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Chapter Seven

Trojan Horse or Troilus's Whore?

Pandering Statecraft and Political Stagecraft in Troilus and Cressida

Nalin Ranasinghe

Although Shakespeare's rancid play *Troilus and Cressida* is evidently not suited for all markets and tastes, it yet contains much dark wisdom to reward one willing to probe its sordid surface. This chapter will expose the workings of its hidden Prince—Ulysses—who silently performs deeds that undercut the exoteric meaning of his stately speech in praise of degree. By winging well-chosen words to be intercepted, overheard and misunderstood, as well as by staging spectacles that humble proud allies and poison insecure adversaries, Ulysses shows how well his creator had absorbed the teachings of Homer and Machiavelli on vanity and honor. Further, by revealing its maker's insight into the immortal desires and carnal needs of human lovers, the bitter *pharmakon* of our play gives knowledge of, and protection against, the perennial art of pandering.

Any conscientious reader of this play is immediately confounded by its complicated and mangled pedigree. How completely can and should we be acquainted with Shakespeare's own sources: Chaucer, Boccaccio, Virgil, Henryson, Lydgate, and so on? Moreover, how well did Shakespeare himself know Homer's original work? As far as we know, only the first seven books of the *Iliad* had been translated when this play was first performed. Further, whilst Troilus merits only a single glancing reference at the end of the *Iliad*, Cressida is an orphan child of confusion and conjecture—she does not even exist in the *Iliad*—and Homer's Pandarus is a doomed archer with no connection to his putative niece or eponymous profession.¹ How may a scrupulous scholar hope to properly understand Shakespeare's subtler teachings

without being familiar with all of his sources, direct and indirect, and thus knowing what he added to and subtracted from them?

We can only respond to this almost paralyzing question by recognizing that Shakespeare himself dealt with it in another form. How could a barely schooled actor—with little Latin and less Greek—possibly know what really happened at Troy? Like a modern archeologist, he only knew that he stood atop a complex of many literary edifices built on the same ancient site. Rather than striving to discover the impossible truth of events that occurred four hundred years before Homer set them to music, Shakespeare uses his own unsurpassed grasp of human nature to brilliantly reverse-engineer a new speculative account of the Trojan War, deftly using episodes and characters from Homer and Chaucer, to reveal many timeless truths. As the Greek gods are reborn as those immortal immoral passions that buffet the soul in love and war,² this play also shows how their power may be used to undermine the integrity of the finest cities and the most glorious souls. Rejecting the clichéd piety that all human events unfold according to the will of Zeus, Shakespeare instead shows us how far chance and contingency can advance or halt the best-laid plans of cynical men.

Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* seems to be woven of two parallel but distinct story lines. The first is derived from Homer's *Iliad*: it is a novel account of Odysseus's initially futile attempts to make an un-typically disillusioned and lovesick Achilles take the field against honor-loving Hector; the second comes from Chaucer's *Troilus and Cressyde*: here we learn of the young star-crossed lovers after whom our play is named. I will suggest that the two strands are invisibly woven together by Ulysses' artful pandering in our play: his cunning manipulation of words and spectacles brings about the effectual fall of Troy through the planned psychic disintegration of its last and best hope—Troilus. By angling love and honor against each other, Ulysses, the un-degreed engineer of the hold-door trade, deftly relieves Troilus and Achilles of both qualities; their love and honor will be replaced in their souls by the considerably less noble sentiments of vanity and pride. Although Ulysses cannot make good persons bad, we shall see evidence to suggest that he silently uses suggestion and spectacle to liberate common human vices previously held in check by self-deception. Similarly, the endeavors of Hector and Cressida to practice non-belligerence and chastity are dashed when their lightly armed vows are exposed to temptation, mockery and betrayal. Abstractly principled morality is effortlessly trumped by crasser calculations about reputation and safety.

At the beginning of our play Troilus and Cressida are so much in love with each other that they are oddly immune to Pandarus's sensual and envy-inducing rhetoric. While Cressida is well aware that Troilus is not Hector's equal in battle or as beautiful as Paris, she loves him no less for this (I.ii.275-276). Indeed. Pandarus is so taken up with his praise of Troilus that he is

unable to recognize the young man and needs Cressida to identify him (I.ii.218-221). Similarly, Troilus has no patience with Pandarus's desire to compare his niece to Helen and find her preferable in every respect (I.i.38-44, 71-74). Deeply enamored with the unseen primary substance of the other, they have no time to catalog the many desirable secondary attributes that turn out only to produce 'minced men' (I.ii.247). Loosely jointed apparitions like Great Ajax possess many notable attributes but lack that vital quintessence of self-possession; even less attractive to those in the know are celebrities, like Helen, who are only desirable because they are desired by the many.

Moving over to the Greek camp, we see that a plague-like disillusionment with glory and desire has come to afflict their once 'orgulous' army. Although Agamemnon and Nestor try to convince themselves that these many setbacks and delays are part of a divine plan to test their piety and make their eventual triumph all the sweeter (I.iii.1-54), Ulysses is clearly not convinced by the banalities bleated by these shepherds of their people. Comparing the mettle of their words to brass and silver (I.iii.63-64), his own implicitly golden wisdom—soon to be likened to the Sun—suggests that the art of rulership has a higher claim to authority than birth or longevity. Even though brass looks like gold, and perhaps shines and blares with greater splendor, Ulysses connects the art or 'speciality' of rule (I.iii.78) to the silent ability to see and order things by their natures. Brazen rhetoric only echoes the empty boasts of authority—it spawns discord when left to its own devices over time. *Sans* degree, raw power bullies before becoming pure will and then appetite—a tyrannical self-consuming wolf (I.iii.109-124).

Yet, instead of witnessing the triumph of natural right and authority in this play, we see Ulysses cynically use sophistry to visit strife and chaos on the Trojans. This suggests that the art of true rulership cannot be used positively on friends in times dedicated to violence and unjust war; it gives way to a darker art—one that ruthlessly exploits every illusion and pretension held by one's enemies as it seeks their psychic ruin. Before this is done, however, Ulysses unerringly diagnoses the malaise afflicting the Greek ranks. He points out that mockery and ridicule have corroded the tragic temper of the Hellenes. Seeing how ineffectually birth and seniority led the Trojan expedition, it is no wonder that Achilles and Patroclus have forsaken the quest for glory, posthumously granted by tragedy, and prefer comic amusement. The demotic aspect of their reductive discourse is given voice to by Thersites—a savage and deformed soldier—who sees things more or less rightly, but uses language only to curse. All in all, the Greeks seem to be ruled by calculation and greed.³

Meanwhile, the Trojan War Council's response to a peace overture made by Nestor is used to reveal the honor-drunk humor of Priam's last sons. When Hector, after praising the security given by peace (II.ii.14-15), points out that thousands of Trojan lives have been lost to keep a worthless foreign-

er and finds “no merit in that reason which denies the yielding of her up” (II.ii.24-25), he is hotly countered by Troilus’ claim that any appeal to “fears and reasons” would impugn the infinite honor of Priam (II.ii.32). When his brother Helenus chides Troilus for his lack of reasons (II.ii.32), the youth accuses him of being unmanly and lily-livered when faced with an armed enemy clearly intending to do him harm. Then reacting to Hector’s observation that Helen “is not worth what she doth cost the holding” (II.ii.51-52), Troilus asks, “What’s aught but as ’tis valued?” (II.ii.52), suggesting that Troy should honor that for which many lives were expended and finding it most base to “have stol’n what we do fear to keep” (II.ii.93). He has no patience with Hector’s objection that true value resides in what a thing is—rather than in how it is esteemed by a “particular will” (II.ii.53), proclaiming instead that the will may not “distaste what it elected” (II.ii.66) and “*not turn back the silks upon the merchant when we have soiled them*” (II.ii.69-70, emphasis added).

Finally Hector, after anachronistically echoing Aristotle’s insight that philosophy is wasted on those whose blood is too heated for moral deliberation (II.ii.165-66),⁴ suddenly declares his “resolution to keep Helen still” claiming that their “joint and several dignities” depend on it (II.ii.191-93)—though conceding that his inclination is opposed to truth and law. So overheated Trojan honor is pitted, vainly, against cold-blooded Greek desire.⁵ Although Hector knows that their cause is unjust, his dignity will not allow him to forsake his own; it is noteworthy that he only announces his change of course after Troilus and Paris refuse to credit Cassandra’s dire warnings that Troy may only be saved by letting Helen go. In this calculation he is unlike Troilus, for whom—like Achilles—justice is derived from steadfast resolution of the “particular will” (II.ii.53). We may wonder if Hector’s courage comes from knowing that Achilles’s love for Polyxena keeps him in check. Once honor is satisfied, trading Polyxena for Helen removes the *casus belli*, separates Achilles from the Greeks, and so could save Troy.

Let us now return to the Greek camp and study Ulysses’s efforts to bring Achilles back into the war. Even though this endeavor is initially unsuccessful, it reveals the strategy he will later use, silently but effectively, in destroying Troilus’s self-control. By this Platonic device he displays the instrument of victory to the few—while seemingly lamenting its impotence before the many. Correctly perceiving that Achilles’s main weakness is his overweening vanity, he sets up the much less glamorous Ajax as the champion Greek warrior (I.iii.368-387), thereby suggesting to Achilles that he would lose his ascendancy through continued idleness. Although Achilles mocked tragedy, perhaps due to having pledged his love and martial inactivity to Priam’s daughter (III.iii.194-95), he is prodded by Ulysses to belatedly recognize that he since owes his glory to tragedy’s values he must break his promise to the enemy (III.iii.38-229). But though he contrives to be challenged by Hector to

re-enter the battle (IV.v.266-270), a letter from Hecuba that reminds Achilles of his vow and forbids him to take the field seems to frustrate both his intent and Ulysses's plan (V.i.36-43).

In goading Achilles to resume his martial activity Ulysses sounds very much like an Elizabethan spymaster as he boasts that all things are known to his intelligence. He says that his "providence" or active prudence "keeps place with thought" and unveils thoughts in their "dumb cradles" (III.iii.198-202). This suggests that he, just as Hatton or Walsingham, functioned also as an *agent provocateur* in causing ideas to speak or cry out in the otherwise dumb or dim-witted cradles or bodies of their factors. Yet the promotion of bovine Ajax over Achilles—causing pride in the former and a renewed desire for glory in the latter—shows but the merest aspect of Ulysses's dark design.

It is with regard to the young lovers, Troilus and Cressida, and their subsequent tragic fates that Ulysses's role as mischief's midwife is best uncovered. In an earlier conversation with Agamemnon, who turns out to be no more than the instrument of the "finer souled" man's policy, we see Ulysses describe what he has learned privately of Troilus from Aeneas (IV.v.111-13). King Priam's youngest son is said to be:

A true knight, not yet mature, yet matchless.
 Speaking in deeds and deedless in his tongue;
 Not soon provoked, nor being provoked soon calmed . . .
 Manly as Hector, but more dangerous;
 For Hector in his blaze of wrath subscribes to tender objects
 But he, in heat of action is more vindictive than jealous love
 They call him Troilus, and on him erect
 A second hope, as fairly built as Hector. (IV.v.97-110)

This is why policy dictates to Ulysses that this "Second Troy" must not stand between the Greeks and the rich booty of Priam's city. Despite Nestor's peace proposal, befitting of an old man who lives by words rather than deeds, Ulysses cares little for Helen's honor—he seems committed to the spoiling and ruination of Troy. Was this not, after all, the ultimate objective of the Greeks? To this end, the art of pandering is subordinated to darker and deadlier designs. Since the Trojans are badly outnumbered, they would be defeated if they left their walled in chastity and took the field. The trouble is that the desire to fight is absent. The leading firebrands of the two forces, Achilles and Troilus, are in love; Aphrodite has overthrown Ares. In their absence the best fighters left on the field, Hector and Ajax, are ill-suited for the brutal, unconditional warfare that Ulysses (like his namesake in the American civil war) desires: chivalrous Hector cares too much for his brother-warriors, while part-Trojan Ajax is uncharismatic and too much of a defensive fighter. We recall Ulysses's complaint that Achilles mocked generalship and policy (I.iii.197-200). Now, like plodding Hephaestus, he will be

revenged. Ulysses places both lovers in situations where their egoism leads them to fly from their professed loves. The votaries of Eros are unarmed and placed at the disposal of the Master Pander.

In Shakespeare's rancid retelling of the Trojan saga, Cressida turns out to be the unwitting Trojan Horse or whore by which Troilus is turned firebrand and the chaste prudence of the long-beleaguered city is breached. We may safely discount her worth to her father, who has no further service to offer the Greeks and is thus of no value to them; it follows then that the avaricious Greeks would never have exchanged an obscure Trojan lady for Antenor, who has a ransom value of a Trojan prince, unless both Cressida and Antenor possess other qualities that make this unequal exchange desirable to the Greek council. Chaucer's account of the prisoner swap offers two vital details that are curiously suppressed by Shakespeare. For one thing, Chaucer's Cressida is exchanged along with King Thoas for Antenor;⁶ Thoas' absence make the inequality of the swap more glaring in our play—especially since he is mentioned later as one of those mortally wounded by the Hector and Troilus (V.v.12). Secondly, Antenor is said by Chaucer to have betrayed the Trojans.⁷ We could infer that Antenor gave his friend Ulysses useful information concerning Troilus's infatuation to hasten his own release. In any event, the fact that Aeneas, the Trojan's recent emissary and Ulysses's informant concerning Troilus's quality, also knows of his love for Cressida is sufficient to my case.

Turning now to Troilus, we recall that in the Trojan council this seasoned warrior and novice lover strangely proclaimed "I take today a wife" in support of his argument that one cannot "avoid, although my will distaste what it elected, the wife I chose" (II.ii.61, 66-67). These words accord ill with his craven willingness to concede Cressida to the Greeks unless he now values other things more than the woman he has just spent the night with. Here we must consider Cressida's empirically grounded fear, expressed well before her nocturnal tryst with Troilus: "She beloved knows naught that knows not this; men prize the thing un-gained more than it is. That she was never yet that ever knew; love got so sweet as when desire did sue. Achievement is command; un-gained, beseech" (I.ii.279-284). In other words, once he has possessed her, a man will scorn and command the very woman that he once worshipped and valued infinitely when she was unattainable.

Although Troilus swore before Cressida and Pandarus, just before their only amorous encounter, that he was "as true as truth's simplicity" and that "true swains in love . . . would approve their truth by Troilus," (III.ii.164, 168-69) his later behavior only supports the latter avowal and illustrates the general truth of Cressida's misgiving that "all lovers swear more performance than they are able, yet reserve an ability that they never perform, vowing more than the perfection of ten and discharging less than the tenth part of one" (III.ii.80-84). The 'ten' motif reminds us of Hector's words

about Helen: "if we have lost so many tenths of ours to guard a thing not ours nor worth to us . . . the value of one ten, what merit's in the reason which denies the yielding of her up?" (II.ii.21-24) While Troilus then hotly rejected this way of using numbers to limit a king's infinite honor, it will soon be evident that he does not value love and honor equally. It is worth noting that before his assignation with Cressida he gave voice to his fear that he would experience death and "lose distinction" once his "ruder powers" encountered the potent force of love (III.ii.20-25); he fears that the cloying power of love will reduce his power to win distinction and honor in battle. This curiously parallels Cressida's aforementioned fear that he would not acquit himself with distinction on the field of Venus—with respect to both romantic fidelity and sexual performance. It is noteworthy that unlike Chaucer's Troilus, who fought valiantly to gain his beloved's notice,⁸ our Troilus is self-professedly already weakened by love and sick of war in the very opening words of the play (I.i.1-12).

When we meet the lovers after their night together, it is evident that while Troilus is anxious to leave, Cressida is equally urgent in desiring him to stay: "Prithee, tarry; you men will never tarry. O foolish Cressid! I might still held off, and then you would have never tarried" (IV.ii.17-19). Although Pandarus lewdly breaks in here, matters turn a great deal more serious when Aeneas turns up and asks for Troilus. When the young prince is told of the prisoner exchange he is strangely composed and only wishes that Aeneas should not disclose his own presence at Cressida's house (IV.ii.71-73). It seems that Cressida's worst forebodings about post-coital fidelity have been justified; her once ardent wooer will not fight to keep her as she is taken away from Troy. Indeed, when Troilus returns his language is both highly formal and quite unfeeling; it contrasts starkly to Cressida's (and Pandarus's) frenzied cries of grief and despair. Troilus acts as if they have seen the last of each other and speaks in a calculating and unwittingly self-revelatory vein: "Injurious time now with a robber's haste crams his rich thievery up . . . as many farewells as there be stars in heaven . . . he fumbles up in a single adieu, and scants us with a single famished kiss, distasted with the salt of broken tears" (IV.iv.41-47). We cannot but be reminded of Ulysses's cunning words to Achilles about Time's ingratitude and forgetfulness (III.iii.146ff); both speeches are carefully wrought. Cressida's prescient fears are surely justified for Troilus is far happier performing the mimetic role of a star-crossed lover. Not for him the tear-stained agony of genuine heartbreak.

Yet, at this point, chance intervenes. Troilus is strangely moved by his lover's description of herself as "a woeful Cressid 'mongst the merry Greeks" (IV.iv.55) and now urges her to be true to him. As Menelaus, he is far more aroused by the prospect of his once-beloved dishonoring his name by dallying with the Greeks than by the thought of living the rest of his life with her. She is suddenly re-valued in his eyes, but even so, she means

more to Troilus as an ideal object of chivalric honor, or even as 'the one that got away' than as a real object of love.⁹ Pandarus earlier tried to make Troilus lustful and Cressida envious; the opposite strategy may be far more potent.

Consciously or not, Troilus fears that both 'the merry Greeks' and Cressida must have something he lacks: the ability to give oneself over to love. Chaucer's Troilus was most valiant when he strove to gain the admiration of his lady, and his counterpart here needs both distance and rivalry to engage his jealous desire. This is why, when Diomedes places himself at her disposal, Troilus insultingly demands that the Greek prince use her well, "as one unworthy to be called her servant" for fear of *his* wrath (IV.iv.124); the imagery harkens back to his words about particular will imposing value on its objects. This excites Diomedes to reply that he will prize her "to her own worth" (IV.iv.132) and not because Troilus says so. Still, whether he likes it or not, by making her a second Helen, Troilus has made Cressida desirable—both to Diomedes and to himself—as a symbol of (k)nightly honor. The cuckold's horns are harder than his manhood. Cressida now exists as proof of his amorous integrity and as incentive for his martial prowess. She is in the best of all possible places for him.

Meanwhile, what of Cressida? It is likely that she has seen through Troilus. Now that her crying fit is over, she must see that her professed lover, who fought so hard for Helen's honor, did not raise a finger to retain her. Realizing her worst fears regarding male promise and performance, Troilus has shown that he prefers mediated jealousy to immediate love. Meanwhile, she finds herself alone in an enemy camp, surrounded by a mob of single men. As Cressida herself acknowledged to Troilus, she had two selves (III.ii.143-44ff). One aspect of her psyche was realistic; it accommodated itself to the harsh realities of war and lust. This side of her is best seen in her bawdy bantering with Pandarus at the beginning of our play. Her second side is idealistic; in spite of ample contrary data, it continued to believe in love.¹⁰ It was this aspect of Cressida that was given to Troilus, and it sustained grievous damage. It is reasonable to expect that she will not expose it to danger any time soon. In the company of 'merry Greeks' she will flirt with all, trust none, and avoid appearing to be worthy of love. This is surely the impression given by the scene where she's kissed 'in general' by the Greeks. It is striking that only Ulysses has the power to resist her. It seems that Cressida can at best pursue a Fabian strategy and hope that she will somehow be delivered from the merry Greeks.

Many of these specific events could not have been foreseen by Ulysses; yet, once the details of Cressida's departure are recounted by Diomedes, he knows all he needs to exploit the situation to the detriment of Troilus and Troy. While we cannot doubt for a moment that Troilus is passionately invested/in love with an idealized Cressida, he barely knows the lady and

thus lacks firm grounds for trusting her. As such, he is putty in the hands of Ulysses, who deftly stages a deceptive scene of infidelity—starring his rival Diomedes—with the express intent of convincing Troilus that Cressida has become untrue to him.¹¹ Ulysses seeks to ‘frame’ this spectacle so that Troilus, who seems to care little for Cressida’s plight and is obsessed with his own honor, will be led to view the ensuing scene through the cynical eyes of its creator. Likewise, our view of this secret meeting cannot occur independently of Thersites—its scurrilous one-man chorus.

It cannot be coincidental that Ulysses places himself at the disposal of Troilus when he seeks directions to Calchas’s tent (IV.v.277-78). Though Diomedes and he have not exchanged a word since the latter appeared with Cressida, Ulysses is quick to tell Troilus that Diomedes “neither looks upon the heaven nor earth, but gives all gaze and bent of amorous view on the fair Cressid” (IV.v.280-83). He deepens the psychic wound by innocently asking: “of what honor was this Cressid in Troy? Had she no lover there that wails her absence?” (IV.v.287-89) Ulysses, like Iago in the Bard’s next play, goes about ‘liming’ Troilus for a visual spectacle similar to that which made Claudio, another amorously inexperienced soldier, unjustly denounce Hero in the earlier *Much Ado About Nothing*. Just as Achilles explicitly says that he will heat Hector’s blood with wine before killing him (V.i.1-3), so too does Ulysses pour poison in Troilus’s ears before breaking his heart. Though Troilus is sworn by Ulysses to secrecy, and thus cannot break in on Cressida and Diomedes without compromising his honor, he has much to say *sotto voce*; but this also means that he’s sufficiently out of earshot to not grasp every nuance of the situation. Indeed, like *Much Ado*, it could even be the case that Ulysses has another impersonate Cressida! We recall that Troilus, like Claudio in *Much Ado About Nothing*, has spent only a few hours with his beloved. He could no more tell Calchas’s tent from another than Claudio could identify Hero’s chamber window. He is wholly at the mercy of the cunning villain framing his strike zone.

As we eavesdrop—with Ulysses, Troilus, and Thersites—at some distance from the assumed conversation between Diomedes and Cressida, it is clear that we are expected to be unclear about its origin. It seems that Cressida owes Diomedes a favor for a service and that he expects to be repaid in kind. We also recall that after her prior experience with Troilus, Cressida now is even more aware that men are as ardent in pursuit of love as they are indifferent in its sure possession. It could be that Cressida seeks to return to Troy—if not Troilus—and will promise, or even compromise, her chastity to this end. It is certain that Cressida valued Troilus’s love more than the mere sleeve that represented it; she would not let a piece of embroidered cloth block her way home. It is just as clear that Troilus values his sleeve more than the reality of Cressida, as he prefers his idealized beloved to her vulnerable reality. It is noteworthy that Chaucer’s lovers undergo something like

the tragic mix-up in *Romeo and Juliet* when Troilus mistakes Cressyde's swoon for death and almost kills himself.¹² This could never occur here, because Troilus clearly prefers adoring or avenging a dead Cressida; he would much rather that she killed herself rather than compromise him. There is no room for the living reality of Cressida between the two extremes of Troilus's ideal of her and his sacred honor; neither does he seem to have any feeling for her plight.

Cressida realizes that her love for Troilus is doomed. Prefiguring Desdemona and her handkerchief, he tells Diomedes the sleeve was from someone "that loved me better than you will" (V.ii.96). Still, lusty ardor is worth more to her now than idealized romance. She can't be faithful to one who feels no attraction to his beloved but only worships her from afar. It was as much a practical error for her to love Troilus as it is a moral error to be drawn to Diomedes. Cross-eyed but no longer star-crossed, Cressida's last words suggest that Troilus now is but a bittersweet memory of the one time she loved well but not wisely:

Troilus farewell. One eye yet looks on thee,
But with my heart the other eye doth see.
Ah poor our sex! The fault in us I find,
The error of our eye directs our mind.
What error leads must err. O then conclude,
Minds swayed by eyes are full of turpitude. (V.ii.113-18)

Her sad words also apply, with modification, to Troilus himself. Since his eyes are 'directed' by his vain sovereign will, the youth has little awareness of quotidian reality. And so his will leads his eye to misdirect his mind. Ulysses has much to do with this exploiting of Troilus's willfulness. Since he wants Troilus to lead the Trojans outside their thick walls and be exposed to the Greek advantage in numbers, he restrains her lover from acting hastily and perhaps discovering the reality of Cressida's plight; instead priming in him an explosion of pride that will instigate the Trojans to all-out warfare. Just as Helen was merely an excuse for brazen-cheeked Greek cupidity, so too will Cressida serve as a catalyst for self-destructive Trojan honor.

Even as his loved ones try to dissuade him from taking the field the next morning, knowing that his death means the fall of Troy, Hector explains that he's bound by honor to do so (V.iii.1-28). He's just led a 'peace offensive' down to the Greek camp and does not expect to meet with Achilles—suggesting that he knows of Hecuba's letter to the Myrmidon (V.vi.21-22). But then Troilus disobeys his brother and joins him. While Hector puts the appearance of honor above life, Troilus desires death more than others wish to live. He mocks Hector's chivalry as incompatible with the "venomed vengeance" of ruthless war (V.iii.47). When diseased Pandarus brings a note from Cressida, perhaps urging him not to take on Diomedes, Troilus rips it

up, saying she feeds his love with words "but edifies another with her deeds" (V.iii.110-111).

Meanwhile the Greeks are left leaderless in battle. Whilst Diomedes follows his private vendetta against Troilus, Ajax refuses to fight against his kinsmen, and Achilles is ruled by his promise to Hecuba. The tide of battle thus turns decisively against the Greeks as Hector and Troilus perform prodigious feats of arms; the latter fighting "with such careless force and forceless care" (V.vi.40) that Fortune, as if to spite cunning and prudence, makes him her favorite. But, Fortune is true to her fickle reputation. When Patroclus is slain, Achilles and Ajax both take the field seeking vengeance. After first chivalrously showing a tiring Achilles mercy, befitting Nestor's description of him as "Jupiter . . . dealing life" (IV.v.192), Hector gets ambushed soon after while foolishly changing armor and is murdered in cold blood by the Myrmidons.¹³

The play ends soon after with Troilus telling the Trojan princes that Hector is slain (V.xi.3). Twice-charged with defiance and despair, his mood is now fully nihilistic: "Sit gods, upon your thrones and smile at Troy . . . let your brief plagues be mercy, and linger not our sure destruction on" (V.xi.7-9). While Troilus does "not speak of flight, of fear, of death" (V.xi.12) and dares all imminent danger that gods and men have in store for him, like Achilles in the *Iliad*, all these "hopes of revenge simply hide his outward woe" (V.xi.31). Troilus too is a dead man walking; his recklessness killed Hector as surely as Achilles's selfishness led to Patroclus's doom. Further, just as Homer's Hector feared returning to Troy and being shamed for his rashness,¹⁴ Troilus lacks the courage to break this terrible news to Priam and Hecuba (V.xi.15-21). It seems that this hatred of Achilles causes him to forget Cressida and Diomedes entirely. It could be that diseased Pandarus, who is wished "ignominy and shame" through his life at the play's end by Troilus (V.xi.33-34), assumes the fate traditionally intended for his niece—said to have been punished by beggary and leprosy. Perhaps this penalty also explains Ulysses's long, inglorious voyage home disguised as a beggar? For himself, Troilus will emulate Achilles and outstare the lightning in the brief time left to him. His well-engineered rage has assured the fall of Troy and brought Ulysses's dark plan to fruition.

By his daring synthesis of two masters, Classical Homer and Christian Chaucer, Shakespeare seems to teach that human nature persists unchanged despite the different names different faiths give to virtues and vices. Neither the tragic quest for honor nor the comic yearning for romantic love can resist the siren-call of temptations based on Ulysses's knowledge of original sin. The deeper question as to whether Socratic self-knowledge, by its knowledge of comedy and tragedy, can resist all seduction is left unanswered for now. While Ulysses could resist the lips of Cressida, he may not be immune to other gods and other temptations.

NOTES

1. The original Pandarus is a Lycian chieftain and bowman described as "blameless" and "godlike" in the *Iliad*. Instigated by Athena to break the truce and wound Menelaus, he is killed in battle by Diomedes soon afterwards.
2. See Bruno Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind* (Dover Publications, 1982), 1-23.
3. Urbane Herodotus wonders at the folly of going to war over a woman, whose abduction hardly seemed involuntary: *Histories* 1.3. Likewise, Thucydides tellingly suggests that Agamemnon's Trojan expedition was assembled more on account of his military power than due to a vow taken by Helen's former suitors to defend her honor. He invites the inference that the war's truest cause was piracy rather than family values.
4. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* I.iii.5-8.
5. Thomas West suggests that the difference between the Greeks and the Trojans is analogous to that between reason and faith: Thomas West, "The Two Truths of *Troilus and Cressida*," in *Shakespeare as Political Thinker*, eds. John Alvis and Thomas West (ISI Books, 2000), 143-144.
6. Chaucer, *Troilus and Cressyde*, 4.20.
7. Chaucer, *Troilus and Cressyde*, 4.30.
8. Chaucer, *Troilus and Cressyde*, 1.67-69.
9. See Rene Girard, *A Theatre of Envy* (Oxford University Press, 1991), 121-134.
10. This essay owes much to Harold Goddard's brilliant insight into Cressida's split soul: Harold Goddard, *The Meaning of Shakespeare* (University of Chicago Press, 1951), I: 8-9.
11. See John Dryden's version of *Troilus and Cressida* for a version of events consistent with this hypothesis.
12. See Chaucer, *Troilus and Cressyde*, 4.166-178.
13. This scene strangely echoes the Homeric account of the death of Patroclus. He, too, was vanquished by the joint efforts of a god and anonymous *anthropoi* and left helpless before Hector, his reputed slayer, administered the *coup de grace*.
14. Homer, *Iliad* XX.89-107. We also recall Hector telling Andromache that he preferred dying in battle to seeing her enslaved (VI.464-465).