnatural. Putting the story in a new style while ridiculing medievalisms as "fusty stuff" (1.3.162) seems to set up new tastes and expectations, not only for the Trojan story, but also for what theatre can do.

While Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* is not a farce, its characters do seek to make others appear ridiculous. This ridicule often plays on the audience expectation for lofty scenes and characters, as set up in the prologue to the play, and other literary and theatrical precedents. Derision is also articulated in terms of taste and distaste. Troilus is fond of the word "distaste", having used it previously in the Trojan council scene. When Cassandra interrupts "raving" (quarto, D2^v) "with her haire about her eares" (folio, TLN 1082-83), Troilus tries to refute her "divination" (2.2.114) and Hector's reservations by making them appear ridiculous.¹¹⁶ He says,

her brain-sick raptures
 Cannot distaste the goodness of a quarrel,
 Which hath our several honours all engaged
 To make it gracious. For my private part,
 I am no more touched than all Priam's sons,
 And Jove forbid there should be done amongst us
 Such things as might offend the weakest spleen
 To fight for and maintain.

¹¹⁶ Quotations here from the quarto and folio are from stage directions in those editions.

(2.2.122-29)

The term “quarrel” used here and by the Prologue (Pro., 10) does not necessarily have a pejorative belittling sense in early modern parlance; it is something that Troilus attempts to justify. Although Troilus dismisses the affect of Cassandra’s raptures, Shakespeare’s use of “distaste” as a verb gives the impression that the great quarrel *might* be distasted: that is, the story/quarrel might not only have been made to look distasteful by a mad Cassandra *or Shakespeare’s play*, but the project of the story or quarrel might be distasteful in itself. Ironically, in *Troilus and Cressida* the war-story is *not* made to look “gracious” by the war heroes’ behaviour on the whole. And although Cassandra seems to suggest a tragic, even sublime, direction for events and the play, Thersites, with his disgusting, distasteful language, soon arrives to “undermine it” (2.3.7).

Thersites’ voice in the play works not only to ridicule the characters, but also to make the story itself distasteful: in this way, it seems to undermine not only the characters and their lofty language and ideals, but also neo-medieval literature and probably recent theatre too. In many ways, Thersites’ language destabilises both the great heroes and the elevated style of their language – which, as many critics have pointed out, already seems over-the-top in Shakespeare’s version.¹¹⁷ While presenting readings of Homer’s *Iliad* and other works, Longinus’s *Peri Hypsous* (first century AD), translated as *On Sublimity*, offers a reading of how an elevated style makes great writing.¹¹⁸ Concerned with how writing and rhetoric can

¹¹⁷ See, for example, Nathan Drake (1817) in Chapter One, p. 48.

¹¹⁸ “Longinus”, *On Sublimity*, trans. D.A. Russell, in *Classical Literary Criticism*, ed. D.A. Russell and Michael Winterbottom (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 143-87. Whether Shakespeare had read Longinus’s essay is not of vital importance for this thesis because there are plenty of instances of authors writing about (and in) an elevated style. Nevertheless, Brian Vickers comments that the essay “was just beginning to be known in the late sixteenth century”, “Introduction”, in *English Renaissance Literary Criticism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 1-55 (p. 25). When George Chapman published Homer’s *Odyssey* in 1611 he refers to Longinus (in his dedication to Robert Carr) as “a man of [...] elegant judgement”, *The Odyssey*, in “George Chapman, On Translating and Defending Homer”, in Brian Vickers, *English Renaissance Literary Criticism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 512-25 (p. 522). On Longinus and the sublime in an early modern context, see also, Patrick Cheney, “‘The forms of things unknown’: English Authorship and the Early Modern Sublime”, in *Medieval and Early Modern Authorship: Swiss Papers in English Language and Literature*, 25, ed. Guillemette Bolens and Lukas Erne (Tübingen: Narr

affect readers and audiences, Longinus points out that the language of food can be disgusting when out of place. As Longinus notes, for example, “Theopompus first gives a magnificent setting to the descent of the Persian King on Egypt, and then ruins it all with a few words”.¹¹⁹ The offending words include, as Longinus narrates, “the multitudes of pack animals and victims fattened for slaughter, many bushels of condiments, many bags and sacks and pots of onions and every other necessity”.¹²⁰ Longinus comments:

By mixing up the bags and the condiments and the sacks in the splendid account of the whole expedition, he conjures up the vision of a kitchen. Suppose one actually had these beautiful objects before one’s eyes, and then dumped some bags and sacks in the middle of the gold and jewelled bowls, the silver vessels, the gold tents, and the drinking-cups – the effect would be disgusting. It is the same with style: if you insert words like this when they are not wanted, they make a blot on the context.¹²¹

Kitchen language is, of course, part of what prevents Cressida, Troilus or Pandarus from reaching more sublime tragic roles. As Longinus puts it, “[l]owness of diction also destroys grandeur”.¹²² However, Thersites not only brings in a vision of the kitchen, but goes further to bring in the language of the toilet, further destabilising the epic project of the Trojan story.

This disgusting language is, however, not just disgusting in itself, but works to undermine the writing of sublime epic. Longinus also has something to say on the subject of filth which implicitly foregrounds the issue of taste in terms of sense and sensibility:

It is wrong to descend, in a sublime passage, to the filthy and contemptible [...]. We ought to use words worthy of things. We ought to imitate nature, who, in creating man, did not set our private parts or the excretions of the body in the face, but concealed them as well as she could, and, as Xenophon says, made the channels of these organs as remote as possible, so as not to spoil the beauty of the creature as a whole.¹²³

Verlag, 2011), pp. 137-60, and Patrick Cheney, *Marlowe’s Republican Authorship: Lucan, Liberty, and the Sublime* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), esp. pp. 12-18.

¹¹⁹ “Longinus”, *On Sublimity*, p. 184.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ “Longinus”, *On Sublimity*, p. 184.

Thersites is not only filthy himself, but enjoys rhetorically besmearing others; he, therefore, has a unique relationship with the other characters and with any potential theatre audience or reader. Bruce Boehrer argues that

in Shakespeare's work Thersites develops into a grating, insistent presence whose every second thought is the sewer. He simply will not go away, and his cockroach-like durability undermines the heroic status of the very Greek cause to which Homer's text sacrifices him.¹²⁴

If Troilus hopes that Cassandra's raving will not make the war-story distasteful, then Thersites presents an even greater challenge to a "sweet" view of love and war, the "beauty of the creature [that is the matter of Troy] as a whole". In Act Five when Hector says "Good night, sweet lord Menelaus" (5.1.68), Thersites interjects, "Sweet draught! 'Sweet' quoth'a, sweet sink, sweet sewer" (5.1.69). Thersites might mean that both Menelaus and a sewer can be called "sweet", but that does not mean that either is actually sweet. Whereas Pandarus's "sweet" words begin to deconstruct the tastefulness of courtly discourse when reiterated, Thersites deliberately undercuts this courtly hyperbolic politeness by juxtaposing the sweet language with the language of the sewer.

Thersites' satirical role is effectively silenced in the *Iliad*, but Shakespeare develops the role to force his audience to rethink the Trojan narrative and the way it had been presented in the past.¹²⁵ As Harry Berger puts it, Thersites' "argument opposes itself to the heroic nostalgia for a vanished age of better men, since it assumes that only the haze of distance and patina of time impart the illusion of superiority".¹²⁶ It is difficult, for example, to be nostalgic about classical warriors when they are imagined by Thersites, in his first words in the play, as having "boils – full, all over, generally" (2.1.2). This "whinid'st leaven"

¹²⁴ Bruce Boehrer, "The Privy and Its Double", p. 73.

¹²⁵ Kenneth Burke, for example, notes how with the *Iliad*, "[f]or any Greeks who were likely to resent the stupidity of the Trojan War, the text itself provided a spokesman who voiced their resistance. And he was none other than the abominable Thersites, for whom no 'right minded' member of the Greek audience was likely to find sympathy", *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1996), p. 110.

¹²⁶ Harry Berger Jr., "Troilus and Cressida: The Observer As Basilisk", *Comparative Drama*, 2.2 (1968), 122-36 (p. 130).

(2.1.11), this mouldy bread, as Ajax calls Thersites, imagines the General Agamemnon as being the “botchy core” (2.1.5) of the Greek army. Shakespeare deflates the elevated epic tradition by putting matter back into the matter of Troy. The language of the body and the bodies of the actors in the theatre work in *Troilus and Cressida* as vulnerable, often disgusting, disease-ridden matter that show the speculative high-flown “tasteful” rhetoric the characters use to be dangerously at odds with their own mundane physicality and questionable aspirations.

The play is not simply using the language of the body – with its taste and disgust – to comment on representations of the story, however. The hyperbolic excess of Thersites’ language and the physical matter that it often evokes suggest an attempt to affect the audience, both in mind and body. Thersites’ satirical language is never more deflating and disgusting than in his description of Patroclus as “Achilles’ male varlet” (5.1.15). When Patroclus asks what he means by this, Thersites responds:

Why, his masculine whore. Now the rotten diseases of the south, the guts-griping ruptures, catarrhs, loads o’gravel in the back, lethargies, cold palsies, raw eyes, dirt-rotten livers, wheezing lungs, bladders full of imposthume, sciaticas, lime-kilns i’th’palm, incurable bone-ache, and the rivelled fee-simple of the tetter, take and take again such preposterous discoveries.

(5.1.17-22)

The evocation of such filthy matter in this passage, which is shorter in the quarto version, contrasts with the lofty language attempted by other characters. More significantly, such language holds the potential physically to disgust the audience.¹²⁷ Dawson reports that at the start of Act Two “in the RSC production of 1990, Simon Russell Beale’s Thersites was setting up Ajax’s dinner into which he ‘slowly and deliberately drooled’”.¹²⁸ It is just this kind of “distasteful” stage action that is implied by the language of the play. Thersites’

¹²⁷ This passage is a counter example to Antonin Artaud’s contention that “Shakespeare himself is responsible for [...] holding that stage performance ought not to affect the public, or that a projected image should not cause a shock to the anatomy, leaving an indelible impression on it”, “No More Masterpieces”, in *Theatre and Its Double*, trans. Victor Corti (Richmond: Oneworld Classics, 2010), pp. 53-59 (p. 55).

¹²⁸ Dawson (ed.), p. 113, quoting Peter Holland, *English Shakespeares: Shakespeare on the English Stage in the 1990s* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 73.

distasteful language seems to fit with the supposed impropriety of deflating and devaluing the Trojan and Greek heroes. Strangely, as critics have commented, despite Thersites' disgusting perspective, it is difficult to think in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* that he is wrong.¹²⁹ Readings that see *Troilus and Cressida* as Shakespeare's most elite play, therefore, need to account for the way that the play destabilises "tasteful" culture itself by emphasising the language of distaste and the matter of the body.¹³⁰

IX. Taste, Troy and Elizabethan Culture

Although so many of the characters in Shakespeare's Trojan play seem concerned about what is refined, Thersites – and the play itself – emphasises the visceral, the fact that any "living Instance" of a hero in the theatre becomes embodied, warts and all.¹³¹ This language of distaste also emphasises the repressive nature of the language of taste and propriety, its making of the conventionally disgusting and the improper.¹³² The notions of decorum and taste as social judgement would reach their zenith in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but in Shakespeare they are already questioned through the destabilisation of the reputations of the heroes themselves. As Boehrer puts it, the "problem plays appear [...] part of an ongoing dramatic conversation on the nature of social superiority and privilege, and on the interrelation of the attributes that define these qualities".¹³³ The danger, as Thersites might have acknowledged, is that this "bastard" (5.8.7) play – being "in everything illegitimate"

¹²⁹ Peter Hyland, for example, comments that Thersites' "cynical attitude may be unattractive, but it does at least rest on an assumption that the world should be better than it is, and if his vision frequently seems to distort the world of the play, it also frequently reveals a truth about it", *Troilus and Cressida: Penguin Critical Studies* (London and New York: Penguin, 1989), p. 79.

¹³⁰ Boehrer comments that "Artaud's work may be viewed as an attempt to de-bourgeoisify the early twentieth-century theatre: to render it less cerebral, less literary, less refined, less circumscribed, more visceral", "The Privy and Its Double", p. 70.

¹³¹ George Chapman describes the Earl of Essex as a "living Instance of the Achilleian vertues" in his dedication to the *Seaven Bookes of The Iliades*, in *Chapman's Homer*, p. 503.

¹³² It is telling, as Boehrer points out, that "when first introduced by F. S. Boas (1896), the phrase 'problem play' was deliberately calculated to evoke questions of theatrical decorum", "The Privy and Its Double", p. 71.

¹³³ Boehrer, "The Privy and Its Double", p. 71.

(5.8.8-9) in the view of those invested in decorum – “tempts judgement” (5.8.11). Written in an incongruous style, the play is nonetheless in keeping with the “bitter disposition of the time” (4.1.49): *Troilus and Cressida* situates the Trojan story in terms of late Elizabethan culture and the literary-theatrical field.

Shakespeare’s positioning of the play in terms of its political and cultural moment is indirect. For example, on one level, Thersites “speaks for all those who perceive themselves to be victims of power, and for those who, asserting the freedom of intelligence, refuse to be taken in by false rhetoric and false images”.¹³⁴ Ulysses’ mythologizing of the “soul of state” (3.3.203) apparently represents a politically conservative position. Ironically, however, the soul of the Grecian state, at least, is manipulated within the play when the politic Ulysses who advises using false rhetoric and false images is shown to be something of a Machiavellian hypocrite.¹³⁵ Furthermore, within minutes of Ulysses’ declaration, Thersites bursts in with, “A wonder!” (3.3.243), “Ajax goes up and down the field asking for himself [i.e. asking for a jakes]” (3.3.245).¹³⁶ This toilet-humour threatens to undermine the more tasteful language of the play and the dignity of the Trojan War itself. The play provides a foil for Elizabethan courtliness and the early modern idea of London as a *Troynovant*. The inversion of the heroes – in Thersites’ description and the play’s events – as “fragments, scraps [and] greasy relics” (5.8.158) is not a case of simple parody or belittling of the heroes for comic effect: by staging such social commentators, or audience figures, as Thersites and Pandarus, this technique “aggressively implicates the play’s readers/spectators in the action they witness”.¹³⁷ Shakespeare’s play creates a world in which people have always been

¹³⁴ Hyland, p. 79.

¹³⁵ In reaction to “Tillyard and his disciples”, Thomas Cartelli emphasises “the conspicuously Machiavellian slant in Ulysses’ position [...] Ulysses’ argument is mediated by his consciousness of the utility of ideology in manipulating the behavior of men and women”, *Marlowe, Shakespeare and the Economy of Theatrical Experience* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), p. 147.

¹³⁶ For the pun on “Ajax”, see, for example, Bruce Boehrer, “The Privy and Its Double” and Peter J. Smith, *Scatology and Its Representations in English Literature, Chaucer to Swift* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2012).

¹³⁷ Boehrer, “The Privy and Its Double”, p. 74.

disgusting, both bodily and morally. On the emotional level, Shakespeare's satire is thus profoundly disheartening; within the play, there seems to be no escape from body matter.

Troilus and Cressida does not appear to offer the supposed emetic cleansing of Jonsonian comical satire, the stateliness of a history play or the catharsis of a tragedy. And yet, for those audience members and readers sensitive to the literary-theatrical field, there are some reasons to be cheerful. Despite the play's bleak outlook, *Troilus and Cressida* is a *tour de force* in cultural deconstruction. In a sense, the strategic undermining of the classical sublime means that in the play the walls of Troy *do* fall and Ilium *is* razed to the ground, but not in the way audiences might expect. Instead of a physical wall, it is the supporting structures of epic, military, chivalric and court culture that collapse. In this reading, Shakespeare's contribution can be seen as commenting on the literary-theatrical field and past precedents for the Trojan story in a way that makes his play *about* the politics of theatre and literature. This is what James Bednarz postulated when he said that *Troilus and Cressida*'s "specific referentiality is focused more explicitly on the politics of Elizabethan theatre than on the theatre of national politics".¹³⁸ However, as new historicists have pointed out, this is only half the story: the play's incongruous nature is not simply due to the playwright addressing the politics of theatre. As Eric Mallin shows,

[t]he peculiar Elizabethan dislocation defined by *Troilus and Cressida* is that gap between England's martial, chivalric glory, of which Essex was the final, desperately flawed representative, and the darker realities of the political present, circa 1600.¹³⁹

Written in the aftermath of Essex's failed *coup d'état* and Elizabeth's physical and political decline, the play subtly exposes the cultural ideologies that prop up Trojan epic, the chivalric ideologies that had sweetened the *Elizabethan* national politics of love and war, but that had, by 1601, left a bitter aftertaste.

¹³⁸ Bednarz, *Shakespeare & the Poets' War*, p. 263.

¹³⁹ Eric S. Mallin. *Inscribing the Time: Shakespeare and the End of Elizabethan England* (Berkeley, LA, and London: University of California Press, 1995), p. 59.

CHAPTER FOUR Book Matter and Authorial Matters

“It would be like playing *Hamlet*
without the Prince of Denmark
if in a discussion of the formation of taste
we were to omit the retailer”

– Levin L. Schücking (1931)¹

“Once a thing is put in writing,
the composition, whatever it may be,
drifts all over the place.”

– Socrates in Plato’s *Phaedrus*²

I. Books Matter

While *Troilus and Cressida* clearly responds to the Elizabethan politics of love and war, it also reflects on the politics of the literary-theatre field at the turn of the century. Between the first probable performance (1601) of *Troilus and Cressida* and its first publication (1609), James I had ascended to the English throne. The play’s publication, then, took place in a Jacobean era, proclaimed as a new time of peace. When Richard Martin of the Middle Temple welcomed James I on behalf of the City of London in a speech on Stamford Hill in 1603, he told the new king that now “[o]ppression shall not be here the badge of authoritie, nor insolence the marke of greatnesse. The people shall every one sit under his owne Olive tree, and anoynt himselfe with the fat thereof”.³ James I would amplify this notion by making peace with Spain and proclaiming a Jacobean *Pax Britannica*.⁴ *Troilus and Cressida* was entered into the Stationers’ Register in 1603 by James Roberts, but it appears that it was not published then, perhaps because publishers thought the play’s cynicism and “bitter disposition” (*T&C*, 4.1.49) would not suit a moment when “peace proclaims olives of endless

¹ Levin L. Schücking, *The Sociology of Literary Taste*, trans. Brian Battershaw (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), p. 101.

² Plato, *Phaedrus*, trans. R. Hackforth (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1952), p. 158, 275e.

³ Richard Martin, *A Speach Deliuered, to the Kings Most Excellent Maiestie in the Name of the Sheriffes of London and Middlesex* (London, 1603), B1^r.

⁴ For James I and his call for peace, see W.B. Patterson, *King James VI and I and the Reunion of Christendom* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), esp. pp. 35-36.

age” (l. 8), as Shakespeare put it in Sonnet 107.⁵ When it was finally published, fashions had changed since the time Shakespeare wrote the play, and the printed quarto partly reflects and negotiates a transition from Elizabethan to Jacobean tastes in literature and theatre. The affective power of the early modern printed quarto of *Troilus and Cressida*, and specifically its paratexts, to influence readers’ interpretations of the play should not be underestimated. The unique preface to the quarto and the two variant title pages have powerfully affected impressions of the play: a study of the play in relation to expectation and taste, therefore, needs to reassess the provenance of the play’s early modern publication, not least because *Troilus and Cressida* displays a concern with book matter.

The 1609 epistle to *Troilus and Cressida* is a paratext that implicitly constructs a reading audience in such a way as to mirror Shakespeare’s staging of audience figures within his plays. The quarto paratext, however, indicates a more focused motivation in its suggestion of an audience: advertising. This chapter begins by examining the ways in which the publisher’s preface and the title pages construct audiences and audience expectations – including readers’ expectations – partly in terms of the author, taste, and elite and vulgar audiences. Rather than acknowledging the play’s tone or its potential satire on cultural elitism, the epistle suggests that the play is delightfully comic, especially for a discerning reader. The epistle writer seems to have taken the language of taste in the play in order to set up more conventional expectations associated with Shakespeare, ones that the play would only satisfy in an oblique way. Whereas Shakespeare’s play is about *responding to* elitist attitudes, the epistle makes the play seem more elitist than it ever was.

As well as suggesting a more discerning readership for the play, the epistle also goes some way to emphasise the value of the play’s author. The epistle writer calls attention to the

⁵ In 1594 James Roberts “secured the Stationers’ Company grant for the exclusive printing of playbills”; see “Appendix B: Selected Stationer Profiles”, in *Shakespeare’s Stationers: Studies in Cultural Biography*, ed. Marta Straznicky (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), pp. 229-305 (p. 281). Lukas Erne discusses James Roberts as a printer but not publisher of Shakespeare’s plays in *Shakespeare and the Book Trade* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 159-61.

work of the playwright, stating this is a “birth of your braine, that never under-tooke any thing commicall, vainely” (¶2^r).⁶ In so doing, it mirrors Ben Jonson’s emphasis on the author in a way that Shakespeare’s play does not. Although *Troilus and Cressida* does not hold up the author as fundamental to the play’s meaning, it is, however, concerned with reputation and fashions in taste in a more general sense. Shakespeare’s heroes are represented at times as if they *were* authors, or at least shown to be sharing some of the concerns of writers. This staging of the reputations of the Greek and Trojan heroes to think through the complexities of reputation can be seen as a response to, and comment on, the Poets’ War – and on Jonson’s play *Poetaster* especially.

Shakespeare’s play, therefore, reacts to trends in Elizabethan literature and previous literature concerned with Troy; the play itself, however, was also published *as* literature in the unique quarto of 1609. After considering the way that this publication generates expectations about the play, this final chapter will look more closely at the language of the book *within* the play and what this suggests in relation to recent work on the theatre of the book and Shakespeare’s status as a literary dramatist.

II. Two Title Pages for *Troilus and Cressida*, 1609

Gérard Genette defines a paratext as that which “enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and, more generally, to the public. More than a boundary or a sealed border, the paratext is, rather, a *threshold*”.⁷ John Jowett similarly describes a paratext as “the marginal and introductory material that surrounds the text itself and gives contextual

⁶ Dawson glosses “your” in this instance as “that (i.e. Shakespeare’s)” noting that “‘Your’ is frequently used in this kind of general way in colloquial English even today”, in Dawson (ed.), p. 73. This epistle, therefore, might be said to mark one of the first published examples of the tradition that celebrates Shakespeare’s genius.

⁷ Gérard Genette (1987), *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 1-2. Paratexts include such printed matter as title pages dedications, epistles, commendatory verses, and, arguably, prologues and epilogues.

guidance as to its interests and how it should be read”.⁸ Genette and Jowett describe the paratext as enabling and guiding, but paratexts do not always tell the truth. As Helen Smith and Louise Wilson argue, “[t]he relative autonomy of many early modern printers allows us to contest Genette’s assumption that the publisher [...] is necessarily one of the author’s ‘allies’”.⁹ It may not be accidental that the printer George Eld had a hand in the publishing of *Troilus and Cressida* and Shakespeare’s *Sonnets* in 1609.¹⁰ The paratextual printed matter of *Troilus and Cressida* resituates the importance of the play for a new kind of audience: an explicitly reading audience. Just as Shakespeare’s play stages audiences and their tastes, so the title pages and the preface to the play creatively imply spectators and reading audiences, making distinctions about how the play should be seen and read.

Given that paratexts can set up conflicting expectations or offer biased interpretations, it is dangerous to take them at face value. In order to examine the way that Shakespeare’s play responds to literary tastes, it is worth reconsidering the history of its first publication and how the epistle situates expectations in relation to literary and theatrical tastes. *Troilus and Cressida* was entered in the Stationers’ Register on 3 February 1603, the month before the death of Elizabeth I.¹¹

m^r Roberte. Ent^d for his copie in Full Court holden this day. to print when he hath
gotten sufficient aucthority for yt. The booke of Troilus and Cresseda as yt is acted by
my lo: Chamblens Men vj^d

⁸ John Jowett, *Shakespeare and Text: Oxford Shakespeare Topics* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 61. A book’s cover was often simply its title page for early modern purchasers, who often chose how to cover their books themselves. Helen Smith and Louise Wilson note that “‘the purchasers of early modern books were much more actively involved in their materialisation’, choosing a particular binding [and] ordering the contents”, “Introduction”, in *Renaissance Paratexts*, ed. Helen Smith and Louise Wilson (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 1-14 (p. 9), quoting Stephen Orgel, “Margins of Truth”, in *The Renaissance Text: Theory, Editing, Textuality*, ed. Andrew Murphy (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 91-107 (p. 91).

⁹ Helen Smith and Louise Wilson, “Introduction”, p. 8.

¹⁰ For a discussion of the *Sonnets* dedication in relation to the *Troilus and Cressida* quarto epistle, see Johann Gregory, “Shakespeare’s “sugred Sonnets”, *Troilus and Cressida* and the *Odombian Banquet*: An exploration of promising paratexts, expectations and matters of taste”, *Shakespeare*, 6.2 (2010), 185-208.

¹¹ Reproduced in “Records of the Stationer’s Company”, in W.W. Greg, *A Bibliography of the English Printed Drama to the Restoration*, vols 4 (London: Printed for the Bibliographical Society at the University Press, Oxford, 1939-1959), I (1939), 1-78 (p. 18).

There are no known copies of a quarto published by James Roberts, who printed the *Hamlet* second quarto.¹² It was eventually published six years later in 1609 and printed by George Eld in two different versions. On 28 January 1609, the play was assigned in the Stationers' Register to Richard Bonian and Henry Walley:¹³

Ri. Bonian Henry Walleys Entred for their Copy vnder thande of m^r Segar deputy
to S^r Geo. Bucke and m^r war^d. Lownes a booke called. The history of Troylus and
Cressida vj^d

Anthony Dawson suggests that the “1603 Stationers’ entry hints at performance in the use of the word ‘booke’, the term typically used for ‘playbook’, i.e. the text used for theatrical presentation”.¹⁴ Critics use the term “Qa” to refer to what editors believe to be the first state of the quarto, whereas “Qb” refers to the second. Both are considered to be part of the same printing process, rather than two separate quarto editions.¹⁵ The main body of the text in Qb is not significantly altered, but the opening paratexts contain several differences and have caused much controversy and many hypotheses. The Qa title is “The Historie of Troylus and Cresseida” (A1^r) purporting to be “acted by the Kings Majesties servants at the Globe” (A1^r), while the Qb title is “The Famous Historie of Troylus and Cresseid” (¶1^r) with no mention of

¹² Some critics have postulated that he did not publish it because he never did get sufficient authority to publish it. For a discussion of possible authorities, see W.W. Greg, *The Shakespeare First Folio: Its Bibliographical and Textual History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), p. 338, and Richard Dutton, “The Birth of the Author”, in *Texts and Cultural Change in Early Modern England*, ed. Cedric C. Brown and Arthur F. Marotti (London: Macmillan, 1997), pp. 153-78 (pp. 167-8). Lukas Erne has recently pointed out that James Roberts chose not to publish plays, although he did print them; see Erne *Shakespeare and the Book Trade* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 159-61. For further discussion of the difference between the quarto versions and its significance, see John Jowett, *Shakespeare and Text*, pp. 46-68.

¹³ Reproduced in “Records of the Stationers’ Company”, in W.W. Greg, *A Bibliography of the English Printed Drama to the Restoration*, I, 1-78 (p. 25).

¹⁴ Dawson (ed.), p. 235. This is absent from the second entry. Two other changes worth noting in the Register are the assigning of a broad generic name, “The history” and the variant spelling of Troilus as “Troylus”, a spelling that is used in the body of the quarto text and also on the two different title pages. This spelling associates Troilus with the city of Troy (and its fall) more closely.

¹⁵ See Philip Williams Jr., “The ‘Second Issue’ of Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*, 1609”, *Studies in Bibliography*, 2 (1949-50), 25-33. Qa and Qb are used rather than Q1 and Q2 because the texts are seen as being part of the same edition. The argument partly relies on the fact that similar printing type and paper with gauntlet watermark were used. The print for the bottom half of the quarto title page had obviously not been dismantled when it came to resetting it for the second version. For the first argument for Qa coming before Qb that notes the signatures “¶2” and “A2” at the bottom of Qb pages, see H.P. Stokes, “Introduction”, in *Shakespeare’s Troilus and Cressida: The First Quarto, 1609: A Facsimile in Photo Lithograph*, ed. William Griggs (London: Griggs, 1886), pp. iii-xii.

a theatre company or theatre (see Appendix II).¹⁶ The paratexts generate expectations about the play that do not agree, which has been confusing for critics.

The two title pages create expectations and claim authority for the edition. This authority is part of a growing attempt by publishers and such authors as Jonson to use a variety of techniques to lend credibility to published drama as literature.¹⁷ Qa mentions “the Kings Majesties servants” (A1^r), the King’s Men, who were based at the Globe, suggesting that the play had been acted by them.¹⁸ Qb, however, deletes this information, perhaps to suggest the play had originally been written for readers. Both Qa and Qb have the author’s name in the centre of the page, a publishing practice that did not occur immediately in the publication history of Shakespeare’s plays. Lukas Erne notes that “it was in 1598 that things suddenly changed with no fewer than four editions featuring Shakespeare’s name on the title page”.¹⁹ As Erne suggests, “publishers seem to have increasingly realized that another way of turning playtexts into more respectable printed matter was by naming the author on the title page”.²⁰ Apart from anything else, Shakespeare’s name was obviously becoming one that publishers hoped would sell books. The fact that the play has a named author, though, also suggests a more literary status for the printed drama. Shakespeare was not only associated with printed drama: he was also becoming known in the print world as a literary poet, having published *Venus and Adonis* (1593), *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594), “The Phoenix and Turtle”

¹⁶ See Appendix II for reproductions of the title pages.

¹⁷ For the authority of print in relation to Ben Jonson’s authorship, see, for example, Jane Rickard’s subsection “James, Ben Jonson, and the authorisation of the author”, in *Authorship and Authority: the Writings of James VI and I* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 168-73.

¹⁸ Critics usually assume that the phrase suggests that the play was acted by the players at the Globe itself, but, though unlikely, it could simply refer to the King’s Men, who work at or come from the Globe. The King’s Men, previously the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, had been at the Globe for a few years already, although they also performed at the houses of various patrons, at court and, even, in the case of at least *The Comedy of Errors* and *Twelfth Night*, at the Inns of Court. Statements showing this at the time include Shakespeare’s *King Lear* quarto title page of 1608 which states “his Majesties servants playing usually at the Globe on the bankside” (London, 1608), A2^r; the adverb, “usually”, expresses the fact that they were associated with the Globe but also played elsewhere, in this case at Whitehall as the title page and the entry in the Stationers’ Register specify; see “Records of the Stationers’ Company”, in W.W. Greg, *A Bibliography of the English Printed Drama to the Restoration*, I, 1-78 (p. 24).

¹⁹ Lukas Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 82.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

in *Love's Martyr* (1601), and his *Sonnets* (1609). Shakespeare's poem "A Lover's Complaint" was also published with his *Sonnets* in the same year as *Troilus and Cressida*. Shakespeare's theatre was arguably literary itself in so far as it staged figures from literature. By 1609, however, the printed play could have been seen as literary because it had been written by someone known for published non-dramatic, literary poetry.²¹

Critics have at times assumed that the quarto of *Troilus and Cressida* was in some way published without Shakespeare's consent – or without the consent of the King's Men – so that it may be a "pirate" edition.²² Defining exactly the nature of this consent is not easy, but it is unlikely that George Eld, as a successful printer, would have wanted to be seen as knowingly involved in publishing a pirate edition.²³ Whether or not the publishers did have permission, the printed version sets up the expectations that the publication is literary and legitimate. Bonian and Walley certainly entered it into the Stationers' Register, the first step in authenticating the publication.²⁴ Eld has his name, "G. Eld", printed identically on both title pages with the place and publishers named on the front, in a sense authenticating the document. Furthermore, just below Shakespeare's name in the middle of the page, Eld places a printers' mark.²⁵ Adrian Johns explains:

Early in the sixteenth century [...] Luther and others had developed printers' marks (descended from notarial signets, themselves created to solve a problem

²¹ See Lukas Erne and Tamsin Badcoe, "Shakespeare and the Popularity of Poetry Books in Print, 1583-1622", *Review of English Studies*, forthcoming (first published online 26 April 2013; DOI:10.1093/res/hgt020). For a reassessment of Shakespeare's published poems and the poetry in his plays, see the recent collection: Patrick Cheney (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's Poetry* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University, 2007).

²² Alice Walker, for example, apparently takes the quarto at face value saying that, "as it would appear from the preface to Q. that the play was published without the consent of its 'grand possessors', it is thought that what Bonian and Walley had acquired was a private transcript", Alice Walker, "The Copy for *Troilus and Cressida*, 1609-1623", in *Troilus and Cressida*, ed. Alice Walker and John Dover Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), pp. 122-34 (p. 124).

²³ Eld printed, for example, Ben Jonson's *Sejanus, His Fall* (London, 1605), *Volpone: or, The Foxe* (London, 1606), and John Marston's *What You Will* (London, 1607), among many other well-known plays.

²⁴ For information on Richard Bonian and Henry Walley, see Marta Stranicky (ed.), *Shakespeare's Stationers*, pp. 297-98. Stranicky assumes, perhaps correctly, that one of these must have written the epistle to *Troilus and Cressida*.

²⁵ Just to add to the mystery, the *Troilus and Cressida* quarto printers' mark is a much simpler printers' mark than Eld's usual one of two volutes with foliage.

of credit in an earlier age) into a way of allowing texts to carry their authentication with them.²⁶

Although it was not impossible for the mark itself to be counterfeited as Johns afterwards makes clear, it is obvious that the mark was not put there simply for decoration. The mark was effectively Eld's signature. The symmetrical text on the title page also no doubt added to the quarto's authenticity in the sense that it made the text appear to be more monumental, more like other expensive literary architectural frontispieces.²⁷ The title page suggests that this is a text that is here to stay, not to be read and thrown away, a collectors' item even: before a reader even begins to read the "Historie", the paratext commodifies it, suggesting that the book is valuable in itself as well as for the literature that it contains.²⁸

The title pages attempt to develop a relationship with their reading audience by setting up expectations. On the Qb title page, "The Historie" (A1^r) has become "The Famous Historie" (¶1^r).²⁹ The title implies that if you do not know about this famous history, you could be seen as ignorant. The subtitle attached in Qb also seems implicitly to be addressing a literary audience. "The Famous Historie of Troylus and Cresseid" is proclaimed in a subtitle as "Excellently expressing the beginning of their loves, with the conceited wooing of *Pandarus* Prince of Licia" (¶1^r).³⁰ This reference to Lycia implicitly distinguishes the reading audience by presuming a familiarity with the *Iliad*.³¹ *Troilus and Cressida* itself does not refer to Pandarus as being from Lycia, nor to his having been a prince. Instead, it is the title

²⁶ Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago, IL, and London: Chicago University Press, 1998), p. 173.

²⁷ See, for example, the title page of Edward Grimeston's *The Generall Historie of Spaine*, co-printed by George Eld (London, 1612).

²⁸ For paratexts as commodifying, see Michael Saenger, *The Commodification of Textual Engagements in the English Renaissance* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006).

²⁹ It is unclear whether the title is promising that Shakespeare's play is famous, whether the story is famous, or whether *Troilus and Cressida*'s behaviour is simply infamous; nevertheless, the title suggests a shared knowledge among its (reading) public.

³⁰ The ambiguous question of who is doing the wooing in the subtitle is discussed by Jeffrey Kahan, "The Title Page of *Troilus* Q1b: A New Reading", *American Notes and Queries* 14.1 (2001), 10-11.

³¹ W.W. Greg suggested that "[i]t required at least some familiarity with Homer to make Pandarus a prince of Lycia", *The Shakespeare First Folio*, p. 349. In *Twelfth Night*, for example, Pandarus is referred to by Feste as "Lord Pandarus of Phrygia" (3.1.50). This does not imply he was lord of Phrygia, but simply a lord from Phrygia. It is possible that there may also be a pun on "Licia" for license, with Pandarus being a prince of licentiousness.

page alone whose literary reference seems to be signalling to a literary elite, an audience in the know.³²

J.M. Nosworthy identifies this subtitle to the Qb title as being a particularly “scholarly touch”.³³ For W.R. Elton, however, the invocation of Licia invokes an even broader literary knowledge: Elton writes that “[w]hile Licia, which occurs nowhere in *Troilus* or Shakespeare’s other works, appears in the *Iliad* as Pandaros’ home (V. 105, 173), its relevance to the play’s professionally erotic Pandarus was derived elsewhere”.³⁴ The reference to Lycians and Cupid resonated with other literary texts such as Sidney’s *Arcadia* (first published 1590, but also printed for the “fourth time” by Eld in 1605); this subtitle, then, evoked distinguished literature that was being read at that time.³⁵ As Elton suggests, the title page assumes knowledge of a larger literary context.³⁶ The “conceited wooing” in the Qb subtitle is also in keeping with the epistle which makes much of the play’s wit.³⁷ Qa is bound more to the theatre with the mention of “acted” and the King’s Men, while Qb promised to be

³² The reference to Lycia may have also resonated with the *theatrical* field of the time. *Cupid’s Revenge* (c. 1607-8), probably first performed a year or two before the *Troilus and Cressida* quarto was published, proved to be very popular. See John H. Astington, “The Popularity of *Cupid’s Revenge*”, *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 19.2 (1979), 215-27. The wooing Pandarus, Elton argues, fits with Pandarus’s Cupid-song and the reference to “Cupid” (3.2.206) in the play but also fits, as Elton points out, with Beaumont and Fletcher’s *Cupid’s Revenge* where the Lycians are the “Adorers of that drowsie Deitie [Cupid] . . . the winged Boy with his obsceane Images” (1.1.45-76), “Textual Transmission and Genre of Shakespeare’s *Troilus*”, in *Literatur als Kritik des Lebens*, ed. Rudolf Has, Heinz-Joachim Müllenbrock and Claus Uhlig (Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1975), pp. 63-82 (p. 67); available at <<http://phoenixandturtle.net/excerptmill/elton.htm>> [accessed 14 November 2009], quoting from Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, *Cupid’s Revenge*, in *Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon*, ed. Fredson Bowers, 10 vols (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1966-1996), II (1970), 315-448 (p. 331, 1.1.45-76). Qb, then, contained a subtitle that – despite the apparent intensions of the publishers – suggests both literary and theatrical resonances.

³³ J.M. Nosworthy, *Shakespeare’s Occasional Plays: Their Origin and Transmission* (London: Arnold, 1965), p. 59.

³⁴ Elton, “Textual Transmissions”, p. 67.

³⁵ Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembrokes Arcadia* (London, 1605), ¶2^r.

³⁶ George Chapman’s translations of Homer were published in parts from 1598 to 1616. See Allardyce Nicoll, “Introduction”, in *Chapman’s Homer: The Iliad*, ed. Allardyce Nicoll with a new preface by Garry Wills (Princeton, NJ and Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. xix-xxx.

³⁷ The phrase “conceited wooing” also echoes the title page to *The Merry Wives of Windsor* which calls the play “A Most pleasaunt excellent conceited Comedie” acted, according to the title page “[b]oth before her Maiestie and else-where”, William Shakespeare, *A Most Pleasaunt and Excellent Comedie of Sir John Falstaffe and the Merrie Wives of Windsor* (London, 1602), A2^r. Interestingly, it is the “more literary” Qb title page that spells Cressida without an “a”, as if it was harking back to the early literary versions of the story by Chaucer and Henryson.

a more literary text.³⁸ Zachary Lesser argues that in “turning the play into a commodity, print publication does not simply transmit the text, is not simply a neutral vessel of textual meaning”.³⁹ These title pages are prime examples of paratexts that are not impartial but are caught up in the marketing strategies and a process of commodification. Like a play’s prologue, both title pages address an audience and identify a readership to which the publishers hope to sell their play, but it is the Qb title page that more overtly establishes literary expectations for the play.

III. The Epistle to *Troilus and Cressida*

While Shakespeare’s play reflects on literary tastes, the unique epistle is especially elitist. Elton states that this epistle in Qb “merits special attention” as “the only detailed commentary on a Shakespearean play published in the author’s lifetime”.⁴⁰ Surprisingly for such a commentary, however, the epistle does not talk about the plot or its characters.⁴¹ Rather than offering the play’s argument to a general public, the epistle speaks to a select audience, or at least, to those who especially *aspire* to be part of a select readership. All Shakespeare’s quarto publications have a title as part of their paratext and yet *Troilus and Cressida* is the only Shakespeare quarto published in the author’s lifetime to include an epistle.⁴² The

³⁸ See Dutton, “The Birth of the Author”, p. 167 and Jowett, *Shakespeare and Text*, pp. 62-63. Michael Dobson also briefly discusses Qb as advertising “a work of literary art” in “Shakespeare on the page and the stage”, in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. Margreta de Grazia and Stanley Wells (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 235-49 (p. 236).

³⁹ Zachary Lesser, *Renaissance Drama and the Politics of Publication: Readings in the English Book Trade*. (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 21.

⁴⁰ Elton, “Textual Transmission”, p. 79.

⁴¹ Zachary Lesser argues that the epistle writer probably had read the play because in fact the epistle “catche[s] the mercantile tone of the play [...] [and] it even highlights the odd word *clapper-clawed*, used in the play itself by Thersites”, *Renaissance Drama and the Politics of Publication*, p. 2. Katherine Duncan-Jones suggests that the “epistle itself invites comparison with the celebrated dedication of *Sonnets*. This seems like Shakespeare parodying his own most insistently playful manner”, *Ungentle Shakespeare: Scenes from His Life* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2001), p. 219; there are definitely similarities between the mystery of the *Sonnets*’ dedication and the *Troilus and Cressida* epistle, but this could be evidence of an understanding between Eld and Shakespeare or somebody else, and need not be Shakespeare’s work alone.

⁴² Douglas A. Brooks notes that “the only other reader address to preface a Shakespeare quarto [before the first folio was published] is a note from ‘The Stationer to the Reader’ that was written by Thomas Walkley and included in the 1622 edition of *Othello* printed for him by Nicholas Okes”, *From Playhouse to Printing House*:

singularity of the play's print production suggests that the publishers thought the play needed to be "enabled" further in order to meet the reader half-way.⁴³ Richard Dutton compellingly suggests that "the point of the epistle is that it announces a reading version of the play".⁴⁴ This does not mean that the text *is* necessarily a reading version, but, rather, that it *ought* to be seen as such according to the publisher. The epistle distinguishes this *Troilus and Cressida* from other kinds of play, history or story so as to open up a way to read it. Dutton follows many critics who point out that this epistle is in the business of helping the book sell and even directing the play towards a specific kind of literary audience. As Jowett observes, both the Qb title page and the epistle have "very similar connotations. [...] In short, the reset and expanded preliminaries play towards an educated elite audience":⁴⁵

the preliminaries can therefore be interpreted in terms of the historical sociology of publishing. How does a publisher negotiate the interface between a play by a popular dramatist and a putative elite readership?⁴⁶

Several critics have suggested that with the use of literary and legal terms (such as "Pleas" (¶2^r)), and its emphasis on wit, the paratext seems to be associating this special readership with the residents of the Inns of Courts: although this may simply be a marketing strategy, the epistle certainly seems to envisage a readership collective which would like to be known for its distinguished literary taste.⁴⁷

The epistle is written anonymously with the title "A never writer, to an ever reader. Newes." (¶2^r) printed on the first page, and "THE EPISTLE." (¶2^v) written at the top of the next page. The epistle ends symmetrically centred but, unlike the *Sonnets*' dedication, is not

Drama and Authorship in Early Modern England (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 60-61.

⁴³ See Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 1.

⁴⁴ Dutton, "The Birth of the Author", p. 167.

⁴⁵ Jowett, *Shakespeare and Text*, p. 63. Jowett analyses compelling evidence for the changes to the title page and inserted epistle being made "when the end of the book was being printed" because the "new title page and epistle were printed on the same sheet as the two-leaf part-sheet M that appears at the end of the book", *Shakespeare and Text*, p. 62.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

⁴⁷ For a recent collection on the Inns in relation to literature and drama, see Jayne Elisabeth Archer, Elizabeth Goldring and Sarah Knight (eds), *The Intellectual and Cultural World of the Early Modern Inns of Court* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2011), esp. pp. 217-314.

signed with initials. The epistle attached after the title page in Qb is far from impartial. As David Bevington observes, the epistle writer

offers to the “eternal reader” a “new play”, “never staled with the stage, never clapper-clawed with the palms of the vulgar, and yet passing full of the palm comical”. In praising the dramatist as a writer of such “dexterity and power of wit” that even those who are “most displeased with plays” are “sure to be pleased with his comedies”, this publisher’s preface goes out of its way to flatter a discriminating readership that prefers literature to stage performance.⁴⁸

The addressee, “Eternall reader” (¶2^r), produces a reader-function not dissimilar to that implicitly imagined in “Sonnet 107” or the eternity promised in the *Sonnets*’ dedication.⁴⁹

Bevington observes, “[s]eldom has the publication of a book been surrounded with so many mysteries”.⁵⁰

Arguably, part of the mystery has been caused by divergent expectations of the play itself. The epistle suggests an elite audience, while the play was unlikely to have been written for an exclusive audience. A closer examination of the epistle shows just how the writer tried to distinguish the play. The epistle commends the play for being one of Shakespeare’s wittiest: it asserts that “amongst all there is none more witty than this” (¶2^r). Like the Qb title page, it speaks to “a discriminating readership”, as David Bevington puts it. The epistle even contains one of the first ever printed references to Shakespeare as an “author” (¶2^r), a fact that frequently goes unnoticed by critics.⁵¹ The epistle also implies that the manuscript of the play had to be wrestled from its owners “since by the grand possessors[’] wills I beleeeve you should have prayd for them rather than beene prayd” (¶2^v), or in this case even preyed on by advertising. Confusingly for early bibliographers, despite the Qa title page clearly stating that it “was acted” (A1^r) and James Roberts’ entry in the Stationers’ Register in 1603 stating that

⁴⁸ David Bevington (ed.), *Troilus and Cressida: Arden Shakespeare*, 3rd ser. (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1998), p. 1. This edition is referred to subsequently as “Bevington (ed.)”.

⁴⁹ Shakespeare’s “Sonnet 107”, for example, sees the poem as a “monument” (l. 13) which will exist “When tyrants’ crests and tombs of brass are spent” (l. 14).

⁵⁰ Bevington (ed.), p. 1 and p. 3.

⁵¹ Recently, for example, even Alan B. Farmer incorrectly surmised that “[t]he playbooks of Shakespeare [...] contained almost no paratextual material and never called Shakespeare an ‘author’”, “Print culture and reading practices”, in *Ben Jonson in Context*, ed. Julie Sanders (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 192-200 (p. 199).

it “ys acted”, the epistle seems to suggest that the play has never been performed on the public stage, “never stal’d with the Stage, never clapper-clawd with the palmes of the vulger” (¶2^r).⁵² *Troilus and Cressida* is a witty play, the epistle states, especially literary, rather than a simple performance text, and it has been separated from its owners reluctantly.

In 1949, Leslie Hotson argued that the epistle is suggesting that the “grand possessors” of the play were a group of Inns lawyers themselves.⁵³ Much rests on the pre-modifier “grand” in this description. Some critics now argue that it is highly unlikely that Shakespeare would have written a play exclusively for the Inns men because, as a dramatist at least, he seems to have been very much a company man.⁵⁴ This commitment to his company at this time suggests that the King’s Men should actually be seen as the “grand possessors”, and in keeping with the condescension of the epistle there is a possibility that it is using the term “grand” ironically.⁵⁵ After all, when *The Comedy of Errors* was performed in 1594 at Gray’s Inn, the actors were referred to as “a Company of base and common Fellows”.⁵⁶ The epistle is similarly contemptuous of those who will not “praise it” (¶2^v) (that is, the play), saying that they and their “wits health [needs] to be prayd for” (¶2^v). This is a play that should be associated with the classical dramatists such as “*Terence or Plautus*”,

⁵² The Stationers’ Register entry is quoted above in full, p. 205.

⁵³ Leslie Hotson argues for the grand possessors being “the gentlemen of the Middle Temple” suggesting in a footnote that “[i]t has been uncertainly conjectured that by the ‘grand possessors’ was meant Shakespeare’s company, the King’s Men. But if (as I think) the author of the address was a barrister of the Middle Temple, it is impossible to see him referring even in irony to common players as ‘grand’”, “Love’s Labour’s Won” in *Shakespeare’s Sonnets Dated and Other Essays* (London: Hart-Davis, 1949), 37-56 (p. 51). The epistle’s term “grand” may be deliberately ambivalent however. On the one hand, as the King’s Men they could be seen as “grand”, while on the other hand they were *just* a theatre company.

⁵⁴ Jarold W. Ramsey argues the case that Shakespeare was a company man and so *Troilus and Cressida* must have been staged at the Globe at some point, “The Provenance of *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 21.3 (1970), 223-40.

⁵⁵ According to the epistle, some audiences are not expected to appreciate Shakespeare in the same sophisticated way; they will be *improved* by Shakespeare’s plays, leaving “better witted [...] than ever they dreamd” (¶2^r). The “grand censors, that style [comedies] such vanities” (¶2^r) are also invoked; “grand censors” suggesting, as Dawson notes, “self-important critics (those allied with the city or Church authorities)”, Dawson (ed.), p. 73. Like the “grand possessors”, there seems to be some ambiguity as to how “grand” the censors really are.

⁵⁶ This reference was admittedly made during a playful mock-trial soon after the event; see *Gesta Grayorum; or, the History of the High and Mighty Prince, Henry [...] Who Reignd and Died, A.D. 1594* (London, 1688), p. 23.

drama which was often *read* in early modern England, rather than performed and watched.⁵⁷

In a time when the “literary” was only just forming as a concept, a complex set of expectations is being set up by these paratexts concerning what the play is and how it should be read.⁵⁸ The epistle suggests that *Troilus and Cressida* suits an elite literary audience who might desire a play that had not been “sullied, with the smoaky breath of the multitude” (¶2^v). Just as characters such as Pandarus in *Troilus and Cressida* use a language of physical taste and food to make aesthetic judgments, so, the epistle implicitly describes the play as a dish that might become “stal’d” (¶2^r) or “sullied” (¶2^r) if it is exposed for too long on the stage in the vicinity of the “vulger” (¶2^r). Whether or not the play was staged at the Inns, the epistle certainly seems to be attempting to cash in on the cultural capital of those with discerning tastes.⁵⁹

The epistle is much more explicit about advertising the play’s literary connections, referring to the writer of the play as an “author” and perhaps wittily highlighting the fact that this is the author of the successful poem *Venus and Adonis*: according to the epistle, his plays were “borne in that sea that brought forth *Venus*” (¶2^r). The epistle writer does not explicitly state that the play is a comedy but it does associate it with Shakespeare’s comedies; arguably,

⁵⁷ These classical writers of comedy are both praised in *Poetaster* (5.3).

⁵⁸ The *OED* dates the first instance of “literary” to 1605 (*adj.*, sense A1.).

⁵⁹ For a reading of Bourdieu’s ideas of cultural, social and economic capital in relation to early modern literature, see Robert Matz, *Defending Literature in Early Modern England* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), esp. pp. 4–8. Lukas Erne briefly discusses Shakespeare’s name in relation to Bourdieu’s terms, cultural capital, economic capital and symbolic capital, in *Shakespeare and the Book Trade*, p. 58 and p. 195. For the Inns of Court students’ interest in the theatre and plays, see, for example, A. Wigfall Green, *The Inns of Court and Early English Drama* (1931; New York: Bloom, 1965); O. Hood Phillips, *Shakespeare and the Lawyers* (London: Methuen, 1972); Wilfred R. Prest, *The Inns of Court under Elizabeth I and the Early Stuarts, 1590–1640* (London: Longman, 1972), esp. p. 161; and Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare’s London*, 3rd edn (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004). Philip J. Finkelpearl goes so far as to suggest “that one of [John] Marston’s [of the Middle Temple Inn] closest friends, possibly closest, was Henry Walley [one of the two printers of *Troilus and Cressida*]”, *John Marston of the Middle Temple: an Elizabethan Dramatist in His Social Setting* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 86, f.n. 6. Elton, sentimentally, sees a MS of *Troilus and Cressida* as the Middle Temple dramatist’s, Marston’s, “parting gift to a friend, [Walley], starting a publishing venture”, “Textual Transmission” p. 6. It is certainly uncanny, as Elton points out, that the epistle writer seems to correctly prophesise, “the last year (1609), during Shakespeare’s lifetime of the publication of any of his [new] works: ‘And beleeve this, that when hee is gone, and his Commedies out of sale, you will scramble for them, and set up a new English Inquisition [(¶2^v)]”’, “Textual Transmission”, p. 5.

this elides the darker tone of the play. Like the *Sonnets* printed by Eld in the same year, the epistle's promises are magnificently suggestive while many of the historical facts of the play's provenance and early performance remain finally elusive. Early modern readers who finally did purchase the quarto may well have been surprised when they started reading the play, their expectations thwarted. Eric Byville recently went so far as to argue that,

[w]hoever approaches the play with the hopes raised by the epistle will be solely disappointed: neither liking nor likable, *Troilus and Cressida* exhibits a wholehearted participation in the aesthetic sadomasochism of satirical bitterness.⁶⁰

By writing an epistle that pandered to an elite audience, Bonian and Walley may well have missed the more heterogonous audience that Shakespeare was writing for, an audience who had been warned – by Shakespeare – about being pretentious.⁶¹

IV. Elite, “populuxe”, “vulger”, or “secretly open”?

The epistle's promise that *Troilus and Cressida* will be especially witty and comic disguises the play's language of malaise and its lack of comic resolution. Ultimately, its marketing as such by the epistle underlies the publishers' expectations of the prevailing trends in the book trade. The epistle's shaping of *Troilus and Cressida* as a chiefly witty comic play is a contributing factor to the belief by some critics that early modern audiences were disappointed by the play. While the critical heritage shows that the epistle has certainly contributed to the belief that the play is itself an elite play, there is still no conclusive evidence that Shakespeare rewrote a revels play for the Inns of Court as a Trojan tragedy for the Globe; neither is there convincing evidence that the play began as a Globe play (as Qa and the Stationers' Register suggest), which was then rewritten for the Inns (as Qb might be trying to hint). In addition to the legal language of the play, it is the witty epistle that has

⁶⁰ Eric Byville, “Aesthetic Uncommon Sense: Early Modern Taste and the Satirical Sublime”, *Criticism*, 54.4 (2012), 583-621 (p. 601).

⁶¹ Lukas Erne comments that “[w]e do not know whether and, if so, when the [quarto] issue sold out, but the fact that *Troilus and Cressida* received no single-play reprint in the rest of the century does not suggest that Bonian and Walley's strategy was a spectacular success”, *Shakespeare and the Book Trade*, p. 128.

encouraged later scholars to believe that the play was performed at one of the Inns of Court, for an audience with supposedly superior expectations and taste. However, this audience is very unlikely to have been the primary audience for whom Shakespeare was writing.

As Dawson argues, the Inns argument has rested partly on “an assumption about Globe audiences – that they were insufficiently sophisticated to appreciate the kind of wit that the play offers”.⁶² In implicit agreement with this assumption, some critics have argued that several other aspects of the play make it seem more suitable for a performance at one of the Inns of Court, more especially fitting for the expectations and tastes of their audience: they point to the play’s lengthy speeches, its literary subject matter, its legal language, the “non-citizen” attitude to love and war, and Pandarus’s unflattering address to the audience.⁶³ These are all expectations of audience that need addressing because they are often used to argue for a performance of the play that was exclusive. Even if the play was performed at the Inns eventually, it would almost definitely have been performed in a public theatre first – as seems to have been the case, for example, with the *Comedy of Errors* and *Twelfth Night*.⁶⁴ Furthermore, the law students made up a well-known section of the audience at the Globe, so it would not be surprising if Shakespeare’s plays were to reflect some of their interests.⁶⁵ The argument that the play was written with an exclusive performance at the Inns of Court in

⁶² Dawson (ed.), p. 8. Anthony B. Dawson discusses the Inns of Court theory in relation to the “submerged elitism of scholars” in “Staging Evidence”, *From Script to Stage in Early Modern England: Redefining British Theatre History*, ed. Peter Holland and Stephen Orgel (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 89-108 (p. 102).

⁶³ These viewpoints are considered in Chapter One, pp. 57-59.

⁶⁴ Stephen Greenblatt comments that “there was a performance at Gray’s Inn [...] on December 38, 1594, but its thematic and stylistic resemblance to Shakespeare’s other earlier comedies [...], have led many scholars to conclude that he wrote it some years earlier”, “Introduction to *The Comedy of Errors*”, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, pp. 683-88 (p. 684). Besides the company’s interests in plays being performed at the Globe, Bednarz argues that John Marston’s *What You Will* (1601) responds to *Twelfth Night*, making it more likely that Shakespeare’s play was publically performed in 1600 or 1601 (before it was performed at Middle Temple in 1602); see Bednarz, “Shakespeare at the Fountain of Self-Love: *Twelfth Night* at the Center of the Poets’ War”, in *Shakespeare & the Poets’ War*, pp. 175-200. Andrew Gurr dates *Twelfth Night* to 1600 at the Globe in *The Shakespearean Stage, 1574-1642*, 4th edn (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 297.

⁶⁵ Andrew Gurr flags up the importance of Inns of Court students, both as playhouse audiences and playbook buyers: “Inns of Court students”, Gurr notes, “were regular playgoers from the start, and a conspicuous presence at the amphitheatres from early on”; he also comments that “the chief buyers of playbooks were courtiers and law students”, *Playgoing in Shakespeare’s London*, p. 80 and p. 86.

mind disregards both the tenor of the play and the fact that Shakespeare was invested in the Globe in 1601.⁶⁶

To suggest that the complexities of *Troilus and Cressida* could only have been appreciated by an exclusive audience is to misunderstand the work of Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*; it also depreciates the powers of the primary audience for whom Shakespeare was writing. In *Hamlet*, for example, Polonius says that the First Player's speech "is too long" (2.2.478) and Hamlet retorts that Polonius only appreciates "a jig or a tale of bawdry, or he sleeps" (2.2.480-81). Hamlet suggests that Polonius's expectations and tastes are like those of some in the public theatre. Soon after Polonius's exit, however, Hamlet himself gives a long speech, a soliloquy that is in fact longer than that of the First Player. If Hamlet's speech was performed in full, such sleights of hand on Shakespeare's part suggest that the majority of Shakespeare's audience at the Globe was capable of concentrating and being quiet enough when they had to be: the long speeches of *Troilus and Cressida* do not, therefore, preclude a Globe performance.⁶⁷ Hamlet's attitude towards such audiences – sometimes seen as a true account of Elizabethan audiences – must be considered carefully because it evinces just the kind of "taste" snobbery that *Troilus and Cressida* exposes and challenges.

Some critics have suggested that public audiences were essentially conservative about love and war, and would not understand the literary references: as a result, these audiences, the theory goes, would not have appreciated the deflation of the Trojan epic and chivalric romance. For Peter Alexander, "the deliberate flouting of tradition as established by Homer

⁶⁶ For a recent argument for Shakespeare's financial and artistic investment in the Globe, see especially Bart van Es, "Phase III. Shakespeare as playhouse investor (1599-1608)", in *Shakespeare in Company* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 149-248.

⁶⁷ It is also likely that the published version represents a longer version than the staged one because longer speeches may have been cut slightly for performance, or the printed version may include passages that Shakespeare and his acting company extended themselves, so that the printed version represents an "uncut" script for a reading audience; see Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, pp. 243-68.

and Chaucer would have been intelligible only to instructed spectators”.⁶⁸ However, this assumption misses the extent to which *Troilus and Cressida* shows these genres to be part of the hegemonic politics of Tudor England: chivalry, heroic sacrifice for the nation, and idolising of certain women (Helen/Elizabeth) were central to the Elizabethan political aesthetic.⁶⁹ *Troilus and Cressida* exposes the political ideology of Elizabeth’s rule by representing an Elizabethan Troy world about to fall. Shakespeare delivers a quasi-elitist play – in that it has expectations of epic and romance – but he stages it as “a tale of bawdry” (*Hamlet*, 2.2.480) that is in addition *about* elitism and “high” literature. This is Shakespeare’s “juggling trick – to be secretly open” (5.2.24): *Troilus and Cressida* speaks to all sections of his public audience, but perhaps not as they might expect.

Recent work by Lorna Hutson and Subha Mukeri has shown how early modern dramatists responded to legal language and practices in their own work, not simply because lawyers represented one of the most powerful sections of the audience or because plays were performed at the Inns, but because the way that the law represented action and the way it was viewed was powerful and could make for good drama in the public theatre.⁷⁰ As Lorna Hutson remarks,

these very rhetorical techniques for evaluating probabilities and likelihoods in legal narratives were perceived by dramatists in London of the late 1580s and 1590s to be indispensable for their purposes in bringing a new liveliness and power to the fictions they were writing for the increasingly successful and popular commercial theatres.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Peter Alexander, “*Troilus and Cressida*, 1609”, *The Library*, 4th ser., 9 (1928-29), 267-86 (p. 279). See Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare’s London*, on citizen tastes in the period between 1558 and 1605, pp. 176-184.

⁶⁹ For an example of the political aesthetic in relation to Elizabeth I, see the painting Hans Eworth, *Elizabeth I and the Three Goddesses* (1563), Royal Collection, UK. A miniature based on this painting was also recently discovered, Isaac Oliver (attributed), *Queen Elizabeth I (“Elizabeth I and the Three Goddesses”)* (c. 1590), National Portrait Gallery, London. The paintings show Elizabeth in the position of the prince in “The Judgement of Paris”, a prequel to the Troy story. Elizabeth holds a golden orb rather than an apple of discord and she appears to prize herself rather than one of the goddesses.

⁷⁰ See Lorna Hutson, *The Invention of Suspicion: Law and Mimesis in Shakespeare and Renaissance Drama* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) and Subha Mukherji, *Law and Representation in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁷¹ Hutson, *The Invention of Suspicion*, p. 2.

Besides these specialist legal techniques, the law in Shakespeare's time was becoming ever more pervasive, not only in national rule and city transactions, but also in the popular imagination.

The play contains several examples of legalistic language but this does not mean that it was only intended for an Inns audience.⁷² For example, seeing Cressida and Troilus finally kiss, Pandarus exclaims, "How now, a kiss in fee-farm! Build there carpenter, the air is sweet" (3.2.44-45). Although this "fee-farm" might be seen as a technical term, usually being the preferred kind of land ownership, "a grant of land in perpetuity", it would not take a lawyer to appreciate the term.⁷³ Brian Jay Corrigan argues for a developing sense of *lay law*:

Law shapes and defines society, and lay law is the popular understanding of that formative force. The best playwrights will create legal images that will reward further examination, allowing for a passable understanding by the casual observer and an increasingly significant understanding by the increasingly more learned observer.⁷⁴

Although Pandarus's legal expression might get a knowing nod from any lawyers in the audience, it is also quite an autonomous in-joke for those at the Globe. As many in the audience would no doubt have been aware, the Globe had been built by the "carpenter" using timbers from the previous Theatre, which stood on ground where the lease had expired.⁷⁵ The significance of *Troilus and Cressida* rests partly on what audiences expect from a play; however, unlike Hamlet and the author of the quarto epistle, who try to distinguish between audiences, everybody seems to be expected to be engaged by *Troilus and Cressida*, or rather disturbed. Pandarus's final epilogue spoken to the "traders in the flesh" (5.11.44) is designed to address anyone in the audience; when he has made his "will" (5.11.50), everyone will be "bequeath[ed] [...] diseases" (5.11.54).

⁷² On the play's legal language, see W.R. Elton, *Shakespeare's "Troilus and Cressida" and the Inns of Court Revels* (Aldershot and Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 2000).

⁷³ "a grant of land in perpetuity"; Dawson (ed.), p. 148.

⁷⁴ Brian Jay Corrigan, *Playhouse Law in Shakespeare's World* (Madison and Teaneck, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2004), p. 193.

⁷⁵ For a brief discussion of the move, see S. Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare: A Compact Documentary Life*, rev. edn (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 206-10.

For Bourdieu, taste is defined in relation to a perception of social differences: in the case of early modern theatre audiences, taste should be considered in relation to the literary-theatrical field.⁷⁶ The written and performed plays help to construct this field, but other materials and actions also help to form the field (and set up expectations) in an immediate way. For example, Martin Wiggins notes that “[b]y Shakespeare’s time, a play’s title, which some theatres displayed on a board visible on the stage during performance, had become overtly part of its artistry”.⁷⁷ Certainly, versions of this title would have been passed around by word-of-mouth and perhaps advertised with a poster; these pre-performance reports would have invited expectations long before people entered the theatre. Shakespeare, on the *Troilus and Cressida* Qa title page, was associated with the Lord Chamberlain’s or King’s Men. Paul Yachnin suggests:

connected to this trade in highbrow literature [promised by the play’s title] is the company’s practice of advertising its court connections, which amounted to an implicit promise that ordinary playgoers might be able to enjoy a kind of courtly entertainment by watching a performance staged by the liveried servants of the Lord Chamberlain or the king.⁷⁸

In this reading, this supposed “populuxe” taste, the caviar to the general populace, of a Globe *Troilus and Cressida*, was expunged when the Qa title page of *Troilus and Cressida* was replaced by the Qb version. The possibility of a Globe performance was then hushed up by the epistle writer of Qb in order to make the book seem even more elitist – more like Hamlet’s caviar play. The epistle enforces a distinction between literary and theatrical tastes. However, this distinction is one that the play itself questions when it has characters represent courtly luxury as the work of “the devil Luxury” (5.2.55) – that is, lechery. The challenge to

⁷⁶ See Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), esp. p. xxx.

⁷⁷ Martin Wiggins, *Shakespeare and the Drama of his Time: Oxford Shakespeare Topics* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 86. See also Tiffany Stern, ““On each Wall and Corner Poast”: Playbills, Title-pages, and Advertising in Early Modern London”, *English Literary Renaissance*, 36.1 (2006), 57-89.

⁷⁸ Paul Yachnin, ““The Perfection of Ten’: Populuxe Art and Artisanal Value in *Troilus and Cressida*”, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 56.3 (2005), 303-27 (p. 313).

the distinction between literature and theatre is made particularly clear in the context of the language of taste employed by the Hamlets of Shakespeare's day, and especially by Shakespeare's rival Ben Jonson.

V. Expectations of Dramatic Authorship: Responding to Jonson

Much has been written about Jonson's representation of his own authorship and the publication (within his lifetime) of a "*Works*" that included drama.⁷⁹ As Ian Donaldson notes, it was "unusual – to the point of oxymoron – for plays (then deemed a somewhat lowly form of writing) to be included within a folio volume bearing the imposing title *Works*".⁸⁰ A memorable epigram disparages Jonson's authorial self-fashioning:

To Mr. Ben. Johnson demanding the reason why he call'd his playes works.

Pray tell me Ben, where doth the mystery lurke,
What others call a play you call a work.⁸¹

Critics have only recently begun to take Shakespeare's concern with print publication more seriously.⁸² Because theatre was often thought of as a secondary, parasitical art in relation to literary creativity, what audiences were supposed to expect from theatre in early modern times was relatively vague.⁸³ Nevertheless, as the epistle to *Troilus and Cressida* exemplifies, certain critics of the theatre and more "literary" poets and authors often sought to denigrate

⁷⁹ See, for example, Joseph Lowenstein, *Ben Jonson and Possessive Authorship* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Lynn S. Meskill, *Ben Jonson and Envy* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); and in relation to King James's *Works*, Jane Rickard, *Authorship and Authority: the Writings of James VI and I*, pp. 168-73.

⁸⁰ Ian Donaldson, *Ben Jonson: A Life* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 326.

⁸¹ George Herbert, *Wits Recreations* (London, 1640), epigram 269.

⁸² For example, see Patrick Cheney, *Shakespeare, National Poet-Playwright* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Erne, *Shakespeare and the Book Trade*; Erne, "Preface to the second edition", in *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, pp. 1-25; and Richard Wilson, Jane Rickard and Richard Meek, "Introduction", in *Shakespeare's Book: Essays in Reading, Writing and Reception*, ed. Richard Meek, Jane Rickard, and Richard Wilson (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2008), pp. 1-26.

⁸³ Compare, for example, Philip Sidney's mixed views on theatre in *An Apology for Poetry*, ed. Geoffrey Shepherd, rev. ed. R.W. Maslen, 3rd edn (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), esp. pp. 110-13.

the tastes of theatre audiences.⁸⁴ Furthermore, Shakespeare himself reveals an engagement in *Troilus and Cressida* with Jonson's ideas about authorship – and a concern with the perceived standing of authors and actors. This is the matter of the literary-theatrical field that Shakespeare grafts onto the matter of Troy.

Troilus and Cressida reflects on many kinds of matter.⁸⁵ In the first book of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, the narrator commands:

Now herkenth with a good entencioun,
For now wil I gon streght to my matere,
In which ye may the double sorwes here
Of Troilus in lovyng of Criseyde,
And how that she forsook hym er she deyde.⁸⁶

Although the story of Troy was often revered in Shakespeare's time, the story of *Troilus and Cressida* had, for some, become a subject for ridicule and humour; for example, Petruchio in Shakespeare's *The Taming of The Shrew* names his spaniel "Troilus" (4.1.131), while in *Twelfth Night* Feste "would play Lord Pandarus" (3.1.45) in order to beg that another coin be added to the one he has already been given. The matter of Troy had become infused with expectations, and even the characters in Shakespeare's earlier plays read some of the Trojan figures farcically. For Shakespeare, then, the legends of Troy were even more layered than they had been for Chaucer – who had his own "auctours" to think about. But, unlike Chaucer, who never saw his writing reach print, Shakespeare would have been aware that his plays would be printed: this understanding encourages a consideration of how *Troilus and Cressida* reflects this awareness of literary-theatrical authorship.

A major advocate of Shakespeare's *early modern* status as a literary dramatist, Lukas Erne observes:

⁸⁴ For a collection of published early modern responses for and against Shakespeare's theatre, see Tanya Pollard (ed.), *Shakespeare's Theater: A Sourcebook* (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004).

⁸⁵ The question "What's the matter?" occurs at 2.1.49, 51, 53, and 4.2.43, 45, 58, 77, 80, 82, 86. The word "matter" or "matters" occur twenty-five times in this play, more often than in any other Shakespeare play, except *Hamlet* and *Othello*.

⁸⁶ Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, ed. Barry Windeatt (London and New York: Penguin, 2003), p. 5, Bk. I, ll. 52-56.

When Shakespeare's sonnets were published, the majority of the plays Shakespeare had written up to that date *were* available in print. Consequently, Shakespeare did not only expect that at some point in the future people would "read – and re-read" his plays. He could not help knowing that his plays were being read and reread, printed and reprinted, excerpted and anthologized as he was writing more plays.⁸⁷

The studies in *Shakespeare's Book* similarly contend that Shakespeare wrote plays with an awareness of their future publication, and that "the representation of writing, reading and print [is included] within his works themselves".⁸⁸ By using printing metaphors and well-known books such as Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in *Titus Andronicus*, Shakespeare evoked a literary field even before the plays were published. *Troilus and Cressida* subtly considers the role of the author in relation to expectations. When Ulysses enters carrying a book, the play seems sensitive to the role of the book in shaping expectations that its *theatre* audience will have: Jeff Dolven and Sean Keilen explain that "Shakespeare returns again and again to scenes where a character is perusing a letter or turning a page or brandishing or just talking about a book".⁸⁹ The scene with Ulysses and his book can be seen to qualify the idea of Shakespeare as a literary dramatist who arranges his work for publication. The book within the play invites a consideration of the ways in which Shakespeare's theatre is literary itself. *Troilus and Cressida* stages characters who "read" (3.3.77: 4.5.239) each other and discuss ideas from books. Shakespeare's awareness of stage and page produces a self-conscious reflection on reputation, the theatre of the book, and the expectations of authorship.

The play mentions an "author" explicitly three times. The Prologue states:

And hither am I come,
A prologue armed, but not in confidence
Of author's pen or actor's voice, but suited
In like conditions as our argument...
(Pro., 22-25)

Later, Troilus promises Cressida:

⁸⁷ Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, 50.

⁸⁸ Richard Wilson, Jane Rickard and Richard Meek, "Introduction", p. 13.

⁸⁹ Jeff Dolven and Sean Keilen, "Shakespeare's reading", in *The New Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. Margreta de Grazia and Stanley Wells (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 15-29 (p. 15).

True swains in love shall in the world to come
 Approve their truth by Troilus: when their rhymes,
 Full of protest, of oath and big compare,
 Want similes, truth tired with iteration –
 [.....]
 Yet after all comparisons of truth,
 As truth's authentic author to be cited,
 "As true as Troilus" shall crown up the verse
 And sanctify the numbers.
 (3.2.153-56, 160-63)

Finally, when Ulysses reads a book written by "A strange fellow" (3.3.95), he explains the "author's drift" (3.3.113) to Achilles.⁹⁰ In each case, the author remains elusive – mentioned, only to be hidden. As the Prologue speaks without "confidence / Of author's pen", the author appears in the negative, and then only represented by a metonymic pen. In Troilus's speech, the author occurs as someone to be cited in a "world to come", part of Troilus's imagination, rhetoric and rhyme. But in a play where Troilus asks, "what's aught but as 'tis valued?" (2.2.52), "truth's authentic author" is unsurprisingly hard to locate.⁹¹ Both the "author's pen" in the prologue and Troilus's "authentic author" could be read as props, stand-ins for Shakespeare, because these scenes offer "fictions of authorship".⁹² The Prologue in *Troilus and Cressida*, however, speaks without any confidence in the author or the voice of the actors, plainly telling the audience to "Like, or find fault, do as your pleasures are, / Now good or bad, 'tis but the chance of war" (Pro., 30-31). *Troilus and Cressida* thus creates a distinction between the importance of an author, however distant, and the power of an audience's reception.

⁹⁰ Although it is not actually stated that Ulysses holds a book rather than a scroll (for example), it is just the kind of anachronism employed in Shakespearean drama. See, for example, the scene in *Julius Caesar* where Brutus keeps a "book" (4.2.303) "in the pocket of [his] gown" (4.2.304) with the "leaf turned down" 4.2.324).

⁹¹ In Chapman's translation of the *Iliad*, Nestor fights with "his new-drawne authentique sword" (*Chapman's Homer: The Iliad*, p. 168, Bk. VIII, l. 74); this instance of "authentic", according to the *OED*, means "Belonging to himself, own, proper" ("authentic" adj. and n.; sense A.7).

⁹² The phrase "fictions of authorship" is borrowed from Patrick Cheney's *Shakespeare's Literary Authorship* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 149. While the author's pen is an obvious metonymic fiction of authorship, Cheney argues that less obvious ones exist too, such as Achilles' spear in *The Rape of Lucrece* that takes on an "authorial resonance", "The epic spear of Achilles: Self-concealing authorship in *The Rape of Lucrece*, *Troilus and Cressida* and *Hamlet*", in *Shakespeare's Literary Authorship*, pp. 31-62 (p. 38).

The war mentioned in the prologue can be read as the Trojan War, but it can also be seen as an allusion to the Poets' War. Although the armed Prologue was not published until Shakespeare's first folio, it is usually taken to refer to Jonson's *Poetaster* which was performed in 1601, probably just before *Troilus and Cressida*, and published in 1602.⁹³ In Jonson's *Poetaster*, an armed Prologue enters to scare off the monster, Envy, and so protect the author. Jonson's monster comes to "damn the Author" (Ind., 46) and to "tear / His work and him" (Ind., 52-53). The Prologue then enters with a "well erected confidence" (Ind., 74):

If any muse why I salute the stage
An armed Prologue, know, 'tis a dangerous age,
Wherein who writes had need present his scenes
Forty-fold proof against the conjuring means
Of base detractors and illiterate apes,
That fill up rooms in fair and formal shapes.
(Ind., 66-71)

Shakespeare's use of an armed Prologue in *Troilus and Cressida* signals his recognition of this "dangerous age" while alluding to Ben Jonson's construction of his own authorship in the Induction to *Poetaster*.

In plays like *Poetaster*, Jonson can be seen responding rather obviously to his contemporary playwrights.⁹⁴ Shakespeare did not respond so overtly with *Troilus and Cressida*, but three pieces of audience evidence, while circumstantial, suggest that Shakespeare was received as responding to the Poets' War and Jonson especially. These historical audience figures include Jonson, Marston and the author of the Cambridge play, *Returne from Parnassus (Part II)* (c. late 1601). In the "Apologetical Dialogue" attached to the performance of *Poetaster*, the author states that he was "sorry for / Some better natures, by the rest so drawn / To run in that vile line" (Apologetical Dialogue, 137-39). As Bednarz argues, this statement could be seen as Jonson regretting that Shakespeare should respond

⁹³ The "armed Prologue" of *Poetaster* acts with "a well erected confidence" (*Poetaster*, Ind., 64), "a phrase taken up by Shakespeare in *Troil.*" in its prologue, as Tom Cain notes in Ben Jonson, *Poetaster*, ed. Tom Cain (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 75; this edition is referred to subsequently as "Cain (ed.)."

⁹⁴ See Chapter Three: VII. Distaste and Disgust: Pills and Purgatives, and Bednarz, *Shakespeare & the Poets' War*, p. 206.

with personal satire against him in *Troilus and Cressida*.⁹⁵ This reading is supported by the comments made by a fictional Will Kempe in *Returne from Parnassus (Part II)*:

Why heres our fellow *Shakespeare* puts them all downe, I [read: “aye”] and Ben Jonson too. O that Ben Jonson is a pestilent fellow, he brought up Horace giving the Poets a pill, but our fellow Shakespeare hath given him a purge that made him beray his credit.⁹⁶

In this reading, as Bednarz points out, Shakespeare frames Jonson as Ajax, a jakes; this impersonation figuratively muddies Jonson’s authorial pretensions to laureate status, and to be seen as an Horatian doctor of taste. Finally, Bednarz shows that “Marston appreciated the philosophical import of Shakespeare’s diffident Prologue [because he imitated it] at the conclusion of the first quarto of *Antonio and Mellida* (publ. 1602)”.⁹⁷ In this “revised printed version of his play (registered on 24 October 1601), he has Andrugio apologise in words lifted from *Troilus and Cressida*”:⁹⁸

Gentlemen, though I remaine an armed Epilogue, I stand not as a peremptory challenger of desert, either for him that composed the Comedy, or for us that acted it: but as a most submissive supplyant for both.⁹⁹

The only contemporary commentary that exists on *Troilus and Cressida*, besides the later epistle, comes from these authors who suggest that they see the play responding to questions of “credit” or “desert”, and as writing that responds to other authors. These insights suggest that the play was at least seen by some of Shakespeare’s contemporary playwrights as engaging in a discussion on the politics of theatre and dramatic authorship.

David Bevington argues that Shakespeare’s prologue “introduces a play that will not choose the Jonsonian path of authorial self-assertion and certitude. Shakespeare’s play

⁹⁵ See Bednarz, *Shakespeare & the Poets’ War*, p. 31 and pp. 41-45.

⁹⁶ Anon, *The Returne from Parnassus (Part II)*, in *Three Elizabethan Comedies, 1597-1601*, ed. W.D. Macray (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1886), pp. 76-154 (4.3. TLN 1809-13). On the way that the *Parnassus* plays “enact what could be described as a materialist analysis of the conditions of literary production”, see John Blakeley, “Exchanging ‘words for mony’: The *Parnassus* Plays and Literary Remuneration”, in *Medieval and Early Modern Authorship: Swiss Papers in English Language and Literature*, 25, ed. Guillemette Bolens and Lukas Erne (Tübingen: Narr, 2011), pp. 161-74 (p. 172).

⁹⁷ Bednarz, *Shakespeare & the Poets’ War*, p. 261.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ John Marston, *The History of Antonio and Mellida; the First Part* (London, 1601), I4^v.

chooses instead to explore disillusionment and multiple perspective in an experimental way that implicitly criticizes Jonson's more dogmatic approach".¹⁰⁰ However, as well as promising a play of "multiple perspective", the reference to *Poetaster*, and the author's confident bodyguard, promise a play that will engage with the Poets' War and satire. This so-called War of the Theatres was hypersensitive to the part the author had to play in the production of the play's meaning for audiences, and, as Edward Gieskes recently argued, the Poets' War "participates in the definition of the emergent category of 'literature'".¹⁰¹ This participation can be seen especially in Jonson's Prologue's reference to the author as a "writer", and Shakespeare's Prologue's reference to the "author's pen". Satirical verses or epigrams were forbidden by the Bishops' Ban of 1599. According to Oscar Campbell, "Jonson and Marston immediately sought to write plays that would serve as effective substitutes for these banished satires".¹⁰² In this reading, these comical satires are a theatrical substitute for poetic verse meant to be read. The armed Prologue opening *Troilus and Cressida* in *medias res*, therefore, signals an oblique response on Shakespeare's part, raising the issue of authorship.¹⁰³

Shakespeare's Prologue speaks without confidence of the author's pen; in contrast, Jonson's Prologue speaks for the author, and Jonson's play contains a range of classical poets as characters such as Ovid, Horace and Virgil. When *Troilus and Cressida* is read as a response to Jonson and the Poets' War, the issue of authorship is more pressing. Bruce

¹⁰⁰ Bevington (ed.), p. 10.

¹⁰¹ Edward Gieskes, "'Honest and Vulgar Praise': The Poets' War and the Literary Field", *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 18 (2005), 75-103 (p. 77).

¹⁰² Oscar James Campbell, *Comical Satyre and Shakespeare's "Troilus and Cressida"* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1938), p. vii. As Ian Donaldson explains, "whole scenes in the third act of Ben Jonson's *Poetaster* (1601) involving the tenacious bore Crispinus, for example, are virtually lifted from Donne's first and fourth *Satires*, which are themselves modelled on a well-known Satire (I.9) of the Roman poet Horace", *Ben Jonson: A Life* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 152.

¹⁰³ Bevington explains that "Horace's *Ars Poetica* [...] commends the rule especially suited to a play on the Trojan war", Bevington (ed.), p. 355. Bednarz argues that here Shakespeare "mimic[s] Jonson's neoclassicism – invoking Horace's famous literary dictum in *The Art of Poetry* that an epic should begin in *medias res*", *Shakespeare & the Poets' War*, p. 260. For Jonson's translation of "in *medias res*" as in "The middle of the matter", see the facing translation in Ben Jonson (trans.), *Horace, His Art of Poetrie*, in *Ben Jonson*, 11 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925-52), ed. C.H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, VIII (1947), 297-355 (p. 314, l. 148 and p. 314, l. 213).

Boehrer suggests that “instead of viewing the War of the Theatres as a personal quarrel that gave rise to literary recriminations, one might just as well regard it as a literary event that ultimately demanded a certain amount of personal animus”.¹⁰⁴ In *Poetaster*, Jonson attempted to control audience expectations and taste through fictions of authorship with poet characters. The preoccupation in *Troilus and Cressida* with reputation, taste, and the issue of the author and his book suggests that the play owes something to Jonson’s *Poetaster*, perhaps just as much as Shakespeare tried to distinguish his artistry from that of Jonson.

VI. The Poets of *Poetaster*

Probably more than any other early modern play, *Poetaster* is obviously about poets and poet-playwrights. The play makes distinctions between the idea of an inspired but illicit poet (Ovid), an inspired and authoritative laureate poet sanctioned by the sovereign (Horace and Virgil), and a “poetaster” (Rufus Crispinus and Demetrius Fannius). Jonson appears to have been the first to use this phrase “poetaster” in English, a term the *OED* denotes as “An inferior poet; a writer of poor or trashy verse; a mere versifier”.¹⁰⁵ As Tom Cain explains, “[t]he suffix *-aster* indicates an incomplete resemblance, hence here an imitation”.¹⁰⁶ Although the term does not denote anything to do with taste, it is tempting to imagine that Shakespeare read the play’s title as a pun about taste; in this reading, *Troilus and Cressida* responds to Jonson’s “unceasing wars upon common taste”.¹⁰⁷ Shakespeare’s play can certainly be seen to respond to the concerns about expectations of dramatic authorship explored in *Poetaster*.

¹⁰⁴ Bruce Thomas Boehrer, *The Fury of Men’s Gullets: Ben Jonson and the Digestive Canal* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), p. 182.

¹⁰⁵ *OED* “poetaster”, n.; see Ben Jonson, *Cynthia’s Revels* (2.4.15).

¹⁰⁶ See Ben Jonson, *Poetaster: The Revels Plays*, ed. Tom Cain (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 62.

¹⁰⁷ M.C. Bradbook, *The Growth and Structure of Elizabethan Comedy*, new edn (London: Chatto & Windus, 1973), p. 103.

Jonson's play is much more obviously *about* theatre and poetry than *Troilus and Cressida*; for example, it opens with Ovid writing verse. The lines he writes, from Ovid's *Amores*, are in fact selectively copied by Jonson from Christopher Marlowe's translation, thus perhaps suggesting an association between Ovid's fate and Marlowe's problems with authority.¹⁰⁸ Ovid's father is upset that he is writing a play, suggesting another distinction between "true" arts (such as law), and "useless" arts (poetry writing and, especially, play writing).¹⁰⁹ Ovid Senior exclaims:

Yes, sir! I hear of a tragedy of yours coming forth for the common players there, called *Medea*. By my household gods, if I come to the acting of it I'll add one tragic part more than is yet expected to it, believe me when I promise. What! Shall I have my son a stager now? An engle for players? A gull, a rook, a hot-clog to make suppers, and be laughed at?
(1.2.11-17)

As Ovid is staged as a law student, the play speaks to Jonson's prime audience, the Inns of Court students who, like John Marston of Middle Temple, enjoyed writing poetry and sometimes plays.¹¹⁰ Ovid Senior's labelling of the base playwright as a "gull" or "rook" of course echoes both the famous description of Shakespeare as an "upstart Crow" and Pandarus's description of the common soldiers as "crows and daws" (1.2.207).¹¹¹ Both use avian imagery to make distinctions about social status.¹¹² As the play progresses, the distinction between different kinds of poet becomes more defined and important. Ovid, for

¹⁰⁸ As Tom Cain explains, "most of the audience, and Jonson's first readers, would probably have seen the opening as a graceful if double-edged tribute to Marlowe, whose translation Ovid is heard composing in the play's first words", Cain (ed.), p. 19. Marlowe's translation of "Elegia XV" together with Jonson's version can be found in Christopher Marlowe (trans.), *Ovid's Elegies*, in *The Collected Poems of Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Patrick Cheney and Brian J. Striar (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 33-156 (pp. 63-66).

¹⁰⁹ For a discussion of the early modern disparagement of play writing as "playwrighting", see Paul Yachnin, *Stage-Wrights: Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton, and the Making of Theatrical Value* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), pp. xi-xiii.

¹¹⁰ See Philip J. Finkelpearl, *John Marston of the Middle Temple: An Elizabethan Dramatist in His Social Setting* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969).

¹¹¹ "upstart Crow": Robert Greene, *Greens Groats-worth of Witte* (London, 1592), F1^v.

¹¹² For a re-evaluation of Shakespeare's early career, see Bart van Es, "'Johannes fac Totum'?: Shakespeare's First Contact with the Acting Companies", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 61.4 (2010), 551-77; van Es argues that the reference to the "upstart" "fits within a context in which established authors resent the competition of less socially elevated men" (p. 562); van Es suggests that Greene's tract has been misread and it is likely that Shakespeare was a playwright before he became an actor on the stage, much like his younger contemporaries such as Jonson.

example, stresses that he is “not known unto the open stage” (1.2.64), although he has written such a “poem of that nature” (1.2.68), but it is for his “near friends and honourable Romans” (1.2.67) “to read” (1.2.71). It is small wonder, then, that the quarto title page to *Poetaster* advertised that the play had been “privately acted”, suggesting a more select audience than the “open stage” (*Poetaster*, 1.2.64).¹¹³ The *Troilus and Cressida* epistle suggests a similarly select audience. Within the world of *Poetaster*, however, the most perfect audience is the sovereign: this royal audience legitimates the poet, marking out the poet and the sovereign’s supreme taste and quality as poet and sovereign share a symbiotic relationship – seemingly Jonson’s ideal scenario. As discussed in Chapter Two, this relationship is implicitly critiqued by the metatheatrical scenes of patronage and performance in *Troilus and Cressida*.

After being criticised for self-glorifyingly marking himself out as Criticus in *Cynthia’s Revels*, Jonson was careful not to frame himself as Virgil, the supreme poet in *Poetaster*. Instead, he took on the lesser role of Horace, reputed in early modern times for discerning taste and his status as an early literary critic. Horace was the author of the epistle known as *Ars Poetica*, a treatise much concerned with questions of literary decorum and style – and translated by Jonson himself.¹¹⁴ Nevertheless, both Horace and Virgil bask in royal praise from Augustus Caesar. In the final act of the play, Caesar asks Virgil to read a passage from his “famous *Aeneids*” (5.2.6). He is invited to sit with his book in a special chair set even higher than Caesar’s; he is represented, in fact, as “an archetypal laureate”.¹¹⁵ Given the concerns of the Poets’ War, it is of course not accidental that Jonson chose a passage from the *Aeneid* concerning “bruit [i.e. rumour] and fame” (5.3.73). Epic is seen in *Poetaster* as the

¹¹³ Ben Jonson, *Poetaster; or, The Arraignment* (London, 1602), A1^r. This is one of the first examples on an English title page of a reference to an explicitly “private” theatre audience.

¹¹⁴ See Robert B. Pierce, “Ben Jonson’s Horace and Horace’s Ben Jonson”, *Studies in Philology*, 78.1 (1981), 20–31.

¹¹⁵ Richard Helgerson, *Self-Crowned Laureates: Spenser, Jonson, Milton and the Literary System* (Berkeley, LA and London: University of California Press, 1983), p. 113.

genre of poetry to be most highly praised. When Virgil's reading is interrupted by the poetasters, Caesar concludes:

Our ear is now too much profaned, grave Maro
With these distastes, to take thy sacred lines.
Put up thy book till both the time and we
Be fitted with more hallowed circumstance
For receiving so divine a work.
(5.3.160-64)

The potential for "sacred" poetry – whether reasoned (like Horace's) or sublime (like Virgil's) – to be "profaned" is the subject of *Poetaster*. In contrast, *Troilus and Cressida* enacts the cultural trashing that Jonson's play most fears.

Jonson registers a fear concerning poetic taste that Shakespeare's play realises. As Bednarz explains,

Shakespeare denies Jonson's conceptual distinction between epic and drama before undermining the rational telos of the *Aeneid* with the *Iliad*'s problematic contradictions of heroic individualism [...]. His selection of the Trojan War was particularly apt since the *Aeneid*'s political history was predicated on the *Iliad*'s conflict.¹¹⁶

While "[i]n *Poetaster* Jonson vilifies theatre" by having characters describe it as imitative and base, Shakespeare uses theatre – and especially staged performances by Thersites and Pandarus – to critique the supposed honour of the *Iliad* and, implicitly, the honour and laureate status that poets like Edmund Spenser, Jonson and Chapman hoped to garner by association with the classics and the sovereign.¹¹⁷ In a subchapter of *The Rules of Art*, Bourdieu considers "Thersites' viewpoint" as represented in the *Iliad* and Shakespeare's play, noticing how Thersites "denounce[s] the hidden vices of the great".¹¹⁸ Bourdieu likens the character's position to those cultural producers who work in the "dominated field of cultural production" and so "are well placed to discover the contradictions, weaknesses or pettinesses

¹¹⁶ Bednarz, *Shakespeare & the Poets' War*, p. 260.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 220.

¹¹⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Cambridge and Maldon, MA: Polity, 1996), p. 192.

which go unnoticed by a more distanced reverence”.¹¹⁹ Working as a non-university educated dramatist in the theatre, Shakespeare was arguably well placed to point out the contradictions of better educated and more socially distinguished poets at the turn of the century.

The interrogative stance towards epic and the classics is, perhaps surprisingly, envisaged by Jonson. His play demonstrates the kind of envy that great poets face. In *Poetaster*, Ovid’s father asks his son:

your god of poets there (whom all you admire and reverence so much), Homer, he whose worm-eaten statue must not be spewed against but with hallowed lips and grovelling adoration, what was he, what was he?
(1.2.79-83)

Captain Tucca responds:

Marry I’ll tell thee, old swag’rer: he was a poor, blind, rhyming rascal, that lived obscurely up and down in booths and taphouses, and scarce ever made a good meal in his sleep, the whoreson hungry beggar.
(1.2.84-87)

This pronouncement is not given authority by any of the poets in the *Poetaster*; it represents a position different from that of the play which generally seeks to elevate the classics. Bruce Boehrer warns that “Jonson is not really a paragon of neoclassical regularity. He takes an important step toward the neoclassical ideal, but his practice is not always consistent with his theory”.¹²⁰ Nevertheless, as a student of the antiquarian William Camden, Jonson was keen to accrue cultural capital by using the classics to lend credibility to his authorship and public image. In contrast to the elevated classical poets represented in *Poetaster*, representations of classical figures are interrogated in Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* by shifting audience expectations: the play responds to Jonson by emphasising the anachronistic nature of the play’s language *as* Elizabethan, by foregrounding the actor’s physical body and, indeed, by showing how chivalric and epic ideals are mediated through *material* culture.

¹¹⁹ Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, p. 192.

¹²⁰ Bruce Thomas Boehrer, *The Fury of Men’s Gullets*, p. 114.

Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* invites its audience to think about this process of cultural re-appropriation when it stages Chaucer's medieval romance, set against an epic backdrop, as a brothel scene fit for "painted cloths" (5.11.4), a media in which no author or artist would be formally acknowledged. Unlike Jonson, who calls attention to the author at every step, *Troilus and Cressida* disassociates the author of the work from the play's meaning. Shakespeare's play places the emphasis on the audience, and yet, like Jonson's play, it also suggests an author who is aware of how discourses of reputation were being played out in the literary-theatrical field and the book trade.

VII. The "author's drift"

In his essay, "What is an author?", Foucault wondered "at what point we began to recount the lives of authors rather than of heroes".¹²¹ *Troilus and Cressida* can be seen to represent a reflection on such a turning point. In the middle of the play, Ulysses arranges for the Greek heroes to walk by Achilles' tent "strangely" (3.3.71), thus performing Achilles' fall from grace and loss of reputation. Achilles asks: "What are you reading?" (3.3.95). Ulysses answers:

A strange fellow here
Writes me that man, how dearly ever parted,
How much in having, or without or in,
Cannot make boast to have that which he hath,
Nor feels not what he owes, but by reflection –
As when his virtues shining upon others
Heat them, and they retort that heat again
To the givers.

(3.3.95-102)

Critics have searched in vain for a direct source for this quotation.¹²² Ulysses suggests that a man only knows himself by reflection. This philosophy offers a way of knowing oneself and

¹²¹ Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?", in *The Book History Reader*, ed. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, 2nd edn (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 281 - 91 (p. 281).

¹²² For possible sources, see Chapter One: IV.iii. Philosophy and the Human Condition.

other people, but it is described in terms that evoke an actor seeing himself on stage. The passage implicitly foregrounds Shakespeare's engagement with the status of the early modern book and its author. Achilles responds:

This is not strange, Ulysses:
The beauty that is borne here in the face
The bearer knows not, but commends itself
To others' eyes; nor doth the eye itself,
That most pure spirit of sense, behold itself,
Not going from itself, but eye to eye opposed,
Salutes each other with each other's form,
For speculation turns not to itself
Till it hath travelled and is mirrored there
Where it may see itself. This is not strange at all.
(3.3.102-11)

Achilles says that this idea is nothing new: it "is not strange"; indeed, as Bevington notes, the idea is "familiar" from Shakespeare's own *Julius Caesar*, written just a few years previous.¹²³ In that play, Cassius says "Tell me, good Brutus, can you see your face?" (1.2.53). Brutus replies "No, Cassius, for the eye sees not itself / But by reflection, by some other things" (1.2.54-55). In *Julius Caesar*, Cassius and several letters act as mirrors telling Brutus to "see thyself" (2.1.46) as a restorer of the Republic. For those who had watched *Julius Caesar*, the scene with Ulysses and his book might even suggest that Shakespeare's earlier play was worthy to be read for its theorisation of the theatre of reputation.

Shakespeare continues to put theories of reputation on stage in the discussion between the Greek heroes. Ulysses responds that he is not so much interested in the idea that is "familiar", but in "the author's drift". In his "circumstance", the author shows that no man is lord of himself until he has communicated his qualities or parts to others and they are reflected back to him. The obvious meaning of "circumstance" here is "argument"; it could also, however, be read in its now more modern sense, as "situation".¹²⁴ In this reading, the

¹²³ Bevington (ed.), p. 365.

¹²⁴ For "circumstance" as "situation", the *OED* ("circumstance" n., sense I.4b.) gives the example from *Hamlet*: "You speak like a green girl / Unsifted in such perilous circumstance" (1.4.101-02). A more convincing example

author of a book is in a similar situation to that of the hypothetical man who is not lord of himself until he communicates his parts to others. Ulysses replies:

I do not strain at the position –
 It is familiar – but at the author’s drift,
 Who in his circumstance expressly proves
 That no man is the lord of anything,
 Though in and of him there be much consisting,
 Till he communicate his parts to others;
 Nor doth he of himself know them for aught
 Till he behold them formed in the applause
 Where they’re extended, who like an arch, reverb’rate
 The voice again, or like a gate of steel
 Fronting the sun, receives and renders back
 His figure and his heat. I was much rapt in this,
 And apprehended here immediately
 The unknown Ajax.
 (3.3.112-25)

Ulysses’ argument includes the theatrical metaphor of “applause” as appreciation. In the theatre, this metatheatrical device invites an audience to see the hypothetical man as an actor who is applauded or possibly as an author whose play is applauded.¹²⁵ The scene is yet another example of the implicit concern in the play with the idea of the world as a stage, a *theatrum mundi*, but this time it is theorised in relation to the idea of the book as well.

The relationship between the author and the audience was one that Jonson liked to emphasise. In the Induction to *Bartholomew Fair*, the Scrivener brings on stage “ARTICLES of Agreement, indented, between the *Spectators* or *Hearers* at the *Hope* on the Bankeside, in the County of *Surrey* on the one party; And the *Author* of *Bartholomew Fayre* in the said place, and County on the other party”.¹²⁶ Because they have paid already, the audience is asked to “adde the other part of suffrage, [their] hands” (Ind., 155) to confirm the contract before the

of this usage is in Ben Jonson’s *Poetaster* where Caesar hopes to hear Virgil when there is “more hallowed circumstance” (5.3.3); see p. 232 above.

¹²⁵ There may also be a metatheatrical pun here on the actor’s “part” when Ulysses speaks of being “dearly ever parted” (3.3.96) and communicating “his parts” (3.3.117): Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern explain that the written “part” the actor received “contained on it all the words the actor was going to speak, but nothing that would be said to or about him”, *Shakespeare in Parts* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 1.

¹²⁶ Ben Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, in *Ben Jonson*, ed. C.H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925-52), VI (1938), 1-141 (Ind., 64-68). All further references to this play are to this edition and line numbers are given in parenthesis.

play begins. Thomas Dekker's *Satiromastix* responds to Jonson's authorial self-fashioning closer to the time of *Poetaster* and *Troilus and Cressida*.¹²⁷ In the epilogue, Captain Tucca says, "Are you aduiz'd what you doe when you hisse? you blowe away Horaces revenge: but if you set your hands and Seales to this, Horace will write against it, and you may have more sport" (*Satiromastix*, M2^v-M3^r). What Tucca suggests is that by hissing at the play they will cool Horace's heated annoyance at Dekker's riposte. Horace can be read as Jonson of course; as Bednarz explains, "*Satiromastix* contains such a thorough caricature of Jonson that it continues to shape all biographical accounts of his early career".¹²⁸ Tucca goes on to claim that if the audience put their seal to the performance by applauding it, Jonson will be impelled to write another play in response which will, like a series of revenge killings, continue the War of the Theatres. In Tucca's view, the play becomes more important through applause and in its positioning of authorial reputations.¹²⁹ This view is similar to the theory in Ulysses' book, where the man comes to be recognised through the applause of others.

The question of whether a theatre audience would recognise the author of Ulysses' book as a possible playwright is difficult to answer. Although the author is described as "A strange fellow", having a book in the theatre was not a strange occurrence: bearing this fact in mind adds a new dimension to the scene between Ulysses and Achilles. Rather than the exchange being something in which Greek philosophers (such as the anachronistic Aristotle mentioned in the play) engage, the thoughtful discussion can also be seen as a comment on the practices of reading within or related to the theatre. Tiffany Stern argues that "printed

¹²⁷ Thomas Dekker refers to a "Poetomachia", the Poets' War, in his preface to the first publication of *Satiromastix; or, the Untrussing of the Humorous Poet* (London, 1602), A3^v.

¹²⁸ Bednarz, *Shakespeare & the Poets' War*, p. 216; he notes that, "[a] stage direction at the beginning of act 2, scene 2, for instance, informs us that Horace enters in 'his true attire' – that is, the clothing that Jonson actually wore", p. 216.

¹²⁹ Tiffany Stern discusses the importance of audience applause after first performances in "'A small-beer health to his second day': Playwrights Prologues, and First Performances in the Early Modern Theater", *Studies in Philology*, 101.2 (2004), 172-99.

books [...] were regularly read in the playhouse and, indeed were also sold there”.¹³⁰ She imagines “canny members of the audience” who would arrive early for a performance and have a book with them, probably reading it aloud.¹³¹ Stern argues that “[w]ritten texts – in performance – filled the playhouse, and ‘literature’ [...] regularly intruded into the theatrical space before the play began”.¹³² If Stern imagines this reading in the theatre audience as a miniature performance (rather like the gentlemen who sat on the stage at Blackfriars), then Shakespeare’s staging of Ulysses is analogous.¹³³ Not only is Ulysses being played by an actor and therefore performing a reading, but Ulysses the character is also using the book reading for his own Machiavellian ends.¹³⁴ The reading that Stern describes just offstage as socially situated is mimicked by Ulysses on stage. Stern suggests that these “[b]ook-owners would hope, by reciting and analyzing the texts in their hands, to draw attention to themselves, highlight their choice of literature and broadcast their talents”.¹³⁵ Ulysses goes armed with a book to put on a “well erected confidence” (*Poetaster*, Ind., 74) when he persuades Achilles of his lost reputation. However, it is Achilles who reflects or confirms Ulysses’ reputation for wisdom, in this case by giving his words credence. Reputation, Achilles comes to understand, is not simply based on his achievements on the battlefield: it depends on how actions are received and remembered by others. This moment in the play suggests that the reputation of an actor or author depends not only on performance or writing, but on how they are appreciated by the audience.

¹³⁰ Tiffany Stern, “Watching as Reading: The Audience and Written Text in Shakespeare’s Playhouse”, in *How To Do Things With Shakespeare: New Approaches, New Essays*, ed. Laurie Maguire (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), pp. 136-59 (p. 137).

¹³¹ Stern, “Watching as Reading”, p. 138.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ For audience members sitting on stage, see Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage, 1574-1642*, 4th edn (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 19, and pp. 280-81, and Tiffany Stern, “Taking Part: Actors and Audience on the Stage at Blackfriars”, in *Inside Shakespeare: Essays on the Blackfriars Stage*, ed. Paul Menzer (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 2006), pp. 35-53.

¹³⁴ Compare Hamlet who uses the book to perform a kind of “madness” (*Hamlet*, 2.2.203) to Polonius.

¹³⁵ Stern, “Watching as Reading”, p. 138.

The emphasis on the idea that it is the audience that must ascribe value to an author's work seems to be part of Shakespeare's critique of Jonson's authorial self-fashioning. As George E. Rowe comments, "[Ulysses] is talking about the power of audience, a power that would finally determine [...] the outcome of the War of the Theaters".¹³⁶ Patrick Cheney suggests that in "passages such as [...] Ulysses' speech on the 'author's drift', we can see the author at work, crafting his text out of the texts of other authors, reading those authors and rewriting them through pressures from his own literary environment".¹³⁷ If the author can be seen at work, however, it is only through a certain amount of reconstruction, especially given Shakespeare's emphasis on the power of the audience. Shakespeare's fictions of authorship are different from those in Jonson's "Apologetical Dialogue", which Bednarz argues was added to *Poetaster* after *Troilus and Cressida* was first performed.¹³⁸ As James Mardock argues, "instead of disappearing behind his works as Shakespeare does, [Jonson] constantly points to himself as their creator and origin".¹³⁹ In Jonson's *Poetaster* epilogue (printed as an "Apologetical Dialogue"), the author is discovered in his study. This epilogue was apparently performed only once and it has been argued that Jonson acted the role of the author himself.¹⁴⁰ In the role-play, Jonson explains to two critics (and the audience) that the abuse he has suffered would be enough to "damn his long-watched labours to the fire [...] / Were not his own free merit a more crown / Unto his travails than their reeling claps" ("Apologetical Dialogue" 198, 201-02).¹⁴¹ Jonson suggests that he can assess his own worth; he knows the "free merit" of his work. He is, as Ulysses' author would say, not troubled to "behold [his

¹³⁶ George E. Rowe, *Distinguishing Jonson: Imitation, Rivalry, and the Directions of a Dramatic Career* (Lincoln, NE, and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), p. 176.

¹³⁷ Cheney, *Shakespeare's Literary Authorship*, p. 15.

¹³⁸ Bednarz, *Shakespeare & the Poets' War*, p. 274.

¹³⁹ James D. Mardock, *Our Scene is London: Ben Jonson's City and the Space of the Author* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 7.

¹⁴⁰ For Jonson appearing himself on stage, see Cain (ed.), p. 261 and Bednarz, *Shakespeare & the Poets' War*, p. 274-75.

¹⁴¹ Here the "reeling claps" could refer to the dizzying applause after his own plays, or the applause after the plays of others that hurts him, as suggested by the epilogue of *Satiromastix*.

own quality] formed in the applause” (3.3.119). The exchange between Ulysses and Achilles provides a rebuttal to Jonson’s show of authorial self-esteem in *Poetaster*.

Shakespeare did not respond to Jonson’s comical satire by simply caricaturing him as Ajax. As Chapter Three explored, it is probable that the characterisation of Ajax is a response to Jonson’s authorial self-fashioning: it is Ulysses, after all, who notes how as he thought on the book he “was much rapt in this, / And apprehended here immediately / The unknown Ajax” (3.3.123-25). However, the conversation between Achilles and Ulysses is concerned not only with the reputation of classical figures and the characters within the play, but, metatheatrically, with that of authors also. *Troilus and Cressida* responds to the way in which Jonson tried to create new audience expectations concerning the standing of authors. A theatrical trope of applause and parody is part of the negotiation of authorial representation. As Bednarz asserts,

Shakespeare defended the common stages not by emphasizing the didactic power of poetry to transform its audience or the status of its performers, but by insisting that theatricality was the fundamental condition of human experience.¹⁴²

Ulysses tells Achilles that if he cares about his reputation, he has to act with the recognition of the theatre of his own existence. This concern with being an “authentic author” (3.2.161) suggests that Achilles needs to write himself or script himself in relation to others. In contrast to Jonson’s distinctions about authors and poetasters, Shakespeare maintains that authorship is not exclusive. The theatre of authorship takes place not just in a play, but also – as Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* seems to suggest – outside a play in the *theatrum mundi*.

VIII. The Theatre of the Book

Jonson and Shakespeare were highly alert to the theatre of the book and its formation of expectations about plays and playwrights. Expectations of the book are integral to the

¹⁴² Bednarz, *Shakespeare & the Poets’ War*, p. 253.

imagination of authorship – even in the theatre – whether in the performance between Achilles and Ulysses, or in Jonson’s epilogue to *Poetaster* where the poet-playwright refers to his plays as “books” (Apologetical Dialogue, 71).¹⁴³ The book is often part of the fiction of authorship within the plays of Jonson and Shakespeare, even if, in the case of *Troilus and Cressida*, the play was not actually published as a book until around eight years after it was first performed.¹⁴⁴ As Lynn S. Meskill demonstrates, in Ben Jonson’s *Poetaster* “the act of writing [is] defined immediately in terms of specularity”; “underneath the ‘War of the Theatres’ is a battle within the poetic imagination between the act of creation and the necessity to submit and expose this creation to the eye and the ear of the reader”.¹⁴⁵ Shakespeare’s creation of the man in Ulysses’ book responds to Jonson’s concerns with authorial “specularity” in *Poetaster*. Ultimately, Shakespeare uses his play to draw attention to the theatricality of authorship and the book, to show that both necessitate an audience.

Troilus and Cressida provides a perfect example of what Julia Stone Peters describes as the *Theatre of the Book*:

If the performance of the book was central to the arts of the Renaissance [...], the process of inscribing performance was equally central to Renaissance self-reflection on its media of expression. As the paradigmatic medium for the union of text and performance, theatre could, in this context, become a locus for the broader discussions of the relation between letters and speech, live presence and inscriptions on the page.¹⁴⁶

Even when book matter was not present on the Elizabethan stage, therefore, the matter of the book was by no means absent. As discussed in the Introduction, Nestor’s paratextual print

¹⁴³ The “Apologetical Dialogue” was published in the Ben Jonson’ folio *Works* and is edited in Cain (ed.), pp. 261-76 and line numbers are to this edition. As Ben Jonson reported in the folio edition, its publication in the quarto was “restrain’d [...] by Authorite”, Cain (ed), p. 261.

¹⁴⁴ As James Roberts, the playbill printer, held the copyright for *Troilus and Cressida* in 1603, it seems probable that the Chamberlain’s Men expected that the play would be published sooner than 1609.

¹⁴⁵ Lynn S. Meskill, *Ben Jonson and Envy* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 98 and p. 100.

¹⁴⁶ Julia Stone Peters, *The Theatre of the Book, 1480-1880: Print, Text, and Performance in Europe* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 106.

metaphor of book “indexes” (1.3.345) was used to describe expectations of the future.¹⁴⁷

Another example can be found when Ulysses sees Cressida in the Greek camp:

Fie, fie upon her!
 There's language in her eye, her cheek, her lip,
 [.....]
 O these encounterers, so glib of tongue,
 That give a coasting welcome ere it comes,
 And wide unclasp the tables of their thoughts
 To every ticklish reader.
 (4.5.54-55, 58-61)

Ulysses describes Cressida as a performing book. Similarly, Charlotte Scott observes that when “Hector berates Achilles, ‘O, like a book of sport thou’lt read me o’er’ (4.5.239), the book is explored, like the body, for traces of the artless heart and the honest soul”.¹⁴⁸ In the play, the matter of Troy consists of actors and books that perform. Although Shakespeare may not have agreed completely with the “never writer[’s]” (§2^r) construction of the author and his play in the published epistle, therefore, the play nevertheless dramatizes an awareness of the “theatrical” writing of book advertising. This writing that worked on the “ticklish reader” could be described as performative in its construction of expectations concerning authors, actors and audiences.¹⁴⁹

In Jonson’s prologues and epilogues, characters ostensibly tell the audience what the author thinks. In contrast, Shakespeare’s drift can be harder to trace. Nonetheless, as far as authorial self-fashioning goes, the “strange fellow” in Ulysses’ book who prefers to be warmed by an audience rather than his own “free merit” offers a reflection on Shakespeare’s own authorial strategies. As Robert Weimann and Douglas Bruster stress, “the dialogical relationship between the media [of stage and page] doubled a poetics of ‘reflection’ and

¹⁴⁷ See Introduction, p. 15.

¹⁴⁸ Charlotte Scott, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Book* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 9.

¹⁴⁹ The expression “ticklish reader” used by Ulysses resonates with the play’s prologue: “expectation, tickling skittish spirits / on one and other side” (Pro., 20-21).

interaction relating to the production of character in the plays”.¹⁵⁰ In *Troilus and Cressida*, however, this poetics of reflection sowed the seed for the construction of the author on the stage of the page. Unlike Jonson, who was always willing to *characterise* himself as an author, Shakespeare refers to the author in his plays directly “only on two occasions in the entire canon, and then with an air of mild self-depreciation”.¹⁵¹ This is not to suggest that Shakespeare did not think about authorship – his sonnets, poems and fictions of authorship in his plays suggest that he did. Rather, by placing the emphasis on representations of audience figures rather than on the author’s drift or intention, Shakespeare takes a peculiarly relaxed or diminished responsibility for the significance of his play and what it promises.

Shakespeare can be hailed, as he is in the quarto preface, as an inventive author who created renaissances – each play was “a birth of your braine” (¶2^r). At the same time, however, the reflection on reputation in his plays shows that he left the expectations and significances of his plays, and even the value of his own authorship, for his audience to valorise; he was aware that he would have a reading audience in the future that was beyond his control. This view of being read in the future is realised by Troilus when he says he will be “truth’s authentic author to be cited” (3.2.161), just as it takes on a poetic function in Shakespeare’s *Sonnets*. It is also clearly evident in relation to print when Jonson addresses the reader published after *Poetaster* in the folio version: “I take no pleasure to revive the times, but that posterity may make a difference between their manners that provoked me then, and mine that neglected them ever”.¹⁵² These lines suggest that Jonson was, of course, not as

¹⁵⁰ Robert Weimann and Douglas Bruster, *Shakespeare and the Power of Performance: Stage and Page in Elizabethan Theatre* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 179.

¹⁵¹ Ian Donaldson, “Shakespeare, Jonson, and the Invention of the Author”, *Proceedings of the British Academy* 151 (2007), 319-38 (p. 322). The Chorus of *Henry V* explains in a sonnet epilogue that “Thus far with rough and all-unable pen / Our bending author hath pursued the story” (Epi., 1-2). Here, in a rare occasion, the Chorus imagines the author bent over his desk writing, or with bended knee, or rather ducking out of sight. The other occurrence is when the Epilogue of *2 Henry IV* reports that the “humble author will continue the story with Sir John in it” (Epi., 22-24) but even here the Epilogue is not party to what the author thinks, saying that “for anything I know, Falstaff shall die of a sweat – unless already a be killed with your hard opinions” (Epi., 25-26). And in the end Sir John does not appear in *Henry V*, despite the apparent promise.

¹⁵² Ben Jonson, “To the Reader”, in *Poetaster*, ed. Tom Cain, p. 261.

insensible to the critical comments of others as he sometimes pretended to be. In Shakespeare's case, the fact that the letter "a" of "author's drift" (3.3.113) morphs from a small "a" in the quarto (G1^v) to a capital "A" in the first folio (folio, TLN 1965) perhaps reflects the growing authority being ascribed to the author just a few years after Shakespeare's death, probably not by the author himself, as in the case of Jonson, but by the book and in others' eyes.

Jonson dedicated his *Poetaster* to Richard Martin, the master of Middle Temple revels, who would welcome the new king into London in 1603.¹⁵³ In contrast to Jonson's patronage-seeking plays, Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* shows an author who seems sceptical about the "Prerogative of age, crowns, sceptres, laurels" (1.3.107). He would make a show at least of leaving the publication of his plays to others, thereby handing over what was to be expected of the play, and its author, to audiences and readers to debate. Contrary to the view, exemplified by David Scott Kastan, that "Shakespeare had no obvious interest in the printed book" and that he "seemingly did not care" about print publication, this chapter has followed Lukas Erne in arguing that Shakespeare was clearly aware of the fact that his plays were being published.¹⁵⁴ Rather than working at the printers to ensure good print productions, however, Shakespeare tended to work with theatre to argue implicitly that his plays, as staged, were literary productions: the example of Jonson and his contemporaries had taught Shakespeare how the theatre of the book worked both ways.

¹⁵³ On Richard Martin and the Middle Temple revels, see Cain (ed.), pp. 46-47; Anthony Arlidge, *Shakespeare and the Prince of Love: The Feast of Misrule in the Middle Temple* (London: Giles de la Mare Publishers, 2000), pp. 77-79; and Tom Cain, "Donne and the Prince D'Amour", *John Donne Journal*, 14 (1995), 83-111.

¹⁵⁴ David Scott Kastan, *Shakespeare and the Book* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 6.

CONCLUSION Expecting “very unworthy matters”?

“Nor doth the silver tongued *Melicert*,
Drop from his honied Muse one sable teare
To mourne her death that graced his desert,
And to his laies opende her Royall eare”

– Henry Chettle¹

“others fish with craft for great opinion” (*T&C*, 4.4.12)

I. Meddling Matter

Shakespeare’s propensity to produce self-effacing representations of authorship in his plays means that there is not the same expectation of a contract between the author and audience as there is in some of Jonson’s plays. The precise way in which Shakespeare’s plays respond to political situations and other authors seems to be left for the audience to decide; this is not simply an interpretive issue troubled by historical distance. As Ton Hoenselaars suggests,

[r]ecognising how rich the textual and paratextual materials of early modern English drama tend to be, and how pervasive the Poets’ War really is, when it comes to weaving either his own life or the lives of his contemporaries into his plays and poems, Shakespeare excels at discretion.²

Working with different methodologies, critics such as Paul Yachnin and Richard Wilson have both suggested that Shakespeare’s self-protective strategy was to establish an expectation that his plays existed in an aesthetic space, apparently detached from early modern politics and history: this scheme would tacitly position Shakespeare as a “dramatist who dreams that art might ‘give delight and hurt not’ (*Tempest*, 3.2.131)”.³ As Richard Wilson notes,

such detachment could not look less like self-promotion; but it ensured that while Marlowe was murdered, Kyd tortured and Jonson imprisoned, Shakespeare was never questioned by the authorities, and always had the last word.⁴

¹ Henry Chettle, *England’s Mourning Garment* (London, 1603), D2^r.

² Ton Hoenselaars, “Shakespeare: colleagues, collaborators, co-authors”, in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Contemporary Dramatists*, ed. Ton Hoenselaars (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 97-119 (p. 102).

³ Richard Wilson, “‘The words of Mercury’: Shakespeare and Marlowe”, *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Contemporary Dramatists*, ed. Ton Hoenselaars (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 24-53 (p. 51). See Paul Yachnin, “The Powerless Theater”, in *Stage-Wrights: Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton, and the Making of Theatrical Value* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), pp. 1-24.

⁴ Richard Wilson, “‘The words of Mercury’: Shakespeare and Marlowe”, p. 45.

With *Troilus and Cressida*, Shakespeare seems to have meddled in the Poets' War and in courtly and national *Troynovant* discourses. The reaction from some – such as Jonson, Marston and the author of *The Return from Parnassus (Part II)* – suggests that his play was seen by some as meddling self-consciously in the literary-theatrical field. This thesis has also suggested that, however significant the play was for the poet-playwright's thinking on the literary-theatrical field, *Troilus and Cressida* was probably doing something more than this literary-theatrical “poetomachia” implies.

As Nicholas Royle notes, “[m]eddling is an organising trope in *Troilus and Cressida*, and yet it operates in a peculiarly negative, tacit or ironic mode: three times in the opening scene Pandarus says that he will ‘not meddle’ or will neither ‘meddle nor make’ (1.1.14, 62, 77), but he never uses the word again”.⁵ Pandarus insists three times that he will not “meddle nor make no more i'th'matter” (1.1.77) of Cressida and Troilus. However, he goes on to do just that. Later in the play, the word appears during a discussion of state surveillance when Ulysses describes the “providence that's in a watchful state” (3.3.197).⁶ He tells Achilles:

There is a mystery, with whom relation
Durst never meddle, in the soul of state,
Which hath an operation more divine
Than breath or pen can give expresseure to.
(3.3.202-05)

The metonyms of “breath” and “pen” parallel the absent authority of the Prologue's “author's pen and actor's voice” (Pro., 24). The irony is that Shakespeare has made a mystery of his own authorship while perhaps giving “expresseure” to “the soul of state”. Ulysses articulates a particularly sovereign view of state mechanics which the future King of England, James I, would strongly endorse. For example, soon after the play was finally published, James I spoke in Parliament in 1610 using ideas seemingly lifted from *Troilus and Cressida*; he

⁵ Nicholas Royle, “Or Again, Meddling”, in *In Memory of Jacques Derrida* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 38-67 (p. 38).

⁶ Dawson notes that “[t]he spying practised by the state is compared, with ironic overtones, to the watchful ‘providence’ of God”, Dawson (ed.), p. 163.

argued that members should “not meddle with the maine points of government; that is my craft: *tractent fabrilia fabri*; to meddle with that were to lessen me”.⁷ The Poet-King James I quotes from the Latin expression, voiced in Horace’s epistle to Augustus Caesar, translated as “carpenters handle the tools of carpenters”.⁸ Shakespeare’s response to early modern national politics (so often articulated through classical allusion and reference to the Trojan legend) recognises that this national politics was itself theatrical.

The scenes of patronage, performance and audience in *Troilus and Cressida* show that the author was aware of the dangers of meddling too obviously. The expectation in the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, for example, must have been that Shakespeare would write plays that would entertain his audience, and this is the one usually promoted in Shakespeare’s prologues and epilogues. The question of what *was* the remit of a play, however, was particularly uncertain during the Poets’ War when the matter of a play’s relationship with its audience was under particular scrutiny: Shakespeare’s play meddled in the matter.⁹ The term “meddling” is especially appropriate to *Troilus and Cressida*: as Royle explains,

“Meddling” in its accepted current usage is interfering or tampering with; in archaic or obsolete senses, it is mixing, concerning oneself with, contending, fighting or engaging in conflict (meddling would here be in the fray with *mêlée*), combining or blending (culinary or medical ingredients, as in a *pharmakon* perhaps), or (a sense still current in parts of the US) having sexual intercourse with.¹⁰

The meddling of *Troilus and Cressida* in the Poets’ War is Shakespeare’s purge, his *pharmakon*, for Jonson and the literary-theatrical field, while also being part of his intercourse and battle with the expectations and tastes about drama promulgated by others. It

⁷ James VI and I, “A Speech to the Lords and Commons of the Parliament at *White-Hall*”, in *Political Writings*, ed. Johann P. Sommerville (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 179–203 (p. 190).

⁸ Horace, “Epistle 1: To Augustus”, in *Epistles: Book II*, in *Satires and Epistles*, trans. John Davie, ed. Robert Cowan (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 94–106 (pp. 94–100, ll. 117–18).

⁹ Future work on this matter in relation to Shakespearean drama would need to explore further Jonathan Gil Harris’s notion of “untimely matter” and to think through his call to “theorize matter’s multitemporality: that is, the ways in which we physically and imaginatively rework matter to produce diverse organizations of time”, *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), pp. 12–13.

¹⁰ Royle, p. 38.

cannot be coincidental, for example, that in his apology (attached to *Poetaster* after Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*) Jonson announced an intention to give up comical satire and to see "If Tragedy have a more kind aspect" (Apologetical Dialogue, 214). He would stop writing the comical satire that Shakespeare had so devastatingly critiqued, and move on to develop a tragic style in *Sejanus, His Fall*.¹¹ Likewise, although plays such as *Timon of Athens*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Pericles* and *Coriolanus* show the playwright commenting on patronage, classicisms and medievalisms later in his career, Shakespeare would never involve his audience in such a scathing play again.

On a national level, *Troilus and Cressida* also arguably marked a wider form of meddling. The quarto epistle to the printed play intimates that the "grand possessors wills" (¶2^v) were against the play's publication. The epistle's probably erroneous suggestion that the possessors were trying to hold the play back from publication has contributed to the notion that in its day *Troilus and Cressida* may have been politically dangerous.¹² If the play really was meddling in "the soul of state" (3.3.203), as Eric Mallin maintains, then it was just like Shakespeare to craft a play so that it could be read as simply about the Trojan War or, otherwise, as an innocuous comment on the literary-theatrical field and Jonson's authorship. This craft belied the play's invitation to rethink the national politics of late Elizabethan court culture and its dependence on credit in all its forms – and especially that social marker of credit: reputation.

¹¹ Jonson's responsiveness to Shakespeare is attested further in his play *Sejanus*; Lynn S. Meskill explains how "[t]here is ample evidence that Jonson had the extremely popular *Julius Caesar* in mind in writing *Sejanus*", "The Tangled Thread of Authorship: Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and Jonson's *Sejanus, His Fall*", in *Medieval and Early Modern Authorship: Swiss Papers in English Language and Literature*, 25, ed. Guillemette Bolens and Lukas Erne (Tübingen: Narr, 2011), pp. 75-91 (p. 77).

¹² David Bevington notes in his edition, "[i]f the play Shakespeare had written proved too hot to handle in the upshot of a failed rebellion (and the company had been in trouble over their revival of *Richard II* in early 1601 on the eve of that attempted coup), the actors may have found it prudent to hold *Troilus* back [from publication]. The players are to be identified, then, with the 'grand possessors' whom the publisher's preface in 1609 describes as having been reluctant to see the play in print", Bevington (ed.), *Troilus and Cressida: Arden Shakespeare*, 3rd ser. (London: Nelson and Sons, 1998), p. 18.

II. Reputation

Troilus and Cressida shows heroes who are often obsessed with their status and reputation: furthermore, it was apparently this play that had been the “purge” that had made Jonson “beray his credit” as the author of *The Return from Parnassus (Part II)* put it.¹³ As this thesis has argued, the characterisation in the play works beyond the Trojan *theatrum mundi* to comment on the concern in the plays of the Poets’ War with expectations of authorial reputation and social positioning, all the way up to an Elizabethan national level. Cheney argues for a reading of Shakespeare as a “national poet-playwright” because he “self-consciously wrote the nation in both his poems and plays, through a combined discourse of poetry and theatre, and thereby [...] participates in his own historical making”.¹⁴ Cheney is arguing that Shakespeare establishes expectations about how he and his work will be seen in the future. The way Shakespeare used literary sources and used the book in his plays to promote a literary theatre finds fruition in the way that the quarto epistle writers advertised the literary dramatist. However, Shakespeare’s project was to establish expectations for his own theatre as having literary value. This expectation cannot be understood from the epistle, which distinguishes between the theatrical and the literary, devaluing the first and valorising the latter.

The advertising epistle writer seems to imply that in *Troilus and Cressida* Shakespeare wrote a play for exclusive tastes. This representation of a literary dramatist is rather like Jonson’s representation of Ovid in *Poetaster* as a poet-playwright whose play is seen or read by “some near friends and honourable Romans” (1.2.67) but not shown on the “open stage” (1.2.67). This thesis has argued, however, that *Troilus and Cressida* does not represent the work of a poet-playwright with ambitions for patronage, even if those ambitions

¹³ Anon, *The Returne from Parnassus (Part II)*, in *Three Elizabethan Comedies, 1597-1601*, ed. W.D. Macray (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1886), pp. 76-154 (4.3. TLN 1812-13).

¹⁴ Patrick Cheney, *Shakespeare, National Poet-Playwright* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 10.

were evident in his earlier poetry. Cheney argues that Shakespeare's plays and poems "represent[] a dialogue between two oppositional aesthetics": the first is "Spenser's Virgilian program of pastoral and epic", a national laureate project, and the second is Marlowe's "own Ovidian *cursus* of amorous poems, poems in the epic register, and stage tragedy", a counter-national laureate project.¹⁵ Shakespeare bridges the two to write as a "counter-laureate" national poet-playwright. As Cheney argues, a key aspect of this "national setting is manifested by a nascent print culture that allows for individual agency and complicates it".¹⁶ This print culture offered a new stage for dramatists. Not being firmly dependent on a court patron and having the financial security that the Globe afforded him, Shakespeare was able to follow his own "counter-laureate" programme. Cheney suggests:

If we look around the literary scene during Shakespeare's career, we see a rather large group of laureate-like authors, from Sidney, Spenser, and Daniel to Drayton, Chapman, and Jonson [...]. [Shakespeare] uses the received authorial frame of self-promotion to invent a frame of self-effacement.¹⁷

Cheney's technique of closely reading Shakespeare's fictions of authorship has been reworked in Chapter Two to consider fictions of audience and patronage. Chapter Three traced the fictionalisation of audience expectations, as voiced by characters, to consider matters of literary and theatrical taste. Chapter Four has taken the recent turn in Shakespeare studies to consider the complex focus on audience, authorship and the book in *Troilus and Cressida*. The evidence presented in each chapter has suggested that Shakespeare was reluctant to endorse the elitist attitudes offered by those writing for the private theatres, and that he was also decidedly sceptical about patronage: he responded with a critique of patronage, taste and Jonson's authorial self-fashioning.

¹⁵ Cheney, *Shakespeare, National Poet-Playwright*, p. 9. See also Patrick Cheney, *Marlowe's Counterfeit Profession: Ovid, Spenser, Counter-Nationhood* (Toronto, Buffalo, NY and London: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

¹⁶ Cheney, *Shakespeare, National Poet-Playwright*, p. 10.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 277; Cheney argues that "[c]aught up in the power was Marlowe, who, amid his thundering threat, could not extricate his art from the spell of the laureates, and so produced what we have termed a counter-national art. Shakespeare inherits the opposition between Marlowe and Spenser, but he stands above it, precisely to bridge it", p. 277.

Troilus and Cressida fits with a shift in Shakespeare's authorial positioning around the turn of the century which deserves further attention in relation to Shakespeare's dramatic development and his ambivalence towards laureate status. These are issues that involve both expectations of Shakespeare's literary-theatrical authorship and of his playtexts. As Warren Chernaik notes, "Shakespeare, unlike Jonson, for most of his career remained outside patronage networks and the world of the court".¹⁸ The exception was in Shakespeare's early printed poetry. Both Shakespeare's famous poems *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594) were printed with dedications written by the author himself to the prominent courtier, Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton. In the dedication for *Venus and Adonis*, Shakespeare ended with, "I leave it to your honourable survey, and your honour to your heart's content; which I wish may always answer your own wish and the world's hopeful expectation".¹⁹ It was later rumoured by the poet laureate Nicholas Rowe (1709) that the Earl gave Shakespeare "a thousand Pounds, to enable him to go through a Purchase which he had a mind to".²⁰ As Bart van Es has recently argued, the poetry publications were

produced in the highest standards as publications complete with a personal letter of dedication. After joining the Chamberlain's Men, however, Shakespeare would never again show such open commitment to printed poetry and quite possibly he ceased to play any part in the publication of his work.²¹

Whether the story of the Earl's gift is true or not, by 1601 Shakespeare would have been more financially comfortable through his investments in the Chamberlain's Men and the

¹⁸ Warren Chernaik, "The dyer's hand: Shakespeare and Jonson", *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Contemporary Dramatists*, ed. Ton Hoenselaars (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 54-69 (p. 58).

¹⁹ William Shakespeare, "To the right honourable Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, and Baron of Titchfield", in *The Norton Shakespeare*, p. 607. Gary Schmigall notes how Shakespeare's publishing career began on a snobbish note, with his choice of a couplet from Ovid's *Amores* as an epigraph for the title page of *Venus and Adonis*: "Let base-conceited wits admire vile things, / Fair Phoebus lead me to the Muses' springs" (Marlowe's translation) *Shakespeare and the Poet's Life* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1990), p. 52; Schmigall continues, "[s]uch posturing is common to the front matter of volumes native to, or in some way destined for, the court – where elitism in every respect, including the aesthetic, was the norm", p. 52.

²⁰ Nicholas Rowe, *The Life of Shakespeare*, introduced by Charles Nicholl (London: Pallas Athene, 2009), p. 38.

²¹ Bart van Es, *Shakespeare in Company* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 108. Douglas Bruster has recently argued that Shakespeare "was not only a literary dramatist but also involved in the publication of his works", "Shakespeare the Stationer", in *Shakespeare's Stationers: Studies in Cultural Bibliography*, ed. Marta Straznicky (Pennsylvania, PA: University Of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), pp. 112-31 (p. 130).

Globe. In comparison, in 1601 the Earl was in prison and apparently only just escaped capital punishment for his part in the Essex Rising. Patronage, as George Chapman repeatedly discovered, could be unreliable.

Perhaps strategically, Shakespeare had “The Phoenix and Turtle” published in *Love’s Martyr* (1601), a collection dedicated to John Salusbury, an up-and-coming patron who, unlike Wriothesley, had not supported Essex during his *coup d’état*.²² Here Shakespeare’s poetry was among those “Done by the best and chiefest of our moderne writers, with their names subscribed to their particular works”.²³ In this published work, the subtitle makes much of the fact that the authors’ names – which included other poet-playwrights such as Jonson and Marston – are attached to their individual work. However, this is arguably the last time that Shakespeare would have a hand in something dedicated to a patron – the publication of Shakespeare’s *Sonnets* famously has a complex dedication that denies straightforward authorial assurance.²⁴ It cannot be accidental, then, that – unlike in Jonson’s *Poetaster* – in *Troilus and Cressida* the individual patrons of performances are represented as decidedly unpromising. As Chapter Two examined, Thersites’ first master, Ajax, is a dope who beats his theatrical fool; Pandarus’s musical courtly audience, made up of Helen and Paris, is uncomprehending; and Achilles’ relationship with his boy-player Patroclus is far from perfect, being constantly viewed with suspicion. In at least one version of the Trojan story, Achilles even kills Thersites in a rage after his railing goes too far.²⁵ If Shakespeare was aiming for counter-laureate status as Cheney argues, then this status was undeniably one very different from that hoped for by Spenser or even Jonson.²⁶ After 1601 especially,

²² See James P. Bednarz, *Shakespeare and the Truth of Love: the Mystery of “The Phoenix and Turtle”* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

²³ Robert Chester, *Loves Martyr; or, Rosalins Complaint* (London, 1601), Z1^r.

²⁴ See Johann Gregory, “Shakespeare’s ‘sugred Sonnets’, *Troilus and Cressida*, and the *Odcombian Banquet*: An exploration of promising paratexts, expectations and matters of taste”, *Shakespeare* 6 (2010), 185-208.

²⁵ See Chapter Two, p. 146, f.n. 92.

²⁶ For recent biographies that consider their aspiration for laureate status, see Ian Donaldson, *Ben Jonson: A Life*, esp. p. 322, and Andrew Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser: A Life* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), esp. pp. 87-88, 536.

Shakespeare makes a radical shift away from national history plays, festive comedies, and popular tragedies. Plays such as *Troilus and Cressida* are much more experimental and indeterminate of genre, and implicitly defy an explicit laureate programme or precedential authorship trajectory.²⁷ These plays, however, do mark Shakespeare out as a highly innovative poet-playwright, or as Erne has it, a literary dramatist.

The years from 1594 to 1603 show Shakespeare becoming more and more invested in the theatre, both financially and creatively.²⁸ *Troilus and Cressida* demonstrates a decisive concern, though often implicit, with issues surrounding authorship, poetic style, theatrical performance, and the matter of the book. Shakespeare's later plays would still be concerned with statecraft – as his earlier plays had been – but it seems that Shakespeare had decided that from now on if something was to be said, it would be said primarily through the medium of poetic *stagecraft* – he would not rely on non-dramatic poetry to make a name for himself. By 1598, his plays were appearing in print with his name on them; this was another reason for Shakespeare to see his work as literary drama, realising that it would be staged in the theatre and eventually on the page. Despite the theatre detractors, this dual publication (on the stage and on the page) appears to have given Shakespeare a renewed confidence in *Troilus and Cressida* to associate theatre, perhaps surprisingly, with disease, violence and deceit. The retort hinted at in the play, however, is that these faults were even more endemic elsewhere: between lovers, family members, military and court factions, and especially on the political stage, wherever it was set.

Shakespeare's considered engagement, however oblique, with his times suggests a refusal to mark theatre as *mere* entertainment, even as his other prologues, epilogues and

²⁷ Patrick Cheney discusses Spenser's "Virgilian progress from pastoral to epic" in relation to Marlowe's own development as an "Ovidian" in *Marlowe's Counterfeit Profession: Ovid, Spenser, Counter-Nationhood* (Toronto, Buffalo, NY and London: University of Toronto Press, 1997), pp. 3-48.

²⁸ Bart van Es marks out four phases in Shakespeare's career: see the chapters "Phase II. Shakespeare as company man (1594-1599)" and "Phase III. Shakespeare as playhouse investor (1599-1608)", in van Es, *Shakespeare in Company*, pp. 79-146 and pp. 149-248.

patronised plays-within-plays ostensibly establish theatre as a leisurely pastime. That his theatre might not *just* be entertainment, for the public or the court, is an idea that is sometimes difficult to square with conventional expectations of Shakespeare's theatrical environment and print culture. In *Shakespeare's Freedom*, Stephen Greenblatt argues:

Shakespeare's texts [...] were brought into the literary marketplace under the sign not of obligation, duty, self-improvement, academic prestige, or aesthetic seriousness but of pleasure.²⁹

That Shakespeare's plays bring "pleasure[]" (¶2^v) is highlighted by the *Troilus and Cressida* quarto epistle. However, even this advertisement suggests that the play might also be good for your "judgements" and "wits health" (¶2^v). Greenblatt suggests that in the first folio the editors promoted an "[u]nderstanding and hence liking" for Shakespeare that

has nothing to do with moral high-mindedness, with any imaginable school curriculum, or with what the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu calls "cultural capital". In 1612 Thomas Bodley instructed the first keeper of his library in Oxford to exclude from the shelves "such books as almanacs, plays, and an infinite number, that are daily printed, of very unworthy matters".³⁰

Greenblatt paints a picture of Shakespeare here as being an author who "chose to imply that his art had no use-value whatever", and that this translated into his plays being seen as "unworthy matter[]" by more learned people.³¹

However, Lukas Erne has more recently argued that "while Shakespeare scholars regularly repeat Bodley's exclusion of plays from his library, they seem entirely unaware of the Edinburgh catalogue testifying to the presence of Shakespeare's quarto playbooks in another university library".³² Erne finds the *Troilus and Cressida* quarto being collected, for example, in the libraries of Humphrey Dyson (c. 1582-1633) and Edward Conway, the

²⁹ Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespeare's Freedom* (Chicago, IL, and London: University of Chicago Press, 2010), p. 99

³⁰ Greenblatt, *Shakespeare's Freedom*, p. 98; Greenblatt quotes Bodley from Anthony James West, *The First Folio: The History of the Book*, 2 vols (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001-03), I (2001), 3.

³¹ Greenblatt, *Shakespeare's Freedom*, p. 121.

³² Erne, *Shakespeare and the Book Trade* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University, 2013), p. 196.

second Viscount Conway (1594-1665).³³ The Viscount valued early modern English drama, writing in a letter to his daughter-in-law that “Our English Playes are not written according to the rules of Antient Comoedies or Tragedies, but if the English language were understood by other nations, they would certainly imitate them”.³⁴ Bourdieu’s study of social capital is aware of the way that certain people are able to “cash in” their cultural capital for social or economic capital. Bart van Es’s recent study, *Shakespeare in Company*, suggests that Shakespeare relied on economic capital to create an unprecedented level of artistic autonomy. In the light of *Troilus and Cressida*, this context suggests that, as well as using his economic capital to increase his standing and comfort in Stratford, he also channelled it through his theatre, and the theatre of the book, to increase the cultural capital of early modern drama. In the future, people would view early modern drama with increased cultural and literary expectations.

III. Shakespeare’s Authorship and his Taste

Although *Troilus and Cressida* deliberately works to disassociate the play’s significance from the author, it seems that other playwrights like Jonson and Marston persisted in associating this play’s creation with Shakespeare and his authorship. With a few notable exceptions, however, audiences and critics have tended not to associate the tastes of Shakespeare’s plays and characters with the author himself – in contrast to those of Jonson. Nicholas Rowe wrote of Shakespeare:

What particular Habitude or Friendship he contracted with private Men, I have not been able to learn, more than that every one who had a true Taste of Merit, and could distinguish Men, had generally a just Value and Esteem for him.³⁵

³³ Erne, *Shakespeare and the Book Trade*, p. 199

³⁴ Marjorie Hope Nicolson (ed.), *The Conway Letters: the Correspondence of Anne, Viscount Conway, Henry More, and their Friends, 1642-1684*, rev. edn, ed. Sarah Hutton (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 31, also quoted in Erne, *Shakespeare and the Book Trade*, p. 209.

³⁵ Nicholas Rowe, *The Life of Shakespeare*, p. 38.

In contrast to this tasteful and esteemed Shakespeare, Jonson is described as being

naturally Proud and Insolent, and in the Days of his Reputation did so far take upon him the Supremacy in Wit, that he could not but look with an evil Eye upon any one that seem'd to stand in Competition with him.³⁶

There is a complex history to Rowe's understanding of these two poets, but the reflections on authorship in *Poetaster* (which Rowe had read) shows Jonson associating himself with one of his characters, while the "author's pen" is only mentioned ambiguously in *Troilus and Cressida*, and then in tandem with the absent authority of the "actor's voice".

Their authorial fictionalisation is not "an airy nothing" (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 5.1.16): partly through Jonson's shaping of himself as an author in his plays, through publication, and especially through his court masques, he became a *self-crowned laureate*.

Richard Helgerson comments that

[c]learly [in *Poetaster*] Jonson hoped that these lessons in the proper treatment of poets would take hold and make a similar fate his [...]. Perhaps they did [because] the first decade of the seventeenth century was a period of remarkable success for Jonson.³⁷

Jonson used his poetry and plays in an attempt to define and show what it meant to be a poet laureate, even if he pretended that he only relied on his own "free merit" (*Poetaster*, Apologetical Dialogue, 201). As Chapter Four has shown, Shakespeare seems to have been reluctant to take this self-presenting laureate route to fame and reputation. In Shakespeare's work, and perhaps especially in *Troilus and Cressida*, the author – like the author of Ulysses' book – is evoked only to be withdrawn.

Shakespeare would also go on to write plays such as *Othello*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth*, which would confirm him to later audiences as a national poet-playwright, or *retrospectively* as a poet laureate, the quintessential English Bard. Nevertheless, Shakespeare's playwriting trajectory, when considered in relation to *Troilus and Cressida*, actually shows a

³⁶ Nicholas Rowe, *The Life of Shakespeare*, p. 41.

³⁷ Helgerson, p. 165.

determination not to follow a laureate programme, but rather to stage experimental hybrid plays in this middle period that pushed the boundaries of what it meant to be a poet *and a playwright*. As Kiernan Ryan recently suggested of the “problem plays”, “in these least accommodating, ostensibly eccentric products of Shakespeare’s mind the standpoint from which all his plays are shaped and worded can be seen in its starkest, most uncompromising form”.³⁸ These path-breaking plays consistently challenged the tastes and decorum that many later audiences would expect from theatre. *Troilus and Cressida*, however, marks Shakespeare’s most radical experiment, confronting audience expectations to engage with his literary-theatrical field in order to question the field’s literary-theatrical tastes.

It is perhaps surprising, then, that Shakespeare kept his “sweet” reputation for so long.

Richard Wilson explains:

Praised *ad nauseam* as “honey-tongued”, by 1598 it was clear that, as Francis Meres drooled, “The sweet and witty soul of Ovid lives in mellifluous and honey-tongued Shakespeare, witness...his sugared sonnets to his private friends”. “Melicert” was what Chettle sneeringly called him, and that there was something in this dulcified reputation more strategic than fashion is suggested by the sentimental stickiness which also clung to Shakespeare’s personality.³⁹

Shakespeare’s sweetness may have been associated with his earlier laureate ambitions and the sublime writing he had attempted, like Ovid, in the poetry of some of his plays and his earlier published poetry. This was a time, after all, when to sublimate also meant to refine, and sublime poetry was seen by many as the most refined.⁴⁰ Shakespeare’s moments of sublime style were only confirmed and perhaps exaggerated after the author’s death by Jonson’s praise in the folio publication. He framed Shakespeare as the “Sweet Swan of Avon” who would rise sublimely – like Chaucer’s Troilus – to “the hemisphere” to become a “Starre of

³⁸ Kiernan Ryan, “‘Here’s fine revolution’: Shakespeare’s Philosophy of the Future”, *Essays in Criticism*, 63.2 (2013), 105-27 (p. 119).

³⁹ Richard Wilson, *Secret Shakespeare: Studies in Theatre, Religion and Resistance* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 14.

⁴⁰ For “sublimate”, the *OED* gives “To raise to a high or higher state; to elevate to a higher degree of excellence or purity; to refine” (v. sense 6) citing Ben Jonson’s *Cynthia’s Revels*; Amorphous who speaks of “the puritie of my taste” (1.3.20-21) says that he knows his “selfe an essence so sublimated, and refin’d” (1.3.30).

Poets”.⁴¹ Given that *Troilus and Cressida* has so often been acknowledged as an ironic, bitter, deflating and defeating play, it is perhaps to Shakespeare’s credit that this play did not immediately affect the “author’s public personality”.⁴² When the play finally reached print, the epistle writer added a spoonful of sugar, glossing over its bitterness by describing it as exceedingly “witty” (¶2^r) and good for your “wits healths” (¶2^v). The fact that Shakespeare did not actually appear to be tarnished as an author with the darkness of the middle plays probably speaks to the way in which Shakespeare managed to make *their matter* appear to be autonomous, even from the author: Shakespeare’s tactic was to suggest that the play’s style was simply “suited / In like conditions as [the] argument” (*T&C*, Pro., 24-25).

The figuration of authorial evocation and withdrawal represents an uncanny strategy of representation and self-effacement on Shakespeare’s part, an unpossessive authorship: it leaves a question-mark over the value of his work, as if Shakespeare asks his audience Troilus’s question: “What’s aught but as ’tis valued?” (2.2.52). This tactic positions the audience or reader as the ultimate arbiter. They are left with the responsibility to make meaning, to “taste” the play and reconsider their own expectations. Shakespeare’s authorial strategy is thus manifestly different from the work of a “self-crowned laureate” such as Jonson, who anchors the meaning and recognition of the work in the author or the recognition of the sovereign. The strategy of self-effacement probably explains why Shakespeare felt confident in dramatizing Pandarus bequeathing his diseases to the audience, without the audience immediately thinking that the poet-playwright was the origin of the speech act. Given Jonson’s linking of text to author, this would have been received rather differently if he had attempted it. By using characters from an established literary tradition, Shakespeare downplays his own involvement in the representation of others’ expectations and tastes. This

⁴¹ Ben Jonson, “To the memory of my beloved author, The Author Mr William Shakespeare: And what he hath left us”, in William Shakespeare, *The First Folio of Shakespeare: The Norton Facsimile*, ed. Charlton Hinman, 2nd edn (London and New York: Norton, 1996), pp. 9-10 (p 10).

⁴² Richard Wilson, *Secret Shakespeare*, p. 14.

thesis has argued that the play does appear to “meddle [...] in the soul of state” (3.3.203) and especially in expectations of theatre. However, Shakespeare’s unpossessive authorship in relation to the theatre and the book means that *Troilus and Cressida* takes on an agency of its own to become meddling matter. It was this strategy and these conditions that gave Shakespeare the opportunity to write a play that would test expectation, the freedom to whirl expectation around.

APPENDICES

Appendix I. Image from Broadside Ballad: “A Good Throw for Three Maiden-heads”

Martin Parker, “A good throw for three Maiden-heads” (London, 1629), *English Broadside Ballad Archive*; available at <http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/20149/image> [accessed 20 September 2011]

Appendix II. Paratexts of the 1609 *Troilus and Cressida* Quarto

“Qa” Title Page: William Shakespeare *The Historie of Troylus and Cresseida* (London, 1609), A1^r

“Qb” Title Page and “The Epistle”: William Shakespeare *The Famous Historie of Troylus and Cresseid* (London, 1609), ¶1^r, ¶2^{r-v}

Appendix III. Caroline Spurgeon’s “A Pictorial Statement of the Dominant Images in *Hamlet* and *Troilus and Cressida*”

Caroline Spurgeon, “Chart VII” in the appendix “Charts”, in *Shakespeare’s Imagery and What It Tells Us* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), n. p.

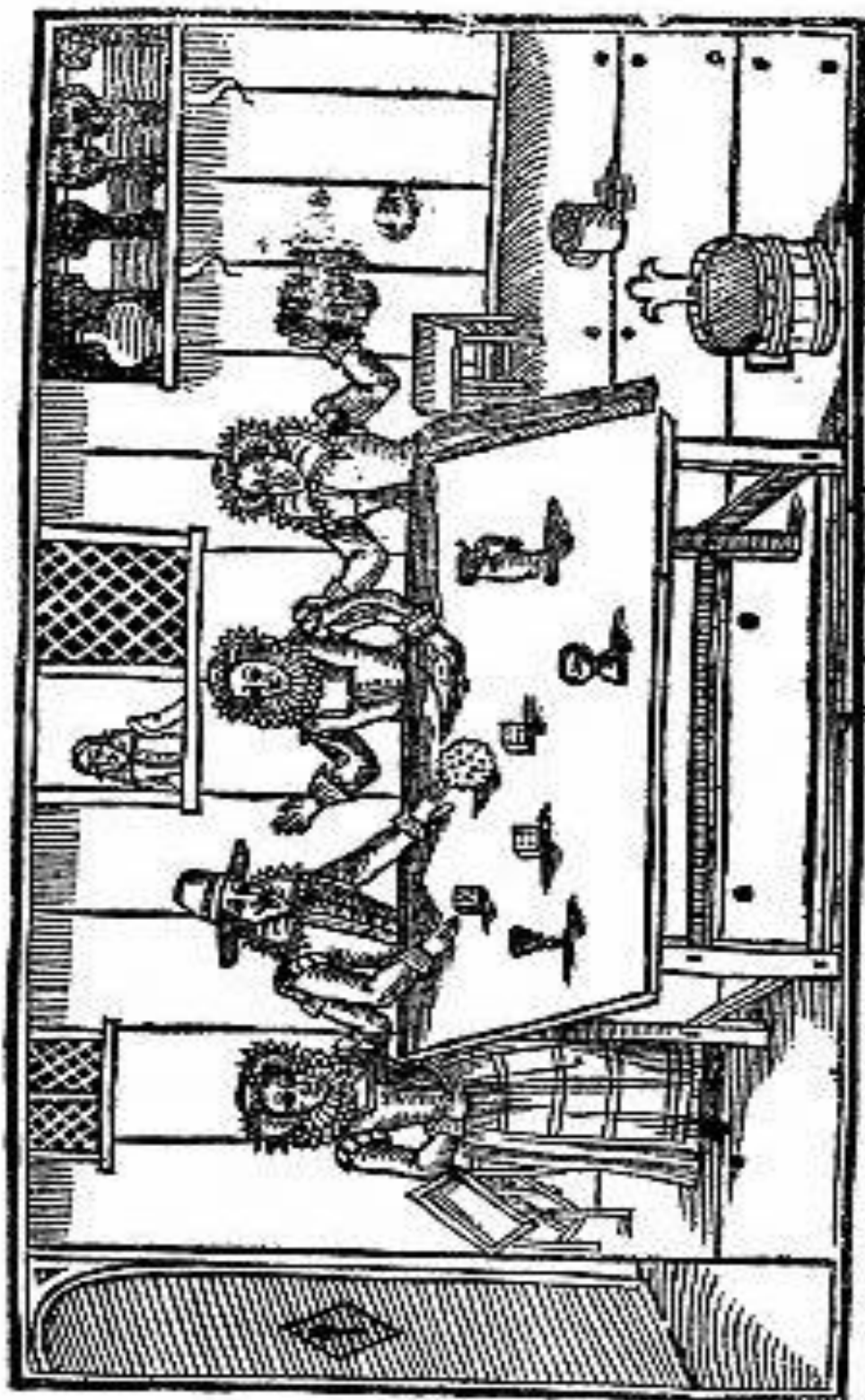
Appendix IV. James P. Bednarz’s “Chronology of the Poets’ War”

James P. Bednarz, “Chronology of the Poets’ War”, in *Shakespeare and the Poets’ War* (New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2001), p. 9

Appendix V. *Troilus and Cressida* in *Histriomastix*

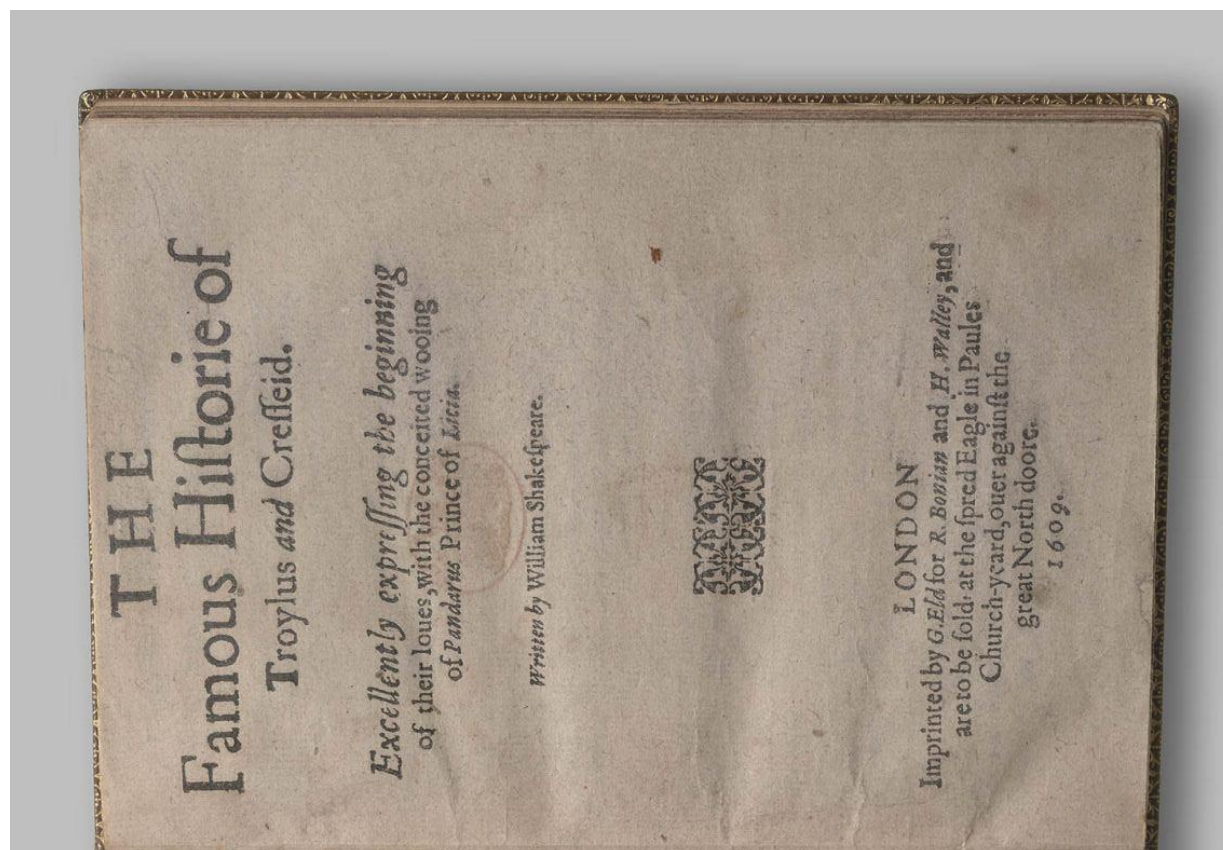
John Marston, *Histriomastix*, in *The Plays of John Marston*, ed. H. Harvey Wood, 3 vols (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1939), III, 243-302 (pp. 264-65)

Appendix I.

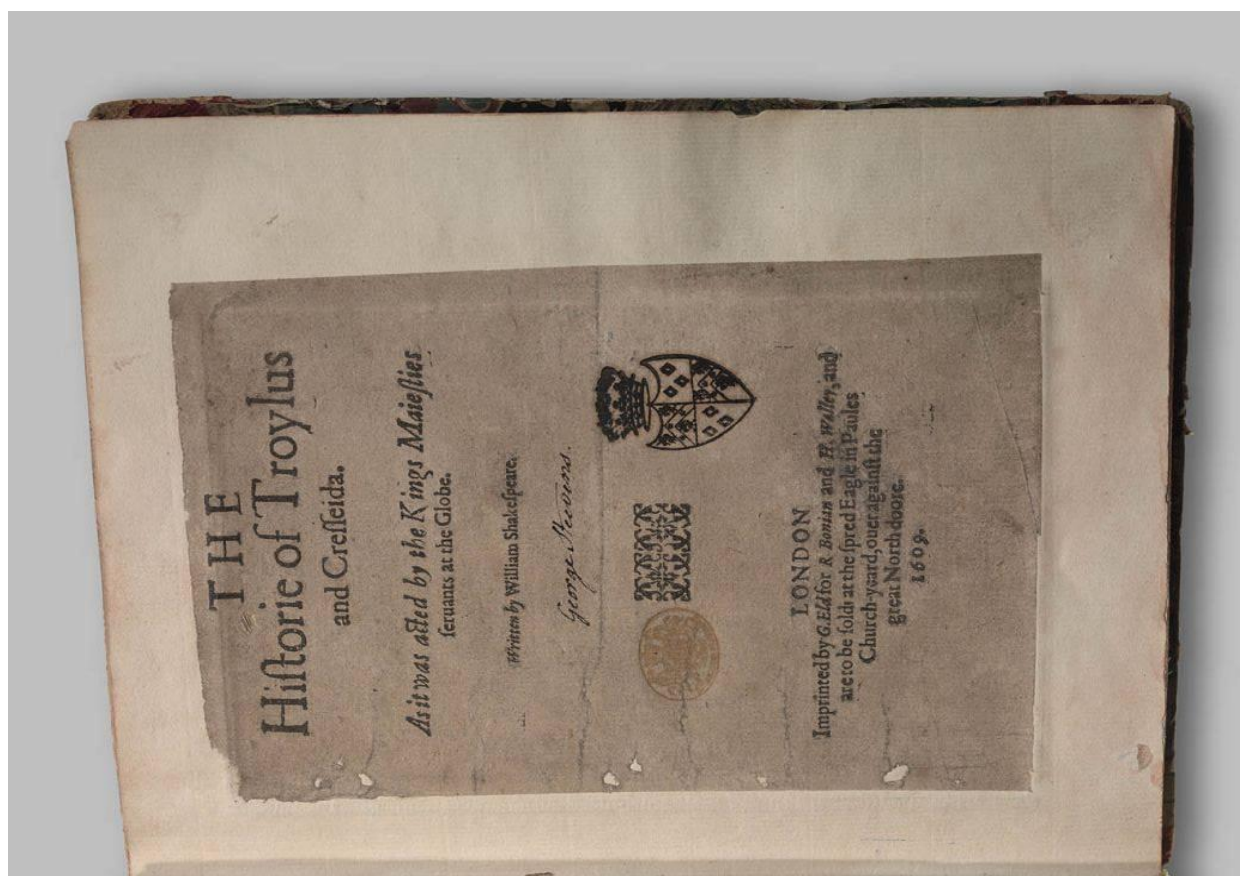


Appendix II.

Quarto b



Quarto a



The history of *Troilus* and *Cressida*.

Enter Pandanus and Troilus.

Tro. All here my vaile, Ile name againe,
Why should I waite without the walls of Troy:
That finde such cruel battell here within,
Each Trojan that is matter of his heere,
Let him no field *Troilus* as hath none.

Pan. Will this eere nere be mended?
Troy. The Greeks are strong and skilfull to their strength
Fierce to their skill, and to their forcefull valiant,
But I am weaker then a womans teares,
Tamer then the peafender then grooance,
Lesse valiant then the Virgin in the night,
And skilless as vapour of infancy.

Pan. Well I haue told you enough of this; for my part Ile
not meddle nor make no further here that will haue a cake
out of the wheate mult tury the grindinge.

Tro. Haue I not tarried?

Pan. I haue tarried you mult tury the boulting.

Tro. Haue I not tarried?

Pan. I haue tarried you mult tury the leauings.

Tro. Still haue I tarried.

Pan. I haue tarried you mult tury the leauings.

Tro. Still haue I tarried.

Pan. I haue tarried you mult tury the leauings.

Tro. Still haue I tarried.

Pan. I haue tarried you mult tury the leauings.

Tro. Still haue I tarried.

Pan. I haue tarried you mult tury the leauings.

Tro. Still haue I tarried.

Pan. I haue tarried you mult tury the leauings.

Tro. Still haue I tarried.

Pan. I haue tarried you mult tury the leauings.

Tro. Still haue I tarried.

Pan. I haue tarried you mult tury the leauings.

Tro. Still haue I tarried.

Pan. I haue tarried you mult tury the leauings.

Tro. Still haue I tarried.

Pan. I haue tarried you mult tury the leauings.

Tro. Still haue I tarried.

Pan. I haue tarried you mult tury the leauings.

Tro. Still haue I tarried.

Pan. I haue tarried you mult tury the leauings.

Tro. Still haue I tarried.

Pan. I haue tarried you mult tury the leauings.

Tro. Still haue I tarried.

Pan. I haue tarried you mult tury the leauings.

Tro. Still haue I tarried.

Pan. I haue tarried you mult tury the leauings.

Tro. Still haue I tarried.

Pan. I haue tarried you mult tury the leauings.

Tro. Still haue I tarried.

Pan. I haue tarried you mult tury the leauings.

Tro. Still haue I tarried.

THE EPISTLE.

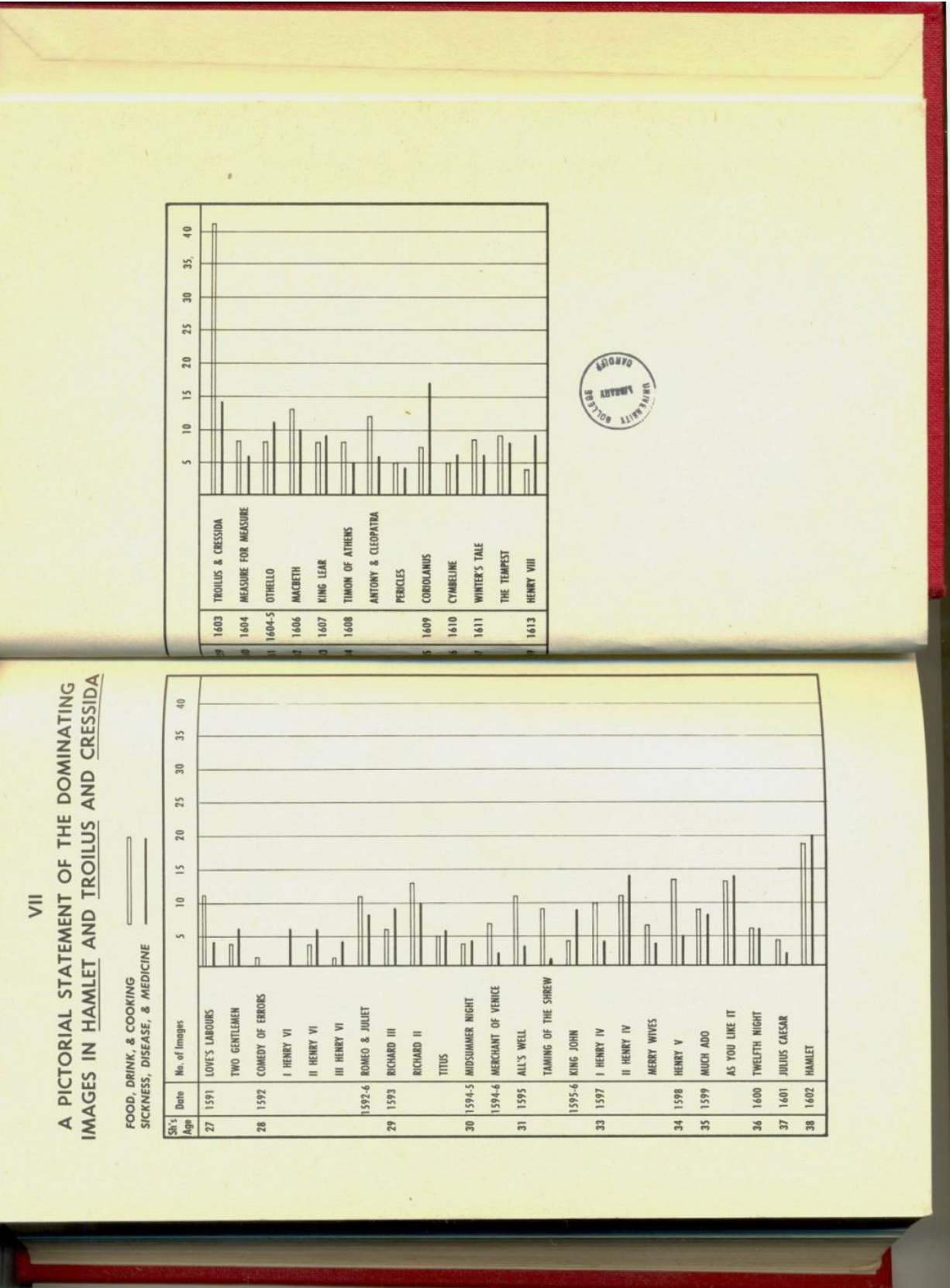
much as will make you thinke your teares will be
stand but for so much worth, as even pore I know to be
suffice in it. It deserves such a doore, as well as the best
Comedy in Terence or Plautus. And helpe the
that when hee is gone, and his Comedies out of sight,
you will forgiue for them, and let up a new English
Inquisition. Take this for a warning, and at the point
of your pleasures, losse and judgement, refuse me, nor
like this the best, for not being full of the breath
breath of the multitude; but thine fortune for the
scape it hath made amongst you. Since by the good
possessors with I desire you should haue prayd for them
rather then bene prayd. And so I leave all to be
prayed for (for the sake of their wits health)
that will not praise it.

Vaile.

A newer writer, to an euier reader. Newes.

Ternal reader, you haue here a new
play, neuer sat'd with the Stage,
neuer clapper-stood with the palnes
of the vniuers, and yet passing full of
the palnes commiseration, it is a birth of
your braine, that neuer under-tooke
any thing commicall, scarcely: And
were but the vaine names of comedies charged for the
title of Commodities, or of Playes for Pleas; you should
see all those grand comfort, that now stile them such
quantities, sicut to them for the same grace of their
gratities: especially this authors Comedies, that are
so from a to the life, that they serve for the most com-
mon Commentaries, of all the actions of our times, be-
ing such a dexteritie, and power of witte, that the most
displeased with Playes, are pleas'd with his Comedies.
And all such dull and heavy-witted worldlings, as were
neuer capable of the witte of a Comedie, comming by
report of them to his representations, haue found that
witte there, that they neuer found in them-selues, and
haue parted better witted then they came: feeling in
edge of witte, for upon them, more then ever they
dreamd they had braine to grinde it on. So much and
such fauored (all of witte is in his Comedies, that they
seeme) for their height of pleasure to be borne in that
sea that brought forth Venus. Amongst all there is
none more witty then this: And had I time I would
comment upon it, though I know it needs not (for so
much

Appendix III.



Appendix IV.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE POETS' WAR

	PHASE I		PHASE II		PHASE III	
	Autumn 1599	1600	Autumn 1600	1601	Spring–Autumn 1601	
	Globe opens	Paul's reopens	Blackfriars reopens			
JONSON	<i>Every Man Out of His Humour</i> •	<i>Every Man Out</i> (3.1.1–35; 3.4.6–40) •	<i>Cynthia's Revels</i> ♦		<i>Poetaster</i> ♦	<i>The Apology for Poetaster</i> ♦
SHAKESPEARE		<i>As You Like It</i> •	<i>Hamlet</i> •	<i>Twelfth Night</i> •	<i>Troilus and Cressida</i> •	<i>Hamlet</i> (2.2.337–62) •
MARSTON		<i>Histiomastix</i> ▲	<i>Jack Drum's Entertainment</i> ▲	<i>Antonio's Revenge</i> ▲	<i>What You Will</i> ▲	
DEKKER			<i>Antonio and Mellida</i> ▲			<i>Satiromastix</i> • ▲

• = performed by the Lord Chamberlain's Men at the Globe

▲ = performed by the Children of Paul's at the cathedral theater

♦ = performed by the Children of the Chapel at Blackfriars

Shaded areas indicate peripheral plays.

For dating, see the Chronological Appendix.

Appendix V.

HISTRIO-MASTIX

264

(Like over-nice portraying pictures,
We spoyle the counterfeit in colouring;
England is playne and loves her mothers guyse,
Enricht with cunning, as her parents rise.

Land. Lady, these eyes did ever hate to scorne,
This tounge's unur'd to carpe or contrary,
The bozome where this heart hath residence,
I wish may seeme the seat of curtesie.

Usher. Rowme my Maisters take your places,
Hold up your torches for dropping there.

Maso. Usher are the Players ready? bid them beginne.

Enter *Players* and Sing.

Some up and some downe, ther's Players in the towne,

You wot well who they bee :

The summe doth arise, to three companies,

One, two, three, foure, make wee.

Besides we that traxell, with pumps full of grasell,

Made all of such running leather :

That once in a weeke, new maisters wee seek,

And never can hold together.

Enter *Prologue.*

Pro. *Phyllida* was a faire maid ; I know one fairer then she,
Troylus was a true lover ; I know one truer then he :

And *Cressida* that dainty dame, whose beauty faire & sweet,
Was cleare as is ye Christall streame, that runs along ye street.
How *Troyl* he that noble knight, was drunk in love and bad
goodnight,

So bending leg likewise ; do you not us despise.

Land. Most ugly lines and base-browne-paper-stuffe
Thus to abuse our heavenly poesie,

That sacred off-spring from the braine of Jove,

Thus to be mangled with prophane absurd,

Strangled and chok't with lawlesse bastards words.

Maso. I see (my Lord) this home-spun country stuffe,

Brings little liking to your curious eare,

Be patient for perhaps the play will mend.

HISTRIO-MASTIX

265

Enter *Troylus* and *Cressida.*

Tro. Come *Cressida* my Cresset light,
Thy face doth shine both day and night,
Behold, behold, thy garter blue,
Thy knight his valiant elboe wears,
That When he shakes his furious Speare,
The foe in shivering fearefull sort,
May lay him downe in death to snort.

Cres. O knight with vallour in thy face,
Here take my skreen weare it for grace,
Within thy Helmet put the same,
Therewith to make thine enemies lame.

Land. Lane stuffe indeed the like was never heard.

Enter a roaring *Diuell* with the *Vize* on his back, *Iniquity*
in one hand ; and *Juventus* in the other.

Viz. Passion of me sir, puffle puffle how I sweat sir,
The dust out of your coate sir, I intend for to beat sir.

Juo. I am the prodigall child, I that I am,
Who sayes I am not, I say he is too blame.

Iniq. And I likewise am *Iniquitie*
Beloved of many alasse for pittie.

Diuell. Ho ho ho, these babes mine are all,
The *Viz*, *Iniquitie* and child Prodigall.

Land. Fie what unworthy foolish fopperry,
Presents such buzzardly simplicity.

Maso. No more, no more, unlesse twere better,
And for the rest yee shall be our debter.

Post. My Lords, / of your accords, / some better pleasure for
to bring, / if you a theame affords, / you shall knowe it, / that I

Post-hast the Poet, / extempore can sing.¹

Lan. I pray my Lord let's ha'te, the Play is so good,

That this must needs be excellent.

Maso. Content (my Lord) pray give a theame.

Theam.

Land. Your Poetts and your Pottes,
Are knit in true-Love knots.

¹ Virgules supplied.

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