

REINTERPRETING *TROILUS AND CRESSIDA*:

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS IN LITERARY CRITICISM AND BRITISH
PERFORMANCE

By

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Abstract

Troilus and Cressida is the unusual instance of a Shakespearean play which had long been read and commented upon before stage practitioners explored it in the theatre. My thesis examines the changing perceptions of the play's characters, paying attention to the chronological relationship between revisions in literary criticism, much of which was written with little proximity to performance, with reinterpretations during its British stage history. The thesis has a particular focus on issues of gender and sexuality. Both the theatre and literary criticism reflected and responded to social change in their dealings with this play, but they did so at different moments. By using the case of *Troilus and Cressida*, I examine whether theatrical practice or academic literary criticism has acted as the more efficient cultural barometer. Revisions of *Cressida* are my central example and I also examine the reinterpretations of eight other characters. The delayed acceptance of the play into the theatre means that the claims of relevance become especially acute. Despite the perceived progressive potential of performance, I conclude that theatrical representations of characters in this play have been slow to change in relation to the revisions seen on the pages of literary criticism.

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INTRODUCTION

Troilus and Cressida – On the page, then on the stage

Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* is a play which had to wait for three centuries, suspended in theatrical amber as it were, before it found its place on the stage. R. A. Foakes began his Penguin edition of the play by commenting that '*Troilus and Cressida* has come into its own as a play for the twentieth century' (1987, p. 8). Jan Kott called it 'amazing and modern' (1964, p. 75) and R. A. Yoder stated 'Of all Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida* is our play' (1972, p. 11). This thesis will consider the ways in which this late arrival into the British performance repertory created a special case in the annals of Shakespearean stage history and the study of page/stage issues. It examines the unusual instance of a Shakespearean play which had long been read and commented upon, and thus had acquired sets of meanings and understandings attributed to it in the study, before stage practitioners began to find different meanings, and in some cases radically different meanings, when they explored it in the theatre. The thesis will examine the changing perceptions of the play and its characters, paying attention to the connections and divergences between earlier literary criticism of the play, written with little or no proximity to performance, with understandings of the play once stage productions became more common. I will be using a comparison between the reinterpretations seen during the performance history of *Troilus and Cressida* and the revisions in the literary critical writings about the play in order to investigate whether or not the theatre is the site where new and relevant thinking about Shakespeare takes place.

'Our play' – claims of relevance

Unlike the stage histories of other, more regularly performed plays, the delayed acceptance of *Troilus and Cressida* into the theatre also means that the claims of relevance, that it is, what R. A. Yoder tellingly labelled, 'our play', become especially acute. To have been chosen for performance during the twentieth century, when it had not previously been the fashion to stage *Troilus and Cressida* at all, suggests that there was something about its themes and subject matter which spoke to contemporary audiences. In the early decades of the century, its lack of certainty, the absence of closure, its apparent experimentalism and the overall sense of decay and alienation meant that the play appealed to the modernist agenda. At this time, Theodore Spencer commented that many aspects of the play were found to be 'sympathetic to a generation which has found an expression in *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land*' (1936, pp. 1-2). When the play became part of a more mainstream repertoire, by the mid-century, the doctrine of ensuring that performance was socially relevant had also come to the fore. *Troilus* was in the process of becoming a more recognisable part of the wider theatrical landscape when it was included in the opening season of the Royal Shakespeare Company, in 1960, for example. Colin Chambers characterises the mood of the time as being one in which:

There were signs that British theatre was beginning to reconnect to its society, having previously failed, in [Peter] Hall's words, "to take into account the fact that we have had a World War [...] and that everything in the world has changed – values, ways of living, ideals, hopes and fears". Theatre was staking its claim as a cultural force of significance. (Chambers, 2004, p. 9)

A play which featured world-weary and cynical views of combat, together with a mocking tone and the comic deflation of leaders and heroic ideals, seems to have particularly suited this cultural period and offered points of access for modern audiences.

Contemporary relevance seems to be even more a point of issue with this play than with other Shakespearean works. Partly, of course, this is due to the unusual gap in the time-line of its stage history: there is a much smaller reservoir of images of representations of performance. As Barbara Bowen points out: 'we see the play as modern partly because we have so little history of premodern readers seeing the play' (1993, p. 32). The available theatrical images of *Troilus and Cressida* are so firmly rooted in the practices and visual realms of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries that it becomes, out of necessity, 'our play'. The play has been thought of as a mirror, reflecting contemporary political anxieties and concerns. It has been thought of, for example, as a play which 'really *is* about Vietnam' (Bowen, 1993, p. 32). In a note to the company during the preparation for the 1968 RSC production, John Barton commented that within the play 'the war [is] an image of a Vietnam situation, where both sides are inexorably committed' (Barton, 1968). The performance history of *Troilus and Cressida*, and its reception, is littered with these kinds of conscious connections between the play and contemporary warfare.

Elements of the style and form of the play have often been thought to have influenced its delayed arrival into the theatre. The generic uncertainty of the play, its

refusal to offer a single, reliable viewpoint and its dark, unclosed ending may have held attraction for modernists, yet these aspects had previously been seen as problematic barriers to audiences more familiar with the clear-cut delineations of neoclassicism and of melodrama. Noticeably, going back as far as John Dryden's seventeenth-century adaptation, *Troilus and Cressida or Truth Found Too Late*, the indeterminate final act of the play had been defined as a problem to be solved, an error to be corrected. The inconsistencies in viewpoint and the internal contradictions of the play became, by the time of the second half of the twentieth century at least, an asset and a source of fascination for the stage. At the same time, shifting attitudes to sex, sexual disease and homoeroticism, subjects considered taboo to Victorian and Edwardian audiences, opened up sections of the play, making them performable and worthy of dramatic interest, rather than the sites of seemingly necessary cuts or sanitised speeches.

Print and Performance

Well before the twentieth century, however, there had been evidence of ambiguities and uncertainties surrounding the stage history of *Troilus and Cressida*. From its earliest days, there was a discrepancy between print and performance. The two states of the 1609 quarto edition contradict each other: the title page of Qa states that the play had been 'acted by the Kings Majesties servants at the Globe' and Qb, which has the reference to a Globe production noticeably removed from its title page, prioritises the printed play on the page, advertising it as a play suited to a literate readership, and includes the famous epistle to the 'ever reader' which states that it is 'a new play, never staled with the stage, never clapper-clawed with the palms of the

vulgar'. At this historical moment, and, as I will discuss, at many other subsequent moments, the play represented a point of tension between the printed page and the theatrical stage. The Qb epistle honours the cultured, studious reader and dismisses the vulgar, theatre-going public. *Troilus and Cressida* is a prime example of what Michael Dobson has called the 'enduring demarcation dispute between the library and the playhouse which has conditioned the reproduction of Shakespeare's works from his own lifetime to the present', a dispute which has been a significant shaping force on the direction of Shakespeare Studies in general (Dobson, 2001, p. 235). The pattern of meanings ascribed to *Troilus and Cressida*, when a three-century tradition of reading the play existed, unusually, before the beginning of its performance history, plainly embodies the gap between the meaning of a play when the text is read, and what it can come to mean in performance.

Textual variance has caused conjecture and debate to be generated around possibilities for the conditions and locations of the play's earliest possible seventeenth-century performances. These debates have often been connected with the notion of the play being unsuitable for general viewers. The conjecture includes Peter Alexander's famous 'Inns of Court' theory, in which the critic stated that the play was specifically written for the raucous tastes of a private audience of clerks, and that it was 'unlikely that this play was ever performed to an audience at the Globe' (Alexander, 1928, p. 278). Although Dryden's much-altered adaptation was performed from 1679 to around 1734, Shakespeare's play remained within the more exclusive sphere of the literary reader, and hence the realm of scholarly literary

criticism, for an unusually long period, before its acceptance onto the twentieth-century stage.

Scholars and elite culture

Its move onto the stage was not a move into the comparatively popular theatrical world inhabited by *Hamlet* or *Romeo and Juliet*, however. The early twentieth-century performances of *Troilus and Cressida* were tied up with a scholarly pocket of elite culture, echoing, in a way, Alexander's conjecture of the specialist audience at the Inns of Court. In the early decades of the twentieth century the play occupied the crossover point between the theatre and the academic world, especially, as I will discuss, in its incorporation into the repertoire of the Marlowe Society at Cambridge University. The play was seized deliberately because of its highbrow challenges and its lack of mass, popular appeal. If Shakespearean performance in general could offer a rewarding sense of 'culture' to audiences, and here Douglas Lanier's definition of this particular type of 'culture' as 'personal development, sophistication, educated taste, and cultivation, often with an upper-class connotation' (2002, p. 7) is useful, then performances of *Troilus and Cressida* could offer audiences an even more magnified sense of this 'culture'.

Documentary evidence shows that British stage productions did not begin until three centuries after the publication of the quarto, with the single performance of Charles Fry's version in London in 1907. For the theatre-going public at the start of the twentieth century, an unfamiliar play by Shakespeare had the potential to offer novelty value and freshness, although the *Daily Telegraph* reviewer, in a piece titled

'First time of performance since Shakespeare's lifetime', labelled Fry's production a 'somewhat gloomy experiment' (quoted in Fry, 1932, pp. 70-1). Early practitioners like Fry were not hampered by long-established stage traditions of the play or models of the perceived correct mode of representation. When the play came to be performed, there were no images of theatrical precedents for it to emulate or react against. There were no images or reviews of Edmund Kean's *Troilus*, Henry Irving's *Ulysses* or Ellen Terry's *Cressida*. The text of *Troilus and Cressida* could be, and indeed had to be, the starting point. The long absence from the stage, however, does not mean that the play was an undiscovered mystery, unknown until 1907. *Troilus and Cressida* had been read, summarised and evaluated, and had been commented upon by critics, including Hazlitt and Coleridge, long before audiences had the opportunity to watch staged versions.

Literary criticism and performance

My focus will be the relationship between academic literary criticism of *Troilus and Cressida* and British stage productions of the play. By noting this relationship, I do not mean to carry out a direct examination of the ways in which actors and directors have read and used elements of literary criticism in their approach to the play, although this has certainly occurred. Even the edition of the play chosen to be used during preparation and rehearsal will carry with it introductory material, suggestions for further reading, summaries of key moments and character analysis. Roger Apfelbaum's work, *Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida: Textual Problems and Performance Solutions*, opens with a photograph of Sam Mendes, the director of the 1990 RSC production, poring over several different single editions of *Troilus and*

Cressida, highlighting the use of scholarly-informed material in the preparation of theatrical work (2004, p. 16). Apfelbaum's work also includes information from his interview with John Barton, a highly significant director of *Troilus*, about the use of different printed editions during the period of preparation. Barton found it useful to consult a range of editions of the play for their differing glosses of specific words and phrases (Apfelbaum, 2004, p. 26). Apfelbaum's work specifically draws together editorial theory with stage practice, whereas this thesis draws together literary criticism with stage practice. Apfelbaum states, however, that the play's 'editorial and theatrical history often expands [...] into areas of critical concerns' (p. 27), and I would add that concerns highlighted in literary critical interpretations of the play also often expand into editorial and textual discussions. In the instances where actors are provided not with a published, printed edition of the play, but with a type-written or photocopied script with extra material removed, editorial decisions concerning textual variants will still have left their imprint: in their initial preparation, directors will have consciously made decisions about word choices and other textual variations, even if the actors do not finally get to see the potential alternatives. For example, as I will discuss in chapters 2 and 5, scholarly critical debate concerning the ending of the play, whether Troilus or Pandarus gets the last word, is highly significant for overall understandings of tone and genre, especially in performance. Academic work concerning these variants, underpinning the decisions made by the director, will have left its trace on even the cleanest of copies. Audiences, too, have often been encouraged to make connections between the views of literary critics concerning the plays of Shakespeare and their own experience of stage productions: theatrical programmes for *Troilus and Cressida* have frequently included quotations from G.

Wilson Knight, A. P. Rossiter, Una Ellis-Fermor and so on, not to mention the use of specially commissioned academic writing about the play.

My intent, however, is to consider what can be understood by looking at the differences, and in many cases the time-lag, between the changing perceptions of an aspect of the play within the world of scholarly work and the way that the same changing aspect was dealt with in the theatrical sphere. I am particularly interested in a comment by Nicholas Shrimpton, written after seeing Howard Davies' 1985 RSC production: 'Henceforth we will never discuss this *text* in quite the same way' (Shrimpton, 1987, p. 205, my italics). Here, the performance of the play onstage had intervened, in some way, with the critical appraisal of what the text on the page was taken to mean, and what it had been taken previously to mean for a considerable period of time. Shrimpton was specifically referring to Juliet Stevenson's portrayal of Cressida in the production, a portrayal which widely received the label 'feminist'. Stevenson's Cressida offered an interpretation which challenged the long-held notion of the character as merely a shallow, changeable flirt, little concerned with moving her affections from Troilus to Diomedes. Understandings of Cressida as a fickle wanton had solidified in literary summaries and analyses of Shakespeare's text over time, long before a performance example had existed. Those understandings had been bolstered, too, by knowledge of the stereotypical figure who was 'as false as Cressid' (3.2.191) from the historical, literary tradition of the playwright's sources. The 1985 production gave its audiences a different Cressida, and the new Cressida created a different way to read the text.

The significance of Cressida

By the end of the twentieth century, British stage productions commonly featured a Cressida who had been pulled from the margins of the play into a position of centrality, as exemplified by Sophie Okonedo's solitary figure, remaining centre stage as the lights went down at the National Theatre in 1999. In this production, directed by Trevor Nunn, the textual evidence for ending with either Troilus or Pandarus onstage had been put aside for the theatrical benefit of underlining the contemporary concern with the redefinition of Cressida. Michael Billington connected the National's production with the RSC's *Troilus* from 1985, and viewed Nunn's version as a form of completion: 'It completes a process that has been gathering force for years: the reclamation of Cressida as a genuine tragic character' (Billington, 1999). No longer was Cressida defined onstage chiefly through Ulysses' eyes as an example of 'sluttish spoils' or one of the 'daughters of the game' (4.5.63,64): the character had been transformed, and it was the performance of the play which provided a prompt to a revised awareness of the potential meanings in the Shakespearean text.

The transformation in the understanding of Cressida is central to my work; it has the potential to alter the slant in interpretation of several other significant characters. A changing view of Cressida, from superficial coquette to sincere victim of the male game of warfare, can change the perception of Troilus, as I examine in chapter 2; it can reduce his status as a wronged hero and it can cause attention to be drawn to his own laconic words of compliance with the political decision to trade his lover. The depiction of Cressida may have implications for the understanding of Helen too, as I

discuss in chapter 3; she is another valuable, traded woman in the play, moved from one group of men to another, in a situation with obvious parallels. A changed depiction of Cressida certainly shapes the portrayal of Ulysses, who famously denounces her: the audience's understanding of Ulysses as either an accurate commentator or a bitter name-caller may hinge on this choice of interpretation of Cressida. I consider readings and portrayals of Ulysses, together with Hector, who has also often been characterised as a valued orator in the play, in chapter 4. Cressida's uncle, Pandarus, the go-between who fosters the relationship between the lovers, is discussed alongside Thersites, another figure of choric, comic framing in the play, in chapter 5. Another relationship, the bond between Achilles and Patroclus, is the focus of chapter 6.

The transformation of Cressida is one of the clearest examples of the time-lag between changes in literary criticism and changes in performance practice concerning an individual character. The chapter concerned with Cressida is, therefore, the one with which I begin, and since the 1985 RSC production was so significant in terms of a reappraisal of the scene where Cressida is kissed by the Greek generals, that particular theatrical production will occupy a significant section of the chapter. There is some evidence of literary critics re-evaluating the role of Cressida from the 1960s, and especially her position and experience during the kissing scene (4.5), even though a wholesale reworking of the role onstage was not seen until 1985. Even then, the reworking caused considerable discomfort and disagreement in many commentators about the 'new' meanings which had been released in Davies' production.

Homoerotic elements

In contrast to the relatively late-century reappraisal of Cressida, some versions of other characters on the stage began to alter and shift away from the traditional readings found in literary criticism more readily. Homoerotic overtones of male warfare were suggested by the oiled bodies of the skimpily-clad Greeks and Trojans on the Stratford stage in 1968, for example, when combatants were engaged in battle sequences which 'became homosexual dances that joined the forces of Venus and Mars' (Greenwald, 1985, p. 71). These challenging stage images of the male warriors occurred earlier than any change in the depiction of the women in the play, and seemed to anticipate later work by scholars such as Alan Bray, Bruce Smith and Eve Sedgwick. Why should some aspects of character in this play change more quickly or more radically than others? In addressing this question, it is necessary to make wider considerations about contemporary theatrical practice, as well as an awareness of general movements in society and culture. It is impossible to consider stage depictions of the intimate relationship between Achilles and Patroclus, as I do in chapter 6 for instance, without bearing in mind issues of stage censorship and legal reform concerning homosexuality. Like all plays, stage productions of *Troilus and Cressida* owe something of their shape, design and tone not only to theatrical trends, but also to elements of wider social change. The decade of the 1960s was the one in which audiences saw visible homosexual desire on the British stage, in examples such as Joe Orton's *Entertaining Mr Sloane* and John Osborne's *A Patriot for Me*. It is no accident that this period should also be the time when Alan Howard's depiction of Achilles for the RSC in 1968, labelled by Ronald Bryden as 'overtly homosexual, a

high camp posturer' (Bryden, 1968), should have become a notable part of the performance history of *Troilus and Cressida*.

Character

My character-led approach is not an attempt to emulate old-style character criticism. It is, rather, an approach which seems to be necessitated in part by the play itself. The Prologue urges the audience to 'Like or find fault' (30), initiating a process in which *Troilus and Cressida* continually draws attention to seeing, recognising and evaluating characters. There is a sense of spectatorship throughout, which is juxtaposed with a sense of potential misrecognition. This leads to a questioning of identity, since viewpoints, and especially the viewpoints of individual characters, are skewed. Cressida's first line, 'Who were those went by?' (1.2.1), when she is led to believe that she has just missed a view of Helen and Hecuba, introduces this notion of characters being just out of sight. It suggests that a secure knowledge of them is always slightly out of reach. The moment is shortly followed by Pandarus' question concerning a confusion between Hector and Troilus, 'Do you know a man if you see him?' (1.2.62-3), which is followed by the parade of famous Trojan soldiers, where the sight of Deiphobus is confused with the sight of Troilus and the 'notorious identity' of each of the well-known historical mythic figures hovers above the actors onstage (Charnes, 1993, pp. 70-102). The procedure of seeing/not seeing and recognising/misrecognising characters is then repeatedly displayed throughout the course of the play, including the banter between Paris' servant and Pandarus in 3.1: Pandarus, perhaps deliberately, takes the description of 'the mortal Venus, the heart-blood of beauty' as a label for his niece Cressida, before being corrected by the

servant. Pandarus is informed that he should know Helen by 'her attributes' (3.1.30-1 and 35). Similarly, when the Greek leaders scornfully pass by Achilles, pretending not to notice him, the absence of acknowledged recognition leads to Achilles' questioning of his own 'attributes' or his 'worth' (3.3.91), as he refers to it. The parade of Trojans, the parade of Greeks before Achilles, the line-up of men waiting to kiss Cressida: all offer up a sequence of figures across the stage. They are sequences and parades across the view of the audience, demanding 'identification, interpretation, comparison, comment' (Rutter, 2001, p. 125). The numerous examples culminate in a fractured notion of identity, encapsulated in Troilus' despairing utterance during the double-watching outside Diomedes' tent: 'This is and is not Cressid' (5.2.153), a notion which had been foreshadowed in Cressida's earlier 'I have a kind of self resides with you,/ But an unkind self that itself will leave/ To be another's fool' (3.2.143-45). The way that the play draws attention to these fractured identities and these slanted viewpoints makes an analysis of the changing interpretations of character, in both literary readings and theatrical productions of the play, seem particularly pertinent.

My character-based chapters begin with an examination of the ways in which literary critics have commented upon the figures in the play. Much of my discussion deals with literary criticism from the nineteenth century and often from the first half of the twentieth century. I am, therefore, often working with readings from critics who dealt with interpretation of character and readily expressed their sympathies and antipathies. Frederick S. Boas wrote in 1896 of 'the sane, equitable worldly wisdom of Ulysses', but labelled Cressida 'a scheming cold-blooded profligate' (p. 383, p.

375). In 1930 G. Wilson Knight felt able to write: 'Troilus' love is throughout hallowed by his constancy, his fire, his truth [...] It is conceived and presented throughout as a thing essentially pure and noble' (p. 60), for example, in a manner we would be unlikely to encounter in literary criticism from later on in the twentieth century or beyond. In the theatre, too, character is central. In a post-Stanislavski environment, a majority of actors approach the play by attempting to formulate an integrated cohesive whole for their character. John Barton stated that '[w]hen a director explores a play he is bound, primarily, to be doing so in terms of character and psychology' (Evans, 1972, p. 65). Since I am also considering stage productions, this reliance on 'character' by actors and directors is a further significant factor in the shaping of my analysis. Many productions have explored the play through its characters, although the Trojans/Woosters of the 2012 RSC/Wooster Group production were an obvious exception to this approach. The Wooster Group are known for their experimental approaches and a rejection of, or resistance to, traditional notions of cohesive 'realistic' characters. Their contribution to the 2012 *Troilus* involved the Wooster actors watching video clips of films during the performance, on screens visible to the audience, and mimicking the gestures and movements of the figures shown. Such an approach provides, of course, an anomalous example within the frame of my character-based work. It does highlight, however, a further instance of the tendency to perceive *Troilus and Cressida* as a vehicle for experimentalism.

As *Troilus* has moved through time on the stage, successive generations seem to have found different characters to be the focal point: Ulysses and Thersites have

taken on this function, as have Pandarus and Troilus. Since 1985 Cressida has often come to the fore in theatre productions, at a time when both literary critics and stage practitioners have continued to shun the earlier negative definitions of her position. David Bevington's approach to the character, his very deliberate slant of interpretation, is typical of late twentieth-century and early twenty-first-century responses when he writes in the introduction to his Arden edition: 'My reading of Cressida attempts to be deeply sympathetic in a way that is consistent, perhaps, with issues that gender studies have brought to our consciousness' (1998, p. xix). It was not only academic gender studies and the pages of feminist literary criticism which had caused Bevington's deliberate sympathy: his reading is also consistent with the path of performance examples and the patterns of portraying Cressida on the British stage since 1985.

Gender and sexuality

Transformations in the interpretation of Cressida are not the only examples of an interest in gender and sexuality in the play as a whole, however. *Troilus and Cressida* seems to offer itself as a site for experimentation with gender and sexuality: from William Poel's pragmatic casting of women as Aeneas, Paris and Thersites in his partly amateur 1912 production, to Elaine Pyke's 'Vesta Tilley' version of Patroclus for the RSC tour in 1998, to the drag costuming employed by various versions of Thersites and Achilles since 1968, the play has suggested a certain flexibility in the definition of gender roles. The play calls attention to its range of military masculinities and its representation of tradable women.

Gender and sexuality have often been the focus for critical work about the play. By the 1970s, literary critics were publishing pieces such as the tellingly-titled 'In Defense of Cressida' by Carolyn Asp (1977, pp. 406-17). Gayle Greene's 'Shakespeare's Cressida: "A kind of self"', appeared as a chapter in *The Woman's Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare* (Lenz et al., 1980, pp. 133-49). Barbara Bowen contributed a piece on the play's stage history to the 1988 revised version of Daniel Seltzer's Signet edition, and then went on to write *Gender in the Theater of War: Shakespeare's "Troilus and Cressida"* (1993), a publication which draws together some of the aspects of gender and the stage history of the play with which I am also concerned. Carol Chillington Rutter has written several relevant pieces, especially about late twentieth-century performance of *Troilus*, including the article 'Shakespeare, His Designers, and the Politics of Costume: Handing over Cressida's Glove', (Rutter, 1994, pp. 107-28). The fourth chapter of her book *Enter the Body: Women and Representation on Shakespeare's Stage*, (2001), is also concerned with the play. The work of literary critics and theatre practitioners which has sought to examine and classify gender roles and sexuality will be a significant theme running through my work. The story of *Troilus and Cressida* on the stage is, in many ways, a microcosm of the story of sexuality throughout the twentieth century and beyond.

Dryden's adaptation

When we think of the three-hundred-year absence from the stage of Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, it is important to note that, for a period within that hiatus, an adaptation of the play had been performed on the London stage. Dryden's changes to Shakespeare's text in his adapted version, *Troilus and Cressida, or Truth Found Too Late*, clearly displayed a discomfort, and hence the need to alter, several of the aspects of the play which would also cause consternation to later literary critics. Dryden's alterations highlight many of the moments which later, in 1817, caused Hazlitt to label Shakespeare's *Troilus* 'one of the most loose and desultory of our author's plays' (quoted in Martin, 1976, p. 35). For Hazlitt, *Troilus* may not have been 'our play', but Shakespeare had been 'our author', it seems. Audiences of Dryden's adaptation had the opportunity to witness an innocent, wrongly accused Cressida pretending to succumb to a villainous Diomedes, in a version which foregrounded the lovers and greatly reduced the war plot. Dryden's own preface to his version stated that Shakespeare's original showed evidence of the playwright becoming 'weary of his task' and that 'the latter part of the Tragedy is nothing but a confusion of Drums and Trumpets' (Dryden, 1984, p. 226). Dryden felt driven to correct these problems and to 'remove that heap of Rubbish, under which many excellent thoughts lay wholly bury'd' (Dryden, 1984, p. 226). He added his own Prologue, spoken by the 'Ghost of Shakespear', played by Thomas Betterton, who spoke of the dearth of worthy successors to the playwright and the 'dul[l]ness' of contemporary drama (Dryden, 1984, p. 249). Dryden's Cressida committed suicide, Juliet-like; her true faithfulness was only discovered by Troilus when it was 'too late'. Cressida's final words, 'And I dye happy that he thinks me true' (Dryden, 1984, p. 351), in a new fifth act, created

entirely by Dryden, gave the sense of closure which many later literary critics felt was lacking from Shakespeare's more ambivalent ending. Troilus himself was then slain by the Greeks, and the version ended with a speech from Ulysses which concluded: 'Then, since from homebred Factions ruine springs, / Let Subjects learn obedience to their Kings' (Dryden, 1984, p. 353). There followed a new Epilogue, spoken by Thersites, a character who, together with Pandarus, was felt by Dryden to be a 'promising' figure in Shakespeare's faulty text (Dryden, 1984, p. 226). Many of Dryden's alterations and excisions pinpoint 'hotspots' in the play; they often coincide with moments which caused later critics discomfort. These include the kissing scene, which he removed, and Pandarus' suggestive Epilogue which was replaced with the newly written piece for Thersites (Dryden, 1984, pp. 354-5). Helen does not appear at all. Yet the kissing of Cressida, the placement of Pandarus' final 'diseases' speech and the 'Helen scene' are some of the moments in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* which are of most significant concern for this thesis, since their revisions have been the most marked.

Early productions

After Dryden's adaptation, the play disappeared from the British stage until early in the twentieth century. A prompt copy of the play was worked on by John Philip Kemble in the late 1790s, including suggestions for casting, but was never performed (Bowen, 1993, p. 36). Theatres on the Continent began to experiment with the play at the end of the nineteenth century, with productions taking place in Munich in 1898, then in Berlin in 1899 and again in 1904, when it was presented as a farce, resulting in walkouts: 'many of the audience left before the end' (Muir, 1982, p. 10). The early

continental productions reflected nineteenth-century German scholars' interest in the play, including critical work by Goethe and Schlegel. The 1898 version, anticipating some of William Poel's concerns, displayed an attempt to recreate Elizabethan playing conditions, such as using a stage devoid of pictorial scenery and employing men to play the women's parts (Bowen, 1993, p. 39). By 1907, when Charles Fry directed his production of Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* at London's Great Queen Street Theatre, inserted in a week's programme of other Shakespeare, the British stage was finally ready for the play, three centuries after its composition.

The connections between scholarship and *Troilus and Cressida* in performance began as soon as its stage history began. Initial performances of the play were at a time when it was still very much a text for students of Shakespeare's whole canon and textual specialists; the very people who were more likely to have been aware of the literary criticism written about the play. George Bernard Shaw was one of the early campaigners, aiming to establish *Troilus and Cressida* as a readable and performable part of modern theatre. Shaw prepared a paper about the play in 1884 for the New Shakespeare Society, to provide advocacy for a text which had widely been considered as 'so uncongenial' (Rattray, 1951, p. 47). Also during the 1880s, William Poel began presenting Shakespeare plays in a manner which suggested a concern for scholarly 'authenticity'. His productions used costumes of the English Renaissance period and a bare stage in a perceived 'Elizabethan' fashion. Several commentators, including J. L. Styan, in his 1977 work, *The Shakespeare Revolution: Criticism and Performance in the Twentieth Century*, have placed Poel's work in the context of late Victorian scholarship about the Elizabethan stage, influenced by

findings such as the 1888 discovery of the de Witt drawing of the Swan theatre. Poel's 1912/13 production of *Troilus and Cressida*, although a heavily cut version of the play, nonetheless became one of the first significant twentieth-century productions, performed on 10th December 1912 at Kings Hall, Covent Garden, then, by request, being performed twice on the same day in May 1913 at Stratford upon Avon. It featured a curtained, recessed area at the back of the stage and heavy draperies, but was lit by electric lighting. The Greeks were dressed as Elizabethan soldiers, smoking Raleigh-inspired clay pipes, whilst the Trojans wore flamboyant Renaissance masque costumes (Speaight, 1954, p.139). Poel himself was a cockney Pandarus, Edith Evans was a coquettish Cressida in farthingale and feathered hat, and several of the amateur actors were women cast in male parts, including a Mrs Scott who played Thersites as a jester for the Stratford 1913 production. Early reviewers were not positive about Poel's *Troilus and Cressida*. Robert Speaight reported that the 'critics proved unusually cantankerous' and that few of them 'showed any understanding of the play' (1954, p. 201), but, despite its lack of familiarity in performance, the play had certainly begun to find a place, or perhaps more accurately a niche, on the British stage.

The Marlowe Society

In 1922 the Marlowe Society at Cambridge University staged its first production of *Troilus and Cressida*. This was the beginning of a huge web of influence between early twentieth-century academe and later, professional British stage productions of the play, with George 'Dadie' Rylands firmly positioned at its centre. The Marlowe's first production was directed by Frank Birch and featured Rylands as Diomedes.

Earlier, in 1913, the year when Poel's *Troilus* played for one day in Stratford, Birch, the new president, had suggested that the Marlowe Society should perform the play, although this initial plan did not come to fruition (Cribb, 2007, p. 45). The aim to produce a version of *Troilus* was finally achieved by the Marlowe Society in 1922, a production which had a uniquely significant impact on the acceptance of the play in performance. Its director, Frank Birch, together with the actors playing Pandarus, Ulysses and Achilles, had returned from the Great War. It was a production which is often thought of as perfectly timed, as one capable of speaking to the world of the war-weary and disillusioned. It was also a production which decidedly gave the play the 'gloss of intellectual prestige' (Bowen, 1993, p. 40) which enabled it to transfer from being silently read in studies and libraries to being seen and heard in the theatre, albeit, at this point, a relatively exclusive, intellectual style of theatre. The reviewer in the *Daily Telegraph* wrote:

This production is much the biggest thing that the Marlowe Society have yet attempted. They are out to prove that "Troilus and Cressida" is an unjustly neglected play: and I think they may fairly claim to have succeeded [...] Shakespeare is allowed to speak for himself. As a result the play gripped me from the very beginning almost to the very end [...] All the first half of the play and most of the second proved far more interesting on stage than I have ever found them in the study. (Quoted in Cribb, 2007, p. 47)

Birch revived his production in 1932 for the Cambridge Festival at the Arts Theatre; a production which featured Anthony Quayle as Hector. Quayle then went on to direct *Troilus* professionally in 1948 at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in Stratford, and then to appear as Pandarus in Glen Byam Shaw's 1954 SMT production. The

Marlowe Society produced the play again in 1940 and 1948, both under the directorship of Rylands. Tim Cribb suggested that the 1957 Argo audio recording of *Troilus* 'had something of the flavour of a don's outing' and that it 'more nearly resembled High Table at King's than the ringing plains of windy Troy' (2007, p. 94), indicating that the close association between scholars and the performance of the play continued well into the middle of the twentieth century.

Christopher J. McCullough has shown how the theatre work of Peter Hall and Trevor Nunn displays what he terms a 'Cambridge Connection' (1988, pp. 112-21). Hall and Nunn, both directors of professional versions of *Troilus*, studied under F. R. Leavis and were influenced by his methods for the analysis of text during university seminars. The connection to Cambridge in terms of *Troilus and Cressida* becomes even more specifically rooted in the work of the Marlowe Society and the influence of George Rylands. Sally Beauman notes that, in terms of his analysis of text, Peter Hall said: 'Perhaps our ideal was to *speak* like Rylands, and to *think* like Leavis' (1982, p. 268). By the time of the Cambridge Festival in August 1951, Rylands was working with both Peter Hall and John Barton. Although 1951 did not see a production of *Troilus*, the Cambridge connection of Rylands, Hall and Barton was in evidence. A theatre programme for the Festival records that Barton and Hall both acted in Rylands' production of *Dr Faustus*, as the 'Chorus' and the 'Evil Angel' respectively (Theatre programme, 1951). An early connection to Stratford also exists in a programme note which thanks the Governors and Director of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre 'for the loan of many costumes'. Nine years after this Cambridge Festival, the Hall/Barton production of *Troilus and Cressida* would take place in the

opening season of the Royal Shakespeare Company. A noticeable overlap exists between lists of theatre practitioners involved in professional British productions of *Troilus* and those alumni of the Marlowe Society, including, not just Rylands, Hall, Barton and Nunn, but more recently Sam Mendes and Simon Russell Beale. A 1973 Marlowe production of *Troilus and Cressida* also featured the casting of the founders of the Cheek by Jowl Company: Nick Ormerod played Deiphobus and Declan Donnellan was one of the Greek soldiers (Theatre Programme, 1973). Cheek by Jowl produced the play in 2008 at the Barbican, bringing the connective web of the Marlowe Society and *Troilus and Cressida* into the twenty-first century.

Amateur Marlowe productions of the play took place in 1922, 1940, 1948, 1956, 1964 and 1973, making up an impressive proportion of the company's total output, many of the productions being under the directorship of Rylands (Cribb, 2007, pp. 187-190). There were also connections, albeit a smaller number, between *Troilus*, academe and the British professional theatre at the Oxford University Dramatic Society. OUDS had productions of *Troilus* in 1938, directed by Nevill Coghill; 1953, starring Alasdair Milne, the future Director-General of the BBC as Troilus; 1977, directed by Keith Hack, who also worked as a director for the RSC; and 1981, starring Imogen Stubbs as Cressida (Carpenter, 1985, p. 173, p. 206, pp. 212-3).

Design – period settings

In terms of professional British theatre, 1923 saw the first fully professional production of the play, at the Old Vic, when Lilian Baylis' company completed the plan to produce all of the First Folio plays to coincide with the tercentenary of its 1623

publication (Shirley, 2005, p. 16). Directed by Robert Atkins, the 1923 Old Vic *Troilus and Cressida*, like the earlier German productions and like Poel's version ten years before it, was performed in Elizabethan dress. Since then, professional British productions of *Troilus and Cressida* have used a diverse range of period settings and costume choices. In his book, *On Directing Shakespeare*, Ralph Berry helpfully categorises four dominant approaches for setting Shakespearean drama: Renaissance; modern; period analogue and eclectic (Berry, 1989, pp. 14-23). Berry extends the 'Renaissance' category to include medieval dress for the histories and Roman clothing for the Roman plays, since the central idea of his 'Renaissance'-labelled category is that the 'period of composition, or the period to which the author alludes, should be directly reflected in the costumes and settings' (Berry, 1989, p. 14). This sense of collapsing different historical periods together, dealing with Elizabethan dress under the same heading as Roman military uniforms, for example, can be especially applicable to *Troilus and Cressida*, a play in which the heroes of antiquity are presented, palimpsest-like, through the images of Chaucerian knights. Berry's extension of the 'Renaissance' category also invokes qualities of the Peacham drawing of *Titus Andronicus*, where Elizabethan costumes are overlaid with, and presented alongside, suggestions of generic classical dress. I intend to incorporate classical costuming, such as toga-like Grecian robes, armoured breastplates and plumed helmets into this first 'Renaissance' category. All four approaches noted by Berry have been utilised for British productions of *Troilus and Cressida*, and the categories provide convenient, though imprecise, groupings for the following overview of the major theatrical productions which will feature throughout

this work. A chronological list of the productions to which I refer can be found in the appendix.

Renaissance/classical

By far the largest group of productions of *Troilus and Cressida* falls under the category of Renaissance/classical setting. These choices of set and costuming, or elements of these choices, have never completely disappeared from the stage history of *Troilus and Cressida*, although there has been a distinct move over time away from the specifically Elizabethan section of the category towards the use of more generic Greek/Trojan classical costuming. The use of specific Renaissance dress, however, was used in several early twentieth-century productions of the play, when the historical study of the period of Shakespeare's composition and the conditions of theatrical output in the Early Modern period was a highly significant trend. This gave way, mid-century, to a move towards a trend for classical costuming for the play. Archaeological digs, searching for the remains of Ilium in modern day Turkey, had taken place since the mid-nineteenth century, and there had been renewed efforts by Carl W. Blegen in the 1930s (Blegen, 1937). It was not until after World War Two, however, that the setting of the play in the theatre began to reflect this archaeological interest: by the middle of the twentieth century, the study of archaeological artefacts and pictorial representations of ancient warriors became influential and an important source of reference for British theatrical designers of *Troilus and Cressida*.

Both strands of the Renaissance/classical category offer the advantage of a more direct correspondence between some aspects of the spoken text and the visual stage production, particularly in terms of weaponry and armour. For example, references to the hacked 'helm[et]' of Troilus (1.2.225), Achilles' 'half-supp'd sword' (5.9.19) and the episode of the mysterious Greek in 'goodly armour' (5.9.2) can be represented efficiently in productions which utilise Renaissance/classical dress and settings: swords, helmets and metal breastplates work within the visual field of each of the two subsets. Ben Iden Payne, at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in 1936, followed the precedent set by Poel and Baylis, utilising Elizabethan-style costuming, with doublets, hose and neck ruffs, and included a version of the 'Helen scene' (3.1) in which Pandarus played a lute. Payne's set, again like Poel's, created a general approximation of an Early Modern stage, with a balcony and an inner, curtained recess: the prompt book records many instances of actors entering 'the inner above' as well as directions for the opening and closing of the 'penthouse curtains' (Prompt book, 1936).

Following Poel, Baylis and Payne, it would be several decades before another British production of *Troilus* would use Renaissance costuming. As late in the century as 1981, Jonathan Miller's BBC Television production of the play returned to doublet and hose. Largely, this choice of setting was related to the stipulations of the series as a whole, that the plays should look 'traditional' and should be set in 'Shakespeare's own time or in the historical period of the events' (Willis, 1991, p. 11). The rejection of Greco-classical costuming also exemplified the director's belief, as stated in his work *Subsequent Performances*, that as a general policy, 'the Roman or

Greek plays cannot be set literally in the period to which they refer' (Miller, 1986, p. 123). Miller felt that productions of *Troilus* which aimed to make the warriors look 'as if they had fallen off Greek vases' (1986, p.123), such as John Barton's theatre work, would cause too great a discrepancy between sound and appearance. He stated that 'to a modern audience the Renaissance significance of the play is much more important than the historical setting to which Shakespeare nominally refers' (p. 127). Miller's version of the play relied, then, on styling from the later period, and had Nestor wearing a full suit of Renaissance-styled, knightly armour over chainmail, for example (Miller, 1986, p. 125). The production, however, also displayed an interest in the theme of war as an eternal component of human experience. Miller felt that 'there should be *intimations* of up-to-dateness without having to dress it in modern clothes' (Fenwick, 1981, p. 20). To suggest a war which would be familiar to a modern audience, elements were introduced such as the use of khaki, albeit on costumes which were Renaissance-looking in silhouette, and the use of canvas tents for the Greek encampment which were deliberately reminiscent of the television series *M.A.S.H.* (Willis, 1991, p. 230).

In 1981, the moment of Miller's televised production, Renaissance costuming had become very unusual for *Troilus* in the theatre. In the immediate post-war period, designers for *Troilus* began to move away from the Elizabethan images which had been favoured by Poel, Baylis and Payne, and began to point towards the classical world, suggesting the ancient setting of the plot. Anthony Quayle, in 1948, and Glen Byam Shaw in 1954, both directing at the SMT, used settings which were largely within the classical field, although Quayle's production encompassed some eclectic,

modern elements, such as military uniforms consisting of tunics and trousers for the Greeks, with 'rank patches and combat ribbons', which made them resemble twentieth-century Fascists (Shirley, 2005, p. 28). Photographic records of Quayle's production, designed by Motley, show the women in long, flowing, rather timeless dresses, and characters such as Pandarus and Priam in more classical robes and cloaks (McBean, 1951). Byam Shaw's later version was more firmly rooted in ancient times, with soldiers wearing greaves, armlets and plumed helmets, and an abundance of sandals and toga-style draperies for the other civilian figures on the stage (Brown, 1956a).

John Barton's work on the play invariably used classical costuming. His famous 'sand-pit' *Troilus*, co-directed with Peter Hall in 1960, began this pattern. Leslie Hurry, the designer, made wardrobe choices which were influenced by images taken from Greek vases (Shirley, 2005, p. 37); the very images which Jonathan Miller felt to be inappropriate for his own, later, televised version. Production photographs from 1960 show chest armour, short tunics and cloaks for the men, and long, flowing robes, gathered on one shoulder, toga-like, for the women. Peter Hall has favoured classical dress for his productions and has commented 'Unless what's on the stage looks like the language, I simply don't believe it' (Berry, 1989, p. 209). Hall and Barton's classical style in 1960 ensured that the textual references to swords were literalised by their use on the stage. Apparently having forgotten Byam Shaw's classically-costumed Stratford production from six years earlier, Robert Speaight remarked:

We have seen the play dressed in Elizabethan, Edwardian and modern costumes, and each of these experiments had its justification and produced its interesting results. But Mr. Hall had the startlingly original idea of letting his actors look like Greeks and Trojans. (Speaight, 1960, p. 451)

Reviewers were generally very affirmative about this Hall/Barton landmark production: writing in 1982, Kenneth Muir called it '[p]erhaps the most satisfying production till now' (Muir, 1982, p. 11). It achieved coherence and 'modern resonance' (Bevington, 1998, p. 102) for many reviewers. The production did not seem to require modern dress in order to achieve 'modern resonance' however: the classical costumes and properties were rendered somehow neutral, and did not distract reviewers from the unfolding of the play itself. Speaight commented very positively that 'Mr. Hall evidently felt that the play was so modern that its modernity could be left to look after itself – which it very capably did' (1960, p. 451). A production of a three-hundred-and-sixty-year-old play, staged with actors in costumes which were reminiscent of figures from two millennia ago, once again received the label 'modern'. *Troilus and Cressida* clearly did not need modern dress in order to be claimed as 'our play'.

In his 1968 version of the play, Barton again chose classical costumes. This time the production became memorable for the brevity of those costumes. The late 1960s were a time of financial constraint for the RSC, and the short, revealing kilts and breech cloths for the warriors, in a very practical sense, did not require large quantities of expensive fabric and were far cheaper than producing armour (Rutter,

2001, p.134 and Shirley, 2005, p. 48). Whatever the financial imperatives were which shaped the production's design decisions, however, the 1968 *Troilus* became known as the version which foregrounded homoerotic themes at a time when sex, and more specifically homosexuality, was a major issue. From its pragmatic, financial roots, the costuming choice for the production acquired a wider set of social meanings and a greater significance within the play's stage history. Barton retained his preferred classical costuming in 1976 at the RSC, this time co-directing with Barry Kyle, in a production which preserved brief male costumes and featured, according to David Zane Mairowitz, 'a lavish effeminacy' and skirmishes which were 'sensually based' (Mairowitz, 1976, p. 20).

Towards the end of the twentieth century the use of classical costuming was again seen in two British productions, both, however, also utilising some less-precise, eclectic elements. Ian Judge's production for the RSC in 1996 featured classical shields and weaponry, and echoed the concentration on the male body, as seen in John Barton's earlier work, with disrobed warriors taking a communal shower and costumes for the battle scenes consisting of, according to Robert Smallwood, 'some leather upper-body armour here and there but mostly just black leather thongs' (1997, p. 211). This time an added note of Orientalism was present in elements such as Troilus' long, black, plaited ponytail and the floor-length robes for the Trojans which resembled Japanese kimonos (Performance recording, 1996). Trevor Nunn's production at the National Theatre in 1999, set on a circle of red sand, was also largely centred in the classical world of antiquity, with shields, spears, fire-bowls, swords and military standards. The Greeks' traditional chest armour, however, was

overlaid with greatcoats which resembled those from more recent centuries (Performance recording, 1999). Strikingly, Nunn cast white actors as the Greeks and black actors (apart from David Bamber as Pandarus) as the Trojans. Nunn made the demarcation between the two sides even more visually noticeable, with the Trojans wearing white, flowing robes, making them look like 'North African tribesmen' (Coveney, 1999), whilst the Greeks wore darker-hued, battered clothing. Nunn stated that he 'wanted to make the maximum distinction between Greek and Trojans' and that, in his production, 'the Trojan culture was the more ancient and mystical' and 'the Greeks were a more recent power with colonial ambitions' (Bate and Rasmussen, 2010, p. 188). Nunn's clear demarcation of the two sides was extreme in its use of racial difference, but some method of visual differentiation between Greeks and Trojans is common to the approach of many other theatre directors. The practice can be useful to a theatre audience faced with a large cast and a less well-known play, yet it has more in common with the interpretations found in much earlier literary criticism. Wilson Knight drew a much clearer distinction between the Trojans, who stood for 'human beauty and worth' and the Greeks, who represented 'the bestial and stupid elements of man' (1930, p. 47), for example, than later writers such as Graham Bradshaw and Michael Long who rejected the straightforward distinction between the two factions, (Bradshaw, 1990, p. 139 and Long, 1976, p. 118).

By the beginning of the twenty-first century, the use of classical costuming, now more commonly with the incorporation of a number of eclectic elements, was still in evidence for some productions of *Troilus and Cressida*. It was seen in Peter Stein's 2006 production for the RSC/Edinburgh Festival and Matthew Dunster's 2009 version

at the Globe. The battle scenes in Stein's production, for example, used traditional plumed helmets, swords and circular shields, and several characters wore generic, long gowns, whilst the lovers wore more contemporary costumes: for the pledging scene, Cressida was in a short-sleeved, knee-length pink dress, whilst Troilus had an open-necked white shirt over loose trousers (Performance recording, 2006). Dunster's production was generally staged in togas and sandals, with the odd, battered leather breastplate, but Cressida sported 'punky purple highlights' in her short, cropped hair (Spencer, 2009).

Period analogue

The next most common category of set and costuming for productions of *Troilus and Cressida* is the group labelled by Ralph Berry as 'period analogue'. More specifically, I am dealing here with the 'concept' strand of Berry's grouping: Berry also includes instances of 'décor'-led period settings, where the 'visual elegance' of a style is used as 'a purely cosmetic way of dressing up the text' (Berry, 1989, p. 16). When directors and designers choose a period setting for a production, a deliberate sense of affinity is evoked between features of the play and features of an historical era. A period analogue setting reveals itself as an act of criticism, for Berry, as the selection and concentration of a range of images is used to 'explain' the play. When this choice of setting is made for *Troilus and Cressida*, it often implies an affinity between the depiction of war in the play with an understanding of warfare typical of the chosen period. The most usual choice of an historical period for *Troilus* has been the late Victorian or Edwardian era, which offers the opportunity to suggest a time of dying chivalry or the last days of heroic idealism, and, on a practical level, makes the use of

swords, especially ceremonial swords, possible. The period also carries with it associations of a repressed underbelly of sexuality and sexual disease, together with a set of perceptions about gender roles in society.

The use of an Edwardian-era setting for *Troilus* was first seen in 1956, in Tyrone Guthrie's production at the Old Vic. More accurately, the production was set in 1913, just before the outbreak of the Great War, because it offered the chance, according to Guthrie, to show the final moments when war could be considered a 'sport, a gallant and delightful employment [...] for young men of the upper class' (quoted in Apfelbaum, 2004, p. 47). Reviews of Guthrie's production show how novel and daring the relatively recent, early twentieth-century period setting for a Shakespearean play was still considered to be in the mid-fifties. These expressions of the audacious newness of the non-classical, non-Renaissance costuming came together with a grudging acceptance that the design choices produced effective and stimulating theatre. John Barber stated that Achilles 'with a brandy balloon glass and cigarette', Helen 'in a bustle' and civilians in 'grey toppers' were examples of 'Guthrie's stunts' which made the play 'sometimes fun' (Barber, 1956). An article in *The Times* (1957) similarly stated that Guthrie's period translations, such as turning the Trojans into flamboyantly-uniformed Guardsmen, were 'wicked tricks' but acknowledged the humour in such a setting. Guthrie's 'wicked tricks' of period setting thus reinforced the overall satirical tone of his production. Shakespeare's play does not treat the heroes of antiquity with reverence, and Guthrie's production highlighted this. The novel cleverness of the period setting in this case, together with Guthrie's overall sardonic approach, enhanced the feeling of levity.

Almost three decades after Guthrie's version, Howard Davies' production for the RSC in 1985 also used a period analogue setting for *Troilus*, this time moving a little further back, chronologically, to the time of the Crimean War. This setting created a juxtaposition, for Nicholas Shrimpton, between 'the heroic idealism of the Charge of the Light Brigade and the brutal reality of the wards at Scutari' (Shrimpton, 1987, p. 203). Set in a crumbling, bombed-out mansion, designed by Ralph Koltai, with a huge, curving staircase, the production found the Victorian era to be a source of useful images. Rather than the levity found in Guthrie's Edwardian-styled production, Davies used the evocation of the Victorian period in order to politicise the play. Power was firmly in male hands, and the social position of women was a deliberate focus. Ulysses was a frock-coated, Gladstone-like orator, whilst Agamemnon was an elderly general in a quilted smoking jacket, far removed from the lines of battle (Performance recording, 1985). More specifically, the setting enabled Juliet Stevenson's Cressida to resemble a nineteenth century 'New Woman'; no longer a flirtatious coquette, she was serious and thoughtful, but ultimately a victim of the showy, masculine culture around her.

In 2003, Andrew Hilton's production of the play at Bristol's Tobacco Factory also used an early twentieth-century period setting to enhance the notion of a protracted conflict which has come to be much-questioned, and which generates great emotion: the Great War of 1914-18. *Troilus* looked like a smart, young cavalry officer and Cressida wore a long, Edwardian-styled, beaded evening dress (Koenig, 2003). Five

years before Hilton's production, Michael Boyd had preferred a looser evocation of a period setting for his 1998 RSC touring production, whilst still interested in the suggestion of a drawn-out struggle. Boyd stated that he had aimed for a setting which 'suggested both the Spanish Civil War and the conflict between the Irish and the British in the early twentieth century' (Bate and Rasmussen, 2010, p. 185). The Greeks were business-suited British, in Boyd's version, with the Trojans resembling a family of farmers, in checked shirts and corduroy trousers, accessorised with bandoliers. Fighting took place with handguns, crowbars and knives, and the bout between Achilles and Hector became, for Robert Butler, 'a tavern brawl, with one hitting the other with a crate' (Butler, 1998). The 1998 set, designed by Tom Piper, was a war-torn, bullet-marked white interior, across which a curtain could be drawn to suggest the Greek encampment. For some reviewers, keen to find 'our play' in a performance of *Troilus* at the end of the century, the design also evoked far more contemporaneous images of the recent Bosnian conflict, with Darrell D'Silva's Achilles being read as a 1990s European war criminal (Spencer, 1998).

Modern

Perhaps surprisingly, for a play that has so often been acclaimed for its current relevance, there have been relatively few productions of *Troilus* which have sought to depict the events of the play in an up-to-date, or truly 'modern' setting. The first of these modern-dress productions was in 1938, directed by Michael Macowan at the Westminster Theatre. Macowan's production appeared during a season when modern dress was also used for *Hamlet* at the Old Vic, and was positioned more than a decade after Barry Jackson's innovations in modern costuming of

Shakespeare at the Birmingham Rep. Barbed wire and field telephones were seen, in Macowan's production, and aeroplanes and machine guns were heard. The Trojans wore khaki and Helen was in a long, silk 1930s evening dress, in a scene decorated with a white grand piano, cocktail glasses and glossy magazines (Shirley, 2005, p. 24). Thersites became, for the first time, an embittered war correspondent. The production is often remembered as a determinedly 'anti-war' version of the play, or perhaps a 'war-debunking' play, (Sayers, 1938), which drew attention to the destruction of honour and a disintegration of noble heroism. Another reviewer found that it expressed a mood of 'contempt for the drum and trumpet attitude to war' and that Macowan's interpretation of the play showed war to be a 'catastrophe to be feared' (*The Times*, 1938a). Ralph Berry comments that one of the most positive aspects of using a 'modern' setting for Shakespeare is that the approach 'undoubtedly communicates rapidly and directly to a large portion of the audience' (Berry, 1989, p. 15). Accordingly, the reviewers of Macowan's version were quick to point out how the production was being performed at exactly the moment when Chamberlain was visiting Germany and that 'the chance of imminent war' was 'in every mind' (*The Times*, 1938b). It is little surprise, then, that this production elicited so many responses connected with the war plot, and a rather smaller number concerned with the role of the lovers.

Productions which use 'modern' dress for *Troilus*, necessarily have to find a way to represent the battle scenes and skirmishes of the play. In 1938 Macowan noticeably cut the duel between Ajax and Hector (Shirley, 2005, p. 27). Quite often, given the increasing incidence of eclectic design in the theatre, traditional swords are used in

modern-dress versions, anachronistically shoe-horned in, as it were, to suggest a more stylised, ceremonial use of the weapon. This particularly seems to be true of the death of Hector, where a ritualistic killing suits the moment and offers a sense of Achilles' desire for display, the same desire for display, inherent in the text, which will lead him to drag Hector's body behind his horse. The Cheek by Jowl production in 2008 and the RSC/Wooster collaboration in 2012 both imported swords into their otherwise largely twenty-first-century settings. Cheek by Jowl's production featured soldiers in trainers, vests and rounded 'squaddie' helmets, carrying swords and wearing segmented body armour. The armour resembled cricket pads, highlighting a trend in recent productions to use costuming to signify 'war as sport', but it also had a suggestion of modern Kevlar (Production photographs, 2008). Other scenes and costume choices had a contemporary feel: Cressida wore white jeans, Thersites had a pair of rubber 'Marigold' washing-up gloves and several reviewers likened the view of Helen, in white tulle, posing with Paris, to a celebrity photoshoot for *Hello!* magazine (Spencer, 2008; Taylor, 2008; Rutter, 2009, p. 383). Hector was dispatched with a sword in 2008, as he was in 2012, when the RSC Greeks were in Desert Storm combat gear and the Wooster Trojans resembled present-day Native Americans.

Eclectic

Some productions have gone further with the incorporation of eclectic design choices, and have displayed a far larger range of images from vastly different time periods. By 1989 Ralph Berry could imagine that eclecticism, or the 'portmanteau category' was becoming 'the central aesthetic of our times' (Berry, 1989, p. 22). In

1981, Terry Hands' production for the RSC at the Aldwych theatre featured, according to David Bevington, 'Trojans in a kind of medieval-classical getup', whilst the Greeks were 'trench warriors of World War I' (1998, p. 105). Sam Mendes' well-received production for the RSC in 1990, designed by Anthony Ward, went even further in the mixing of eras: a metal Renaissance breastplate was worn by Agamemnon, overlaid with a moth-eaten cardigan, and soldiers had plumed helmets and circular shields from ancient times, whilst 'Lover Man, Where Can You Be' played on a ghetto blaster outside Achilles' tent (Performance recording, 1990). The costuming choices for Simon Russell Beale's Thersites, as I discuss in chapter 5, formed an eclectic 'Frankenstein's monster', a figure described by the director as a being 'created from the body parts of other people' (Leipacher, 2011, p. 56). Dennis Kennedy has called Mendes' production 'scenographically representative' of the RSC's output at the time (2001, p. 336), suggesting that the use of eclecticism on stage was widespread by the company in the late twentieth century. Whilst each individual visual unit created or suggested meanings for the audience, there was no sense of the production being constrained or limited by having to maintain the 'rules' of any particular historical time period, and a generally neutral colour palette tied the visual units together.

The companies

The British theatrical productions outlined above form the basis for my study. A chapter may necessarily feature one or more of the specific staged versions more prominently than others, since my focus lies in changes to the interpretation of characters, and some theatre productions offer more evidence of this sense of

transformation. The output of the RSC provides a significant proportion of the material under discussion, largely due to the fact that, as a major, national organisation for presenting Shakespeare in Britain, the company has been more likely to cover less-frequented areas of the canon, such as *Troilus*, than smaller, independent theatre companies. I have attempted wherever possible to include consideration of productions from other companies, such as those of the National Theatre and Cheek by Jowl. Jonathan Miller's 1981 BBC production of the play is included with stage productions where I feel that it demonstrates some of the movements in character interpretation under discussion. Its inclusion also acknowledges the fact that as a version which was widely accessible to colleges and universities, as well as the general public, it has an important place in any examination of meanings and understandings ascribed to *Troilus and Cressida*.

Structure of chapters

Within each chapter I have attempted to examine three principal areas: the changes in the reading of a character in some of the major works of literary criticism about the play; the differences which were seen and heard on stage when various theatre productions depicted the character throughout the decades; and the ways in which the staged versions of the characters were understood and received at the time of production. Generally, I use the term 'critic' when referring to a person engaged in academic literary scholarship about the play, and the term 'reviewer' when referring to a person who evaluates a specific theatrical production in writing for either a newspaper or a specialist publication such as *Shakespeare Survey*. There are, of

course, examples where an overlap exists between these categories. When quoting from the text of the play, I use David Bevington's 1998 Arden 3 edition.

The understandings of characters in any drama are subject to revision over time, of course, but for *Troilus and Cressida*, with its long history of readership and its relatively short history of performance, the rate of change and the order of change in these characters, from page to stage, can become telling. The concentrated timespan of the performance history for the play means that the changes in depiction of its characters remain vivid, and have not become diluted by a huge range of variations over several centuries. Audiences have been able to note a new, changed Cressida or an anomalous Achilles more distinctly than they may have been aware of a different Romeo, for example. The changes in performance trends can act as a test case, indicating the moments at which the theatre moved in challenging, radical directions. The changes can highlight the moments when the stage opposed long-held notions of gender roles and views of sexuality, as well as the moments at which it retained a sense of conservative ideology. At times, as I will examine, theatrical versions of *Troilus* reflected the alteration in readings of character prevalent in literary criticism of the play, although sometimes a time-lag was in evidence. At other times, and with other characters, stage practice moved more quickly and anticipated later changes in critical thought: theatre productions acted as a prompt to new meanings being considered on the page. This thesis will consider the chronology of these changes, as well as the implications and significance of such variations.

CHAPTER 1 - CRESSIDA

Villain or victim?

‘Cressida goes directly to the Greek camp, and kisses all the men, with an abandon much greater than the liberal customs of Elizabethan salutation prescribe.’

(Oscar James Campbell, 1938, *Comicall Satyre and Shakespeare’s ‘Troilus and Cressida’*, p. 215)

‘On arrival in the Greek camp she is exposed to further trauma – the verbal and osculatory equivalents of gang rape, with a group of soldiers making bawdy jokes and taking turns at kissing her ...’

(Laurie Maguire, 2009, *Helen of Troy: From Homer to Hollywood*, p. 94)

The two literary critics quoted above are summarising the same scene. At the beginning of 4.5, Cressida has left her home in Troy, after spending one night with her lover Troilus. Despite her protests, she has been exchanged for Antenor, a soldier held captive by the Greeks. She has arrived amongst the Greek officers in their camp. Campbell’s reading of the episode suggests a comic tone and his summary makes Cressida active and assertive, a woman making choices: she ‘goes directly’ to the camp and she ‘kisses all the men’. Maguire’s reading makes the moment darker, more threatening, and makes Cressida the recipient of the men’s actions: she is ‘exposed’ to trauma as the soldiers are ‘taking turns at kissing her’. An

element of blame or culpability is present in both readings, directed at the person or people who give the kisses: for Campbell, Cressida has crossed a prescribed moral line and kisses the men with 'abandon'; for Maguire, the Greek soldiers make 'bawdy jokes' and are guilty of acting like rapists. In the time between these two examples of written criticism there had been more than seventy years of social, political and cultural change concerning attitudes to sexuality and the role of women. In between these two positions there had also been seventy years of the performance history of *Troilus and Cressida*, during which time changing approaches to the character of Cressida were visible in the staged versions of the kissing scene.

Cressida's first line in the scene is a question. She asks Menelaus: 'In kissing, do you render or receive?' (4.5.37), and it is this very question, the question of who gives the kisses to whom, which becomes significant. Cressida's arrival amongst the Greeks, and the nature of the kisses rendered and received, offers an important moment which can reveal the interpretative stance of both literary critics and stage directors. At one end of the spectrum, characterised by Campbell's reading, the presentation of a flirtatious Cressida who enjoys (or even gives) the kisses, sets up a dramatic logic for her later shift of affections to Diomedes: her attachment to Troilus must have been weak or shallow to begin with, if she can revel in the attentions of other men so soon after spending the night with him. In some ways, in this reading, she becomes the villain of the piece, duping the innocent Troilus. At the other end of the spectrum, characterised by Maguire's interpretation, the more sympathetic presentation of Cressida as a frightened victim, passed viciously from man to man, can suggest the

imperative need to cling to Diomedes as her protector: better to become the mistress of one guardian than to be used 'in general' by the whole of the enemy camp.

Written summaries of the text of the kissing scene and the performance choices seen on stage have both displayed a movement along this spectrum. The movement along the spectrum, as I will discuss in this chapter, was largely unidirectional during the twentieth century. There were only a few exceptions to the passage away from earlier written depictions of the coquettish, rather inconsequential Cressida who bestowed kisses, towards Cressida, the central tragic victim of the play, who was forced to endure the kisses of the Greek officers. What becomes significant, then, is chronology: the moments when the changing perception of Cressida occurred provide a map of more widespread cultural change in the representation of women. For this thesis, the relationship between the changes in literary critical readings of the character and the reinterpretations of Cressida in performance are central.

Literary critics have used their divergent readings of the kissing scene in order to either castigate Cressida or to explain and excuse her later relationship with Diomedes. Graham Bradshaw has commented that 'we notice how many critics have fallen in, then fallen out – disagreeing about *which* characters invite approbation and sympathy' (Bradshaw, 1987, p. 131, italics in original) in the play as a whole. Judgements of Cressida are especially prevalent in critical works. What seems to be more significant, however, more significant than the individual attempts to offer moral evaluation of the actions of a literary/dramatic character, is the seismic shift, the

complete alteration, in the understanding of the kissing scene by both literary critics and theatre practitioners over time. The kissing scene has acted as a gauge of contemporary attitudes towards female sexuality. The actual words used in written summaries indicate far more than an attitude towards one specific fictional character in a play, just as the action onstage when the play is performed displays a good deal about much broader notions of sexuality, the role of women, and, more lately, what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick called 'homosocial' bonds between men (Sedgwick, 1985).

The 'kissing scene' in the text

If such divergent interpretations have been possible, what does the text of 4.5 provide in terms of clues to the characterisation of Shakespeare's Cressida and the nature of the kisses? David Bevington notes, in his 1998 Arden 3 edition of the play, that the square-bracketed '[*He kisses her*]' stage directions he uses in 4.5, not present in either quarto or folio editions of *Troilus and Cressida*, follow emendations introduced substantively by John Payne Collier in his 1858 edition of the *Works* (Bevington, 1998, p. 285). Kenneth Palmer, in the previous Arden edition of the play, used '[*Kisses her*]' stage directions and noted Alexander Dyce as the originator of these additions in 1857 (Palmer, 1982, p. 245). From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, then, it seems likely that readers of the text in many different editions received information in print that the Greek men were giving the kisses to Cressida. The play in Henry Irving's 1895 edition of the *Works of Shakespeare*, for example, includes the '[*Kisses her*]' directions, as do most modern editions since. Significantly, there does not seem to be a tradition of using a more neutral-sounding stage direction such as '[*Kiss*]' or '[*They kiss*]'. Whenever editors insert these additions

about the action of kissing, they are always clear about who renders and who receives. In the same way that the words of literary critics reveal their interpretation of the action of the scene, editors have made specific word choices for these stage directions. Using Bevington's edition, there are four instances of '[*He kisses her*]', relating to Agamemnon, Nestor, Achilles and Patroclus, and a final '[*He kisses her again*]' relating to Patroclus, all sharing the sense that the men are carrying out the action of kissing and that Cressida receives their kisses. Whether the kisses are received happily or not, is, of course, another matter.

How is it possible, then, that a critic such as Oscar James Campbell in 1938 could summarise the moment as one in which Cressida 'kisses all the men' with 'abandon'? One of the editions of the play listed by Campbell in the bibliography to his work *Comical Satyre*, is K. Deighton's 1906 first Arden version. Unusually, Deighton's edition does not have the '[*Kisses her*]' stage directions. Perhaps, then, Campbell's own reading of the verbal exchanges in the scene, without the presence of stage directions, was enough to cause him to believe that Cressida instigated and gave the kisses. Even without the square-bracketed stage directions, however, the implied stage directions from the spoken text also hold the sense of the kissing being done actively by the men *to* Cressida, initiated by Ulysses' suggestion that 'Twere better she were kissed in general' (22). Nestor, for instance, states that it is Agamemnon who has kissed Cressida, 'Our general doth salute you with a kiss' (20), and not the other way around, just as, even more unmistakably, on his second turn Patroclus says 'The first was Menelaus' kiss; this, mine./ Patroclus kisses you' (33-4). When square-bracketed stage directions are added in various editions, they are invariably

placed in identical positions, (lines 19, 23, 26, 30 and 34). This certainty and consensus about their placement provides evidence that, for editors at least, the implied stage directions are strongly signalled by the spoken text.

Together with the notion that the kisses are something done to her, Cressida's general lack of action is noticeable here. Laurie Maguire points out that Cressida does not even speak at this point; 'the silence of this normally vocally assertive woman for a full 20 to 30 lines after her entrance into the scene is striking' (Maguire, 2009, p. 94). When Cressida does begin to speak, she uses witty puns in order to keep Menelaus at arm's length. These puns, as well as the fact that they are delivered in rhyming couplets, are an element of the scene which had often been cited as evidence, by earlier critics such as E. M. W. Tillyard, that the mood of the episode is 'broadly comic' (1950, p. 76), with Cressida being largely untroubled by the situation.

Cressida in literary criticism

In sharp contrast to Maguire's twenty-first-century viewpoint, earlier readers of the text had often described a conception of the scene which made Cressida promiscuous and blameworthy. Dryden felt such a discomfort with the kissing scene that he removed it from his adaptation, and made attempts to 'cleanse' his heroine: his Cressida only pretended to succumb to Diomedes in order to make an escape. G. B. Shaw's late nineteenth-century attitude was rather anomalous in terms of the chronology of changing evaluations of Cressida. He called her 'most enchanting' and believed her to be 'Shakespeare's first real woman' (quoted in Rattray, 1951, p. 47).

Frederick S. Boas offered an understanding of Cressida which was more typical of the late Victorian period. In his 1896 work, *Shakspeare and his Predecessors*, Boas was clear about his view of the character: amongst other denunciations, he labelled Cressida 'a mere wanton' (p. 373), 'a scheming cold-blooded profligate' (p. 375), and a 'heartless coquette' (p. 376), for example. Boas' understanding of Cressida's situation in the kissing scene was equally unequivocal:

On her arrival in the Greek camp she at once shows herself in her true colours. She allows herself to be "kissed in general" by all the chiefs [...] She does not gradually fall away from loyalty to Troilus, for of loyalty her shallow nature is incapable; she simply throws herself with redoubled zest into her old game in this new field. (Boas, 1896, p. 376)

Boas' use of the word 'game' tightly aligns his view with the declaration from Ulysses that Cressida is like one of the 'daughters of the game', as well as indicating a sense of the flippancy of Cressida's actions. Ulysses' castigation of Cressida, beginning 'Fie, fie upon her!' and culminating in him setting her down as an example of 'sluttish spoils of opportunity/ And daughters of the game' (lines 55-64), was understood by such readers to be the accurate comments of a clear-sighted observer. As I will go on to show, Boas in 1896 was not the last commentator to replicate the word choices of Ulysses in order to offer judgement on Cressida.

In some other written summaries of the scene, Cressida did not just 'allow' herself to be kissed, as Boas saw it, but became the initiator of events. For many readers of the text, including Oscar J. Campbell quoted above, Cressida became the kisser. In

1931, in his work *Shakespeare's Problem Comedies*, W. W. Lawrence read the scene when Cressida arrives amongst the Greeks as one where 'she greets the chiefs with bold coquetry' (Lawrence, 1931, p. 129). Further, he wrote disparagingly of Cressida at this pivotal moment: 'I do not see how anyone can be in doubt as to what Shakespeare thought of her, and meant his audiences to think, after reading the famous scene in which she kisses the Greek chieftains all round' (p. 148). A summary of the moment from a 1960 children's version of the tale, in Marchette Chute's *Stories from Shakespeare*, displays the same idea. In Chute's retelling, Cressida arrives in the camp 'in remarkably high spirits for a woman who has just parted from her beloved' and is 'quite willing to kiss half the commanders in camp' (Chute, 1960, pp. 175-76). Chute shared the reading of the clear-sighted Ulysses, too: 'the honourable Ulysses does not think highly of her behaviour' (p. 176). In 1961, work by A. P. Rossiter labelled Cressida 'a chatty, vulgar little piece' who, in another similar summary of the scene, is active in 'kissing the Greek generals all round as soon as she meets them' (Rossiter, 1961, p. 132 and p. 133). Like W. W. Lawrence before him, Rossiter also displayed a keenness to express what he saw as Shakespeare's own indictment of Cressida, in his comments that the aural ambiguity of the unified cry 'The Trojans' trumpet' (Trojan strumpet) at line 65, showed that the playwright was in full agreement with Ulysses' judgement of Cressida: 'Shakespeare underlined that verdict with one of his wickedest puns' (Rossiter, 1961, p. 133). For Rossiter, the inherent humour of the scene, the light-hearted tone encompassing witty 'knaveish' puns, similar to Tillyard's 'broadly comic' understanding of 4.5, is far removed from the tone and mood conveyed on stage later on in the century.

Cressida/Cresseid/Criseyde – the literary tradition

It would seem reasonable to assume that the conventional literary stereotype of the false Cressida/Criseyde was so powerfully and intertextually ingrained for readers that it repeatedly cast a long shadow across the centuries, colouring many later interpretations of Shakespeare's kissing scene. René Girard has stated that '[t]he critics remember the medieval story and cannot imagine that Shakespeare might cleverly overturn its message: the woman alone must be guilty; she has falseness written all over her' (1991, p. 128). It does not seem to be Chaucer's rather sincere, thoughtful heroine that they are remembering, however. By Shakespeare's time, Robert Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid*, a 'sequel which was included in sixteenth-century editions of Chaucer' (Muir, 1982, p. 15), included pious repetitions of 'O fals Cresseid and trew knicht Troilus!' (lines 546, 553 and 560). It ended moralistically, with Cresseid becoming a beggar and a leper before her death. Denton Fox, in his edition of Henryson's poem, notes that during the medieval period, leprosy was considered to be a venereal disease and 'above all other diseases, was thought of as a punishment sent by God' (Henryson, 1968, p. 35). These beliefs continued into Shakespeare's time, when the name 'Cressid' had become a by-word for falsity, a female type: Doll Tearsheet is referred to as 'a lazar kite of Cressid's kind' (*Henry V*, 2.1.76), for example. Whilst Henryson's poem may have helped to solidify the stereotype of 'false' Cressida in general, its narrative events follow on after Chaucer's, and so do not include a version of the arrival in the Greek camp.

This kind of reading of 'false' Cressida, and more specifically this interpretation of the kissing scene in the play, becomes even more curious when we note that the kissing of Cressida by several Greek officers was a new addition by Shakespeare, not found in his sources. Chaucer's *Criseyde* is delivered straight to her father, Calchas, and receives paternal kisses: 'Hire fader hath hire in his armes nome, / And twenty tyme he kiste his doughter sweete' (5.190-91). William Caxton's version, *The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye* (1471-5), features Cressida's forerunner, Briseyda, being greeted honourably by the Greeks, who present her with gifts and promise to keep her 'as deere as their daughter' (quoted in Muir, 1982, p. 17). There was no tradition of older versions of the story featuring a flirtatious Cressida who kissed, or who enjoyed being kissed by, the Greek chiefs. The experience of reading Shakespeare's kissing scene must have been the only encounter with this particular narrative moment for the readers of his play. Whether or not the printed, square-bracketed '[*He kisses her*]' directions were present in the editions of the play used by literary critics in the first half of the twentieth century, the fact remains that the strongly implied stage directions, that Cressida receives the kisses from the group of men, became curiously invisible. Lawrence, Campbell, Rossiter and others all summarised the scene as one in which Cressida chooses to kiss the men, adding a condemnatory remark about the rapidity with which this occurs after her arrival in the camp. These critics were eager to underline her guilt.

The acceptance of Cressida as a figure of conventional immorality continued into the studies of the early twentieth century, when the kissing scene in Shakespeare's play was readily understood to be a humorous situation in which Cressida was happily

'kissing all the men'. No matter what was printed on the page, and no matter what implied directions were present, no matter what the medieval sources may have shown or not shown, 'kissing all the men' was simply the expected behaviour of a certain 'type' of woman. The seventeenth-century play-world collapsed into early twentieth-century values and views about the evils of an unmarried, but sexually active woman. After the night with his lover, Troilus could still be read as a hero, whilst Cressida became fair game. According to this group of male critics, Cressida may verbally protest her displacement from Troy, but she is exhilarated by her sexual command over a group of men, and kisses them 'with abandon'. The notion that a woman may say 'no', when she means 'yes', echoes around these interpretations of the scene.

In her 1989 article, 'The Text of Cressida and Every Ticklish Reader: *Troilus and Cressida*, the Greek Camp Scene', Claire M. Tylee has examined and summed up many similar critical attitudes. She comments: 'scholars [had been able] to interpret what G. Wilson Knight called "the pivot incident of the play" according to their preconception of innocent men tempted by a libidinous woman, rather than as a case of Susanna and the Elders' (Tylee, 1989, p. 68). The interpretations of a single scene from an Early Modern play could display a huge amount about the societal attitudes to women and sexuality in the minds of the early twentieth-century critics. A 'libidinous woman', to use Tylee's phrase, especially an unmarried libidinous woman, who has not one, but two lovers, caused outpourings of disapproval.

Changing perceptions of Cressida in literary criticism

As late as 1980, in his summary of the scene for the York Notes Series, a series intended for A'-Level students and first-year undergraduates, Daniel Massa stated that 'flirtatious' Cressida 'is forward, unabashed and at ease among the merry Greeks' (Massa, 1980, p. 37). Massa's interpretation, however, which also included his assessment of her 'villainy' (p. 40) in succumbing to Diomedes, was a vestigial throwback to an earlier form of criticism. By the 1970s, it was becoming more common for literary critics to produce new, sympathetic readings and understandings of Cressida, particularly the significance of her arrival amongst the Greeks. Noticeably, these readings were a decade in advance of a similarly sympathetic revision of the representation of Cressida in the theatre. In 1975, for example, Grant L. Voth and Oliver H. Evans examined the complexity and development of Cressida throughout Shakespeare's text in their article 'Cressida and the World of the Play', to liberate the character from the 'disproportionate amount of blame' that had been allotted to her, when her position was 'neither as simple nor as corrupt as critics have judged it' (p. 237). At the same time, from the mid-1970s, the role of women featured in academic work in other disciplines. Feminist anthropologists including Gayle Rubin were writing about 'The Traffic in Women', providing a framework to think about the gendered relationships inherent in the kind of transactions concerning Cressida and Helen which are at work in the play. 'As long as the relations specify that men exchange women, it is men who are the beneficiaries of the product of such exchanges – social organisation' wrote Rubin, (1975, p. 174). Not long after this, in 1977, Carolyn Asp's seminal piece, the tellingly-titled 'In Defense of Cressida' was published, stating that Cressida is 'a pawn in the male game of war' (p. 410), who, in

4.5, is 'passed from man to man' (p. 413). By 1980, Gayle Greene's article, 'Shakespeare's Cressida: "A kind of self"' had appeared, providing a re-evaluation of the character in a piece that Tylee called 'The first politically feminist interpretation of Cressida's character' (Tylee, 1989, p.74). Shortly after the kissing scene had begun to be reassessed in the literary field, the stage portrayal of Cressida also began to change. The role of Cressida, towards the end of the twentieth century, and during a second wave of feminist thought, became politicised in performance. Literary critics, however, had got there first.

Cressida on the stage

Many of the first documented stage representations of Cressida, like the contemporaneous opinions from literary critics, constructed a flirtatious young woman, untroubled by, or even enjoying, the kisses of the men in the enemy camp. William Poel's production in 1912/13 featured an amateur Edith Evans in the role of Cressida. Her portrayal was generally understood as light and comic; coquettish like the Restoration heroines she would later play to great acclaim (Muir, 1955, p. 31). The reviewer in *The Times* described the way in which 'Miss Edith Evans gave Cressida a falsetto and prancing gait' (*The Times*, 1912). Evans' Cressida was also a pragmatist, however, keen to make the best of things when handed over to the Greeks. Whilst Troilus was asking her for oaths of fidelity, Cressida smartened her appearance and 'was manifestly preoccupied with pinning on her hat' (O'Connor, 1987, p. 97). Her experience of being greeted in the Greek camp also showed a light-hearted approach: in *The Contemporary Review* of February 1913, Edward Garnett wrote positively about 'her sprightly response to the kisses of the Greek lords'

(quoted in Speaight, 1954, p. 202). Unlike many of the summaries of the scene on the pages of literary criticism of the time, the remark from Garnett indicates that in Poel's stage production the Greek men gave the kisses to Cressida. She did not 'kiss all the men' with 'abandon', but it was her 'sprightly response', her enjoyment of the kisses, which indicated her guilty faithlessness and the comic tone of the scene.

Ben Iden Payne's 1936 production at Stratford's Shakespeare Memorial Theatre featured Pamela Brown as a pink-cheeked, doll-like, lisping Cressida who was 'merely a flirt' (Shirley, 2005, p. 21). Her infantile intonation of 'A woeful Cwessid 'mongst the mewwy Gweeks' at 4.4.55, as she was about to be parted from Troilus, gave 'a suggestion of levity and insincerity' to the portrayal of Cressida (*The Times*, 1936; Hodgdon, 1990, p. 267). The prompt book (1936) records a scene of polite, restrained and ceremonial gesture for the first section of 4.5, with the Greek officers arranged in a semi-circle behind Cressida, and each man crossing over to her individually to bestow a kiss before returning to their original position. A photograph of the Marlowe Society's 1948 version of the kissing scene similarly shows a smiling Cressida happily receiving a kiss on the cheek from Nestor, as the other men are placed in a well-ordered semi-circle around them.

During the 1950s, theatrical productions took their cue for Cressida from the words of Ulysses, making her resemble a sanitised 'daughter of the game', content to receive the kisses of the Greeks. In 1954, Glen Byam Shaw's production of *Troilus and Cressida* included Muriel Pavlow as a 'false and sensuous Cressida' who coped

'remarkably well' with 'her scenes of enticement and of treachery' (Brown, 1956a, p. 5). Richard David, reviewing the production in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, referred to the importance of the 'sluttish spoils/daughters of the game' speech, when he wrote that Pavlow 'modelled her first appearance on Ulysses' description, and made little attempt to go beyond this brief' (David, 1954, p. 390). David's comments reveal, however, a note of negative criticism. His observations, that Pavlow's depiction had failed to move 'beyond' Ulysses' view, suggest that the statesman's words in themselves were partial, and were not necessarily accurate in summing up Cressida. David's comments seem to be indicative of the potential of a more nuanced reading of Cressida's motives and situation from the text, which was, disappointingly for him, not reflected in the performance onstage. The words of Ulysses were not universally questioned at this point, though. Two years later at the Old Vic, Tyrone Guthrie's production featured Rosemary Harris as Cressida. For Ivor Brown, in this case, the portrayal was a success specifically because it *did* follow Ulysses' description:

Miss Harris was the prettiest villain indeed and abundantly supported the remark of Ulysses that 'her wanton spirits look out at every joint and motive of her body'. She was a bewitching and authentic 'daughter of the game'.
(Brown, 1956b, p. 67)

The twentieth-century stage, then, up until the end of the 1950s, had produced a range of rather inconsequential Cressidas in theatrical productions, usually lacking in sincerity from the start, often seen in a comic or frivolous light. Unlike the action suggested in some written summaries of the time, there is no evidence that these

earlier stage Cressidas went around kissing the Greek men, but they do not appear to have been threatened or distressed by the events in the enemy camp. Befitting contemporary sensibilities, the scene featured restrained, polite kisses from the Greeks and offered an opportunity to display Cressida's flirtatious, witty banter in a humorous interlude. Her shift to Diomedes, then, was part of this general superficiality and shallowness.

As social attitudes to sexual relationships began to change in the 1960s, stage representations of Cressida also began to change. At the time of the lifting of the Chatterley ban and the Beatles' first LP, to use Philip Larkin's convenient description, the era of the sexual Cressida began. John Barton's productions, in 1960, 1968 and 1976, all featured Cressidas who were far more sexualised figures in performance than their predecessors had been. The interpretations of Cressida's actions moved beyond superficial flirtation. Dorothy Tutin, in 1960, was 'a seductress from an exotic film' to John Russell Brown (Brown, 1961, p. 130), and, famously, to Bernard Levin she became 'a wisp of rippling carnality that is almost unbearably alluring' (Levin, 1960). In 1968 Helen Mirren's Cressida was the first nude Cressida on stage at Stratford (Styan, 1995, p. 264), and was described by Irving Wardle as 'a sensual child who is on the point of seducing her uncle before Troilus takes her, and who moves over with equal facility to Diomedes' (Wardle, 1968). An emphasis was placed again on Cressida's sensuality and her role as a temptress in 1976, when Francesca Annis was 'a sinuous Cressida on the Stratford stage' (Watts, 1976), and wore a change of costume for the kissing scene, with a laced bodice and gauze covering her

breasts, which made her look like an ancient 'Minoan snake goddess [...] a type of Eve' according to Carol Chillington Rutter (2001, p. 129).

Barton's three versions of the kissing scene shared some of the qualities of earlier productions in that they displayed Cressidas who were largely untroubled, and increasingly pleased, by the men's attentions. A note in the 1960 prompt book, 'All bow', as Cressida entered the gathering of Greeks, suggests that the officers began in a ceremonial fashion. In contrast to the rough, physical handling that later Cressidas would experience on the stage, the only reference to an act of attempted coercion is a note that Menelaus 'grabs her arm'. In terms of the kisses themselves, there is a small but significant detail in the prompt book at the moment when Patroclus takes his second turn. There is an added, handwritten note which reads 'Pat and Cress kiss again'. The use of 'and' in this note crucially suggests that the kiss was consensual, a mutual act. It precludes a sense of threat or danger for Cressida, and, in place of the passive acceptance of a formal greeting, she is equally active in the moment of kissing. There is an absence of commentary about the kisses in the reviews of the production, indicating that they were restrained, perhaps brief. John Russell Brown, for example, did not mention the kisses themselves, but viewed the scene as indicative of Cressida's wit and pragmatism. He wrote that Cressida's 'silence among the Greeks and then the mocking of Menelaus became eloquent of her "quick sense"' (Brown, 1961, p. 133). In the same way that the note 'Pat and Cress kiss again' in 4.5 suggests a mutual, consensual act, notes in the later scene, 5.2, the assignation with Diomedes, follow a similar tone. Notes such as 'They

embrace', 'arms round each other' and 'they kiss' make it clear that Tulin's Cressida was a willing participant in both scenes.

Noticeably, in a production so often remembered for its portrayals of masculine physicality, and specifically Alan Howard's blatantly homosexual Achilles, Mirren's Cressida in 1968 received proportionately little attention in reviews. Milton Shulman commented that 'Cressida hardly gets a look in' (Shulman, 1968). W. A. Darlington did take note of the kissing scene, however, commenting that Mirren's Cressida 'gives herself away to the wise Ulysses by the increasing pleasure with which she responds to her new host's very warm welcome and it is easy to see that her devotion to Troilus will not last' (Darlington, 1968a). Similarly, in 1976, Michael Billington saw Francesca Annis' Cressida 'delighting in the kisses she receives' (Billington, 1976), whilst another reviewer stated: 'Annis' Cressida is never even remotely troubled when she is bandied from Greek to Greek in the "kissing" scene' (Mairowitz, 1976, p. 21).

From the examples above, it would seem that nothing much had really changed in six decades' depictions of Cressida, apart from the fact that changing attitudes to sexuality in the era of 'free love' had caused the rather coy flirtatiousness of earlier Cressidas to be replaced with more overt depictions of physical sensuality. In terms of the kissing scene in 1976, however, one example from a female reviewer has a different tone. In a newspaper interview with Francesca Annis, Janet Watts recorded what she had seen of 4.5 from one of the final rehearsals:

[Annis as Cressida] stood defenceless while her enemy Greeks took turns to clinch their hostage in a kiss of welcome: and the frozen misery of her lost love for Troilus melted visibly in the heat of their vicious embraces.

(Watts, 1976)

The language used by Watts, ('defenceless', 'enemy Greeks', 'clinch their hostage' and 'vicious embraces') suggests that Cressida's arrival at the Greek camp in this production had an air of danger and, at least, a momentary sense of threat in the initial kisses. This sense of threat was passing, however, as she began to enjoy the Greeks' physical greetings. It had the potential to suggest Cressida's delaying tactics, which her earlier line, 'Yet hold I off' (1.2.277), had indicated. The male commentators, in the small selection above, had noted only the final mood of Cressida's acceptance of the kisses, it would seem. For the first time, fleetingly in evidence was the notion that a group of enemy men kissing a woman hostage could be a potentially menacing situation. The momentariness of it, however, enabled the viewers to align it with the cinematic cliché of the woman delaying/holding off before eventual submission.

A new Cressida – reinterpreting the 'kissing scene'

The evident, visual sexuality of Barton's three Cressidas all but disappeared during the next twenty years in the performance history of *Troilus and Cressida*. As the movement towards a reading of 'Cressida the victim' took hold, the next few manifestations of Cressida were serious, thoughtful young women, rather than alluring sirens. In general, (apart from one notable exception in 1996), Cressidas in the 1980s and 1990s did not gain any pleasure from the kisses, but were forced to

suffer them, as a tone of danger and hostility in 4.5 became more common. To use Carolyn Asp's phrase from her 1977 'Defense' article, Cressida in performance also became 'a pawn in the male game of war' (p. 410): Cressida as a moveable game-piece was an image which became repeated in the commentaries of this period. Hard on the heels of the reappraisal of Cressida in works of literary criticism came the revision of the character on the stage. Central to this set of performance examples is Howard Davies' 1985 RSC production, often thought of as a milestone in the stage history of the play, in which Juliet Stevenson's Cressida was brutally passed from man to man and forcibly kissed by the Greek officers. Sam Mendes' 1990 version, also for the RSC, followed similar principles for the depiction of the kissing, although Jonathan Miller's earlier BBC TV production featured a transitional interpretation of 4.5, including, like the 1976 Barton/Annis version, an introduction of passing moments of threat.

In Miller's 1981 version of the play, Cressida's arrival in the Greek camp, her being 'kissed in general', was a rather brief episode within the context of the production as a whole. It took just under two minutes of running time from the arrival of Cressida and Diomedes, through all of the kisses, up to the moment of Diomedes' interjection that he would take Cressida to Calchas. The most obvious threat came, not from the named officers, but from the large mass of common soldiers, the 'chaff and bran' (1.2.233) to which Pandarus had previously alluded. Jeers, laughs and catcalls were heard as Cressida approached, being guided through the jostling crowd by Diomedes who protectively kept both arms around her. The actions of the Greek officers themselves were reasonably polite, and Cressida was not troubled by the formal

kisses. A tightly-cropped camera shot was utilised for Ulysses' 'sluttish spoils/daughters of the game' speech, as he spoke the words privately and quietly to Nestor. There was no sense that Ulysses' judgement was 'true' or even universally held within the camp: it was almost secretly relayed to Nestor alone. Nestor responded to the speech with a slightly amused 'Oh' and a shake of the head, indicating that he felt Ulysses was being unjustly harsh. There was no suggestion of Cressida as a flirtatious 'strumpet' in the action of the scene and, accordingly, the line 'The Trojans' trumpet' was cut: a punning elision would have made no sense here. The duel between Ajax and Hector was of far more significance to the Greeks than the unexpected arrival of Cressida.

In contrast, the nature of the kisses on the main stage of the RST in 1985 became central to the reception of the production. A great deal of the commentary about Howard Davies' production of *Troilus and Cressida* found a focus in the early section of the scene depicting Cressida's arrival at the Greek camp. The radical approach to the famous 'kissing' scene in 1985, the viciousness with which the officers man-handled Juliet Stevenson's Cressida, was certainly pivotal in the reading and understanding of the production, and led, in large part, to the awareness of it as a 'milestone in the history of the play' (Shrimpton, 1987, p. 203). Nicholas Shrimpton expressed the view that 'Henceforth we will never again discuss this text in quite the same way', (p. 205), connecting the influence of the play's performance history upon changes in the critical thinking about it as a text. Attitudes to Cressida had already begun to change within the pages of literary criticism, however, before Davies' production came to the stage. It seems likely that the wider dissemination, relatively

speaking, of a big-budget, main-house RSC production of the play could have greater impact on the general perception of Cressida. From 1985, she became more widely understood as a victim, and the play became a drama about the victimisation of women during wartime. For the first time, newspaper reviews repeatedly used the word 'rape' to label the kissing scene.

Costuming for 4.5 reinforced Cressida's vulnerability in Davies' production, with Stevenson's character rapidly dispatched to the Greeks, unable to change, and so still wearing her white nightgown, covered with Troilus' greatcoat, and with her hair down and loose (Performance recording, 1985). In Miller's 1981 production, Suzanne Burden's Cressida had been wearing a nightgown, her hair down and in disarray, clinging tearfully to Troilus during the enforced parting from him in the earlier scene. On exiting that scene, however, a serving woman had clearly been seen, carefully carrying Cressida's silk dress, ready for her to change into before the journey to the Greek camp. On her arrival, then, Burden's Cressida had the advantage of high-status, costly apparel, complete with jewellery and an elaborate hair style, to make a formal meeting with the officers. Stevenson's Cressida in 1985, however, had no such sartorial advantage. Compared to her previous costume of smart, high-buttoned, long-sleeved Victorian dress, in a production utilising 'minute attention to spats, braces, boots and hats' (Rutter, 2001, p. 130), the fact that she was not 'properly' dressed to meet the Greek generals, who were fully attired in military uniform, immediately placed Stevenson's Cressida at a disadvantage.

According to the prompt book (1985), Diomedes, who had led her on by hand, left Cressida to the officers, as he moved downstage right, out of the way. The prompt book records the action of the other Greeks at this point, showing that they 'all move in'; a very telling phrase for the tone of the incident, suggesting the pack-like movement of the men. The brutality began at once. Amidst much laughter, Cressida was pushed and pulled between the men. Patroclus was particularly physically rough in this version of the scene, forcing down the greatcoat off Cressida's shoulders, causing her to appear more undressed and also more trapped as the coat pinned her arms to her sides. The moment was understood by observers and commentators, not surprisingly then, as 'a brutal semi-rape' (Nice, 1986, p. 26), 'tantamount to rape' (Billington, 1985), 'a cruel display of male sexual brutality' (Shrimpton, 1987, p. 205) and 'kisses that amounted to assault' (Warren, 1986, p. 117). These examples are part of a larger sample of newspaper reviews which utilised the same vocabulary of rape to describe the kissing scene, vocabulary which had never been connected with this moment in *Troilus and Cressida* before. The terms were used widely and consistently, showing the noteworthiness of the 1985 stage interpretation of the kissing scene. The violence inherent in the vocabulary of rape and sexual assault communicated the sense of shock of the viewers as well as the mood of the moment on the stage. An extremity of language seemed to be needed to communicate their response.

The reviewers' response

This interpretation of the kissing scene did not meet with universal approval, however, with several critics feeling that the approach went against the text and

caused difficulties for other moments. There was a good deal of written discussion about the 'meaning' of the play. Nicholas Shrimpton, whilst writing in a generally positive tone about the production, commented about the new interpretation of 4.5:

Fascinating though this high-minded re-reading was, certain crucial joints of the play creaked a good deal under the strain [...] Juliet Stevenson was obliged to patch up [the later scene with Diomedes] by stooping to the desperate expedient of suggesting that terror had somehow driven Cressida mad. Shakespeare's plays will always mean more than we conventionally expect them to. But this does not imply that they will always mean exactly what we want.

(Shrimpton, 1987, p. 205)

Another critic who shared the view that Davies' production was wrongly going against the text and was not living up to the 'true' meaning of the play intended by Shakespeare was Michael Coveney. He wrote:

In recent years there have been noticeable contortions to make elements of *The Shrew* or *The Merchant* palatable to contemporary liberal sensibilities, but nothing so crass as here perpetrated by Davies and his Cressida, Juliet Stevenson. They are unwilling to suggest that Cressida is either false or sluttish after the exchange with Antenor, and simply censor the play's meaning without rewriting the words [...] It may be hard cheese on the RSC feminist puritans, but Shakespeare is writing about falsity and sexual wantonness, not rape. (Coveney, 1985)

Coveney's commentary privileges the literary, printed text, 'Shakespeare is writing about falsity [...]', and claims his own interpretative view of that writing as authoritative. The reviewer's use of specific vocabulary, 'sluttish' and 'wantonness', are another example of a commentator echoing the words of Ulysses in order to prove a point. However, by the time of the transfer to the Barbican in 1986, Coveney had also, to some degree, accepted a new set of meanings in the play, as he re-evaluated the scene. Here was an instance where the performance of the play had intervened in the accepted meaning of the text; for Coveney, at least. He revised his position on the scene, stating that he was 'not so sure' that Stevenson and Davies were wrong in 'playing against Cressida's falseness' and that the rejection of the usual path of 'careless promiscuity' was an interpretation which worked, and was 'original' (Coveney, 1986). During the debate about the kissing scene in Davies' 1985 production, the point of conflict between the long-accepted meaning of *Troilus and Cressida* when read from the page, and the meanings released by interpretation on the stage, was brought into sharp relief.

Juliet Stevenson, though, believed her portrayal of Cressida's treatment by the Greeks and her subsequent succumbing to Diomedes to be very much led by the meaning in the text, what she called the 'evidence', rather than a rewriting or a rereading of it. She also applied a rationalising sense, from outside the text, of the realities of women like Cressida during wartime:

I didn't want to play her as a whore – she's not a whore, there's no evidence for that at all. But yes, she may seem a cynic [...] And with Diomedes, [sic] she

knows that if she doesn't accept him as her boy friend, [sic] she will become the sexual pawn of the whole camp. (Hebert, 1985)

For Stevenson, Cressida's change of allegiance to Diomedes became 'a survival technique' (Hebert, 1985), a kind of pragmatism also seen during 4.5. Stevenson's Cressida famously used a gesture and a single line to alter and turn the threatening tone of the scene. When Ulysses asked for his kiss, Cressida wrapped the greatcoat back around herself, and loudly barked out 'Why, beg then', as she 'snapped her fingers, gesturing imperiously towards the ground' (Rutter, 2001, p. 131). The video recording of the scene includes a clear, widespread audible gasp from the audience at this moment. The presence of a large, handwritten and capitalised message written next to the 'Why, beg then' line in the prompt book, complete with asterisk, reading 'DON'T PROMPT', indicates the use of a long pause at this moment, suggesting its significance as an important turn-line in the tone of the scene.

Ulysses' comments became the sour, peevish retort of a man verbally bettered by a woman. Several reviewers found this device to work well. Michael Billington stated that 'this pays rich dividends', as Ulysses' words became 'the violent reaction of a man humiliated by being expected to beg a kiss' (Billington, 1985). Another reviewer likewise understood that 'Ulysses' biting assessment of her' became reduced to 'spite rather than perception' (Thomas, 1985). Although many reviewers summarised Cressida in 1985 as a 'victim' of men and of war, the Cressida who exited the stage from 4.5 was, at least momentarily, no victim. The change in Cressida was necessarily creating a change in Ulysses and the 'meaning' of his words.

The notion that Cressida on the stage 'had no need to be a coquette' (Shrimpton, 1985, p. 203) and could find an active voice on her arrival at the Greek camp, was, therefore, one of the most influential aspects of the 1985 production. Centred upon the new interpretation of 4.5, but also having an impact on other scenes such as 1.2, the parade of Trojans, and 5.2, Cressida's assignation with Diomedes, Juliet Stevenson's portrayal came to cause a redefinition of the role and, to some extent, the play as a whole, for audiences, reviewers and theatre scholars. Anticipating some of the themes which would come to be connected with the 1985 RSC production, Jonathan Miller had stated that he wished to reject the manner in which Cressida had often been portrayed as 'a trollop from the start', and Suzanne Burden had felt that her Cressida in the BBC series was finally 'a victim of states and men and rulers ... [but] a survivor as well' (Fenwick, 1981, pp. 25-6). The one-dimensional portrayal of Cressida as calculating and faithless seemed to belong to a bygone age, and Howard Davies' production had taken a longer, more memorable and more radical step along a path already initiated elsewhere.

Developments from 1990

Five years later at The Swan Theatre, in Mendes' RSC production, developments in reviewers' responses to a victimised Cressida were becoming evident. The youthfulness of Amanda Root's Cressida was commented upon by several reviewers. Some commentaries referred to a 'Juliet'-like quality in her interpretation, suggesting not only her young age and her innocence, but also the tragedy of her situation, given her initial, genuine attachment to Troilus. No longer just commenting on the way that Cressida could stand for 'woman as victim of war', critics were

beginning to invoke literary classifications of 'the tragic victim'. As Cressida's suffering increased, so her character's status within the play increased. Nicholas de Jongh wrote that 'Amanda Root, as if she were playing Juliet, makes Cressida a tragic victim rather than a flirtatious main chancer' (de Jongh, 1990); the reviewer in the *Financial Times* commented that 'Amanda Root is a wonderfully young Cressida: a Juliet who turns unfaithful' (Rutherford, 1991) and Michael Billington stated that this Cressida caught 'precisely Shakespeare's sense [of] youthful ardour contaminated by the insidious values of war' (Billington, 1991).

Mendes' interpretation of the kissing scene shared many of the staging decisions of the 1985 production, such as the circling, aggressive men and Cressida's recourse to verbal wit to extricate herself from sexual threat. The scene took place within an area marked off by low ropes, ready for the Hector/Ajax fight, an area where Cressida also had to 'duel'. She was pushed and pulled between Patroclus and Menelaus, with Menelaus grabbing her arm in his attempt to drag her away from Patroclus. Where Mendes' version differed from its immediate RSC predecessor was in its more sympathetic portrayal of Diomedes as Cressida's protector. Grant Thatcher's Diomedes did not appear onstage in the 1990 production until 3.3, the first scene after the interval. The prompt book (1990) reveals that Diomedes' lines in earlier scenes, such as 2.3, were either cut or given to other characters, including Nestor and Ulysses. As such, this Diomedes was not associated with the gulling of Ajax and was not visually aligned in the minds of the audience with the underhand trickery of the older Greek Officers. He was new to the audience after the interval and so could signify something different. The interpretation of the 'smiling, smooth Diomedes'

(Feay, 1991) who was 'all sophisticated charm [with] nothing of the buffer about him' (Rutherford, 1991) allowed Cressida to shift her affections to him, rather than succumbing through fear to a violently thuggish Diomedes, as Stevenson's Cressida had done in the 1985 production. Malcolm Rutherford (1991) stated: 'You can see why Cressida falls for Diomedes'. Although the harsh treatment of Cressida on her arrival in the Greek camp was retained, her change of allegiance, away from Troilus, was not excused or defined by the mitigation of fear, but was an active choice.

In common with Miller's 1981 and Davies' 1985 production, the speech from Ulysses served to display more about his own character than to expound a justified, accepted recognition of Cressida as 'sluttish'. In 1990, the lines were delivered in a manner 'close to hysterical melt-down', exposing 'his naked neurosis' as 'Nestor and Agamemnon exchanged a significant look of raised eyebrows' (Rutter, 1994, p. 120). Productions of *Troilus and Cressida* within this decade, 1981-90, did not seem to offer any validation to the comments of Ulysses. The comments were always called into question, presented as spiteful and irritable, and were spoken without Cressida hearing them, following a scene of some degree of sexual threat. The performance of 4.5 at this point in its stage history was set at a distance, both chronologically and politically, from the readings and summaries of the text often seen much earlier in the century, in terms of both the action of the kissing and the onstage reception of Ulysses' words.

The 1990 kissing scene was understood by several reviewers as sharing some characteristics with the portrayal of male brutality from Davies'/Stevenson's work from five years earlier and their vocabulary was similarly patterned. R. V. Holdsworth (1990) summarised the kissing scene as: 'Encircled menacingly by her new hosts in the Greek camp, she is subjected to kisses of escalating sexual aggressiveness, and wipes her mouth disgustedly after Patroclus' double assault'. Another reviewer found Cressida 'more roughly handled than false' (O'Connor, 1990, p. 29) and Martin Hoyle (1990) saw Cressida's arrival at the Greek camp as 'heavy with the threat of rape'. By 1990, there was no sense that this was a difficult or challenging new interpretation of the scene, however. There were no debates about 'meaning' or about scenes creaking under a misreading of Shakespeare's words.

The 'kissing scene' becomes a dance

By the end of the century, the scene of Cressida being 'kissed in general' had evolved into a dance. Michael Boyd's 1998 touring RSC production and Trevor Nunn's 1999 production at the National Theatre both presented Cressida's arrival at the Greek camp by employing choreographed steps. Nunn called 4.5 the play's 'watershed event' (Taylor, 1999), and both he and Boyd gave the scene a deliberate emphasis, elongating it and marking its significance with music, brutality and choreographed movement. At a time when academic studies of masculinity were extending within the realm of gender studies, the kissing scene was no longer just an examination of the vulnerable position of women in war: by the end of the twentieth century, it had become a site for the exploration of male group behaviour.

Like its RSC predecessors of 1985 and 1990, Boyd's 1998 version of the scene was staged as a series of forced, unwanted kisses imposed upon Cressida, causing commentators once more to see the episode, as Charles Spencer did, as 'almost as shocking as a gang rape' (Spencer, 1998). The aural dimension of the performance was extended. The opening section of 4.5 featured the sound of a slow, military drumbeat, signalling the approach of Hector, coming to fulfil his chivalric challenge. When Cressida unexpectedly entered the scene, the drumbeat continued, and it continued throughout the kissing, becoming an ominous pulse. The prompt book (1998) records the use of 'drum', 'whistle' and 'shaker' by the Greek men onstage. The combined aural effect was reminiscent of the antagonism of an unruly football crowd. As Achilles stepped in for his turn, the action became stylised. Darrell D'Silva's Achilles forced a kiss onto Cressida, then took her into his arms, in a formal dancing hold, and began to tango (Performance recording, 1998). As the onstage musical rhythms continued, he nudged, pushed and moved her body around as though she were a rag doll. At one point, Achilles slapped Cressida's leg to instruct her where to position it before continuing with the dance. She began to pick up the steps. Robert Smallwood referred to the action as 'a sinisterly orgiastic tango dance whose steps [Cressida] had quickly to master or be destroyed' (Smallwood, 2000, p. 260). The dance was thus used as an expressionistic statement of Cressida's need to fit in with the rules and expectations of the Greek men in order to survive. In using the device of dance to display how she was forced to become compliant, the now-established interpretation of Cressida as victim/survivor was in evidence.

The longest section of the tango was performed when Patroclus stepped in to claim his kisses, one for himself and one in the place of Menelaus. In 1998, Patroclus was played by a woman, Elaine Pyke, dressed in male clothing. Reviewers were keen to mention the gender ambiguities and confusion surrounding Patroclus in the production as a whole, often rather negatively. Alastair Macaulay wrote, for instance, 'we are tripped up by one gender issue too many' (Macaulay, 1998), and Jane Edwardes saw Patroclus as being 'confusingly played by Elaine Pyke pretending to be a schoolboy' (Edwardes, 1998). Yet in their specific comments about the kissing scene, this extra twist of cross-gender casting remained unmentioned. The reviewers, who had clearly seen a woman's body inside Patroclus' business suit, remained silent about the onstage sight of two, violently forced, same-sex kisses and a lengthy sexualised dance between two women. The episode of Cressida's treatment in 4.5 was read in a fairly straightforward manner, as a scene of male sexual brutality, with Patroclus now subsumed, almost invisibly, within the group of Greek men. Typical of the comments were those of Paul Taylor, who wrote that 'Cressida has been subjected to a sort of tango-ing gang rape from the reception committee in Greece' (Taylor, 1998). Despite the casting of Elaine Pyke as Patroclus, this version of the scene worked in much the same way that the 1985 and 1990 versions had done, to suggest that Cressida learns a lesson from the kissing scene: for a woman in an enemy camp, survival entails submission.

Boyd used the scene to accentuate the dynamics and the power struggles of the group of men themselves. During the verbal exchange between Cressida and Ulysses, Achilles stepped forward purposefully, next to Cressida, his arms folded

against his chest. He seemed eager to watch Ulysses being rebuffed by Cressida, just as Menelaus had been. Achilles took on a proud, gloating stance as Ulysses was denied the kiss. This antagonism between the two men was consistent with other moments in the production as a whole, including the earlier moment in 3.3 when Ulysses, a politicking blackmailer, had produced a brown envelope containing photographic evidence of Achilles with Polyxena. Diomedes and Cressida made their exit at 4.5.54. This meant that Cressida did not hear Ulysses' 'sluttish spoils/daughters of the game' speech, which was delivered with fury. The other men deliberately moved or stood away from Ulysses at this point, marking his words as hysterical and his reaction extreme. Just like the delivery of the speech in 1981, 1985 and 1990, Ulysses' words were given no validation and, to the audience, were more an indictment of his character than Cressida's. The 'trumpet/strumpet' line (4.5.65) was, again, not used.

In 1999 at the National Theatre, in Trevor Nunn's production, Cressida was exchanged, not for Antenor, but for Margarelon, the bastard son of Priam. Any son, even an illegitimate son, was more valuable than Cressida to the Trojans. Margarelon was seen onstage at 4.4, being greeted and welcomed back with warm handshakes by his fellows (Performance recording, 1999). Sophie Okonedo's Cressida, meanwhile, was escorted offstage by two armoured, spear-carrying Greek soldiers. For the kissing, Cressida was heavily outnumbered by fifteen Greek men onstage. The episode had a clearly defined visual power: Cressida was under threat. Nunn believed that Cressida was 'so clearly a victim of war [...] forcibly uprooted from Troy to become a humiliated fantasy plaything for an array of sex-starved Greek

generals' and was determined that there should not be any indication in his production that she was 'disloyal or superficial or opportunistic' (in Bate and Rasmussen, 2010, p. 190). In common with its recent predecessors, the National Theatre stage production did not feature a courteous, genteel Greek commander, but an Agamemnon who was fully part of the group machismo of the kissing scene. Similarly, Cressida being 'kissed in general' in 1999 involved her being roughly pushed and pulled, passed from man to man, as they forced kisses onto her. For each kiss, the prompt book (1999) records the phrase 'He holds her'. Reviewers again saw 'a ritual of rape' (Coveney, 1999), a depiction which was now unquestioned, even by Coveney. When Ulysses came to 'beg' a kiss, Cressida lifted the hem of her skirt, pointing out the toes of her bare foot for him to kiss. Akin to Juliet Stevenson's finger-snapping gesture to the ground in 1985, this signal meant that Ulysses would have to stoop and kneel to take a kiss. The jeering and laughter of the other officers, targeted at Menelaus and Ulysses, meant that the scene was being used, not just to display the power play over the female prisoner, but also to parade the competition and antagonisms between the men. After she had bettered Ulysses, Okonedo's Cressida demonstrated an awareness of these tensions as she held up her hands to her onstage audience in a mock call for appreciation or applause. The men did begin clapping, but it was not the applause Cressida had hoped for; it was a slow, threatening handclap. Naively feeling she had momentarily scored a victory, Cressida was then goaded into a dance, moving around the stage, in between the men.

In 1998, Boyd had used a formal partnered dance in 4.5, connoting notions of instruction and adherence to rules and conventions. In 1999, Cressida danced alone. Given Nunn's choice of Trojan/black, Greek/white casting, Sophie Okonedo's Cressida became a swirling, exotic figure imported for the amusement of a large group of white men, like a turn on a nightclub floor. The racial divisions seen on the stage signalled Cressida's isolation and victimhood even more noticeably. Like Jayne Ashbourne's RSC Cressida the year before, this Cressida also made an exhausted exit from the scene (Performance recording, 1999). Charles Spencer saw the 'weariness and sexual disgust of a woman who is forced to turn tricks to survive' (Spencer, 1999). The exertion of the dance for both Cressidas suggested how their experiences on arrival in the Greek camp had worn them down, both mentally and physically, preparing the way for the yielding to Diomedes in 5.2. In Nunn's production there was no sense that fickleness or a desire for flirtation had motivated Cressida in either the kissing or the acceptance of Diomedes. Her treatment at the hands of the officers meant that she had been 'reluctantly ground down' (Brown, 1999) and, as Smallwood wrote, 'she gave in to Diomed unwillingly, resignedly, disgustedly almost' (2000, p. 258).

The majority of Cressidas from the 1980s and 1990s made their exit from the kissing scene before Ulysses gave his 'sluttish spoils/daughters of the game' speech, a speech which was usually not taken seriously or validated by the other officers. In 1999, Cressida was still crossing the huge Olivier stage, wearily leaving with Diomedes, as the speech was delivered. She did not respond, suggesting either that she had not heard the condemnation, or that, in her dejection, she had begun to be

resigned to her lot. The 'Trojans' trumpet' line was maintained, but rather than being uttered by 'All', was assigned to Ajax who, having completed his warm-up, delivered it clearly as 'trumpet'. This unmistakably heralded the second section of the scene, the duel.

Cressida was not the only Trojan to show naivety in being goaded into dancing. Just a few minutes later, within the same scene, Dhobi Oparei's Hector, 'a chivalrous giant' (Smallwood, 2000, p. 259), found himself spinning into an all-male dance. He was partnered by a pony-tailed Achilles, and circled by the other men, their arms across each other's shoulders, making the meeting of adversaries a loutish party in a Greek taverna. It also placed Hector into the path of his murderer, surrounded first by dancers, as he would later be surrounded by Myrmidons. For Cressida and Hector, being drawn into a dance when on enemy soil suggested gullibility, threat and manipulation by a group of men.

By the end of the twentieth century, the trajectory of British stage representations of Cressida had reached some sort of completion. Cressida had moved from fickle coquette in the early decades, via the sensual wanton of John Barton's time, to the significance and status of a central tragic character. Juliet Stevenson's 1985 portrayal had redefined the role, offering mitigation for the victimised Cressida to yield to Diomedes in the midst of a dangerous environment. In 1999, the sight of Okonedo's solitary Cressida began proceedings at the National Theatre, orienting the audience to the notion that this would be *her* story. She no longer disappeared from

view after her meeting with Diomedes, but was the sole figure left onstage as the lights dimmed at the end. Cressida, like the love-plot itself, had been pulled from the margins of the play into a position of centrality. As the new millennium began, the play in performance had become *Cressida and Troilus*.

Men and masculinity

This prioritising of Cressida's story was not long-lived, however. Productions at the beginning of the twenty-first century continued to feature kisses being forced onto Cressida, but the emphasis for reviewers became shifted to what this moment displayed about male values and masculinity. John Peter praised the version of the kissing scene at Bristol's Tobacco Factory in 2003, and claimed that 'it is male military values of pride and power that spark it off' (Peter, 2003). Lyn Gardner stated 'The great love affair in this play is not between the impetuous Troilus and the girlishly romantic Cressida [...] but between men and war. They have all gone insane, and it is the women, particularly Cressida, who pay the price' (Gardner, 2003). Rhona Koenig felt that 'the scene in which the Greeks force their kisses on the captive Cressida seems more awkward than ugly' (Koenig, 2003). For this reviewer, there was, by this point in the play's performance history, an expectation that the kissing of Cressida *is* ugly and *should be* ugly: the fact that it seemed 'awkward' instead in this production was used as a negative point. There seemed now to be no question about Cressida's victimisation: she was undoubtedly the recipient of unwanted, forced kisses, rather than a keen participant or initiator of the action. There was no longer any sense of shock or novelty about this interpretation, and at this point the vocabulary of rape disappeared from theatrical reviews. An extremity of

language was no longer needed to signal what had become the accepted meaning of the scene.

There was also a solid acceptance that the words of Ulysses displayed peevish misogyny: John Mackay's Ulysses was a 'swift-witted Scot steeped in Presbyterian misogyny, making his outburst against Cressida both credible and revealing' (Kingston, 2003). For Kingston, the Scots Presbyterian interpretation was useful to make sense of the misogyny that was present anyway, and the reviewer unquestioningly accepted that Ulysses' speech was an 'outburst', and not a calm, accurate description of Cressida's behaviour. Similarly, in Cheek by Jowl's 2008 production, directed by Declan Donnellan, the kissing scene was no longer solely about the victimisation of Cressida, but was understood to be a powerful indictment of male group behaviour:

The two scenes in which the Greek generals receive Lucy Briggs-Owen's Cressida in a hostage swap and, later, joust and then jive with their Trojan counterparts suggest that Donnellan's targets are macho display, locker-room misogyny and, maybe, a dangerously unacknowledged homoeroticism. (Nightingale, 2008)

John Barton's productions in the 1960s and 70s had been typified by a concentration on male bodies, but by the start of the twenty-first century, the representation of machismo was an area which had received greater scholarly attention. The kissing scene provided another opportunity to examine masculinity, and the term 'misogyny'

began to be scattered across commentaries. The by-product of this was that the significance of Cressida's plight during the kissing began to recede.

In 2012, in the RSC/Wooster Group production there were no kisses at all, whether forced or otherwise. The scene began with posturing, as Ajax was afforded pomp and ceremony before his fight with Hector, arriving on a gold-draped gurney, here acting as a litter, and playing the electric guitar like an adored rock star (Performance recording, 2012). The RSC/Greeks were oblivious to Marin Ireland's Cressida, making no eye contact with her. They made stylised, grabbing gestures into thin air, accompanied by foot-stamping, at each of the moments when a kiss would normally have occurred. At the point of her exit from the scene, Cressida used the back of her hand to wipe the non-kisses from her mouth, making more of a connection, if any connection was to be had, between this version and the 'Cressida as victim' versions. Ireland's Cressida also mimed a 'pushing away' gesture to an invisible figure as she exited. Like many of her recent incarnations, this Cressida was not called 'strumpet' and was not present to hear Ulysses' denunciation. The kisses had disappeared from the kissing scene, but the sense of discomfort and disgust was still present.

Throughout the history of the different depictions and understandings of the kissing scene, from the written summaries, the literary criticism and the performance examples of 4.5, the language used to characterise Cressida at this point has provided a shortcut to the range of attitudes to gender and sexuality circulating in both the appropriations of the play and in society as a whole. In earlier times, when a

sexually active but unmarried woman was a corrupt figure of moral degeneracy, Cressida was a villain, or could be labelled by borrowing freely from the words of Ulysses. She could be 'wanton', 'sluttish', or a 'daughter of the game'. In the era of free love, performance examples of Cressida made her a sensualist. From the mid-1970s, when feminist anthropologists were writing about the nature of exchange, or the 'traffic' in women, a large amount of literary criticism also began to see Cressida as a 'pawn', a moveable exchange token. A little later she became a quasi-rape victim on the stage, and, for a while, she became the tragic heroine at the centre of the play, before a concentration on the political, homosocial relationships between men came to the fore. The reinterpretations of Cressida have coincided with, and in some cases prompted, changes in the way that other characters and moments in the play came to be perceived. As I will now go on to discuss, the changes in critical readings and the revised theatrical versions of Cressida had implications for the understanding of Troilus.

CHAPTER 2 - TROILUS

Troilus – ‘a true knight’

In Act 4 of *Troilus and Cressida*, Ulysses describes Troilus as:

The youngest son of Priam, a true knight,
 Not yet mature, yet matchless firm of word,
 Speaking in deeds and deedless in his tongue;
 Not soon provoked, nor being provoked soon calmed;
 His heart and hand both open and both free. (4.5.97-101)

The affirmative words of Ulysses have often been taken to be an accurate perception of the young man as the hero of the play. The praise is also reminiscent of Pandarus' earlier description of Troilus as 'the prince of chivalry' (1.2.221), although it should be remembered, of course, that the knightly image was being used by Pandarus in his attempt to promote the young man to his niece. Nevertheless, owing perhaps to the roots of the love-plot in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, the play is littered with images and nostalgic references to idealised forms of medieval chivalry and knighthood, a code of conduct with very specific gender roles.

Throughout decades of literary criticism, Troilus and Hector have especially been associated with these standards. The words of Hector's challenge, 'The Grecian dames are sunburnt, and not worth/ The splinter of a lance' (1.3.282-3), suggest ceremonial combat in the lists, and they also display a picture of the world where women are fought over, as long as their 'worth' is valued highly enough, and where it

is clearly men who do the fighting. In this chapter I will examine the reinterpretations of Troilus in literary criticism and in performance with these notions of knightly heroism in mind. In particular, Troilus' response to the order for Cressida's removal to the Greek camp, as I will examine, has been a significant moment in the later revisions of his character.

With one notable and striking exception, which occurred in the work of O. J. Campbell in 1938, the comments of literary critics concerning the character of Troilus were largely positive and sympathetic until about 1970. Troilus was described in terms of his heroism, his honour, his devoted faithfulness and his ideal nobility, with these key words and phrases often making him sound like a medieval knight. Then things changed, and critics began to find fault with the Trojan prince. As may be expected, this change occurred at the moment when the specific predicament of Cressida began to take a more prominent place in readings of the play. The words, motives and actions of Troilus began to be questioned with suspicion, or even to be condemned outright. After the 1970s, the play as a whole was far less likely to be read as 'the tragedy of Troilus' in the way that had been suggested by G. Wilson Knight in *The Wheel of Fire* (1930, p. 69). Up until the 1970s, though, glowing descriptions of Troilus were the concerns of many literary critics.

Troilus in literary criticism

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's interpretation of Troilus was typical of many of the earlier commentators. In 1833 he wrote about 'the profound affection represented in Troilus' and believed that throughout the text of *Troilus and Cressida*, the character shows

'excellent judgement'. For Coleridge, this meant that when Cressida has 'sunk into infamy below retrieval', the 'moral energy' of Troilus allows him to leave behind her 'dishonour' and rushes him 'into other and nobler duties' in combat and affairs of the state (quoted in Martin, 1976, pp. 41-2). Similarly, in 1896, in *Shakspeare and his Predecessors*, Frederick S. Boas wrote with admiration about Troilus, as though describing the sporting prowess and stiff-upper-lip mentality of a wronged young man at an English public school: 'He seeks refuge from his heartache in strenuous achievement on the field of battle, and when we take leave of him, he is planning exploits of revenge for the death of Hector, whose fall has left him the foremost hope of Troy' (Boas, 1896, p. 375). For Boas, *Troilus and Cressida* was a play with a clear hero, a militant hero who manages to overcome enormous disappointment.

For Boas, however, there was a fault in Troilus, and that fault was to do with the excessive passion and the naivety of youth when faced with the enticements of Cressida. It was, therefore, an understandable and somewhat qualified fault in an inexperienced young man. Boas wrote:

Never has there been a more exact and subtle analysis of the delirious ecstasy that chokes in its own surfeit. And all this is for a shallow wanton in whom this heroic greenhorn, himself "as true as truth's simplicity", looks to find "a winnowed purity in love" equal to his own. (Boas, 1896, p. 374)

Troilus was understood to be the victim of an intoxicating infatuation, one which was capable of 'paralyzing the will, blinding the gaze, and sapping manhood at its source'

(Boas, 1896, p. 373), but an infatuation, nonetheless, which Troilus, ultimately, is able to defeat.

G. Wilson Knight saw Troilus as 'an ardent and faithful lover' (1930, p. 62), yet an unusually 'metaphysical' young man; thoughtful and analytical, concerned with, and thwarted by 'the fine knowledge of human limitations' (p. 64). During 5.2, the eavesdropping scene, when Troilus witnesses Cressida with Diomedes, Knight understood Troilus to be holding fast, erroneously, to his former, idealised view of love: 'it is so deeply rooted in his soul, he may not, dare not, deny it [...] Herein lies the tragedy of Troilus' (p. 69). The tragedy was embedded in the manner in which the innocent Troilus had misrecognised the true nature of the world around him. For Knight, however, Troilus was the only character who remained untarnished by the end of the play: unlike Cressida and Achilles, 'all the fires of human nobility and romance yet light Troilus to the last' (p. 71).

A year after the publication of Knight's *Wheel of Fire*, W. W. Lawrence, in his book *Shakespeare's Problem Comedies*, also commented upon 'the eager and youthful ardour of Troilus' (1931, p. 130). Lawrence found highly favourable similarities between the character and his oldest brother, and stated 'Troilus and Hector are especially brilliant, sympathetic and moving figures. They are brave and chivalrous, the chief ornaments of the Trojan camp' (p. 131). Where Knight had suggested that Troilus' excessive, idealistic passion was the root of his final disillusionment, Lawrence found the fault far more forcefully within the character of Cressida herself.

She was guilty of leading the innocent young Troilus astray. In the text we learn from Pandarus that Troilus has not yet seen 'three-and-twenty' (1.2.227), whilst the age of Cressida is not discussed. Lawrence's own perception of the difference in age of the lovers was of particular significance. It enabled him to find fault with, according to his perception, the older, womanly Cressida. He wrote, for example, that 'Troilus is an ardent, idealistic young fellow, thoroughly under the fascination of a sensual and calculating woman' (p. 129) and also that Troilus is 'an ardent, high-spirited boy who gives all the fervour of his idealistic young love to a false and shallow woman' (p. 130). This reading, perhaps suggested by memories of Chaucer's Criseyde, who was a widow, enabled Lawrence to further his interpretation of Troilus as a youthful, misguided, tragic figure. Although widowhood confers no absolute qualification of age, of course, the figure of Criseyde as a widow, and therefore presumably more sexually experienced than Troilus, seems to have been in the background, influencing many readings of the Shakespearean depiction of the lovers' relationship.

How old is Troilus?

Although some literary critics, including Lawrence, had understood Troilus to be significantly younger and more boyish than the 'calculating' older Cressida, the stage has rarely taken up the idea of this age difference in its productions of the play. William Poel, however, expressed a belief that Shakespeare's Cressida 'is not a girl but a woman who has had considerable experience of the world [...] She is about 28, I take it' (quoted in Speaight, 1954, pp. 195-6), but his perception that the difference in ages of Troilus and Cressida was of significance did not reverberate for long through the play's performance history. For the first performance, Poel's own

Cressida in 1912 was a 24-year-old Edith Evans who appeared alongside a 25-year-old Esmé Percy as Troilus, beginning a long run of acting pairs which had a slightly older male partner. Using a sample of the six RSC productions of *Troilus and Cressida* between 1968 and 1998, the actor playing Troilus has usually been 1 to 3 years older than the actress playing Cressida, with the exception of Francesca Annis in 1976 who was 4 years older than her Troilus, Mike Gwilym. It should be noted, of course, that actors can play roles which are significantly different in years to their own real ages, and it is quite possible for a young actress to convey the pragmatism and maturity of an experienced Cressida, but the stage history of this play does not seem to yield performance examples of this kind. There are not examples from the stage of a clearly delineated younger Troilus, or an obvious depiction of an older Cressida. In this respect, there is a clear example of an understanding of one particular element of the play when read as a text, which has never seemed relevant to the play in the theatre. Literary critics had looked to Troilus' youth in order to excuse his infatuation, but in the theatre the lovers have always looked, physically at least, to be a very similar age.

A negative perception of Troilus

In 1938, the exception to the pattern of reading the play as 'the tragedy of Troilus' occurred in Oscar James Campbell's *Comical Satyre and Shakespeare's "Troilus and Cressida"*. Campbell, unusually for the time, understood both Troilus and Cressida to be figures to be viewed negatively and satirically. Campbell argued against the trend of sympathising with Troilus, and named Frederick S. Boas, G.

Wilson Knight and W. W. Lawrence as literary critics who had mistakenly sided with the young male lover. Campbell wrote:

Troilus was also meant to be rejected. But many critics who spew Cressida out of their mouths attempt to swallow him. They persist in seeing in him an honourable, inexperienced young man seduced and ruined by a sensual and calculating woman. Thus conceived, Troilus becomes a tragic figure – a younger and more sympathetic Antony [...] Almost certainly, Troilus' love story could have taken on no such meaning for Shakespeare or his audience. (Campbell, 1938, p. 210)

Campbell further went on to label Troilus a 'sexual gourmet', a character displaying Shakespeare's idea of the 'educated sensuality of an Italianate English roué' (p. 212). He also described the plighting scene of the lovers, 3.2, as 'the amorous preliminaries of an assignation of two adepts' (p. 213), thus refuting the common understanding of the more innocent, inexperienced Troilus. Campbell's use of the term 'sexual gourmet' for Troilus became especially singled out for censure from other literary critics.

Campbell's position was anomalous within the trajectory of literary criticism's views of Troilus. Campbell was attempting to make connections between Shakespeare's work and the plays of Marston, and so he was specifically looking for elements of 'Comical Satyre'. Writing in the 1930s, Campbell's interpretation of Troilus in particular stood out from the work of other commentators and a quantity of scholarly material repudiated his reading of the character as a satirical figure. The backlash against

Campbell was noticeably vociferous, as other critics of the time seemed reluctant to let go of the image of the romantic, suffering and innocent, young Trojan prince.

In 1942, W. W. Lawrence published a further piece of work, a character-based article entitled 'Troilus, Cressida and Thersites', and took issue with Campbell about his reading of Troilus, whilst siding firmly with Boas, whose 'greenhorn' label he reiterated. Lawrence wrote about Troilus: 'probably most of us would agree that he is a "heroic greenhorn". But Professor O. J. Campbell, in a recent book, has vigorously attacked his character' (Lawrence, 1942, p. 428). Lawrence restated some of the arguments from his own earlier work, that Troilus is 'an idealistic boy deceived by a calculating and experienced woman' (1942, p. 432), and also used some of the words of Ulysses from the play to bolster his tirade against Campbell. Like many 1930s/40s critics, Lawrence accepted Ulysses as a precise, unbiased observer, correct in his appraisal of Troilus. Lawrence quoted Ulysses' words about Troilus from 4.5.97-9, 'a true knight,/ Not yet mature, yet matchless, firm of word,/ Speaking in deeds' and commented that he believed 'It was not Shakespeare's custom to mislead his audience; would he have written these lines if he had desired to satirize a "sexual gourmet"?' (1942, p. 430). Literary criticism from later in the twentieth century, together with some staged interpretations, would certainly not be so ready to take on the words of Ulysses as displaying unquestionable accuracies, but for many earlier commentators the character was viewed as the moral centre of the play, and his likening of Cressida to one of the 'daughters of the game' was often used at this time to 'prove' her true nature and motivation. Similarly, it is not too surprising at this point to see Lawrence quoting Ulysses to reinforce a positive reading of Troilus.

Another critic who argued against Campbell's reading of Troilus as a 'sexual gourmet' was E. M. W. Tillyard in his 1950 book, *Shakespeare's Problem Plays*. The critics who found the play as a whole to be a 'problem', such as Boas, Lawrence and Tillyard, interestingly did not see Troilus himself as part of the problem: he remained untainted. Tillyard argued against Campbell, stating that 'to turn Troilus into an adept at lechery is to wreck one of Shakespeare's masterpieces of characterization and to go flat against what his poetry is telling us [...Troilus] is not a mere sensualist' (Tillyard, 1950, p. 51). Tillyard quoted some of Troilus' more impassioned lines from the plighting scene, such as 'I stalk about her door/ Like a strange soul upon the Stygian banks/ Staying for waftage' (3.2.7-9) and 'My heart beats thicker than a feverous pulse,/ And all my powers do their bestowing lose/ Like vassalage at unawares encount'ring/ The eye of majesty' (3.2.34-7), to prove that the character should be read positively and romantically. Tillyard added 'The last words tell of a noble devotion, which we know to be tragically misplaced. But the displacement does not alter the nobility' (p. 51). In a very similar way, five years before Tillyard's work, in *The Frontiers of Drama*, Una Ellis-Fermor had also written of 'the ideal love of Troilus and the betrayal it meets at the height of its glory' (1945, p. 59). Again, in defending the naive but romantically devoted Troilus, the critics' beliefs in a 'tragically misplaced' devotion implicitly condemned Cressida, and what they viewed as her betrayal of Troilus at the tent of Diomedes.

Apart from Campbell, critics from the 1930s/40s read *Troilus and Cressida* as a series of clear-cut binary opposites: Troilus/Cressida, true/false, naive/experienced, romantic/sexual, victim/betrayer. These views adhered to the archetypal, legendary figures described in 3.2: the constant man who is 'As true as Troilus' (177) and the faithless woman who is 'As false as Cressid' (191). In later literary criticism, the ironies and complexities of these traditional and proverbial selves would be treated more discursively, for example in Linda Charnes' 1993 work, *Notorious Identity*, but for much of the first half of the twentieth century, the definitions of what it was to 'be Troilus' and what it was to 'be Cressida' were largely clear and distinct. Troilus was true, and a knightly hero; Cressida was false, and a shallow wanton.

By the 1960s, however, the opinions of Oscar J. Campbell, that Troilus was not merely an emblem of perfect male heroism, were beginning to be reflected more widely in the work of others. Ideas which had seemed anomalous in 1938, such as the idea that Troilus, too, is being lampooned by Shakespeare, appeared in A. P. Rossiter's *Angel with Horns*. Rossiter, like Campbell, did not find the lovelorn language of Troilus to be evidence of a pure and noble devotion, but believed that the prince's rhapsodies were being undercut and satirised by the playwright and that there was an 'ambiguity of attitude towards Troilus's love' introduced in the text (Rossiter, 1961, p. 132). The very presence of Pandarus, in 1.1, for example, meant, for Rossiter, that 'Troilus's passionate hyperbole is jarred against by what turns the whole scene into a pattern of ridicule' (p. 132) and also 'from the very beginning, a romantic, indulging self-identification with Troilus is checked by the implicit derision of Pandarus's very existence' (p. 147). Earlier critics who had championed Troilus for

his talk of honour during the Trojans' debate about keeping Helen, in 2.2, were slated by Rossiter: 'Troilus's argument was quite specious and self-deluding – rape confers no rights – but critics have been taken in by his “chivalrous passion” and never noticed that his argument is nonsense, and *meant to be seen to be nonsense*' (p. 142, italics in original). Critics, like E. M. W. Tillyard, who had praised the integrity and strength of character in Troilus, for overcoming his distress and for fighting bravely after seeing Cressida with Diomedes, also came in for attack by Rossiter: 'I know that Dr. Tillyard [in *Shakespeare's Problem Plays*] says Troilus has effected a “self-cure”, and found “vent in action” for a new “fierce and resolute temper”. But what Shakespeare shows me is that he has exchanged one mad passion for another' (p. 146). For Rossiter, Troilus was as guilty as Achilles for fighting when it suited him, and for being motivated by personal rage, rather than any sense of nobility.

As feminist thinking about the play began to appear, and as more sympathetic readings of Cressida emerged, Troilus came in for more and more negative criticism. This criticism often found a focus in the close analysis of the character's use of language. Two moments seemed to produce specific commentary: Troilus' use of the word 'wallow' at the beginning of 3.2, the plighting scene, and his short comments upon hearing that Cressida would be given to the Greeks at 4.2. The second of these, his utterances at 4.2, the parting scene, would also come to be of significance in the interpretation of Troilus in the theatre, as I will later discuss.

Troilus' use of language and a disappearing hero

In 1967, Joyce Carol Oates, although not as vehemently critical of Troilus as some other commentators would come to be, questioned his terminology in 3.2, which she labelled 'the strange love scene': 'Troilus is giddy with expectation and his words are confused: does he really mean to say that he desires to "wallow" in the lily beds of Cressida's love, or is this Shakespeare forcing him to reveal himself?' (Oates, 1967, p. 178). The same eight-line speech from Troilus (3.2.7-14) which had been selectively quoted as evidence of his passionate, youthful ardour by critics such as Lawrence and Tillyard, was now, a few decades later, being quoted, again selectively, as evidence against him. Where Tillyard had focused on the lyrical romanticism of 'I stalk about her door ...' (7), Troilus' desire to 'wallow in the lily-beds/ Proposed for the deserver' (11-2) did not endear him to many later literary critics. For example, Grant L. Voth and Oliver H. Evans, in their 1975 essay, 'Cressida and the World of the Play', stated that 'the source of Troilus' vision, in spite of his own disclaimers, is the desire to "wallow" in Cressida's "lily beds"' and they added that 'his imagery consistently reveals that the core of his vision is as corrupt as the real world of the play' (Voth and Evans, 1975, p. 233). Whilst editors of the text discussed the classical roots of the 'lily-beds' as being in either the carnal, bodily world of the *Song of Solomon*, or the sex/death association implied by a reference to Hades in the *Aeneid*, literary critics increasingly began to find the apparent self-indulgent sensuality of the word 'wallow' to be troublesome.

Where Oates, in 1967, had just begun to question and express some uncertainty and discomfort about Troilus' use of 'wallow', feminist critics in the 1970s were more openly and decisively negative. The use of the word 'wallow' was only troublesome to supporters of Troilus: it became a useful piece of evidence for those looking to castigate him and its use served to bolster support for Cressida. R. A. Yoder, in a 1972 article, 'Sons and Daughters of the Game', was particularly unsympathetic to Troilus' use of language. The critic claimed that Troilus had a 'subdued coarseness' in his love poetry and stated:

[H]e wallows – to use his own egregious verb – in a morass of conceits that invariably betray a less idealistic basis for love than Troilus realizes. Not only do sensuous and financial images undercut his romantic protestations, but the strained pitch of his language leads him to absurd exaggerations.

(Yoder, 1972, p. 13)

Yoder also found fault with Troilus' abrupt comments given immediately on hearing that Cressida is about to be removed from Troy and taken to the Greek camp. Of Troilus' lines 'Is it concluded so?' (4.2.68) and 'How my achievements mock me!' (4.2.71), Yoder commented 'an offhand question, a wistful comment, and Troilus departs with Aeneas to join the very council that has dealt the blow' (p. 20). The brusqueness and rapidity of Troilus' sentences here prompted the same negative criticism from Carolyn Asp in 1977, in her article 'In Defense of Cressida'. Asp commented that when about to be separated from his lover, 'The formerly impassioned Troilus, without protesting the decree, comments self-regardingly, "How my achievements mock me!" (IV, ii, 71), and quickly exits without even taking leave of

Cressida' (Asp, 1977, p. 412) and that 'In their parting scene it is Troilus, ironically, who introduces the negative theme of distrust that dominates their dialogue. Repeatedly, he urges Cressida to "be true" and in the same scene, 'Troilus ignores her distress' (pp. 412-3). If we think back to comments such as those of G. Wilson Knight, that 'all the fires of human nobility and romance yet light Troilus to the last' (Knight, 1930, p. 71), it becomes clear to see that opinions of Troilus from the page had changed considerably through the decades of the twentieth century. The images of untainted, chivalrous gallantry were beginning to disappear from the pages of literary criticism. But how was Troilus represented on the stage at the same time as these literary readings? Did an increasingly negative portrayal of his character come to the fore of the play's performance history? Or was the desire to maintain the figure of 'a true knight', a man of sympathy and heroism, a deciding factor in the work of theatre practitioners?

Troilus on the stage – ending the play

One way in which theatre practitioners have attempted to portray Troilus onstage as a sympathetic, central figure has been to end productions with him. When the Folio version's earlier dismissal of Pandarus, at 5.3, is used, then an audience is left with a final view of the grieving Troilus, vowing vengeance for Hector's death. The concluding, and decisive sounding couplet, 'Strike a free march to Troy! With comfort go./ Hope of revenge shall hide our inward woe' (5.11.30-1), offers the potential depiction of a tragic hero, disappointed in love and bereft of his brother, yet still actively engaged in combat. It makes Troilus sound decisive, a quality useful in the construction of a hero. The sound of Troilus giving orders to Trojan soldiers, whether

the men are seen or unseen at this point, ('Strike a free march'), also adds to the notion of him as the new and defiant leader of Troy.

Ending the play with Troilus onstage was commonly used in Stratford productions of *Troilus and Cressida* up until 1960. The first three productions of *Troilus and Cressida* to originate in the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre displayed, at their conclusions, a sense of the fighting spirit of Troilus; the heroic was tied in with the tragic. Ben Iden Payne in 1936, Anthony Quayle in 1948 and Glen Byam Shaw in 1954 all used the Troilus 'Hope of revenge' couplet ending, dismissing Pandarus at the earlier point, 5.3. Ralph Berry, in *Changing Styles in Shakespeare*, calls this 'the "Romantic" way of ending the play' (Berry, 1981, p. 52), when the audience is given a concluding view of Troilus, rather than the more cynical, bitter tone of Pandarus' epilogue. This final stage moment is, therefore, also an important feature of the role of Pandarus, as I examine in Chapter 5.

Payne, in 1936, made the combat and revenge theme clear, ending his production with Troilus ascending some steps to join a group of Trojan soldiers. Troilus had been given heroic status from the very beginning of this production: according to Payne's prompt book (1936), his first lines in 1.1 were preceded by 'Cheers off' as he left the battle. His first entrance was made from the top of a flight of stairs – the same stairs which he would ascend again at the end of the production. The upper level, then, seemed to be connected to the field of battle and its elevation could have stood symbolically for loftier, noble endeavours. When he re-joined his comrades at the

end, Troilus spoke the 'Hope of revenge' couplet as he was 'going up stairs'. This was no solitary Troilus: he moved towards Aeneas and '4 [Trojans] on inner above' (Prompt book, 1936). The final view for the audience was one of camaraderie and a noble, heroic Troilus taking on the responsibilities of leadership.

This side of Troilus, the keen soldier and new leader, was consolidated at the end of Quayle's 1948 production too, when the 'Hope of revenge' couplet was addressed to the group of soldiers who 'All salute[d]' (Prompt book, 1948). The prompt book also records that Troilus, onstage at the end, was accompanied by a 'high violin note', followed by a blackout and then a 'fast curtain'. This ending was typical, wrote Ralph Berry, of the 'heroic, gestural conclusion' of late 1940s theatre (1981, p. 52). The combination of the tragic with the heroic ending was also noted in the comments of J. C. Trewin, who remarked that Paul Scofield's Troilus used, in the last scene, a 'low, charged voice rising from a hell of grief and anger' (Trewin, 1948). Troilus, the soldier, was ready to fight on.

In 1954, in Shaw's production, Laurence Harvey as Troilus also finished on 'Hope of revenge' and was seen alone, outlined against the walls of Troy. Harold Hobson was especially pleased with this final spectacle, whilst acknowledging that Pandarus and his bawdy speech had been moved:

Mr Byam Shaw chooses to strike a grander note, and leaves us with Troilus, a lone figure on an empty stage, with drawn sword, amid the deepening gloom,

facing in desperate defiance, but with will still unbroken, the naked night.
(Hobson, 1954)

Hobson's notion of the 'still unbroken', defiant Troilus from the end of this production seems particularly reminiscent of the positive readings of the heroic qualities of the character from earlier literary criticism, such as Wilson Knight's view that 'all the fires of human nobility and romance yet light Troilus to the last' (1930, p. 71). It is this aspect of the character, the noble enterprise of fighting on whilst faced with defeat, which had created the strongly positive readings both from the text and in stage productions. Whether joining military colleagues, or holding a drawn sword, some visual signifier of Troilus as a warrior knight, and most significantly, a warrior who was prepared to continue the battle, was often used as the concluding spectacle on the stage from the 1930s to the 1950s. At this point, mid-century, the relationship between literary criticism and performance examples of the play seemed very close in the interpretations of Troilus.

Earlier than this, William Poel's 1912/13 production had ended with Troilus onstage, Pandarus having made his last exit at 5.3 (Bevington, 1999, p. 302), but had created a very different concluding mood. Ending a production with Troilus does not, in itself, determine a depiction of the noble, defiant soldier. Poel's production had left the audience 'with its final tableau of Troilus mourning Hector's corpse' (Shirley, 2005, p. 10). As Roger Apfelbaum has pointed out, Poel's own changes to the text in his prompt book show that although it ended with the figure of Troilus, the production did

not offer a view of Troilus as a warrior. Poel removed Troilus' angry and defiant final couplet, and concluded instead with:

Frown on, you heavens, effect your rage with speed!

Sit, gods, upon your thrones, and smile at Troy!

I say at once let your brief plagues be mercy,

And linger not our sure destructions on!

(5.11.6-9, quoted in Apfelbaum, 2004, p. 214)

The remainder of the final scene was all cut, removing the later lines spoken by Troilus when in a war-like, vengeful frenzy; a decision which Poel's biographer, Robert Speaight, put down to the fact that the lines jarred against Poel's pacifism. Speaight seemed critical of the director's cuts in the final scene, and the implications of these cuts on the portrayal of Troilus: he reinforced his own displeasure by reporting that *The Times* reviewer had 'bristled with disgust at the "moping, degenerate Troilus"' (Speaight, 1954, p. 201). Whilst literary critics at the beginning of the twentieth century had understood Troilus to be a tragic hero, Poel's production concluded with a tableau which played up the tragedy, but played down the heroism. Rather than ending with the call for 'a free march' and harbouring the 'Hope of revenge', Poel's Troilus spoke of 'our sure destructions'. This was an ending which Apfelbaum accurately characterises as 'submissive mourning', especially when coupled with Poel's direction in the prompt book, quoted by Apfelbaum, 'Hector slain, Troilus weeping' (Apfelbaum, 2004, p. 214). Whilst sympathetic readers of Troilus had, at times, found excuses for his boyish infatuation with Cressida, by the end of the play they expected their hero to have matured into manly leadership and action. Frederick S. Boas, for example, had pictured Troilus 'planning exploits of revenge for

the death of Hector, whose fall has left him the foremost hope of Troy' (1896, p. 375). Poel's alterations presented a more feminised, weeping figure at the end, which was very unlike the final view of Troilus imagined by many readers. His production may have ended with Troilus, and thus can be seen as indicative of the general sympathetic understanding of the character at the time, but Poel's version also denied the rage and rebelliousness which literary critics had admired in the Trojan prince.

From 1960, it became usual for productions to end with the bitter, cynical epilogue delivered by Pandarus. Although Peter Hall and John Barton's 1960 production ended with a full rendition of Pandarus' 'diseases' speech, a conclusion which had not previously been used at Stratford, a suggestion of the heroic Troilus was still in evidence just before this, created by the use of music. As Troilus spoke the 'Hope of revenge' couplet, the prompt book (1960) records an accompaniment of incidental music with the cue 'Go Orch[estra]' noted at the side. The couplet from Troilus was thus afforded an auditory significance, even though it would not be the final speech of the production. The tone of the finale then changed, however, as Pandarus, played by Max Adrian, entered: the prompt book records the instruction, for the orchestra, 'kill on Max entrance', meaning that the satirical ending, unlike Troilus' heroic ending couplet, was unaccompanied by music. The production heralded the beginning of a trend of theatrical versions to conclude with Pandarus, but seemed to have retained a vestigial echo of earlier, heroic Troiluses, performing what Berry called the 'romantic' ending, where 'Hope of revenge' had been given significance. Where earlier productions had given the character of Troilus the impact of ending the show

with his rhymed couplet, Hall and Barton marked the couplet with music, but then ultimately chose Pandarus to close proceedings.

John Barton's 1968 RSC production followed the growing theatrical trend of giving the final word to Pandarus, but it also employed images of a heroic, physically impressive Troilus. Again, where reviewers expressed admiration for this portrayal of Troilus, it was specifically the cluster of 'true knight' qualities which were praised: leadership, prowess in battle, purposefulness and strength were positively noted. Frances A. Shirley stated that Michael Williams' depiction was 'remarkable' and wrote:

Clearly he had the strength to become the next Trojan leader, and his final speeches were a logical development in a man who was consistently respected by others. Bloodied, he seemed appropriately vicious with Pandarus at the end. (2005, p. 50)

In a similar vein, responding to the 1969 revival of the production at the Aldwych Theatre, Frank Cox stated 'above all stands Michael Williams' Troilus [...] not merely the wronged lover but also a mature politician and the physical equal of his brother, Hector, in battle' (Cox, 1969, p. 50). Although the late 1960s were the time when the first signs of negative criticism of Troilus were emerging in literary works, the images of the character on the stage which were received positively were those which adhered to stereotypically masculine qualities of physical strength and leadership.

Michael Boyd's 1998 production, unusually, returned to the pattern, not seen for several decades, of dismissing Pandarus in the letter scene, and ended once more with Troilus centre stage (Performance recording, 1998). The conclusion of SMT productions from the 1930s to the 1950s had featured visual signifiers of militarism, as their versions of Troilus ended the play as a bold combatant, fighting on. The Act 5 Troilus in Boyd's production wore straps of bullets across his chest, a rifle on his back and was seen sharpening a large knife. Rather than the meanings of brave, chivalrous nobility offered by the sight of a sword held aloft or the saluting soldiers seen in earlier versions, however, William Houston's solitary and purposeful knife-sharpening in 1998 looked bloodthirsty and vengeful. Another set of meanings were formed around a final view of Troilus. Whereas Poel's pacifism seemed to have shaped the forlorn, weeping figure of his finale, and notions of heroic defiance had featured in the cluster of productions around the Second World War, then by the end of the century, when Troilus did, unusually, appear at the conclusion of the play, then suggestions of gory vengeance were in evidence.

The ending of Boyd's production was also textually rearranged. Pandarus had made his final exit at 5.3, but rather than ending with Troilus' 'Hope of revenge' couplet, a line transposed from the battle, 5.6.26, was repeated with increasing intensity, which left the 1998 audience with an image and a sound of a murderous, yet self-destructive Troilus (Prompt book, 1998). It ended:

I reckon not though thou end my life today.

I reckon not though thou end my life today.

End my life today.

The play did not find a focus in the decline of Pandarus, a decrepit wreck finally spitting out the word 'diseases'. Even if a traditionally noble, sword-wielding hero was not appropriate for the 1998 production, it had become, briefly once more, 'the tragedy of Troilus'. It was a different form of tragedy when compared with earlier Stratford versions, however. The removal of the lines 'Strike a free march to Troy! With comfort go./ Hope of revenge shall hide our inward woe' (5.11.30-1) removed the notion of Troilus giving orders, marching and fighting alongside a group of soldiers. All the positive associations contained within the words 'free', 'comfort' and 'Hope' were likewise removed. When Poel, in 1912/13, had transposed lines for Troilus to the end of the play, the tone had been one of 'submissive mourning'. The transposition of 'I reckon not though thou end my life today' in Boyd's production altered the tone to one which was far more bleak, solitary and nihilistic. The text highlighted a desolate, isolated Troilus, unconcerned with his own survival.

Textually and editorially, there has been scholarly support for both methods of ending the play; that is, with either Pandarus or Troilus delivering the final speech. The issues are discussed by David Bevington in his article 'Editing Informed by Performance History: The Double Ending of *Troilus and Cressida*' (Bevington, 1999). The use of a three-line passage found in the Folio text at 5.3, ending with a decisive-sounding rhymed couplet, seems to remove Pandarus from the play for good and dispenses with the need for the Epilogue:

Pand. Why, but hear you?

Troy. Hence brother lackie; ignomie and shame
Pursue thy life, and liue aye with thy name.

The Folio text ends with a near identical repetition of these lines, with 'broker-lackey', rather than 'brother lackie' in the middle line, followed by the Epilogue. The Quarto text does not have the three lines at the earlier, 5.3, position. Editors have generally made a choice between the two instances of the passage, believing that Shakespeare would not have written an unnecessary repetition, nor would Pandarus need to be dismissed twice by Troilus in exactly the same manner. Gary Taylor, in his important essay '*Troilus and Cressida*: Bibliography, Performance, and Interpretation' in 1982, wrote of the repetition: 'it cannot reasonably be claimed that both versions of the passage were intended to stand [...] the exact repetition of Troilus' couplet would be pointless, ridiculous, and flat' (Taylor, 1982, p. 103). Nearly all editors follow Q and have the lines occur only at the end of the play, and then lead onto the Epilogue. The Oxford editors, however, follow F, believing it to be Shakespeare's later revision, more theatrical, and thus keep the 'broker-lackey' line at 5.3. The repetition of the three-line section and Pandarus' Epilogue are then printed at the end of the play as an additional passage, marking an alternative ending which 'the Folio inadvertently repeats' (Wells and Taylor, 1988, p. 748).

By the end of the twentieth century, Boyd's textual choices had become an unusual way to end the play. Audiences familiar with the play in performance would have seen more recent versions ending with Pandarus' epilogue. The centrality of Troilus in 1998, including his appearance at the end, did allow for the arc of character development to be clearly recognisable. For Carole Woddis, the concluding spectacle of Troilus in Boyd's production created its own powerful set of political meanings for the play: 'By the end, the glint of mania in his eyes, William Houston's magnetic

Celtic Troilus has turned from an adoring Romeo into an avenging killing machine. You can imagine him die-hard Irish Republican or Bosnian freedom-fighter, fighting on and on' (Woddis, 1998). Robert Smallwood commented on the effectiveness of '[A] beginning and an ending with Troilus, moving from reluctant fighter and adoring lover to mad, suicidal killer' (2000, p. 260). The changing depiction of Troilus onstage also mirrored, in some ways, the changing understanding of warfare, with the 1998 production occurring at a time when news items regularly covered the war-crimes and the atrocities of conflict in the Balkans. War was a nasty business, devoid of chivalrous rules. The noble, knight-like figure was disappearing from *Troilus and Cressida* in performance, but the 'glint of mania' and the 'mad, suicidal' labels applied to Houston's Troilus by reviewers did not mean that the interpretation of the character was necessarily being perceived by them in a negative way. Reviewers expressed satisfaction, on the whole, with Houston's performance, stating that it had 'a fine, raw intensity' (Spencer, 1998), 'heart-catching openness' (Macaulay, 1998) and that this was a Troilus with 'the unusual advantage of not sounding drippy' (Butler, 1998). Houston's Troilus was associated throughout the production with traditional images of manliness. He was no playboy prince living a life of leisure, as Paris in this version was, but was often seen with shirt sleeves rolled as though he had come from a physical task (Performance recording, 1998). Robert Butler wrote 'William Houston's grimy Troilus, rag in hand, resembles a garage mechanic emerging from under a car chassis' (Butler, 1998). An image of traditional manliness, including decisiveness and physical action, even if it incorporated vicious gung-ho tendencies, was viewed in a more favourable light than 'drippy' or weeping versions of Troilus.

Troilus and questions of masculinity

Where actors playing Troilus have displayed physical or vocal qualities which have not adhered to what may be thought of as the set of heroic, masculine signs, their performances have often been received more negatively. It is noticeable that when Anton Lesser's version in 1985, Joseph Fiennes' portrayal in 1996 and Alex Waldmann's Troilus in 2008 veered away from these heroic, masculine qualities, there was a good deal of resultant negative censure. The theatre may have been ready to incorporate some of the negative character traits of Troilus into performance, but theatre reviewers did not seem ready to accept them. Ros Asquith called Lesser in Howard Davies' RSC production 'a disappointingly lightweight Troilus' (Asquith, 1985), exemplifying a common understanding that Troilus, as a hero, should be made of sterner stuff. Francis King went further and wrote: 'The weakness of the production lies in its casting. Anton Lesser, though he has an effective line in juvenile hysteria, lacks the inches – and I am not referring solely to his physical stature – for the role of Troilus' (King, 1985). Fiennes, in Ian Judge's RSC production, was criticised widely for the tremulous quality of his voice. There seemed to be little recognition that this vocal effect, though irritating and overdone to some, could have been an appropriate element of characterisation to suggest Troilus' immaturity, or emotional uncertainty. Rather, it was seen again as a fault in the depiction of Troilus: the actor and/or the director had got it wrong, because heroes do not have voices filled with vibrato. John Gross stated of Fiennes 'his voice sounds as though it were perpetually about to crack with self-pity' (Gross, 1996) and Charles Spencer wrote 'Joseph Fiennes's quivering, quavering Troilus seems to be lost in his own little world of anguished introspection, and the couple's relationship never comes

close to sexual ignition' (Spencer, 1996). Similarly, in responding to the 2008 Cheek by Jowl production, reviewers were again disappointed with a 'less-than-manly' voice: 'Alex Waldmann's sibilant, scampering, vocally challenged Troilus rings untrue' wrote Nicholas de Jongh (de Jongh, 2008) and Charles Spencer commented 'Waldmann often sounds merely shrill in his grief, a boy-actor sent to do a man's work' (Spencer, 2008). Expectations about the physicality of a male theatrical hero were also in evidence in 1996. Robert Hewison commented that Fiennes 'has been excused weight-lifting, and his hoarse and reedy tenor makes him sound as if he is about to burst into tears. Not much of a hero here' (Hewison, 1996). Although he also found Fiennes' vocal effect irritating, Russell Jackson did, parenthetically, state that the sound could have been deliberately indicative of Troilus' own shortcomings: 'Troilus (Joseph Fiennes) was sometimes inarticulately lachrymose, a tiresome vocal effect that (perhaps appropriately) made it difficult to idealize him as a lover and that detracted from any sense of chemistry between himself and Cressida' (Jackson, 1997, p. 213). It is possible, of course, that Jackson's role in academia had made him more aware of the shift in attitude to Troilus in literary criticism, and the greater familiarity with a questioning approach to the perception of the character as a perfect male hero may have been shaping his response. Certainly, unlike the newspaper reviewers, Jackson was alone in suggesting that it could be appropriate for Troilus to be less than an idealistic hero.

Ulysses' labelling of Troilus as a 'true knight' was also still being put to work in 1996, with Benedict Nightingale using the description, as so many early literary critics had previously done, to bolster his view of how the Trojan prince should be: 'Fiennes

introduces so much adolescent throb and romantic sob into his performance that you feel he is playing Romeo in his whingeing Rosaline period rather than the Troilus whom Philip Voss's fine Ulysses calls a true knight and second Hector, as "firm of word" as of deed' (Nightingale, 1996). There seems to be an accepted view, partly borne out in Nightingale's comments, (the Rosaline period is only a 'phase'), that Troilus, like Romeo, may begin with adolescent posturing and idealistic romanticism, but, on the stage at least, the character should end in maturity and should finally conform to the observations of Ulysses. Some literary critics, such as A. P. Rossiter and R. A. Yoder, understood the character of Troilus to be still immature and reckless by the play's conclusion, however. Rossiter wrote that Troilus' final furious aggression is not a strong display of defiance, but shows that 'he has exchanged one mad passion for another' (1961, p. 146), and Yoder similarly saw Troilus at the end of the play as flawed and naive: 'Always what matters is what Troilus does not recognize: that "after so many hours, lives, speeches spent", another oath of revenge is a terrible folly' (1972, p. 24). The growing tendency for Troilus on the page to be read, certainly from 1960 onwards, as flawed and remaining flawed throughout, proved more difficult for the stage, or more accurately for its audiences, to accept. When elements of self-pity or adolescent self-absorption were evident in theatrical versions of Troilus, the reception of those elements of the productions became noticeably negative. At times, moments of self-pity were used early on, during the adolescent 'pining for Cressida' phase, before Troilus matured into the courageous 'second hope' (4.5.110) of Troy. Unlike Rossiter and Yoder, who had viewed Troilus' final wish for revenge as a character flaw, many theatre reviewers regarded a viciously combative Troilus to be a positive concluding sight.

'No remedy' - the loss of Cressida

One of the key moments for literary critics of the 1960s/70s, in their dealings with Troilus, seems to have been the rapidity with which Troilus accepts that Cressida will be taken away to the Greek camp and the fact that he offers no resistance to the circle of male politicking. The young man, who had argued so forcefully and fully for the keeping of Helen in 2.2, speaks only brief phrases concerning the loss of his own lover (4.2.68, 71) and does nothing to prevent the prisoner exchange. The scenes 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4, all concerning the dawn parting and the removal of Cressida to the Greek camp, are often slightly rearranged or run together in theatrical performance. In the 1960 Hall/Barton production, there was a moment in 4.3, when Troilus had just heard about the loss of Cressida, and was speaking to his brother Paris, when a written note was added in the prompt book (1960) about a section of speech, here bracketed, stating that it was to be delivered as an aside:

I'll bring her to the Grecian presently;

[And to his hand when I deliver her,

Think it an altar and thy brother Troilus

A priest, there off'ring to it his own heart.] (6-9)

There seemed to be a splitting of public and private personas here. Publically, Troilus maintained the Trojan party line and followed orders about handing over Cressida. It would make sense for the last three lines to be delivered 'aside' privately to Paris, out of earshot of Aeneas, Deiphobus, Antenor and Diomedes; the reference to 'thy brother' would seem to support this, as would Paris' following line, 'I know what 'tis to

love' (10). The decision in this 1960 production to isolate the three 'romantic' lines from the first declarative 'dutiful' line reveals an interpretation of Troilus as a man who subsumes his personal amours beneath the more significant, male, political business. For this Troilus, the public act of honourable duty amongst his brothers and other generals comes first and takes precedence over his personal feelings, which must remain an 'aside'.

Towards the end of the century, theatre productions were also making the rapidity of Troilus' acceptance of the situation a point to be recognised. For example, in Sam Mendes' 1990 RSC production, Ralph Fiennes' Troilus delivered the line, 'Is it so concluded?' (4.2.68) without a moment's pause, immediately on hearing about the loss of Cressida. He also nodded as he said 'I will go meet them' (72). This dutiful Troilus had accepted the decision immediately and was quick to try to protect his own name: his line to Aeneas 'We met by chance; you did not find me here' (73) was delivered less than 20 seconds after first hearing that Cressida was to be given up (Performance recording, 1990). Through the speed of this section, the production made it clear that Troilus was prioritising Trojan politics and was anxious to save his own reputation. Similarly, six years later in Ian Judge's production, Joseph Fiennes also spoke Troilus' line, 'Is it so concluded?' swiftly, again without a pause (Performance recording, 1996), causing Robert Smallwood to comment that 'at the news of her [Cressida's] exchange for Antenor his uncomplaining compliance seemed even calmer than it usually does' (Smallwood, 1997, p. 214). William Houston's 1998 Troilus displayed such a high level of compliance with Trojan prisoner policy that he physically repacked Cressida's suitcase in preparation for her

journey (Performance recording, 1998). Peter de Jersey's delivery of the line in Nunn's 1999 National Theatre production was a rather uncommon example, in this late century period, including a noticeable, contemplative pause before he spoke. He also added extra emphasis to the word 'concluded' (Performance recording, 1999). The pause and Troilus' insistence in finding out if the issue had actually been fully and conclusively decided showed that he was giving the issue more consideration than some other versions of the character had done, and he appeared to be suffering from a sense of divided loyalties. Apart from de Jersey's version in 1999, a pattern seemed to be emerging in the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries that Troilus as a character on the stage could incorporate some negative traits, certainly in his dismissive attitude to Cressida's exchange.

A little after his 'Is it so concluded?' exchange with Aeneas, Troilus has to face Cressida herself, who, by this point, has heard the news of her fate from Pandarus. When directly questioned by Cressida, 'I must, then, to the Grecians?', Troilus bluntly replies 'No remedy' (4.4.53-4). In contrast to earlier understandings of the play, it was no longer Cressida who was betraying Troilus by kissing the Greeks and sleeping with Diomedes, but by the time that feminist literary critics were re-examining the play in the 1970s, it had become the incidence of brief, offhand comments from Troilus, such as 'No remedy', which had first betrayed Cressida. This knight seemed to offer no defence to his lady. Speaking about her role as Cressida in Howard Davies' 1985 RSC production, in a newspaper interview titled 'Love on a battlefield', it was this moment which Juliet Stevenson claimed to be of significance:

There is a tremendous sense of her love being like a home. Then she's told she's got to be exchanged, and Troilus walks in – and he doesn't say "we'll fight this" he doesn't say "I won't let you go". He just says "No remedy". I think that's the greatest shock in the play for her. (Hebert, 1985)

Short verbal exchanges, which had not been particularly commented upon during the first six or seven decades of the century, were now being utilised as key moments for determining character, culpability and motivation, both in literary criticism, and following this, on the stage.

Some theatre reviewers also began to recognise some negative elements of the 1985 portrayal of Troilus, and to connect them to the ways in which they offered a dramatic logic to the narrative movement and outcome of the love plot. Unlike the romantically devoted portrayals of earlier staged versions, Anton Lesser's Troilus, in Davies' production, tried to sneak away from the sleeping Cressida during the dawn parting, quietly retrieving his boots so that he could make a hasty exit. 'This Troilus registers little feeling about Cressida until the display with Diomedes', wrote Michael Coveney (Coveney, 1985), recognising that it was the competitive male/male clashes which prompted the more passionate actions in this production. If Troilus is seen as weak or lacking, and does not protect Cressida, and if Cressida is thrust into dangerous terrain, then a production can offer mitigation for her to act pragmatically in the Greek camp, by protecting herself, and by accepting Diomedes as her 'guardian' (5.2.8). John Peter, for example, wrote: 'Anton Lesser's Troilus is an intense and unstable youth: unromantic, volatile, insecure, and like all insecure

people, entirely full of himself [...] Troilus loses her, really, because she perceives him to be more wind than will: he almost wallows in defeat' (Peter, 1985). Peter's understanding of the 1985 Troilus being 'unromantic' and 'entirely full of himself' is an arrestingly new understanding and description of the character on the stage. His specific word choice, 'wallows', the verb from Troilus' own speech which had begun to be so significant, distasteful and suggestive of self-indulgence to feminist critics, similarly leaps out. The review suggests that these less than admirable qualities in Troilus were not a weakness in Anton Lesser's portrayal, but an accurate rendering of weaknesses in the character from the text, because they make sense of narrative events; Troilus is not good enough, and so he loses Cressida. Like Russell Jackson's commentary about the vocal quavering used by Joseph Fiennes for Troilus in 1996, this commentary from John Peter remained rather unusual, with most reviewers being more likely to express some dissatisfaction when seeing elements of unmanly weakness in the supposed hero figure.

Troilus' attitude to Cassandra

Other theatre productions of the late twentieth century also found moments within the play, besides Troilus' quick acceptance of the loss of Cressida, where a less than perfect version of the character could be displayed, although reviewers were not so likely to comment upon them. One such moment occurs during 2.2, the Trojan Council scene, when the audience is afforded a glimpse of Troilus' attitude towards another woman in the play, his sister, Cassandra. To the sound of her anguished cries, Troilus simply states, 'Tis our mad sister. I do know her voice' (98). This line can often make Troilus appear thoughtless, dismissive or uncaring towards

Cassandra, depending on whether or not the adjective 'mad' is delivered as a cruelly judgemental term. In Anthony Quayle's 1948 SMT production, the prompt book shows that Troilus' line about Cassandra was reassigned to Helenus. Although it is not possible to gauge how the line was delivered in 1948, whether 'mad' was a callous label or not, it seems significant that it was the only line in the scene which was given to another character. There must have been something about it which made it 'unsuitable' for this particular Troilus to say. Potentially, moving the line to Helenus enabled Troilus to remain more sensitive and caring towards his sister. The reassignment of the line could help to maintain a clearly delineated sympathetic, positive portrayal of Troilus. At the end of the Trojan Council scene, following Hector's change of heart about keeping Helen, Quayle's prompt book (1948) records that Troilus 'sigh[ed] with relief'. He also laughed and took a drink from the jug on the table. Troilus was relieved that the war was going to continue. It was his function as a keen soldier which was of greater importance here, and the potential awkwardness of this soldier speaking rudely about his sister, a lady of the court, was avoided.

Troilus' flippant attitude to Cassandra in 2.2 was a significant moment in terms of the changing perception of Troilus in later productions, however. In the 1981 BBC TV production, Troilus laughed contemptuously, shook his head and turned away from Cassandra during her outburst. In 1990, there was evidence of a rather immature Troilus. At the sound of Cassandra's offstage shriek, he turned away and said dismissively 'Tis our mad sister', rather like a sniggering schoolboy. He was then instructed in behaviour by Hector, who walked towards Troilus and very pointedly said 'It is *Cassandra*' (line 100, my italics), deliberately emphasising her name to

rebuke his younger brother for speaking disrespectfully (Performance recording, 1990). In 1998, the Trojan Council was staged as a family meal, with women present. Cassandra's interjection in this RSC production took the form of a song. She sat rocking what appeared to be a baby, and in the middle of the men's discussion she began to sing an Irish folksong. William Houston's Troilus momentarily paused in his speech, but then carried on regardless, in the same vein, speaking loudly over Cassandra's song (Performance recording, 1998). The way that he ignored her displayed the fact that Cassandra's singing at inappropriate times was a common occurrence in Priam's household. As it turned out, there was no baby: she was cradling an empty shawl, which she dropped, providing a mini-backstory of a lost child causing a mother's mental disorder, perhaps. His deliberate talking over her song also showed Troilus' own disdain and lack of concern for his sister, who was clearly distressed. His use of the word 'mad' for her became especially cruel in this version. Five years later, at Bristol's Tobacco Factory, the portrayal of Troilus caused Jeremy Kingston to write: 'Joseph Mawle gives us a mainly unsympathetic Troilus, though I was unsure how intentional this was' (Kingston, 2003). Performance interpretations of Troilus that showed him to be unsympathetic to the women around him were increasingly common at this time, but reviewers remained confused, uncertain or disappointed with such portrayals.

It seems clear, then, that there are examples of both literary criticism and the stage moving beyond idealised versions of Troilus as a knightly hero towards interpretations which encompassed more negative aspects of the character, as the play continued to be read and performed throughout the twentieth century and then

on, into the twenty-first. An increasing ambiguity of response to Troilus came into existence following the lead set by the reinterpretations of Cressida in literary criticism. This does not necessarily mean that Troilus was no longer a 'true knight', however. The notion of knighthood and its associated concepts of honour and chivalry were the very ones in which early literary critics were 'placing their trust', according to Graham Bradshaw, but are the very same concepts 'which the play is rendering problematic' (Bradshaw, 1987, p. 132). What is knighthood within the world of Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*? Achilles, the knight, kills the unarmed Hector. Hector, the knight, hunts down a man solely to obtain his sumptuous armour. Troilus, the knight, is willing to fight alongside his brothers to defend the idea of Helen, who is a 'theme of honour and renown' (2.2.199), yet makes no attempt to keep his own lover safely in Troy. Early literary critics and early theatrical practitioners may have rooted their depictions of Troilus in images of the 'true knight', but it began to transpire in later interpretations that those images of knighthood in the play were themselves hollow. Chivalry is shown to be the glorious, golden front, concealing male savagery and self-interest. It is not the case, the play seems to tell us, that Troilus believes Cressida to have no value: as later productions seem to have found, with their clear depictions of Troilus' rapid acquiescence to the handing over of his 'pearl' to the Greeks, Cressida has a very precise value – she can be traded to reacquire the warrior Antenor. Despite many theatrical examples which have explored the distasteful aspects of Troilus' character, and despite decades of examples of literary criticism which have questioned the earlier definitions of him as a wronged, tragic hero, it seems to be theatre reviewers who display the greatest intransigence and are reluctant to let go of Troilus, the perfectly manly 'true knight'.

CHAPTER 3 - HELEN

Sixteen years before he would stage *Troilus and Cressida*, William Poel found a way of representing Helen of Troy in the theatre. In Poel's 1896 production of *Doctor Faustus* at St. George's Hall, London, Helen 'walked upstage towards Faustus with her face virtually obscured from the audience, so that her beauty, taken on trust, could be imagined from Faustus's reaction to its presumed quality' (Tydeman, 1984, p. 77). This rather evasive approach to representing Marlowe's Helen, a reluctance to represent her fully, highlights an issue also present in the staging of Shakespeare's Helen in *Troilus and Cressida*. How can Helen be put onstage? What does Helen of Troy look like? Can her famed beauty be represented, or is it more important to consider the effect of her beauty on those around her? In the realm of literary tradition, of course, she is the world's most beautiful woman, but Helen is also the symbolic trophy at the centre of the conflict, fought over, ostensibly, by Greeks and Trojans. Placed onstage by Shakespeare for only one short scene, Helen offers theatre designers and directors a brief but valuable moment to communicate a good deal about the objectives and the justification of war, as well as the value of women within the world of the play.

The figure of Helen in Shakespeare's play has remained, however, one of the most unstable images in performance. As I will discuss in this chapter, at the times when the character of Cressida was revalued and was represented in more sympathetic ways as a victim of war, representations of Helen still oscillated more freely. There

have been satirical depictions of Helen as a vacuous hedonist, relishing a lascivious lifestyle with Paris, oblivious to the men who fight and die in her name. These versions have included Edwardian gaiety girls, glamorous film star analogues and farcical parodies. These interpretations have fluctuated with portrayals of Helen as a vulnerable, isolated woman held captive on foreign soil. Directors who sought to 'rescue' Cressida from blame did not necessarily feel compelled to treat Helen in a similar way. The 1968 RSC theatre programme included a section of the 'Director's notes to the company at rehearsal', in which John Barton described how Helen is 'an ideal' to the Trojans and 'a whore' to Diomedes, but, Barton stated: 'She herself, in her brief appearance, is neither. Shakespeare doesn't label her, but gives us a glimpse of a human woman' (Barton, 1968). In general, as I will go on to discuss, literary critics have been more than happy to label her, and have been remarkably consistent in their perceptions, whilst theatre directors have generally moved between many different versions of the sort of 'glimpse' of Helen they wish their audiences to see. The theatre has not come to an agreement about her value.

The crux here, in both the realm of literary criticism and the theatrical domain, is the understanding of Helen's attitude to her own 'fair rape' (2.2.148). Laurie Maguire, in *Helen of Troy: From Homer to Hollywood*, has written that 'the concepts of rape and adultery were inextricably intertwined in the early modern period' (Maguire, 2009, p. 99). The term 'rape' referred, ambiguously, to both forced coition and abduction. Furthermore, the abduction or *raptus* itself could be of two types: the woman could be willingly or unwillingly 'seized'. She could be taken from a father or husband to another man, either with or without her consent, with the same ensuing legal

terminology (Maguire, 2009, p. 96). As Maguire has pointed out, narrative absences and ambiguities surrounding Helen's complicity with the rape are common in written versions of the Helen myth (2009, p. 83), and Shakespeare's dramatic version is no exception. Shakespeare's Helen is already a resident of Troy, and the scenes of her initial movement away from Menelaus, whether that movement was a violent, coerced abduction or an eager elopement with a new lover, are missing.

Nevertheless, literary critics and stage directors have often made attempts to fill in part of the narrative jigsaw. They have used the short scene, 3.1, to show, not the conditions of the initial *raptus* itself, but their understanding of Helen's attitude to her situation and her lifestyle in Troy. Unlike the role of Cressida, which largely changed and developed in literary criticism and on the stage along a particular trajectory during the latter part of the twentieth century, the role of Helen in performance did not settle. As Cressidas generally became more sinned against and victimised, some versions of Helen on the stage still wallowed in adulterous revelries, unconcerned by the war fought in her name.

Helen in Shakespeare's text

Helen's value to the Greeks and Trojans is tied up with her mythic beauty, but Shakespeare offers few textual clues to the physical appearance of his specific version of the character. The references to her in the play show far more concentration on her mercantile worth to the opposing armies, as the root of the great 'quarrel', than about her actual beauty. Her first mention, in the Prologue, is that she is 'The ravished Helen, Menelaus' queen' (line 9), suggesting that there is a focus on

the seizure from her husband, rather than a reference to the sight of her ravishing beauty. Troilus' reference to her beauty in the first scene is undercut with bitter sarcasm:

Fools on both sides! Helen must needs be fair,

When with your blood you daily paint her thus. (1.1.86-7)

Noticeably, the Marlovian Helen, whose beautiful face 'launched a thousand ships', is manipulated by Shakespeare into a costly, tradable Helen, 'Whose *price* hath launched above a thousand ships' (2.2.82 – my italics). Throughout the play, the moment of greatest praise for Helen's beauty is put into the mouth of a nameless, punning servant who trots out clichés, tritely calling her 'the mortal Venus, the heart-blood of beauty' (3.1.30-1) during his banter with Pandarus. In other references to her, Helen has a value which can be weighed and measured, most notably during the Trojan Council scene, when Hector says that 'she is not worth what she doth cost/ The holding' (2.2.51-2). In her absence, Helen is described or referred to many times. To Diomedes she is 'contaminated carrion' (4.1.73); Pandarus often gossips about her, including an appraisal of her hair colour (1.1.39); Thersites refers to her derisively as 'a placket' (2.3.17); whilst Troilus, when it suits his political business to do so, calls her 'a pearl' (2.2.81) and 'a theme of honour and renown' (2.2.199), for example. The idea of 'Helen', then, is present throughout the play at many moments when Helen herself is absent.

The 'Helen scene' is positioned quite centrally within the text of the play, meaning that much has been heard about Helen, from both sides, before she makes an

entrance. Even within the action of 3.1, Helen herself is not seen for very long and is heard from even less, despite a sense from the text and from history that 'Helen is what this play is about' (Rutter, 2001, p. 116). She appears onstage for 110 of the 153 lines of the full scene, and speaks 18 times, often in very brief phrases such as 'O, sir!' (3.1.53) and 'Nay, but, my lord-' (3.1.79). Her longest and final speech, which occurs when she is left alone with Paris, employing blank verse rather than the informal prose she uses in the earlier parts, is still only four lines long (3.1.149-152). Shakespeare places the famous Helen of Troy in a scene where her chief actions are to tease Pandarus, and to call for a song; a scene of repetitive utterings of saccharine 'love'.

Literary critics labelling Helen

Not surprisingly then, in summaries and critical analyses of the text of the Helen scene, many readers understood Shakespeare's version of the character to be trivialised and lightweight, yet lewd and salacious. There is a great deal of consistency in the critics' approach. Arthur Symons, in 1907, before professional British stage productions of *Troilus and Cressida* had begun, read the Helen scene as a comic moment of 'lascivious satire', stating that 'Love in this cloying scene between Paris and Helen appears before us sickly, a thing of effeminate horror, which can only be escaped by turning it into laughter' (quoted in Martin, 1976, pp. 61-2). Some literary critics who found fault in 'false' Cressida, likewise found blame in Helen: a central 'problem' with the reading of the play, for W. W. Lawrence, was what he termed 'the sensuality of Helen and Cressida', and the critic believed that this female sensuality was one of the play's most 'ugly features' (1931, p. 115). Echoing

the language so often used to describe Cressida, Lawrence wrote of Helen, 'she is notorious in both camps as a wanton' (1931, p. 127). According to the words of the Prologue, it is actually Paris who receives the label 'wanton' (line 10), rather than Helen, but for many earlier literary critics it was the women in this play who were continually denounced in this manner. It is useful to remember that a play featuring two women who are involved in sexual relationships with men to whom they are not married had also been considered unsuitable reading matter for the young William Poel, who had been cautioned away from the text by a tutor (Speaight, 1954, p. 192). The late Victorian sensibility which had defined the subject matter of *Troilus and Cressida*, together with that of *Measure for Measure*, as indelicate and 'not proper' reading matter for the teenaged Poel, was still in evidence several decades later in the work of literary critics, and one of the aspects of the play most troubling to that sensibility was the perception of Helen's keen enjoyment of her illicit sexual relationship with Paris.

Often the levity of the Helen scene came to the fore in commentaries. Una Ellis-Fermor referred to 'the froth and fantasy' of 3.1 (1945, p. 62), whilst Kenneth Muir saw Helen as 'a woman of extreme silliness and affectation' (1955, p. 85). Similarly, A. P. Rossiter summed Helen up as 'silly and empty, with some of Cressida's tricks of playing the men up prettily' (1961, p. 143). Jan Kott's 1964 commentary on the Helen scene is strikingly visual:

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. (Kott, 1964, p. 76)

Whilst Kott had rejected a one-dimensional reading of Cressida, and had been one of her earliest apologists, calling her 'one of the most amazing Shakespearean characters, perhaps equally amazing as Hamlet' (p. 80), he read Helen more simply, as 'a hussy' (p. 76), 'a whore' (p. 77) and 'a tart' (p. 79). Joyce Carol Oates added to the list of labels when she wrote that Helen was 'insipid and vulgar' (Oates, 1967, p. 175). There has not been the same movement of growing sympathy towards Helen which has been seen with readings of Cressida. Although Carolyn Asp briefly referred to Helen's helplessness, calling her 'a pawn in the game of war' (1977, p. 410), the same phrase which she had also applied to Cressida, the more frequent approach has been to employ negative, reductive labelling. Helen as a character has been largely condemned throughout decades of literary criticism, with many readers clearly siding with Thersites' view of her as a 'whore' and a 'placket'.

There is no requirement, of course, for the fictional women in Shakespeare's plays to be exemplars of perfection. There is no reason why a female figure onstage should *not* be foolish or shallow. As Kathleen McLuskie points out in 'The Patriarchal Bard', feminist criticism does not have to be limited to 'special pleading on behalf of female characters' (1985, p. 106). The pun-riddled language, the risqué song lyrics, the extensive repetitions and the generally comic tone of the scene in which we encounter Shakespeare's Helen of Troy can readily support evaluations of the character at the centre of that scene as vacuous and immoral. The short length of 3.1

also means that there has not been the same concentration on 'rescuing' Helen from blame in the same way that there has been in the case of Cressida, who appears across the acts of the whole play. The consensus between literary critics about Helen, however, makes for a rather unusual case. There is a small, limited range of evaluations of her character, mainly limited to the negative end of the spectrum, and yet this play has prompted widely divergent appraisals of other figures, in terms of readers 'liking' or 'finding fault' with them. The consensus also seems unusual given that the play, and particularly the role of Cressida, prompted such a revised set of interpretations in the field of literary criticism in response to movements in sexual politics during the 1970s. After detailing the array of critics who had widely and stridently disagreed in their praise or condemnation of the key characters in the play, Graham Bradshaw makes the point that '[E]verybody agrees that Helen is a worthless chit' (1987, p. 132). Bradshaw deliberately draws attention to the way in which the very similar interpretations of Helen are quite unusual in the readings of *Troilus and Cressida* as a whole. Maguire's more extensive study of many versions of the figure of Helen, in her 2009 work, *Helen of Troy: From Homer to Hollywood*, is a more sympathetic approach to the character, and places emphasis on the vulnerability of her moveable status. Maguire also makes many connections between the roles of Cressida and Helen; a connection which I will discuss later in this chapter. Many readings of Shakespeare's Helen, however, as Bradshaw indicates, have not displayed this sympathetic slant, even at the times when literary criticism was claiming this play as a vehicle to examine sexual and gender disjunctions.

Shakespeare's Helen in performance

Despite the lack of sympathetic readings of Helen from the text, some theatre directors, particularly since 1968, *have* sought to represent a more sympathetic view of Helen, or at least to show another, potential side to her story. Some have also elongated her stage time in order to do this, choosing to have her appear at moments other than her designated short scene: as I will discuss, this elongation occurred in the productions directed by Jonathan Miller in 1981, Michael Boyd in 1998, Trevor Nunn in 1999 and Declan Donnellan in 2008. The Helen scene itself has become an important indicator of a production's intention and values. Peter Holland states that 'the Troy scenes stand or fall on the appearance of Helen' and that the scene itself, like the wrestling in *As You Like It*, 'has become a way of defining productions, evaluating their intelligence' (Holland, 1992, p. 173). The representation of Helen is a highly significant key to show the production's approach to some of the major themes of the play. A satirical depiction of a wholly carefree, frivolous Helen points to the absurdity of her designation as a 'theme of honour and renown', and also highlights the senselessness of the conflict. A suggestion of suffering in Helen, or an awareness of her as a captive of the Trojans, can align her with Cressida and can construct a separate, gendered narrative about the trade in women.

Scenography

In terms of scenography, directors and designers have often used the Helen scene to provide a contrast with the war-mongering world of the play. A comfortable, languorous world of pillows, music and frivolous comedy may be offered as a contrast to the male environments and heated debates of the Trojan Council and the

Greek camp. The Helen scene may also offer parallels, rather than contrasts. The scene occurs just after a scene in the Greek camp, 2.3, featuring Achilles, Patroclus and Thersites. In productions where the indolence and the sexuality of Achilles are highlighted, and where Achilles has been depicted lounging on cushions, rugs or a daybed, the Helen scene can offer a similar view of the self-indulgence of Trojan society. If the consecutive scenes, 2.3 and 3.1, offer visual echoes of each other, then Greeks and Trojans can be made to look alike in some ways, again suggesting the senselessness of a war between the related men who are, as Hector puts it, a 'commixtion' (4.5.125) of the two groups.

The common use of a bed or a couch in 3.1, perhaps suggested by the Prologue's line that Helen 'With wanton Paris sleeps' (line 10), was used to connote laidback decadence in earlier productions, and then eroticism in later ones. William Poel's 1912/13 production of *Troilus and Cressida* began the action of 3.1, the exchange between Pandarus and the servant, in front of the curtains. The Paris/Helen tableau was then revealed, with Paris lolling on a bed and servants in attendance (Shirley, 2005, p. 150). Similarly, Ben Iden Payne's 1936 Stratford production utilised inner stage curtains which were opened to reveal a daybed and a stool (Prompt book, 1936). Irving Wardle mentioned 'Helen's vast bed' in his review of John Barton's 1968 RSC production, and commented on the 'erotic charge' of the scene (Wardle, 1968). In 1996 at the RST Helen and Paris kissed and embraced on a chaise longue (Performance recording, 1996). The Helen scene in 1999 at the National Theatre featured colourful rugs and large cushions for the guests to lie on, with several fire bowls sited around the perimeter (Performance recording, 1999). In 2006, in Peter

Stein's production of *Troilus* for the RSC, in association with the Edinburgh International Festival, Helen descended on a huge, red-draped bed, which remained suspended and moved with a swinging action. A solo trumpeter, playing sultry jazz, added to the indulgent atmosphere (Performance recording, 2006).

Decadence and enjoyment

As well as offering a scenographic contrast to the verbal in-fighting of the Trojan and Greek meetings, versions of the Helen scene which use rugs, cushions and beds can efficiently signal Helen's guilt: while men are dying for her, she is comfortably at ease. In some productions, the general lack of concern for the war was communicated as the Helen scene became a lively party, often featuring the presence of additional party guests to heighten the division between Helen's hedonistic lifestyle and the realities of war. Payne's 1936 production employed music and frivolity, as Pandarus danced with five ladies-in-waiting during his song (Shirley, 2005, p. 154) and the conception of a fun-loving Helen, completely won over to her life in Troy, was to remain widespread. In 1996 Ian Judge's RSC production maintained the lovers as a self-indulgent couple, casually oblivious to the war being fought over them. Ray Fearon's Paris joined in happily with some of the lines of the song, particularly relishing 'Love, love, nothing but love' and, similarly, Katia Caballero's Helen said the line 'O Cupid, Cupid, Cupid!' with excited delight (Performance recording, 1996). An early note from Trevor Nunn, on a provisional list of music cues, shows his aims for the design and mood of the 1999 Helen scene: 'I want to make the scene a bit like an opium den – pipes, hookahs – people high and silly, languid and erotic' (in Prompt book, 1999). Nunn's aims seem to have been

achieved, with Robert Smallwood calling the scene 'suitably decadent, with a hookah pipe passed among the participants' (Smallwood, 2000, p.259). In Nunn's Helen scene, the black/white casting produced a visual snapshot of Helen's position as a foreign outsider; the blonde, pale-skinned Aislinn Sands stood out amongst the black Trojans. This difference was not threatening in tone here, however. It was not used to connote the idea of a lonely, homesick woman, for example. Instead, Robert Smallwood saw her as 'a spoil of war who luxuriated in her status' (Smallwood, 2000, p. 259) and Shirley understood that this Helen 'plainly enjoyed her "white goddess in Africa" status as a special captive' (Shirley, 2005, p. 74). The visual dynamics of the scene were diluted, however, by the presence of Pandarus; David Bamber was the only white actor to be cast as a Trojan. Since Pandarus is such an integral part of the Helen scene, and dominates the spoken text in terms of his copious talking, the obvious presence of another white actor weakened the sense of Helen as a different, exotic prize for Paris. Nunn's production placed Pandarus physically close to Helen and Paris at several moments within 3.1 (Performance recording, 1999), creating a central trio where the image of Helen as lone white woman was muted. What the anomalous casting of Bamber did bring to the Helen scene, however, was a sense that Pandarus himself was out of place in the presence of Paris' party entourage; he was the only white man amongst the lolling, pleasure-seeking black Trojans. Unlike some other productions, what Nunn's work chose not to convey was any negative sense that Helen's position could be at all uncomfortable or problematic. Nunn's production, which made Cressida a central, tragic heroine, showed a clear-cut, sharply delineated version of fun-loving Helen. Accordingly, Nunn's Helen ended her scene by happily dancing offstage, still surrounded by the party entourage.

The opportunities for presenting a scene of decadence and enjoyment had earlier been taken up in Tyrone Guthrie's 1956 Edwardian-costumed production of *Troilus* at The Old Vic, although there was a striking absence of any additional guests or attendants. The frivolous enjoyment of the scene was created just between the three characters, Paris, Helen and Pandarus, situated around a white grand piano (Apfelbaum, 2004, p. 118). Wendy Hiller's Helen in 1956 had the look of Lillie Langtry, with feathers in her hair and strings of pearls, holding a glass of champagne in one hand and a long cigarette holder in the other (Shirley, 2005, p. 33). When the production toured the United States in the following year, the role of Helen was taken over by Coral Browne, who reported the directions that Guthrie had given her:

He explained what he wanted, which was the remnants of a good-looking woman – full-blown, drunken, ridiculous. The whole point of the play was the futility of fighting over a woman not beautiful anymore [...] She was this wild sort of Mae West [...] It was such a wonderful idea, and in that scene he made the whole point of the play – the futility of war – fighting over this good-for-nothing drunken broad. (Quoted in Rossi, 1977, p. 110)

Guthrie's objectives for the scene, as reported by Coral Browne, had similarities with a 1940 Marlowe Society programme note, written by the production's director, George Rylands, which read: 'our glimpse of her [Helen] is of an ageing, frivolous, sensual, spoilt professional beauty' (Theatre programme, 1940). What is indicated in the shared, rather misogynistic approach from Guthrie and Rylands, is that fighting for the frivolous Helen is an example of futility, but also that fighting for the ageing Helen is even more pointless. A conflict over the ownership rights to a beautiful,

young woman is one thing, the productions seemed to suggest, but a maturing Helen further devalues the continuation of the war.

On the occasions when 3.1 features a large group of attendants, the presence of servants, associates, party guests or general hangers-on can signify Helen's 'celebrity' status. In 1948 the Marlowe Society's production was able to suggest Helen's fame and prominence by placing her as the centre of attention in a large group of Trojans. Helen was seated on an elevated, throne-like chair covered with a tiger skin, its head visible (Photograph of cast and set, 1948). The positioning made Helen appear as the successful hunter, rather than the hunted human prize of the two armies. Reviewers seem eager to label the interpretation of Helen as icon by making direct reference to female figures from modern popular culture. This association seems widespread. The use of contemporary film star analogues is at once both an act of perceived fidelity to the text, where the famous Helen is continually talked about and argued over, and yet has also become a trend in theatrical reviewing. Glamorous images of film stars were mentioned by reviewers and commentators about the 1960 Hall/Barton production. In her review in *Plays and Players*, Caryl Brahms wrote that 'Miss Elizabeth Sellars was a smiling Helen – Miss Marilyn Monroe could have called her sister' (Brahms, 1960, p. 9). In the case of Sam Mendes' 1990 RSC production, this tendency can be seen in Martin Hoyle's comment that Sally Dexter's unusually brunette Helen became 'a cross between Jane Russell and Hedy Lamarr' (Hoyle, 1990), whilst Peter Holland saw 'a ghastly parody of Elizabeth Taylor' (Holland, 1992, p. 173). The notion of Helen as an ideological cultural construction, a superficial image of Hollywood beauty and desire

seems to be at the forefront here. At the Barbican in 2008, Declan Donnellan's Cheek by Jowl production showed Helen and Paris posing for photographs 'as if for a spread in *Hello! Magazine*' (Spencer, 2008).

In 1998, Michael Boyd also chose to present Helen of Troy as an icon. Directors of earlier productions had used glamorous film star analogues for the presentation of Helen, such as Tyrone Guthrie's wish that his Helen should resemble an 'overblown' Mae West, but Boyd chose the ultimate icon of western culture when he had Helen pose as the Virgin Mary. Boyd's Trojans were Catholic, 'a pious bunch who worship the Virgin' (Billington, 1998). A large statue of the Virgin was situated in a niche under a circular, coloured-glass window at the rear, during the scenes set in Troy. A plain curtain was drawn across the rear section with a rapid swish, hiding the statue, whenever the action moved to the Greek camp. Religion and combat were placed together at various points. Aeneas made the sign of the cross on his chest to fortify himself as he brought on Hector's challenge to the Greeks in 1.3. During the Trojan council scene, at the moment when Hector resolved finally 'to keep Helen still' (2.2.191), despite the ongoing bloodshed, he addressed his words to the statue, turning away from his brothers and facing the altar (Performance recording, 1998). The two women, Mary and Helen, were thus visually and aurally linked, raising questions about whether they were appropriate causes for war; one, the Blessed Virgin, the other defined so frequently in Shakespeare's play as a 'whore'. Hector's phrase 'mad idolatry' (2.2.56), applied to the value of Helen, picked up extra resonance when spoken in a room containing a religious idol.

The 1998 Helen scene began with Pandarus engaging in banter with Paris' servant, a hump-backed, androgynous hobgoblin dressed in a long, black robe and skullcap. When Pandarus was finally to be admitted, the servant pulled a cord to draw back the curtain, which moved, slowly and deliberately this time, with a clanking, mechanical sound, audibly cranking up expectations of the big 'reveal' (Performance recording, 1998). In the dimly-lit area, three black-robed women knelt at the feet of the statue of the Virgin Mary, continuing with their devotional singing. Disconcerted, feeling like an intruder, Pandarus turned to go, when suddenly the head of the statue swivelled to look at him. It was Helen. She removed her veil as Paris appeared, performing a backward roll, from underneath her long blue skirts. Paris, Helen and the three 'nuns' all clapped and laughed in delight at their own cleverness. They had managed to trick Pandarus. Carol Chillington Rutter wrote: 'Here was the stuff of farce: outrageous, impudent, carnivalesque, but also offensive, iconoclastic' (Rutter, 2001, p. 120). The audience read the moment as farce, laughing as the statue's head surprisingly moved. They enjoyed, also, the later discomfort of Pandarus as he attempted to continue his song, his voice catching and wavering as he tried to avoid the distraction of the sight of Helen kneeling at the feet of Paris, suggestively and lingeringly kissing her lover's fingers. In some ways, the scene worked comically and satirically, as older stage versions had: it had disguise, trickery and sexual innuendo. Robert Smallwood called the 1998 Helen scene 'the smuttiest joke of all' (Smallwood, 2000, p. 261), and Paul Taylor stated that the sarcasm and amusement made the scene a 'sacrilegious travesty' which was 'a striking way of showing the worthlessness of the woman the war is being fought over' (Taylor, 1998). Boyd's daring representation of Helen went further than previous productions had done to

underline the frivolous nature of the character. Her guilt was not just defined by her adultery, but was extended to religious desecration. It made Helen a pointless cause for the war, by combining the sacred with the sexual with the ludicrous.

Additional stage-time

The audience's first glimpse of the 1998 RSC Helen had been very early on, however, well before her appearance in 3.1. Thersites delivered the Prologue, and as he did so, he illustrated his words with a slide show, the remote control in his hand. Scenes from the First World War were projected onto a curtain at the rear of the stage during the talk of battles. At the ninth line, 'The ravished Helen, Menelaus' queen', the photographic image of the head and shoulders of a blonde woman appeared. The woman was wearing dark sunglasses and attempting to hide behind her upturned collar. Here was an obviously more modern photograph, incongruous with the grainy images of the Dardanelles. The deflationary clash of juxtaposed images, of vacuous, late-century celebrity culture with emotive First World War imagery, caused the audience to laugh. Their initial view of Sara Stewart's Helen introduced the mood of the ridiculous which would find full vent in the Helen scene proper.

The practice of putting Helen on show before the text dictates is unusual, but not unique. The way that extra stage-time for Helen is managed can be strongly indicative of the way in which a production is defining and adding meaning to some of the ambiguities and absences in Helen's story. In 1981, Jonathan Miller put Ann Pennington's Helen, sulking silently, into the Trojan Council scene, 2.2, staged as a

family meeting around a table. She was forced to hear a debate about her worth, and whether or not her future would lie in Troy, but could take no part in the discussion. Although Miller's version of 3.1, the Helen scene itself, adhered to an established pattern of satire, with giggling, self-obsessed lovers, unconcerned by external events, the earlier glimpse of Helen in 2.2, as a woman who literally had no voice within the family and was powerlessly subject to their male decision-making, offered the suggestion of an alternative side to Helen's story.

In 1999, at the National Theatre, Helen was not just confined within 3.1. During the Prologue, spoken by a single figure in armour, the whole cast appeared onstage and, in the manner of a dumbshow, at the words 'The ravished Helen, Menelaus' queen,/ With wanton Paris sleeps; and that's the quarrel' (9-10), Helen happily moved away from her husband's side and walked eagerly across to join her new lover. Helen's spirited, keen movement across the floor of the Olivier stage in 1999, within the first few moments of the production, provided the missing narrative jigsaw piece and announced quite clearly the interpretative slant of Trevor Nunn's version of Helen. In 2008, Cheek by Jowl's Helen, resplendent in white tulle, actually spoke the Prologue: 'This was *her* war [...] And she was *loving* it', wrote Carol Chillington Rutter (2009, p. 383). This Helen also gained extra stage-time by observing the battle scenes (Prompt book, 2008); the embodiment of the provocation for war was maintained in the audience's line of vision. A very different mood was also suggested at times, since Marianne Oldham doubled the roles of Helen and Cassandra in this production, drawing together images of the cause/pretext for war, with the horror and despair foreseen at its outcome.

The practice of giving additional stage-time to Helen went further in Boyd's 1998 RSC production, when there was one further glimpse of her very near to the end. During the chaos of the final skirmishes at the end of Act 5, Paris dragged Helen across the stage in front of his body, as a human shield. Helen's worth, particularly her worth to Jack Tarlton's young, petulant Paris, was conclusively depicted. From comical object of paparazzi interest in the Prologue, through sacrilegious and sexual role-playing in the middle of the play, to expendable commodity at the finale, the increase in Helen's visible presence in this production enabled an exploration of the worth and values of war's sacrifice. This Helen was not a 'glimpse of a human woman', however: in 1998, Helen had become a range of ciphers; a celebrity photograph, a mock statue, a shield. Representations of Helen can vary from production to production, never becoming established in a definitive form, but within Boyd's production, the image of Helen changed and varied from scene to scene. Helen is a figure for directors and designers to paint in many tones.

The Helen scene in sombre tones

As these examples show, the trajectory of change seen in the depictions of Cressida, the movement from villain to victim, was not a pathway necessarily seen in the representations of Helen. Bundles of examples of a particular 'type' of Helen do not fit neatly into chronological order, but can be seen to disappear, and then to reappear, across the stage history of *Troilus and Cressida*. It is necessary to move back in time in order to examine examples of the Helen scene in the theatre which deviated from the depiction of fun and frivolity and to locate versions in which Helen appeared to be suffering. In 1976, in John Barton and Barry Kyle's RSC production,

Helen became a commodity, led on by Paris and wearing a golden chain around her neck like a pet (Rutter, 2001, p. 122). Roger Warren wrote about the manner in which this Helen 'was compelled to speak the unexceptional lines about unarming Hector grimly and slowly' (Warren, 1977, p. 175). Irving Wardle praised this version of 3.1: 'There is a big expressive gain whenever, as in Pandarus's doting scene with Helen, an element of poison seeps into the comedy' (Wardle, 1976). The Helen moment was not entirely one of shallow fun, but one in which hints were provided by the golden leash about the nature of her initial removal to Troy. This 1976 production also included a version of the kissing scene in which there were some momentary suggestions of threat, as I discussed in chapter 1, but the major revisions to Cressida had not yet occurred, even if Helen's role as a prisoner was in evidence.

Labelled in the prompt book (1985) as 'Paris and Helen's party', Howard Davies' RSC version of 3.1 had an atmosphere reminiscent of a noisy inn, initially evoking the frivolous fun of many other representations of the scene. A slice of Trojan nightlife was on display, as the bustling party mood was achieved through the inclusion of several raucous guests. The scene featured a woman wearing a long, late-Victorian-style evening gown, with a low neck and bare arms, together with a military cap. The woman was carried into the scene by two soldiers as she played blasts on a bugle, intermittently and drunkenly. She was then placed to sit on top of the production's ever-present upright piano as the men shared the keyboard to play a light-hearted 'chopsticks'-style tune. At this point, the woman was reminiscent of Guthrie's Helen from three decades earlier, who had also perched drunkenly atop a piano. Any audience member familiar with Shakespeare's play may well have been

anticipating Helen's arrival. Those not familiar with the play would still have heard the almost continual references to Helen in the first two acts, and so may have been expecting her entrance. It seemed almost certain that a party in Troy would involve the appearance of the famous and much talked-about Helen. Yet this woman was not Helen. Howard Davies introduced another woman, albeit a nameless, speechless woman into the scene, as a kind of precursory proxy Helen. One possible route for women in wartime, the production seemed to suggest, was to become the silent plaything of soldiers, stereotypically propped up on a piano in a bar.

When Lindsay Duncan's Helen did arrive, the mood of the party went through several transitions, as Davies' production examined some of the darker facets of Helen's situation. Despite the concentration on Juliet Stevenson's Cressida in the reviews of the 1985 RSC production, the importance of the Helen scene did not go unnoticed. Vivian Thomas, for example, called it '[o]ne of the most fascinating scenes of this enormously rich and resonant production' (Thomas, 1991, p. 135). Not merely a vapid, frivolous tease, Lindsay Duncan's Helen 'shared the deeper reading' (Shirley, 2005, p. 61) of women defining themselves according to the ways in which they were rated by men. This Helen was, then, according to David Nice, 'a woman devalued but dully sensate of her suffering' (Nice, 1986, p. 26) and, in the words of John du Bois, this was a role played with 'desolate icy detachment' (du Bois, 1986). In this production of *Troilus and Cressida*, with its hugely influential, new 'feminist' representation of Cressida, the portrayal of Helen was commented on as a useful indicator of the slant of the whole piece. This was a production where the perceptions

of Cressida and Helen, both to some extent presented as victims, reinforced each other.

Pandarus was humiliated and bullied during the Helen scene in this production. Three men carried Pandarus up to the top landing of the staircase and dangled him upside down by his ankles, over the railing (Performance recording, 1985). He had been 'debugged', his trousers clearly around his knees. During this section, a lighting change in the side doorway, on the smaller intermediate landing, was noted in the prompt book (1985). This illuminated Helen and Paris who had arrived and could observe the riotous goings-on. As Pandarus was carried upstairs, Helen clapped her hands happily, enjoying and sanctioning the antics, very much part of the group. Laurie Maguire suggests that 'Helen must "enjoy" herself in Troy: she is personally vulnerable if she does not' (Maguire, 2009, p. 96). At this point, Lindsay Duncan's Helen played out the frivolous, shallow role expected of her by Paris; the role also expected of her by many literary critics, as well as the stage tradition of foolish, playful Helens.

However, here the tone began to change. After Pandarus had been lowered down, headfirst, to two other party guests, he stumbled around, disorientated and constricted by the trousers tangled around his knees. Helen walked over to him and pulled up his trousers, the first moment of sensitivity or humanity in the scene. Helen began to be more of a woman and less of a convention. Likewise, on saying 'thou hast a fine forehead' (line 100) Helen stroked and then lingeringly kissed Pandarus'

forehead, in a manner no longer humiliating or teasing, nor even sexual, but in a way that suggested a search for warmth and affection. Further, at her line 'This love will undo us all' (102), Helen became visibly upset, seeming to weep and lose control, and laid her forehead against Pandarus' chest. 'O Cupid, Cupid, Cupid!' (103) was spoken in desperation, followed by a long silent pause. In a scene of much frenetic movement and music, these elongated moments of quiet stillness became even more noteworthy. The interpretation of Helen in this way was a reminder of the personal, human story behind the iconic, mythic persona. It was up to Pandarus, in an avuncular fashion, to lift Helen's head. This gentle action prompted Paris to a competitive male display, as he reasserted his control and influence over Helen. Sitting on a chair, he slapped his thigh to indicate that Helen was to go and sit on his lap, which she, obediently, did.

Duncan's Helen, in a performance that was well-received, ended 3.1 wearily seated, with her head back against the chair, looking exhausted and totally unresponsive to Paris. Vivian Thomas read the mood of the closing moments of the scene as bleak and sombre: Helen 'conveyed a sense of impotent desolation as she gazed beyond him [Paris] to the audience and the world outside' (Thomas, 1991, p. 135). In Davies' production, then, Helen was allowed an untold story. She was presented, not just as a beautiful, symbolic 'pearl', but as a woman, alone and emotional, far from home, forced at times to fit in with the actions of those around her. Howard Davies seemed to have shared John Barton's desire to offer 'a glimpse of a human woman'. When that glimpse of Helen attempts to make her seem more 'human', however, it often serves to portray her as a victim too.

Like the majority of twentieth-century stagings, the Helen scene remained almost uncut in Sam Mendes' 1990 RSC production. Although its overall tone was dissimilar to its immediate RSC predecessor, it offered a view of Helen that moved sharply away from many of the 'fun and frivolity' versions. The lengthy, strikingly visual display of Helen's arrival suggested the significance of this scene to Mendes' overall view of the play. In 1990, more than a minute of wordless action was taken for Helen, seated on a large dish-like litter, to be carried onto the centre of the darkened stage by four attendants (Performance recording, 1990). Her cross-legged form was disguised in its wrapping of gold cloth, resembling a Buddha-like precious idol. If Davies' 1985 production had established the tone of a noisy party, then in 1990 the tone was that of a ritual.

Paris was dominant, determining the action of the Helen scene in Mendes' production. Images of Paris as a bully, or images of Paris exerting control, are often utilised in stage versions where Helen's backstory is suggested to be one of capture and imprisonment. So, in 1990 it was Paris who unwrapped 'the mortal Venus' (3.1.30-31), slowly circling her seated figure, choosing the exact moment when he would allow his prize to be revealed to the gaze of others. As Paris cast aside a long length of gold fabric which he had unwound, a final, smaller square of gold cloth was still left over her head, veiling Helen's face. Paris, as ironic bridegroom, then, unveiled someone else's wife. Also, following Pandarus' obsequious line, 'Fair prince, here is good broken music' (3.1.48), Paris, with raised arm, snapped his fingers to master the musicians and to bring them to silence. His next line, addressed to the

fawning Pandarus, 'You have broke it' (3.1.49), showed his displeasure that not only the music, but the mood of the unwrapping ritual itself had been broken.

The mood of the scene was read by several reviewers as a departure from the conventionally lighter tone often seen in some other productions of the play. The perception of the darker, more overtly sexual nature of Mendes' version of the scene can be picked up in comments such as Michael Coveney's description of the 'lushly melancholic Helen' (Coveney, 1990), and Michael Billington's statement: 'The whole scene reeks of exhausted, melancholic lust' (Billington, 1991). Aside from its rejection of conventionally frivolous stagings, the scene became noticeable and memorable, too, set in contrast as it was with the neutral colour palette used for many of the other costumes. Like several Helens before her on the British stage, Sally Dexter's Helen was visually associated with gold. The gold-coloured fabric seen with such regularity in the costuming for Helen in performance would seem to owe its origins to the set of images around 'value', 'merchandise' and the use of 'price' in Shakespeare's adaptation of Marlowe's line. The 1990 Helen arrived in a golden wrapper, 'packaged by the politicians' PR men like some Golden Calf designed by Cadburys', according to Carol Chillington Rutter (2001, p. 120), but then was revealed to be wearing a bright red dress, adorned with wide gold bracelets and a large gold collar. The vividness of the red dress was the only use of that colour, indeed the single use of any very vibrant colour, during the production, which otherwise employed quite muted tones, especially seen in the beiges and creams of the Trojans' immaculate uniforms. This Helen, due to costume design, looked different from those around her. She did not belong to the group of Trojan women, like Cressida and Cassandra, who

wore long, plain, neutral-coloured gowns. Helen's very visible jewellery set up a range of meanings of wealth and decadence and the lifestyle of a kept-woman, 'little better than a tart', according to one reviewer (Dungate, 1990). Yet the gold collar was also read by Frances A. Shirley, perhaps recalling the 1976 golden leash, as a sign of Helen's entrapment: 'a broad gold collar that might have anchored a slave's chain' (Shirley, 2005, p. 68).

Towards the end of the scene, textual cues led to a change in tone and a transformation for Helen. In this final verse section, as Paris' words conjured up 'the edge of steel' and the 'force of Greekish sinews' (lines 146-7), Dexter's Helen replied sincerely and genuinely to the request to aid Hector's disarming, 'Twill make us proud to be his servant, Paris' (line 149). This sincere delivery of the final lines caused Peter Holland to reach the understanding that the 1990 Helen was 'deeply aware of her own shaming responsibility for the war' (Holland, 1992, p. 173). Significantly, for this final short section of the scene, the golden cloth was wrapped protectively around Helen like a shawl, covering the shoulders which had previously been bared by her low-cut dress. The fabric no longer wrapped an icon, but covered a woman. It created a sense of intimacy between Paris and Helen, not seen in the earlier public display, and graphically marked the change in mood.

Mendes, like other directors, made much of the arrival of Helen into 3.1, seeking a visually striking, memorable effect. Directors like to keep Helen teasingly hidden and to hold off from showing her full appearance for a little longer, just as her physical

representation has been withheld until the middle of the play, despite much prior discussion of her worth. Carol Chillington Rutter likens this theatrical trope to the 'ratchet[ing]' up of Helen's value (2001, p. 120). Just as Poel, Payne and Boyd had used opening curtains to present and reveal Helen, and just as Davies had used the nameless, drunken woman as a forerunner for Helen, Mendes used a body-covering golden wrapper to delay her appearance. In 1996, Ian Judge had Helen emerge naked, not from behind curtains or wrappers, but amid clouds of steam from a sunken bath (Performance recording, 1996). Where Poel had increased the audience's belief in the beauty of his Marlovian Helen in 1896, by not displaying her face at all, the common tactics of postponement in the presentation of Shakespeare's Helen of Troy in the theatre are also indicative of the desire to 'ratchet' up the value of her beauty. After the postponement, however, when the trophy is finally unveiled, there remains the question about whether or not any 'body' on stage can represent ultimate beauty.

Despite the variations in the stage's interpretations of Helen, British productions up to 2012 had consistently cast a physically attractive woman in the role. The RSC/Wooster Group production, featuring many doubled roles, had Scott Handy playing, according to one reviewer, 'the bespectacled house-intellectual Ulysses of the Greeks' who then 'crosse[d] the pond to appear in a blond Afro wig as the sweetly intoning Helen' (Carnegy, 2012). Together with Helen's costume, which resembled two rough blankets, the use of a male actor employing a falsetto voice eradicated any conventional images of beauty, glamour or sensual decadence. There was no bed; there were no cushions or rugs and there was no golden fabric. This

was a very different staging of Helen, rejecting notions of luxury and hedonism. This was a confused and dazed Helen, wandering around rather aimlessly, singing wistfully about the 'Queen of the May' whilst the Trojans onstage sang the 'Love, love, nothing but love' song to a different melody (Performance recording, 2012). Helen was made to seem foreign, out of place visually and aurally, and isolated to a degree where she was unaware of much that went on around her. At one point, Paris handed her a piece of fabric which she rubbed on her face like a child's comfort blanket. Yet the audible laughter, albeit uncomfortable laughter, captured on the video recording, suggests that the audience found it funny. Had a young woman played the role of Helen, dressed in nothing more than rough blanket squares and wandering around the group of Trojan men in a confused state, then the meaning would have been quite different. The double casting of Scott Handy as both Ulysses and a cross-dressed Helen, which brought theatrical artifice to the fore, created a sense of the ridiculous. A phoney Helen could be nothing more than a phoney pretext for war.

Most performance examples of the Helen scene retain almost the full text, but in 2012 the majority of Helen's own lines were cut, leaving only 5-6 separate utterances (Prompt book, 2012). Although she sang the 'Queen of the May' song, Helen spoke very little in this version. The lines in the early section, where Helen encourages Pandarus to sing, were cut. This removed the sense that she was actively bantering or punning with Pandarus. When she did speak, Helen's voice was so quiet and lacking in assertiveness that Pandarus' question 'What says my sweet queen?' (80)

was delivered with the sense that he genuinely could not hear her. She was a passive figure in an alien setting.

Paris displayed a certain degree of physical roughness, moving Helen around the stage and grasping her by the shoulders. There was an absence of any suggestion of a genuine relationship between them. The notion of Helen as a figurehead for chivalric ideals had completely disintegrated. The notion of Helen as an exemplar of female physical beauty and perfection had, likewise, been erased. If we return to Peter Holland's comments that the Helen scene 'has become a way of defining productions' (1992, p. 173), then the 2012 RSC/Wooster version was one of disjunction and artificiality.

Helen and Cressida

Significantly, the directorial choices inherent in the presentation of 3.1 have the potential for productions to draw comparisons between two women, Helen and Cressida, and to suggest ways in which Cressida's fate can be understood. Laurie Maguire has written that Shakespeare uses Cressida as a replacement figure, what Carol Chillington Rutter calls a 'distorted twin' (2001, p. 116), to enact and probe Helen's missing scene of transition. Maguire continues:

Through the figure of Cressida, he investigates the position of Helen, writing a scene in which a woman is removed from one man in her home town (Troilus in Troy) and handed over to another (Diomedes in the Greek camp). He offers

an action replay of the circumstances in which Helen might have changed allegiance in the other direction, from Greece to Troy. (Maguire, 2009, p. 93)

Certainly, the two women are continually associated and confused, one for the other, throughout the play. Both are 'pearls' to Troilus, (Cressida at 1.1.96 and Helen at 2.2.81) and Pandarus compares their hair colour and considers which of the two women is the most 'fair' (1.1.39-40 and 1.1.71-74). Additionally, Pandarus tells his niece that Helen loves Troilus 'better than Paris' (1.2.103-4), and later, rather confusingly, tells Helen that Cressida 'is horribly in love with a thing you have' (3.1.94). Some theatre productions have also made connections between the two characters. In 1960, John Barton's and Peter Hall's version of *Helen* used strong visual parallels with Cressida. Both wore classically-styled long gowns with gathered, tight bodices and one bare shoulder, and both women were shielded from the desert sun by similar fringed canopies (Production photographs, 1960). The similarities between Cressida and Helen were also visually in evidence in 1968. Both actresses had long blonde hair, similarly styled (Production photographs, 1968). An association between the Helen scene and 4.5, Cressida being 'kissed in general', was made in Trevor Nunn's 1999 National Theatre production by the incorporation of dancing. Here, though, the differences between the experiences of the two women became apparent. Helen danced happily to entertain her onstage audience in 3.1, with Pandarus also circling around, obsequiously playing a small tambourine, adding a touch of the silliness Nunn had planned. The later scene depicted Cressida being miserably goaded into a dance by the group of Greek men.

In Davies' 1985 version, the power relationships present in the whole of 3.1, including the significance of the bullying of Pandarus in the scene, set up a consistent point of reference for understanding other, later crucial scenes. The scene so often commented upon in reviews of this production, the radical interpretation of Cressida being 'kissed in general' in 4.5, became so noticeable and effective due, in part, to the readying work that had been done by the Helen scene. Several reviewers made connections between the two women and the two scenes, in this way. For example, Roger Warren wrote that in Stevenson's portrayal of Cressida, 'the brazen manner was a cover to protect herself from becoming a love-object like Helen' (Warren, 1986, p. 117) and David Nice commented 'When Cressida is taken to the Greeks, her response to the brutal semi-rape shows us why Helen has become what she is – not a rotten cause, but a cause made rotten by war' (Nice, 1986, p. 26). This connection between the two women, however, like the representation of Helen, has not become a common feature in performance.

Although the majority of literary critics and commentators may have agreed, to use Graham Bradshaw's term, that Helen is 'a worthless chit' (1987, p. 132), the theatre has not come to any such concrete conclusion. Helen on the stage has remained as unfixed as the ambiguities in her own story. The portrayal of Shakespeare's Helen demands an imagined backstory to fill in the gaps. In short, did she jump, or was she pushed? If the depiction is of a fun-loving adulteress, then the audience understands the satirical swipe at the pointlessness of the war. If the depiction is of an unhappy captive, then, like the changing role of Cressida, the Helen moment can communicate powerful messages about a world where women are degraded. But the

stage has not settled upon one or the other. The stage cannot make up its mind about her, and Helen, in many ways the most famous and the most well-known name in the cast of characters, remains the most unknown. Veiled, curtained, disguised versions of Helen have emerged into the scene, tickling their audiences, but remaining changeable and fluid.

CHAPTER 4 - HECTOR AND ULYSSES

This chapter will deal with Hector and Ulysses: the readings of the characters in literary criticism and the interpretations of them on the stage. The two figures have been paired here due to their structural significance within the play. Where distinctions have been drawn between the qualities of the two warring factions, either on the stage or in literary commentary, these two characters have often become figureheads for their respective sides; Hector representing Trojan chivalry and Ulysses standing for Greek cunning. Both men are also significant in furthering the war plot: they are connected by their wish to draw Achilles back into combat, Hector through his challenge to the Greeks, which seems to apply particularly to Achilles, and Ulysses through his plan to fix the lottery to ensure that Achilles is piqued by the result. As earlier literary critics categorised them, Hector and Ulysses were both believed to be astute orators, delivering what Joyce Carol Oates termed 'vertical' speeches which move out momentarily from their 'horizontal' narrative position, to 'explain and insist upon values which must be understood so that the pathos to follow will be more clearly understood' (1967, p. 170). An admiration for the quality of discourse in these set-piece speeches also often created an admiration for the two characters themselves: fine words were given to fine fellows, it seems. Through time, literary readings of both characters began to change and to embrace a greater sense of complexity, especially in the case of Ulysses. Scholars and theatre directors moved towards an acknowledgement of negative traits in characters that had previously been lauded. As Frances A. Shirley noted, flaws started to be 'discovered' in characters such as Ulysses and 'even Hector, who used to be treated with

unquestioning sympathy' (2005, p. 1). However, as I will go on to discuss, the performance history of the play displays much more of a divergence between the depictions of the two men, with examples of Ulysses becoming a more hardened, cynical manipulator, whilst stage practitioners have displayed a greater reluctance to relinquish their portrayals of Hector the hero.

Literary criticism of Hector and Ulysses

In their readings of the text of *Troilus and Cressida*, many literary commentators understood Hector and Ulysses to be figures voicing the ideas of Shakespeare himself; one within the walls of Troy, and one outside, in the Greek encampment. Oscar James Campbell wrote that '[the Trojans'] representative of wisdom is Hector. Like Ulysses, he is an intellectual mouthpiece of the author' (1938, p. 205). At the end of the previous century, G. B. Shaw had believed that Ulysses was 'Shakespeare drawn by Shakespeare himself' (Rattray, 1951, p. 47). Critics specifically felt that Hector and Ulysses sounded alike in the content and the delivery of their speeches to their comrades. A. P. Rossiter understood Hector, in his speech to his fellow Trojans in 2.2, to be 'appealing – like Ulysses in the Greek War Council – to Natural Law itself' (Rossiter, 1948). Similarly, Joyce Carol Oates bound together the two characters due to their tendency to philosophise. Oates believed 'Hector parallels Ulysses in his belief that "degree, priority, and place,/ Insistence, course, proportion, season, form,/ Office and custom" (1.3.86-8) are observed not only by man but by the natural universe' (1967, p. 170).

The 'somersaults' of Hector and Ulysses

In *Shakespeare's Professional Skills*, however, Nevill Coghill stated that although there was indeed a connection between Hector and Ulysses, it was due more to contradictions within the content of their speeches. He drew attention to the way in which the debates of the Greek Council, 1.3, and the Trojan Council, 2.2, are similarly patterned by the personal inconsistencies of Ulysses and Hector, the principal speakers within these scenes. Coghill wrote about the manner in which they both display a sudden change of heart. During the play, both characters have a *volte-face*, or a 'somersault' (1964, p. 121), as Coghill called it, whereby a previously held opinion is radically altered into an opposite. In the Greek Council, Ulysses delivers his famous 'Degree' speech, arguing for the importance of order and hierarchy, before speaking with Nestor about his plan for a rigged lottery to ensure that Ajax is drawn into Hector's challenge. 'This is the moment', stated Coghill, 'for the back-somersault of Ulysses. To get Achilles back into the war (which is his main concern) he sees that what is wanted is not degree but emulation' (1964, pp. 112-3). More noticeably, Hector changes his mind abruptly during the Trojan Council meeting, first arguing to send Helen back to her Greek husband, and then, towards the end of the scene, he proposes 'In resolution to keep Helen still' (2.2.191). Hector's rapid about-turn, as I will discuss, caused a good deal of puzzlement for many literary critics. Stage practitioners, likewise, have had to find their way around Hector's sudden change, whilst the 'crab-movements' and 'double-dealing' of Ulysses (Coghill, 1964, p. 121) do not seem to have caused such difficulties in either literary criticism or performance.

Literary criticism of Hector

Whilst admiring the rhetorical force and intellectual brilliance of Ulysses, many literary critics, particularly up until the 1970s, displayed a distinctly pro-Trojan bias, with praise for Hector being a common theme in their writings. Hector often seemed to stand for all things Trojan and all things good. G. Wilson Knight, in *The Wheel of Fire*, saw Hector as a 'symbol of knighthood and generosity' and lamented that 'the less noble and beautiful seem to win' (1930, p. 71). Una Ellis-Fermor believed that the figure of Hector embodies an 'honourable, heroic code', and that the 'highest altitudes of chivalry are touched in the scene of Hector's visit to Agamemnon' (1945, p. 61). Northrop Frye, also a firm supporter of Hector and the Trojan force, stated confidently in *Fools of Time* 'we prefer Hector and Troilus ... [to the Greeks] ... as in other tragedies of passion, it is the greater and more heroic vitality that is destroyed, something colder and meaner that succeeds with the Greek victory' (1967, p. 66). The Trojans were the preferable side, for many of these literary critics; whether knowingly or not, they were leaning upon a centuries-old literary tradition of the legend that the descendants of the Trojan Aeneas were the founders of the British Isles. Hector, the leader of the Trojan fighting force, was especially favoured. In a play dealing with cynical backbiting and uncomfortable words and actions, the chance to latch onto the one, seemingly unsullied and heroic male figure was gratefully accepted. Frye grappled with the notion of bias and continued, in a qualifying tone: 'The Trojans are not innocent in any intelligible sense of the word, but in Troilus' trust in Cressida and in Hector's chivalry there is a quality of innocence' (1967, p. 69). Whilst readings of Troilus in the first seven decades of the twentieth century seemed to applaud the youthful, impassioned, but naively duped and

wronged hero, the critics' interpretations of Hector suggested that they had found an even cleaner, more spotless tragic figure. Furthermore, in Act 5, Hector underscored this position of dramatic eminence by suffering a terrible and tragic death.

Hector's 'somersault'

But if Hector was a hero and a wise orator to earlier scholars of the play, how did they deal with their hero's very obvious and sudden 'somersault' in his arguments about fighting for Helen? The inconsistency did not go unnoticed. It is remarkably difficult not to notice the switch. The Trojan Council scene begins with Priam's announcement that another message has been received from the opposing force. If the Trojans see fit to 'Deliver Helen' (2.2.3), then the bloodshed will cease and the 'cormorant war' (6) will be ended. Priam turns immediately to his eldest son Hector. Hector is very clear on the matter: 'Let Helen go' (17), he proposes, so that no more Trojan men need to die. When Troilus begins his counter-argument, Hector adds another statement of great clarity: 'Brother, she is not worth what she doth cost/ The holding' (51-2). He also utilises the outburst of Cassandra's prophesying cries as a further reason to bolster his cause: 'Now, youthful Troilus, do not these high strains/ Of divination in our sister work/ Some touches of remorse?' (113-5). After lengthy speeches from both Troilus and Paris, Hector still firmly maintains his line on the need to return Helen to the Greeks, this time using the solemnity of marriage to support his position: 'If Helen then be wife to Sparta's king,/ As it is known she is, these moral laws/ Of nature and of nations speak aloud/ To have her back returned' (183-6). Hector's case is particularly clear and, up to this point, remarkably consistent. Yet four lines later, within the same speech, Hector's *volte-face* occurs as,

without offering any explanation at all, he says 'My sprightly brethren, I propend to you/ In resolution to keep Helen still' (190-1). This was a change in position which was to prove puzzling to readers of the play and a moment on the stage which actors and directors have attempted to explain.

Without the opportunity, or certainly with only limited opportunities, to witness this scene being performed on stage, the earlier literary critics struggled with such a sudden conversion of thought from their hero on the page. G. Wilson Knight stated that 'after a speech of cogent reasoning, [Hector] curiously concludes by asserting ... "I propend to you/ In resolution to keep Helen still"' (1930, p. 55), Oscar James Campbell believed that 'he lamely abandons his logically sound position' (1938, p. 207) and E. M. W. Tillyard referred to the change as 'a surprising turn' (1950, p. 67). In *Stories from Shakespeare*, her retelling for children, Marchette Chute cleared up the issue and insisted upon Hector's nobility at the same time. Her summary of the volte-face reads: 'the honour of the city is now at stake. It is the mention of honour that touches Hector and makes him reverse his former decision' (1960, p. 173).

The desire to retain the untarnished strengths of intellectual consistency and forceful debating skills of the eldest Trojan prince led to one critic putting forward the idea that the error lay in the text itself. If Hector could not be at fault, then perhaps the text was. A letter to the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1948, written by A. P. Rossiter, is an interesting piece of evidence of the ways in which the introduction of performances of *Troilus and Cressida* in the early twentieth century was beginning to

influence and shape the work of literary critics and textual theorists. It specifically deals with the problem of Hector's political switch. Rossiter's letter deals with so many issues about the relationship between performance and the text, and the nature of the problem of consistency in Hector's character, that it is worth quoting a significant portion here. He wrote:

Sir, - Having seen the admirable production of *Troilus and Cressida* by the Marlowe Society, I feel bold enough to suggest a textual readjustment which occurred to me a number of years ago, but which I left in pickle until I could be surer of its usefulness on the stage. It concerns the last 25 lines of Act II, Scene 2, where Hector makes an abrupt *volte-face* to join the opposition to his own motion that Helen be returned to the Greeks ... as our texts stand, he crosses the floor in the very climax of his argument, without reason of his own or persuasion from the other side, whose "reasons" he has, in fact, treated with contempt. Until I had seen the play twice, I supposed that this *volte-face* might be plausibly smoothed over by making Hector speak like a man who knows the right course but feels all the time that "the sense of the meeting" is against him; so that he gives in, rather as he does in Chaucer over the exchange of Cressida, because "substance of the parlement it wolde". Now, however, I believe that the change is too sudden to make sense in playing or in reading; and since Hector is no weathercock – is, indeed, by no means defamed, defiled or degraded with all the other "heroes of antiquity" – it is tempting to suppose that the text is at fault. (Rossiter, 1948)

Rossiter then went on to suggest that a section of Troilus' speech was wrongly placed: he believed that Troilus' lines beginning 'But, worthy Hector,/ She is a theme

of honour and renown ...' (198-9), should not come after Hector's final decision to keep Helen, as those lines are placed in all modern editions, but should form an earlier interjection; the words should be an interruption which tempts Hector to switch position. By this point in our current texts, of course, when Troilus begins to speak of 'honour and renown', Hector has already 'crossed the floor', and so a further argument from Troilus about keeping Helen seems substantively redundant. Metrically also, the part-line from Troilus, 'But, worthy Hector,' would comfortably complete the rhythm of his brother's line if the interruption occurred, as Rossiter suggested, at line 188, after Hector's words 'Thus to persist/ In doing wrong extenuates not wrong,/ But makes it much more heavy'. Rossiter blamed a printer or copyist for missing an emendation in the margin of the manuscript, from which both Q and F derive, where, Rossiter believed, the 'But, worthy Hector,' interruption had been added 'as an afterthought to make the "conversion" convincing'. What appeared to Rossiter as a gap in the logical steps of Hector's 'conversion' was explained by looking for a gap in the text.

Watching the Marlowe Society's production of *Troilus and Cressida* in 1948 led to Rossiter's letter: a requirement for plausibility on the stage caused him to suggest a rearrangement on the page. The moment, otherwise, did not seem to make sense. At the root of this puzzlement is the critic's desire to maintain the masculine, noble integrity of Hector: it is better that a final interjection from Troilus about chivalrous 'honour and renown' should sway his position, rather than Hector just suddenly changing his mind, since, as Rossiter wrote, Hector is not 'defamed, defiled or degraded' like the other characters. There had to be a reason. Nevill Coghill, in

Shakespeare's Professional Skills, similarly tried to find a reason for the change: thinking theatrically, Coghill imagined the fraternally-guided Hector switching sides 'due to the dismay he sees on the faces of his brothers' (1964, p. 121). Rossiter wrote that his suggested textual changes would 'remove[s] the reader's difficulties with Hector's "character"' just as, it could be added, they would help theatre audiences. Even if Rossiter was right, however, and an unobservant copyist had missed the placement of Troilus' interruption, thus denying the reader and the audience the piece of the persuasive jigsaw which converts Hector, then the conversion is still jarringly sudden. Hector has argued forcibly against Troilus, against Paris, over the duration of 200 lines of text, raising issues including those of wasted Trojan blood, the sight of ruined Troy from Cassandra's prophesy and the sanctity of the marriage vows of Helen and Menelaus. And yet, according to Rossiter in 1948, one interruption from Troilus about 'honour and renown' should be inserted near the end of the scene to smooth it all out. Furthermore, this process of applying a smooth line to Hector's reasoning was connected implicitly with the desire to maintain a greater semblance of heroic steadfastness: Rossiter was quite clear that Hector was no 'weathercock'.

By the time he wrote the *Troilus* chapter in *Angel with Horns* (1961), however, Rossiter's notion of Troilus' late, but amazingly effective interjection during the Trojan Council was nowhere to be seen. In this work, Rossiter stated about 2.2: 'at the end of this scene of close debate, Hector commits an inexplicable volte-face, and swings over to the side of Paris and Troilus against his own reasoning. That switch is his death-warrant' (p. 143). The inexplicable nature of Hector's switch now seemed to be

significant, and not to be reduced or explained away. Rossiter's use of the more negatively loaded term 'commits' also suggested a flaw or culpability in Hector, a flaw which leads to his death.

Rossiter was not alone in connecting the abrupt change during the council scene to Hector's Act 5 death. Almost twenty years after Rossiter's letter to the *Times Literary Supplement*, Joyce Carol Oates wrote about the way in which Hector 'suddenly and inexplicably gives in to the arguments of Troilus and Paris' (1967, p. 170). Oates went on to discuss the way in which the about-turn in 2.2 would function as a foreshadowing of the about-turn in Act 5, when the noble Hector will die ignobly, after killing a man for his 'hide' (5.6.32). Oates also went on to state that the council scene 'makes sense' if it is understood to be carrying out the function of demonstrating the ineffectuality of reason within the play (1967, p. 171). For Oates, Hector's about-turn, whilst seeming implausible to audiences, fits well into a play which is concerned with 'the existential cynicism that values are hallucinatory' (p. 171).

Nevill Coghill followed up his analysis of Hector's 'somersault' in 2.2 with the pertinent observation that Hector 'then reminds the audience of the challenge which, morals or no morals, he has delivered to the Greeks' (1964, p. 121). The earlier Greek council scene, 1.3, had featured the arrival of Aeneas bearing Hector's challenge. No matter how lengthy, forcible and convincing Hector's arguments that the war should be ended may seem in 2.2, Coghill correctly pointed out that Hector then informs the council, and reminds the theatre audience, that, before the meeting

had even begun, he had already sent a challenge over to the Greeks. Far from trying to douse the flames of hostility, Hector had been busily reigniting them, behind the scenes. Graham Bradshaw also alluded to this point in 1987, stating that Hector's inexplicable switch occurs not at the end of 2.2, as the majority of commentators note, but is present at the very opening of the scene when Hector begins his argument to send Helen back in order to end the fighting; he does this knowing that he had already sent a 'roisting challenge' of a duel, intended to wake the 'drowsy spirits' of the Greeks (2.2.208 and 210). Bradshaw wrote:

[T]he dramatic sequence suggests that the inconsistency occurs not at the end but at the beginning of 2.2, when Hector so unexpectedly steps forward as the suddenly sober champion of reason, morality and Natural Law. His challenge has already committed him, and Troy, to a course of action which his subsequent argument in 2.2 would exclude. Far from wanting to end the war, Hector's concern had been to end the "dull and long-continued truce" (1.3.261) [...] And in issuing the challenge without consultation Hector has shown his indifference to family councils and policy debates.

(Bradshaw, 1987, p. 133)

What seems particularly noticeable is the sheer weight of critical thought which had turned a blind eye to Hector's earlier combative challenge and had focused solely on the puzzle or curiousness of his about-turn in 2.2. The erudite figure of Hector, skilfully arguing for peace, had formed an almost indelible image for many readers, causing them to forget the challenge for armed combat which he had already sent. Likewise, in their eagerness to find an unblemished hero in the play, they had

managed to read, and yet forget, that the first we hear of Hector is a report that he had 'chid Andromache and struck his armourer' (1.2.6); these actions being displayed by the man who was known for his virtuous 'patience' (1.2.4). Some also conveniently avoided the issue of Hector's acquisitive desire for the 'sumptuous armour' of an enemy, including Marchette Chute, in her summarised retelling for children, which ignores Hector's desire for the armour, misses out the moment, in the way that a short précis has to ignore some moments, but chose to write of the battle: 'These men are all knights, and it is part of their code that a man must be courteous to his enemies [...] The only one who does not behave well is Achilles' (1960, p. 176). Hector was maintained as a knight who did behave well, it seems.

Bradshaw went on to describe the killing of Hector by Achilles and the Myrmidons in a manner which would surely have been profoundly shocking to many of the earlier literary critics who had sung the praises of the gallant knight: 'Hector is then butchered, put down with no more chivalry or honour than it would be sensible to show a rabid dog – *and why not?*' (1987, pp. 138-9, italics in original). Bradshaw's interpretation echoed the reading of the Act 5 moment carried out twenty years earlier, by Joyce Carol Oates. Oates had seen a shabbier side to Hector and commented that, in spite of the perception of his high ideals, Hector is willing to hunt and kill a man for his 'hide'. He is willing to carry out this act, moreover, whilst alone on the battlefield, 'when he can act without witnesses' (Oates, 1967, p. 172). Oates also stated that 'Hector, who might have rejected a sordid end, in fact makes up his mind to degrade himself and is then killed like an animal' (p. 169). What the readings of Bradshaw and Oates share is the acceptance of negative character traits in Hector

and the willingness to view his death, not as the tragic end of an innocent, noble man envisaged by some, but as the appropriate finish for someone who has, finally, acted like an animal. There is the sense, in the words of these critics, that Hector is a more complex figure, rather than the rather one-dimensional symbolic persona of 'knighthood and generosity' suggested by G. Wilson Knight in 1930.

Literary criticism of Ulysses

There is an acceptance of complexity in the readings of the character of Ulysses, however, seen much earlier on in the critical writings on the play, when compared with the earlier appraisals of Hector. Readings which eschew a simple good/bad binary opposition are much more widespread when dealing with the Greek tactician, perhaps due to the tradition of the Homeric 'cunning' Ulysses. Certainly, the adjective 'wily' is much used in descriptions of him. Alongside views which praise 'the studied commentary of Ulysses' (Knight, 1930, p. 55) and the 'noble smoothness and simplicity of line to his doctrine of hierarchical "degree"' (Ellis-Fermor, 1945, p. 61), for example, there are also comments about him as 'the wily schemer' (Campbell, 1938, p. 199) and 'a Machiavellian puppet-master, as shrewd as unprincipled' (Rossiter, 1961, p. 149). Individual critics were also capable of embracing both positive and negative commentary of the figure of Ulysses in their work, usually due to his role as a politician: Coghill called him a 'superlative speech-maker' and 'the brains of the party' as he delivers the 'Degree' speech, which is 'a real spell-binder', for example, whilst immediately adding that 'Ulysses has no thought of taking what he has said seriously' and '[H]e has no serious thought of appealing to the better

feelings or corporate sense of anybody' (1964, p. 111). A male politician could be admired for being clever yet cunning, charismatic yet duplicitous, it seems.

Ulysses was also often believed to be a clear-sighted observer in *Troilus and Cressida*; Oscar James Campbell called him the 'authentic commentator' (1938, p. 231) in the play. Campbell quoted Ulysses' 'Fie, fie upon her [...] daughters of the game' speech from 4.5 to prove that Cressida is nothing but a strumpet who 'kisses all the men' (p. 215). There was no question, for Campbell, that there could be any sense of bias within Ulysses himself; they were not the bitter words of one who had been spurned. In terms of his denunciation of Cressida, the words of Ulysses were true and accurate for Campbell; Cressida was a daughter of the game because Ulysses said so, and, as Campbell added, because Ulysses was the character placed by Shakespeare 'conveniently at hand to keep the audience clear on that point' (p. 215). Campbell was not the first critic to utilise the 'daughters of the game' speech in order to 'prove' the immoral fickleness of Cressida. S. T. Coleridge in 1833 had unquestioningly quoted Ulysses' speech in order to show that Cressida was a 'portrait of a vehement passion' (in Martin, 1976, p. 41). Frederick S. Boas in 1896, in *Shakspeare and his Predecessors*, similarly quoted the words of Ulysses as evidence to prove what was 'true' in the play. He quoted nine lines of Ulysses' speech about Troilus, for instance, that Troilus is 'The youngest son of Priam, a true knight [...]' (4.5.97) in order to support his own praise for the 'model of youthful heroism' (Boas, 1896, p. 373). Boas was highly critical of Cressida, and, as I discussed in chapter 1, although he did not quote directly from Ulysses' 'daughters of the game' speech, his use of the individual word 'game' strongly indicates a Ulyssean influence on his

reading of the kissing scene: 'of loyalty her shallow nature is incapable; she simply throws herself with redoubled zest into her old game in this new field' (p. 376). In 1950, E. M. W. Tillyard wrote that Ulysses 'towers right above the other Greeks in good sense' and that, during the kissing scene, '[H]e sees through Cressida instantly, while the other Greek leaders make fools of themselves' (Tillyard, 1950, p. 77). For these earlier literary critics, Ulysses was correct and clear-sighted in his assessments, especially in his assessment of Cressida, and a tradition arose in which he was eminently quotable.

By 1967, however, Joyce Carol Oates could write that 'the tradition of considering Ulysses the wisest person in the play is suspect' (p. 178). R. A. Yoder claimed that 'no one any longer seems to accept Ulysses's "degree" speech as the established value of the play' (Yoder, 1972, p. 11), and in 1977 Carolyn Asp believed that, rather than his observations being conclusively true and accurate, 'Ulysses uses his position as observer to further his own political ends' (Asp, 1977, p. 409). At the time when the situation of Cressida was being reappraised by feminist critics, as sympathetic responses to her character were on the rise, so there was a corresponding decline in the stature of Ulysses. In the late 1960s, for the first time, there was a greater sense that, whilst Ulysses may dominate the stage at key moments with the power of his rhetoric, the voice of male authority, in many scenarios, was diminishing. The un-kissed Ulysses may call Cressida one of the 'daughters of the game', but then he would, wouldn't he?

Hector and Ulysses on the stage

In the theatre, interpretations of Ulysses and Hector changed more slowly than the movements seen in literary criticism. In general, the stage history of the play included many depictions of the wise but wily Ulysses and the noble heroic Hector, which continued for decades after literary critics had begun to question the more established views about the two characters. Versions of Ulysses on the stage began to move further away from the role of accurate observer and truthful commentator, particularly during the 1980s, as the focus of the play in performance shifted towards Cressida. Although some literary critics from the late 1960s had begun to write about negative aspects of Hector's character, the role in performance has changed very little from the earlier incarnations, perhaps due to the fact that he seems the nearest thing to a hero that the world of *Troilus and Cressida* can offer.

The importance of Hector and Ulysses as men of vocal influence has been maintained in stage practice. The general significance of their set speeches can be seen very quickly from the start of the scenes of great oration: 1.3, the Greek Council scene, and 2.2, the Trojan meeting. In part, this is due to decisions about blocking/positioning. Directors have very commonly placed Ulysses to the right hand of Agamemnon, just as Hector has often been seated to the immediate right of his father Priam, visually signalling them both to be the right-hand men of the respective leaders. So, Payne in 1936, Mendes in 1990 and Nunn in 1999 all placed Hector to the right of Priam, whilst Hall/Barton in 1960 placed Hector next to his father, but on Priam's left (Prompt books, 1936; 1990; 1999; 1960). Similarly, the rank and

importance of Ulysses was signalled by adjacent, right-hand positioning in relation to Agamemnon in several productions, including 1936, 1960 and 1990. When Priam was seated at the head of a long table, as in Quayle's 1948 SMT production, it is little surprise to find that Hector occupied the other end (Prompt books, 1936; 1960; 1990; 1948). In a play which has often been described as 'wordy', or 'pre-eminently a "talk" play' (Berry, 1981, p. 51), the spoken words of two central male characters have often been given weighty significance by placing the speakers next to their factions' leaders.

Ulysses and verse-speaking

Male political discourse and the values of verse-speaking have often been the focus of praise for these roles from theatre reviewers too, especially in the case of Ulysses, the character with the second largest number of lines in the play, after Troilus. The two speeches on 'Degree' in 1.3 and 'Time' in 3.3 have become a kind of competitive acid-test of an actor. Richard David was impressed with the way in which the 'great speech on Time was patiently and feelingly unrolled' by Leo McKern's Ulysses at the SMT in 1954 (David, 1954, p. 390). In 1960, responding to the Hall/Barton version, Robert Speaight wrote 'Mr. [Eric] Porter's Ulysses was superb [...] I have never heard finer speaking in Shakespeare than his argument with Agamemnon and Achilles' (Speaight, 1960, p. 452). Roger Allam was singled out for particular praise in Nunn's 1999 production at the National Theatre, with Michael Coveney calling him 'an exemplary and masterfully spoken Ulysses' (Coveney, 1999). Michael Billington called Allam's interpretation of Ulysses 'the best since Eric Porter' (Billington, 1999) and, according to Charles Spencer, 'Roger Allam shines as a superbly intelligent and

witty Ulysses, delivering the great speeches about degree and time with dramatic clarity' (Spencer, 1999). Four years later, John Mackay was Ulysses for a production by The Tobacco Factory in Bristol, which caused the reviewer John Peter to join in with the commentary on this male speaking contest in his appraisal of the 2003 version of the character: 'I have not seen his two great speeches, about order and about political survival, more intelligently delivered' (Peter, 2003). Literary critics and theatre reviewers may no longer have accepted the words of Ulysses as unbiased truth, particularly his 'daughters of the game' speech, after the time when Cressida came to be reconsidered by the stage, but the judgements concerning the ability of an actor to communicate the content of 'Degree' and 'Time' skilfully was a common feature of the response to the play in performance.

Weaving through the work of literary critics from the nineteenth century until the middle of the twentieth was a common thread of viewing Ulysses as the 'authentic commentator' in the play (Campbell, 1938, p. 231). One particularly clear example of this can be seen in the work of critics such as Boas, Campbell and Tillyard who unquestioningly used the words of Ulysses from the 4.5 'daughters of the game' speech to reveal what they saw as the nature of Cressida. Tillyard also accepted the words of Ulysses to be indicative of beliefs in Shakespeare's world at large: he quoted more than half of Ulysses' 'Degree' speech at the beginning of his chapter on 'Order' in *The Elizabethan World Picture* (1943) to illustrate the classical notions of cosmic and political order, which, according to Tillyard, 'were quite taken for granted by the ordinary educated Elizabethan'. Tillyard followed his long quotation from 'Degree' by stating 'Much of what I have to expound is contained in this passage' (p.

11). It is tempting to think, then, that earlier on in the twentieth century, the 'Degree' and 'Time' speeches would be given full rein during theatrical productions, and escape too much cutting. Prompt books, however, reveal a different story. Ralph Berry has called the 'Time' speech 'a severe test of the audience' (Berry, 1981, p. 52), and it seems that decades before Berry's writing, theatre directors such as William Poel shared a similar belief and removed many lines from the speeches of Ulysses. Robert Speaight decried the quantity of verse lines removed by Poel in 1912/13. Speaight felt that Ulysses' 'Time' speech 'was unbearably truncated [...] Poel did not see that Ulysses has the character of a Chorus; his speech to Achilles is one of the greatest passages of reasoning in the whole of dramatic literature, and it was a sacrilege to maltreat it' (Speaight, 1954, pp. 197-8). It should be remembered, however, that Speaight himself played Ulysses in Macowan's 1938 production, and so perhaps had more subjective, proprietorial reasons for disliking the removal of Ulysses' lines. Examination of the 'Degree' speech in several productions also reveals a good deal of cutting earlier on in the play's performance history. Certainly it is a long speech, with implications in an already long play for the overall theatrical running time; at its conclusion, Ulysses himself refers to it as 'a tale of length' (1.3.136). Taking the 'Degree' speech to be the section from 1.3.75 ('Troy, yet upon his basis, had been down') to line 137 ('Troy in our weakness lives, not in her strength'), there are 62 verse lines. In 1936, Ben Iden Payne removed almost half the lines, keeping only around 35 (Prompt book, 1936). Anthony Quayle, in 1948, went further, and kept only about a third of the speech (Prompt book, 1948), as did Guthrie at the Old Vic in 1956 (Berry, 1981, p. 53).

By the second half of the twentieth century, however, Guthrie's much-shortened form was rather unusual, and it was more common for the 'Degree' speech to be delivered in a fuller version. Glen Byam Shaw maintained a much fuller rendition at the SMT in 1954, when only 7½ lines were removed, and featured Leo McKern's Ulysses standing centre stage for the final four lines (Prompt book, 1954). The RSC versions of 1960 and 1968 were very nearly complete (Prompt books, 1960; 1968), only losing the 2 lines 'Insisture, course, proportion, season, form,/ Office and custom, in all line of order' (87-8). Mendes kept around 50 lines (Prompt book, 1990), Donnellan's Cheek by Jowl production had 43 lines in its 'Degree' speech (Prompt book, 2008), and the 2012 RSC/Wooster version was almost intact (Prompt book, 2012). Referring to his 1998 production for the RSC, Michael Boyd commented: 'We pruned, for instance, Nestor, when we thought that Shakespeare's satirical intentions had sufficiently made their point. We gave a lot of space, however, to the steady progress of the boa constrictor of Ulysses' rhetoric' (in Bate and Rasmussen, 2010, p. 194). Later productions, it seems, which questioned the veracity of Ulysses' approach and were more willing to display the negative aspects of the character, used the fuller versions of the intricacies of 'Degree' to show something, not of the condition of the Greek force in general, but to reveal the qualities and capabilities of Ulysses.

On the stage, for a large proportion of the twentieth century, the political speeches of Hector and Ulysses from the two council scenes were still clearly a display of power, in many ways as important as any muscular clout displayed on the field of battle, mirroring the importance attached to the orations by earlier literary critics. In terms of the 'Degree' speech, earlier performance examples showed Ulysses holding the

floor, dominating proceedings in a calm, lucid manner as McKern did in 1954, or as Sebastian Shaw did in 1968, when a reviewer referred to the 'beautiful sober clarity' of the speech in John Barton's production (Bryden, 1968). Later, the speech started to be undermined in some way, even if it appeared in a fuller version.

When Howard Davies' production in 1985 used Victorian costuming, the frock-coated Gladstone-like Ulysses, standing behind a table, sounded archaic and pompous: the 'Degree' speech 'sounded like a series of sententious platitudes' to Roger Warren (Warren, 1986, p. 117). In 2008, for *Cheek by Jowl*, Ryan Kiggell's Ulysses delivered 'Degree' timidly, like a stuttering, bespectacled academic (Nightingale, 2008). In 2012, Scott Handy's Ulysses, another spectacle-wearing intellectual, was so exhausted by the speech, that he finished by scrabbling around for his inhaler, suffering an asthma attack (Performance recording, 2012). The words of this man were no longer a voice coming from outside the drama and commenting accurately upon it, but were indicative of the wider disintegration of values within the play. In a very similar way, Ulysses' words about Cressida in 4.5, the 'daughters of the game' speech, are now rarely the words of an accurate commentator, or 'Chorus' as Speaight believed, but are more often the sour, furious backlash of an embarrassed man.

After 'Degree' there comes a moment of Ulysses' inconsistency; what Coghill referred to as his 'back somersault', when he immediately puts aside all notions of order and degree to suggest a faked lottery to usurp Achilles by putting Ajax into the challenge

in his place. Theatre productions, particularly more recent ones, have anticipated this moment with stage business to display a seedier side to Ulysses' character. More complex depictions of Ulysses, with many negative elements, have become more common, as directors have embraced his underhand dealings and inconsistencies. The versions of Ulysses in 1998 and 2012 both had a notebook to flick through (Performance recordings, 1998; 2012), like a school sneak, telling tales and recounting evidence of overheard comments from Achilles and Patroclus about the Greek generals. Scott Handy's 2012 Ulysses flipped back and forth through the notebook, searching for the particularly salacious terms, 'bed-work' and 'closet war' (1.3.205), in order to implicate his targets. Colin Hurley's Ulysses in 1998 furthered the depiction of underhand tactics by producing incriminating photographic evidence from a brown envelope in 3.3, when accusing Achilles of being in love with Polyxena, the daughter of the enemy.

In sharp contrast, productions have sought methods of explaining away and excusing Hector's 'somersault' during the Trojan Council scene, even though the switch is far more abrupt and obvious. Directors who have made Ulysses into a shifty, spying bureaucrat have attempted to fill in the gaps of reasoning in Hector's about-turn, in order to keep their hero whole. Hector's scene of debate and oration amongst his fellow Trojans allows the positive depiction of a thoughtful man, apparently reasonable and verbally adept. Directors generally cut very little from Hector's summing-up speech, from 'Paris and Troilus, you have both said well' (2.2.163) to 'joint and several dignities' (193). Although this is Hector's longest speech within the Trojan Council scene, it is, certainly, a good deal shorter than Ulysses' utterances in

1.3. Sometimes the reference to Aristotle at lines 165-7 is removed, for example by Payne (Prompt book, 1936) and Mendes (Prompt book, 1990), but little else. Hector's sudden switch has been dramatized in a variety of ways; theatre practitioners have displayed a reluctance to show Hector changing around in his opinions for no reason, preferring a model of male steadfastness. Most often, a suggestion of Hector's desire to strengthen familial bonds by keeping Helen has been utilised on the stage: his decision has been explained by the need to maintain Trojan unity, despite his personal beliefs. So, Payne (Prompt book, 1936) and Quayle (Prompt book, 1948) both had Hector reposition himself during the scene, to end in close proximity to Troilus at the line 'joint and several dignities' (193). Quayle's version of the scene in 1948 began with Troilus pointedly sitting with his back towards Hector, but ended with them together, Troilus taking Hector's arm. Boyd offered a religious aspect to the explanation of Hector's switch in 1998, as Hector turned upstage to face the statue of the Madonna at the moment of his final, altered decision (Performance recording, 1998): the shared zeal of a holy war fought with brothers in the name of the Virgin was equated with the enterprise of keeping Helen.

David Troughton, in Mendes' 1990 production, felt too that his version of Hector needed a reason to switch. For Troughton, Hector's sense of duty and honour was a crucial aspect of his understanding of the character as a hero, and he constructed a scenario of Hector playing devil's advocate in 2.2:

I felt that it was Hector himself, and not his brothers, who needed inspiration and motivation to carry on the war. He is feeling the weight of all Troy's

expectation on his shoulders; he is a man for whom honour in life means absolutely everything and so the capturing of Helen is a thorn in his side. He argues for Helen's release in order that his fellow generals, with their jingoistic counter arguments, will reignite his own warlike spirit. (Troughton, 2015)

In the scene in performance, Troughton's Hector was costumed to suggest military leadership: in contrast to the long, floor length priestly robes of Helenus, and Paris' flamboyant knee-length Edwardian-style coat, Hector's short jacket was buttoned up to the neck in a style reminiscent of officers' uniforms. Troughton's Hector dominated the central space (Performance recording, 1990), speaking firmly and decidedly, voicing his commitment to Helen being returned: 'Hector's opinion/ Is this in way of truth' (188-9). Troughton's Hector then made pointed use of the mid-line caesura by sitting down heavily in his chair. There was then a long pause before, still seated, Hector said gently, completing the verse line and changing his point of view, 'yet, ne'ertheless,/ My sprightly brethren, I propend to you/ In resolution to keep Helen still' (189-91). By delivering these words from a seated position, after a long pause, this interpretation created a sense of lassitude. This Hector displayed the late twentieth-century dilemma of the warrior leader who, whilst exhibiting skill at killing, must also show distaste for it. The same distaste had earlier been shown in the parade of Trojan soldiers, when Hector had been the only returning soldier to wash away the blood from his sword. Similarly, according to Troughton, the 'putrefied core' of the Greek in 'sumptuous armour' in Act 5 'signified Hector's final revulsion at killing for honour's sake and enhance[d] his own weariness and lack of appetite for war, first hinted at in the Council scene' (Troughton, 2015).

Hector and the Greek in 'sumptuous armour'

Mendes' production, rather unusually, treated the episode of the Greek in 'sumptuous armour' in a symbolic manner by using a bright, blinding light shining onto Hector, rather than having the literal appearance of another actor onstage in gleaming attire. Literary critics have not come to a consensus about the meaning of the armour, nor about whether or not it actually had another meaning to transmit: whilst Joyce Carol Oates had seen the moment as 'an allegorical little piece [...] which suggests that Death itself is present on the battlefield, tempting everyone with an external show of sumptuousness' (1967, p. 172), A. P. Rossiter had stated: 'It perplexes me that Shakespeare did not make an overt symbol of the "one in sumptuous armour" whom Hector kills and strips [...] only to find him somehow disgustingly diseased' (1961, p. 151). Yet Mendes, unlike other directors of *Troilus and Cressida*, chose a lighting device to suggest a moment more symbolically loaded with Hector's internal struggle. It was a decision which did not please Peter Holland, who felt that the figure of the unnamed Greek soldier had emblematic force enough: 'Nothing is gained by dispensing with the Greek in splendid armour and replacing him with a light shining into Hector's eyes, accompanied by a throbbing heartbeat' (Holland, 1992, p. 175). David Troughton felt that the light could represent Hector's own continuing hunt for 'the "glory" of war' (Troughton, 2015); a search which would lead only to a 'putrefied core' and ultimately to his own death. Hector was blinded by the idealistic blaze of chivalry, perhaps. It is useful to remember that neither Q nor F has a stage direction specifically calling for 'sumptuous' armour – this adjective was an addition in Malone's 1790 edition of the play (Bevington, 1998, p. 344). Many editions of the play, however, use the word 'sumptuous' in their stage direction, even if in square

brackets, and thus many prompt scripts used by actors and directors have included the notable phrase. Hector himself says 'I like thy armour well' (5.6.29) and refers to it as 'goodly armour' (5.9.2), rather than 'sumptuous', but nevertheless it is the physical appearance of the armour which attracts him acquisitively to it as a showy war trophy.

Literary critics from the 1960s onwards had commented upon the 'sumptuous armour' moment. Nevill Coghill wrote that 'Chivalry and courtly love have their ugly sides', including pillage, and stated that Hector is guilty of 'Yielding to the impulse for loot' (1964, p. 124). R. A. Yoder wrote about the moment when Hector is 'suddenly stirred by an acquisitive and bloodthirsty lust' (Yoder, 1972, p. 14). In performance, during the rapid action of the short Act 5 battle scenes, the 'sumptuous armour' moment is one which can easily be missed, since much of the battle section features brief exchanges and figures quickly entering and exiting across the stage, often through a haze of smoke. As shown in their prompt books, the Stratford productions of 1936, 1948, 1960 and 2012 were amongst those that used the literal manifestation of the unknown Greek onstage, often doubling an actor who had a smaller role, such as Antenor or Calchas. Quayle, in 1948, did not seem entirely happy with Hector hunting down the man in armour, however. As the prompt book (1948) shows, an already short episode was cut to be even shorter, with Hector's lines being reduced: the middle section about the armour itself ('I like thy armour well;/ I'll frush it and unlock the rivets all,/ But I'll be master of it' 5.6.29-31) was cut, making Hector appear less greedy. Although the mention of the 'hide' remained, Quayle's cutting meant that the stage moment could even more easily be missed, and it became less to do with

pillage or loot and more to do with yet another short encounter with an enemy in the midst of the battle. The negative aspect was reduced for the reading of Hector. In the same production, the guilt of pillage was firmly embedded in the Greek ranks, as one of the Myrmidons stole a ring from the dead body of Hector (Prompt book, 1948).

Hector the hero

The 'sumptuous armour' is also an episode which is sometimes cut completely from stage productions: Byam Shaw in 1954, Davies in 1985, Boyd in 1998 and Donnellan in 2008 removed all references to it from their prompt scripts, for instance. Potentially, productions which cut the moment, and reject a scene of Hector hunting a man for his 'hide', are rejecting an image of Hector as a flawed individual. It is easier for productions which remove the scene to project Hector as a more innocent, tragic victim of Achilles' brutality, and thus maintain the heroic figure. The RSC productions of 1985 and 1998 were clearly of this type. Davies' 1985 version featured David Burke as Hector, visibly a few years older, and wiser, than Troilus and Paris, the model of nostalgic chivalry within the Crimean ruined mansion set. He wore smart, pristine white gloves, in 2.2, as though he had paid more attention than his brothers to the detailed niceties of dress uniform (Performance recording, 1985). A family man, he chidingly corrected Troilus for using the term 'mad sister' by emphasising 'It is *Cassandra*' (2.2.100 – David Troughton added the same vocal stress as a rebuke in 1990), and his duel with Ajax featured the two men on table tops in the officers' mess, using foils, abiding by the sporting rules and conventions of a fencing match. He hunted no 'sumptuous armour' but was truly at a disadvantage

against Achilles, who directed his riflemen/Myrmidons to all shoot Hector from a distance.

Alistair Petrie in 1998 gave a warm, sympathetic depiction of Hector, looking like a farmer in homely corduroys and checked shirt, putting his hand on Andromache's shoulder during the family council (Performance recording, 1998) as he asked 'What nearer debt in all humanity/ Than wife is to the husband?' (2.2.175-6). His duel with Ajax, here a street-fight in shirt sleeves, allowed another view of Hector's belief in fair play: Diomedes attempted to escalate the fight by handing the two men metal bars, but a look from Hector caused them to be thrown down. Casting was significant here too, as Petrie, a tall, physically impressive man, looked capable of beating Paul Hamilton's Ajax, but then actively chose to forgo the advantage, when he spoke of their blood-ties. The audience was sure that this Hector was no 'boy-queller' either: it was Ulysses who had directed the killing of Patroclus; a deliberate act to rouse Achilles back to action. Elements of an 'acquisitive and bloodthirsty lust', which the literary critic Yoder had seen as part of Hector's character (Yoder, 1972, p. 14), were efficiently removed from the Trojan in this stage version, and became a tactic of the Greeks. This Hector suffered a grisly death, reminiscent of Sarah Kane's 1995 *Blasted* thought Michael Billington (Billington, 1998), as a lone Achilles cut out his heart with a knife, held it up for examination, before putting it inside his jacket. The 1998 Hector was not guilty of seeking an enemy's sumptuous armour, but, in Boyd's version, Achilles was the one with the pillaged war trophy, dripping in his pocket.

Reviews of different versions of Hector from productions across the decades show recurring key words and phrases. The figure onstage has had 'a genuine nobility' (David, 1954, p. 390) and 'a natural dignity' (Shorter, 1986), for example. Audiences have viewed, at times, a 'dignified Hector' (Holland, 1992, p. 173), a 'grave, decent Hector' (Nightingale, 1998) and a 'lean, decent Hector' (Rutter, 2009, p. 384). From the mid-1970s, however, there were also theatre reviews which began occasionally to include, as literary criticism of the time did, acknowledgements that Hector was less than perfect, and an awareness that traditional male heroic behaviour came at a cost. When Michael Pennington was Hector in the 1976 RSC Barton/Kyle production, one reviewer noticed 'his inconsistent, unkind chivalry' (Lambert, 1976). Through the 1980s and 90s, Hector's chivalry was seen as outmoded, from a by-gone age of 'war-as-sport', and thus rather naive. David Burke with fencing foils in 1985 and David Troughton in cream jodhpurs for his match with Ajax in 1990 were 'classic adherents of stiff-backed honour' (de Jongh, 1990). By the beginning of the twenty-first century it was increasingly common for reviewers to have spotted Hector's failings. Responding to the 2003 Tobacco Factory production, John Peter wrote of Hector: 'when push comes to shove, the macho pride of the fighting man proved stronger than decent humanity' (Peter, 2003,) and Lyn Gardner commented: 'Even heroes such as Hector make bad judgments' (Gardner, 2003).

Like Paul Taylor, many reviewers of Cheek by Jowl's 2008 production felt that 'attention is drawn to the flaws in David Caves's charismatic Hector' (Taylor, 2008). This Hector was 'foolish' (Allfree, 2008), 'if not a hypocrite, a dope' (Rutter, 2009, p.

384) and 'armed with the vanity of the self-righteous [...] a chivalric fool who only serves to extend the Trojan War' (Billington, 2008).

What is particularly interesting about the reception and understanding of Hector on the stage in 2008 is that on paper, or at least across the pages of the Cheek by Jowl prompt book, David Caves' version of Hector did exactly the same things which Hector had always done, and even had a greater number of the more questionable elements excised from the role. So, Caves' Hector performed the 'back somersault' about keeping Helen, during the Trojan Council, as his acting predecessors had done, but then, as the prompt book (2008) records, he did not give the enthusiastic announcement to his brothers that he had already sent a 'roisting challenge' to the Greeks. There was no obvious evidence that he was going to continue fighting anyway – this Hector could have looked as if he had just changed his mind, under pressure from his brothers, and could have been aiming to maintain family cohesion. Significantly, in Act 5, there was no mention of the 'sumptuous armour' episode. It was all cut. Hector, in 2008, had no connection to material acquisitiveness or to the practice of looting the dead. Yet comments about Hector in this production, more than any other version, were quick to remark on the character's negative attributes. Partly this seems due to the context of the production as a whole; the range of masculinities on offer was ripe for criticism. The long, traverse runways across the Barbican made the parading warriors into male models on a catwalk (Production photographs, 2008). The segmented pieces of plastic body armour, like sportsmen's protective gear, together with rounded contemporary 'squaddie' helmets, made them 'a cross between big-headed American sport stars and Action Men dolls' (Taylor,

2008). David Caves, speaking about his role as Hector commented on the fact that 'the male body is incredibly central in this play' and that the men 'eye each other up' (Caves, 2008). Masculinity, especially masculinity on show, was about preening and posturing, and Hector did not stand apart from that world.

The death of Hector

No matter how Hector has been portrayed during the rest of the play, and, as the examples above demonstrate, depictions until at least the mid-1970s were largely positive, an unfair grisly death can add even greater sympathy for the character at the end. Outnumbered by Myrmidons, incapacitated or injured by spears, swords or quarterstaves, the final killing blow to staged Hectors has often been delivered by Achilles. The 1960 Barton/Hall prompt book records a ritualistic, synchronised approach to the killing, ending, as many other productions typically did, with a clear indication of the ultimate guilt of Achilles: 'Myrmidons circle Hector – spears upwards – concerted three thrusts – Myrmidons back – kneel – Achilles strike[s] then Hector collapses - Achilles sword in sheath'. Referring to his 1999 National Theatre production, Trevor Nunn summarised the scene as: 'Achilles slaughters the unarmed hero with the aid of a pack of Myrmidons, and not in the long-heralded test of single-combat; Hector's body is dragged disgustingly around the walls of Troy' (in Bate and Rasmussen, 2010, p. 191). In Nunn's version, repeated offstage shouts were heard (Performance recording, 1999), echoing Achilles' line: 'Achilles hath the mighty Hector slain' (5.9.14). The lie was being passed on and on, becoming a myth. The death of Hector onstage, which Nunn quite rightly characterises as one which is far-removed from the chivalrous duelling and jousting rules of one-on-one combat,

produces an understanding of tragic loss. Even in versions, such as Cheek by Jowl's 2008 production, where Paul Taylor had noted the 'flaws' in Hector, the reviewer still felt 'an overwhelming sense of sorrow in the stunningly staged scene where he is slaughtered' (Taylor, 2008). The performance history of this moment remains far closer to literary criticism from several decades ago, rather than more recent scholarship. The stage's approach to Hector remains far closer to Coghill's choice of Malory-style labelling of his chapter about *Troilus and Cressida*, 'Morte Hector: A map of Honour', from 1964, than to Graham Bradshaw's feeling about the episode, that 'Hector is then butchered, put down with no more chivalry or honour than it would be sensible to show a rabid dog – *and why not?*' (1987, pp. 138-9, italics in original). The 'why not?' for the stage is that, ultimately, even with a growing acceptance of Hector's flaws and inconsistencies, he is the closest thing to a hero in the play, and practitioners are not willing to relinquish the theatrical potency of his sorrowful death.

CHAPTER 5 - PANDARUS AND THERSITES

This chapter will examine readings of Pandarus and Thersites, in terms of the literary criticism which made connections between the functions of the two characters. This will be followed by a discussion of the various literary readings of Pandarus as a separate character, and then an examination of the performance interpretations of this pander on the British stage, drawing attention to the moments of change in the portrayal. The Epilogue and the placement of Pandarus' final exit will be of importance here. A similar analysis of readings of Thersites across the decades of literary criticism will be followed by an examination of some of the reinterpretations of the character in the theatre. The periods which saw the use of Thersites as Prologue will be a particular focus.

From early on, literary readers of Shakespeare's play made associations between Pandarus and Thersites, as I do here. Both characters were regarded as having some form of comic, choric function in the play; one placed inside the walls of Troy, one placed outside, in the Greek camp. During the performance history of the play, directors have also sought to draw together the two characters. Using Thersites or Pandarus, or both figures together, to provide an opening or closing frame for a production has been a common approach. I will discuss these changes to the opening and closing moments of the play in the context of the contemporary social and cultural climate, as well as looking at the chronological relationship between literary readings of Pandarus and Thersites in the text of the play and the portrayals of the characters in stage performance.

Contemporary moral attitudes influenced the perception of the language used by both characters, with the coarseness of the sexual subject matter causing disapproval in earlier times. More recently, the cynical voices of Pandarus and Thersites have taken on a greater significance and have become accepted as an intrinsic part of the play's bleak outlook. At times, the sexuality of Pandarus has become a specific feature in performance, and this will also be one of my points of focus. From as early on as 1938, and certainly by the middle of the century, some productions displayed visual suggestions of an effeminate, homosexual Pandarus. These performance examples were in evidence well before literary critics became concerned with describing the character's sexuality. This is an aspect of the play where a noticeable time-lag occurred between earlier interpretations in performance and later changes in literary readings. More recently, a specific desire for Troilus became a noticeable sign of Pandarus' motivation for involving himself in the relationship of the lovers in some stage productions. His diseased ending has also, at times, taken on further significance in the drawing together of the themes of sexuality and sickly decay.

The Prologue and the Epilogue

Beginnings and endings are an important part of this chapter. They are important because the opening and closing moments of *Troilus and Cressida* are malleably available for reinterpretation, and Pandarus and Thersites have been widely associated with these moments. If the Folio-only Prologue is included in performance, as it almost always is, then the figure chosen to speak the Prologue of *Troilus and Cressida* brings onto the stage a set of meanings. An actor in full armour,

for example, can initially suggest a focus on the war-plot: a focus which can then be immediately questioned, since Troilus' first speech in 1.1 is his call to be unarmed. When a particular character from the play delivers the Prologue, a keynote for the production as a whole can be created from the start. Noticeably, the cynical outsider, Thersites, has often been given this initial task, bringing a sneering undercurrent to the grandiose language of the Prologue. At the other end of the performance, Pandarus' sleazy farewell, his Epilogue addressed to 'traders in the flesh' and 'Brethren and sisters of the hold-door trade' (5.11.45 and 51), has become a familiar and expected finale to the play in the theatre. This has not always been the case, however. During stage productions in the early decades of the twentieth century, Pandarus more commonly made his final exit at 5.3, the letter scene. From the mid-century, when Pandarus' Epilogue became the usual ending of the play in performance, the general prominence and visibility of Thersites also increased. The changes in the way that performances of *Troilus* have ended can be very revealing, as I will discuss, and theatre practitioners have utilised the editorial tangle of textual uncertainties concerning the placement of the final exit of Pandarus to provide opportunities to steer their productions in certain generic directions.

Pandarus and Thersites in literary criticism

A common strand in literary criticism from the beginning of the twentieth century was an attempt to connect the deflationary function of the two characters: Pandarus' machinations were seen to reduce the notion of 'love' into a triviality and Thersites' use of invective did the same with the heroic notion of 'war'. Arthur Symons, in a 1907 essay, associated the two characters in this way and stated 'Shakespeare uses

not only Thersites but Pandarus to speak through, as he escapes the sting of love by making a laughing stock of the passion under cover of Pandarus' trade, and holds up war to contempt through the licence of the "fool", "mimic", and "privileged man" of these "beef-witted" lords who are playing at soldiers' (quoted in Martin, 1976, p. 62). Una Ellis-Fermor concurred with this association between the two characters, and focused on their ability to disrupt order and decency. She stated 'Thersites or Pandarus (the explicit or the implicit statement of the mood of disillusionment) breaks in upon every scene in which nobility of conception, passion or conduct is emphasized' (1945, p. 60). Pandarus and Thersites were seen to have a functional, though unpleasant, purpose.

Before the middle of the twentieth century, many literary critics expressed distaste for the language used by Pandarus and Thersites, as well as their moral standing. The comments of both characters were often considered to be 'unsuitable' for all readers. One of the concerns was with what critics saw as the depiction of illicit love and Pandarus' part in bringing it about. They were uncomfortable with the directness of lines from Pandarus, addressed to the unmarried Troilus and Cressida, such as 'Whereupon I will show you a chamber with a bed; which bed, because it shall not speak of your pretty encounters, press it to death' (3.2.202-4). In the morning, following the lovers' night together, Pandarus gleefully teases his niece just as candidly: 'Ha, ha! Alas, poor wretch! Ah, poor *capocchia*, has't not slept tonight? Would he not – ah, naughty man – let it sleep?' (4.2.32-4). In his work, *Shakespeare's Problem Comedies*, W. W. Lawrence found the character guilty of making 'the coarsest of comments' (1931, p. 129) and lamented that 'Pandarus is

constantly made to utter comments which no decent girl, even in Elizabethan days of unbridled speech, could hear without a protest' (p. 130). In *Shakespeare's Problem Plays*, E. M. W. Tillyard wrote of Pandarus 'He is good-natured but he is coarse' and added that the character 'does not stand for good sense' (1950, p.56). For many, Pandarus the bawd, and the language he used, was very much one of the 'problems' of the play. The coarseness of the utterances from Thersites received similar commentary. Thersites was 'the foulest-spoken of all the people of Shakespeare' for Tillyard (1950, p. 130) and by the 1940s, in his article 'Troilus, Cressida and Thersites', W. W. Lawrence stated of Thersites: 'He is almost intolerably foul-mouthed' (Lawrence, 1942, p. 432). It is not difficult to imagine that the content of the language used by Pandarus and Thersites was partly responsible for the Victorian and Edwardian distaste for the play; a distaste which continued, in part, well into the twentieth century.

At times, in criticism, Pandarus and Thersites were understood to be opposites, providing a useful function of demarcating the rival factions. G. Wilson Knight, for example, a great supporter of the 'chivalrous' Trojans in *The Wheel of Fire*, commented that 'The contrast between the two camps is marked by the Pandarus and Thersites conceptions. Pandarus' humour is always kindly and sympathetic, Thersites' cynical and mocking' (1930, p. 60). As an early apologist for Pandarus, and unlike many of his censorious contemporaries, Wilson Knight called the character 'one of the most exquisite things in this play' (p. 61) and stated that 'Pandarus' humour [is] like health-bringing sunshine compared with the sickly

eclipsing cynicism of Thersites' jeers' (p. 61). This glowing testimonial to Pandarus from Wilson Knight was not generally shared by others, however.

By the 1960s, critics continued to show an interest in the connections between the 'clown' and 'chorus' functions of both Pandarus and Thersites in their readings of the play, and continued to make associations between the characters. Sounding reminiscent of G. Wilson Knight's earlier distinctions between the characters, Jan Kott wrote 'In this tragicomedy there are two great parts for clowns. The sweet clown Pandarus in Troy, and the bitter clown Thersites in the Greek camp' (1964, p. 82). Joyce Carol Oates went further in making an association between Pandarus and Thersites, and suggested that after the exit of Thersites during the Act 5 battle scenes, a kind of amalgam is created during the Epilogue. She wrote:

Perhaps he [Thersites] does return, in the figure of Pandarus – for the mocking, loathsome Pandarus who ends the play seems a new character altogether. He is really Thersites, but Pandarus is needed to unify the love plot: the play's final word is "diseases", a fitting one certainly, but one that makes more sense in Thersites' mouth than in Pandarus'. (1967, p. 174)

Thersites is connected throughout the play, linguistically at least, with sickness and disease, beginning with his references to 'boils', 'a botchy core' (tumour), 'plague', 'itch', 'scratching' and 'scab' which all occur within the first 25 lines of his initial appearance in 2.1. Oates believed that this lexical set was being concluded with the final bitter bequest of diseases to the audience, which comes not from Thersites, as may have been expected, but from Pandarus. Pandarus' position onstage during the

final moments, for Oates, brought together the outcome of the love plot, (a negative outcome: the procurer left alone with no young lovers to 'go between'), with the malicious tone of disorder and disease which had previously been associated with Thersites. It is noticeable that theatre directors, including John Barton and Trevor Nunn, have also been keen to draw a concluding association between Pandarus and Thersites, as I will later discuss, and several productions have found ways of incorporating Thersites into the last moments of performance. My focus now, however, will rest specifically upon the figure of Pandarus.

Pandarus in literary criticism

Although Thersites has gained in prominence as the play came to be more regularly performed, Pandarus had always been given prominence in reading and consideration of the play on the page. Notions of reading a play text, watching a play in performance and the significance of an individual character become tangled from the very start with *Troilus and Cressida*. The Qb version, with its emphasis on a literary readership and a refutation of past performance, has a title page which gives precedence to the love plot and the centrality of Pandarus: it describes the play as 'Excellently expressing the beginning of their [Troilus' and Cressida's] loves, with the conceited wooing of Pandarus Prince of Licia'. Although the play's earliest stage history remains uncertain, David Bevington has suggested that Qb's prominent reference to 'Pandarus Prince of Licia' could mean that the character 'had become something of a household name, like Falstaff' (Bevington, 1999, p. 298).

As we have seen, Pandarus often came in for negative commentary from literary critics in the first half of the twentieth century: even his supporter, G. Wilson Knight, commented on the 'lax morality' of Pandarus (1930, p. 60). This moralising stance had been evident in earlier commentaries. At the end of the nineteenth century, the diseased ending of Pandarus had caused Frederick S. Boas to state that the character received a just, punitive finale for his lifestyle. Boas was an early user of the term 'problem-plays', to deal with *All's Well that Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure*, *Troilus and Cressida* and *Hamlet*. In his 1896 book, *Shakspeare and his Predecessors*, Boas believed that the 'problem' of representing a bawd had been solved by the play's ending and the decline of Pandarus. He wrote: 'we get a hint that his evil courses are not without their punishment. In the brief glimpse that we get of him in Act V he is complaining of his ill-health. He is suffering from the retribution with which age pays for youthful excesses' (Boas, 1896, p. 377). Boas was likely to have been referring to Pandarus' complaints of the syphilitic 'ache in my bones' at 5.3.105, as well as the 'sweat' at 5.11.55. The non-active, vicarious nature of Pandarus' sexuality within the events of the play would not suggest any connection to the 'punishment' of venereal disease to which Boas alluded, but imagining the backstory of Pandarus' 'youthful excesses' seemed to enable Boas to connect the role of the bawd with the world of corrupt sexuality and immorality in general. One of the problems of the play could then be 'cleaned up' by the decline of Pandarus.

Amongst later literary critics showing disapproval were W. W. Lawrence, who referred to Pandarus as 'an elderly lecher' (1931, p. 115) and A. P. Rossiter, who, in *Angel With Horns*, referred to 'a buffoonish old Pandarus [...] a mere broker of sexual

stock' who concludes the play 'with a lamentation for bawds in his thoroughly venereal Epilogue' (1961, p. 132, p. 134). For feminist critics in the 1970s, who were offering new, sympathetic readings of Cressida as victim, Pandarus was negatively viewed as one of the men who used her for their own purposes. Carolyn Asp, for instance, saw Cressida as 'a pawn in the male game of war', mobilised by 'her self-serving and licentious uncle' (1977, p. 410). Whilst literary critics used the terms 'bawd', 'lecher', and 'procurer' in their descriptions of the character, they did not use the term 'pimp'. It was not until the end of the twentieth century, and then within the realm of theatre reviews, that the term, still rather occasionally, came to be applied to Pandarus; possibly because 'pimp' had a more distasteful, informal and pecuniary meaning than the older, more traditional 'bawd'.

Literary critics had also, at times, expressed more positive features of the character of Pandarus, due to the humour inherent in the role, particularly in his meddlesome fussing. Here, some Falstaffian qualities seemed to emerge. W. W. Lawrence, writing in 1931, but imagining some of the potential, earliest performances of the play, suggested, almost reluctantly, that 'Pandarus no doubt afforded the audience constant amusement' (1931, p. 130). G. Wilson Knight believed Pandarus to be akin to Juliet's Nurse, and wrote that 'From the start Pandarus' fussy interest in his young friends' love-adventure is truly delightful' and that towards the end of the play 'he is deeply sympathetic' (1930, pp. 60-1). Jan Kott also expressed sympathetic views: 'Pandarus is a kind-hearted fool who wants to do his best for everybody, and make the bed for every couple. He lives as if the world were one great farce. But cruelty will reach him as well. The old procurer will weep' (1964, p. 82). Again, the dramatic

function of the character was significant to critics; the decline of Pandarus throughout the play, ('cruelty will reach him as well'), was understood to be a powerful symbol of the degeneration of the society as a whole. As such, his ending could be one which invoked a sense of pity, for some readers, rather than a moment of closing retribution.

Kott's suggestion that Pandarus enjoys seeing lovers brought together because he is 'kind-hearted' is rather unusual. No money changes hands during the arrangement, and what is generally absent from works of literary criticism from the first seven decades of the twentieth century is any attempt to suggest why Pandarus should procure his own niece for Troilus in the first place. Conversely, at the end of the century, editors and critics were far more likely to discuss Pandarus' motivation. In his Arden edition of the play, (1998), for example, David Bevington suggested that Pandarus has a particular reason for his intense interest in the young lovers' relationship: it enables him to have access to the young Trojan prince. For Pandarus, according to Bevington, the final loss of Cressida means very little, even as he tries to deliver her letter, because she is merely 'after all, his avenue of approach to Troilus' (p. 64). Bevington does not make clear whether this avenue is the route to a royal prince for the sycophantic Pandarus, or if the situation has a more sexual motivation. In 'The Politics of Desire in *Troilus and Cressida*', René Girard had described Pandarus as 'a dreadful snob' who has a 'fascination for the royal palace', but had also commented on the 'mimetic desire' he experiences for both Troilus and Cressida. Girard wrote: 'Pandarus is not working for money; he is driven by his own desire [...] He is so entranced with both Cressida and Troilus, the one and the other

potential rivals as well as objects, more or less indifferently, that he must deliberately push them into each other's arms' (Girard, 1990, p. 201). Staged interpretations, however, did not wait until the end of the century before putting on view a specific understanding of Pandarus' sexuality and motives. Unlike Girard, who saw Pandarus to be 'entranced with both Cressida and Troilus', the stage often made his incentive to act as go-between clearly one-sided, and frequently presented him as a homosexual voyeur, vicariously relishing the prospect of his niece, as proxy, sharing Troilus' bed.

Pandarus in performance

By the 1950s, as coded signifiers of homosexuality were being used in the staged depiction of the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus, a theatrical convention for the portrayal of an older, effeminate, homosexual Pandarus also began to take hold. The examples of Pandarus' homosexuality in performance, although coded, were seen in advance of these kinds of interpretations appearing in written literary criticism. Although a specific desire for Troilus was not yet in evidence, by the middle of the twentieth century a gossiping, giggling Pandarus, often in feminised garb, became a familiar feature in the stage history of *Troilus and Cressida*.

This had not always been the case in earlier productions, however. William Poel cast himself as Pandarus in his 1912 production, and played the role as a comic with a cockney accent (Shirley, 2005, p. 11). In Ben Iden Payne's 1936 Stratford production, Randle Ayrton's Pandarus was driven solely by kindly paternalism. There was no mention of a homosexual subtext in Ayrton's performance. The reviewer in

The Birmingham Mail found that 'his motive was simply to guide the young people to happiness' (quoted in Shirley, 2005, p. 21). By the 1950s, however, a different representation of Pandarus was more commonly seen which became a longstanding trend, and reasons other than avuncular concern could be interpreted in the bawd-like actions of the character.

Glen Byam Shaw's 1954 production at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre featured Anthony Quayle as Pandarus. This Pandarus left a large impression on the audiences, with Quayle 'mincing, lisping, and gloating over the passions of his "Twoilus and Cwessida"' (*Daily Mail*, 1954). Production photographs (Brown, 1956a) show a white-haired Pandarus with an elaborate, long, hooped earring and a draped, silk scarf. This depiction seems to share features with, what Nicholas de Jongh calls, 'the 1950s socio-medical version of the "ageing homosexual"', a stereotype described by the psychotherapist D. J. West (and quoted by de Jongh) as 'on the shelf, lonely, without home or family [...] trying to bribe himself into the company of young men' (de Jongh, 1992, p.130). Cressida, according to this interpretation, was to be that bribe.

Two years after Byam Shaw's Stratford production, in Tyrone Guthrie's production at the Old Vic, another elderly Pandarus, played by Paul Rogers in a grey wig, also displayed suggestions of homosexuality. Costuming was not used as a signifier of a homosexual Pandarus in 1956; no earrings or scarves were in evidence. Rogers wore 'masculine' clothing throughout, beginning in Ascot attire, including top hat and

tails, and ending in an overcoat and felt hat for the departure from Troy (Wood and Clarke, 1956). His actions, however, spoke volumes. Henry Hewes remarked on the lecherous glances given by Pandarus to any young men onstage (*Saturday Review*, 12th January 1957, quoted in Shirley, 2005, p. 34). This was an image of Pandarus that was to live on. More than fifty years later, the depiction of a lewd, homosexual Pandarus searching for any available, young, male flesh was still in evidence: in Matthew Dunster's 2009 production at the Globe, for example, 'semi-nude, doe-eyed servant boys [were seen to] pad about, risking a goosing from Matthew Kelly's lecherously camp Pandarus' (Marlowe, 2009).

Back in 1956, the playing of 1.2 was also used to give an indication of Pandarus' general interest in men. The way in which a gleeful Pandarus reacts to the spectacle of the parade of returning Trojan soldiers has often been used as an indicator of his sexual preferences. Roger Wood and Mary Clarke believed that the positioning of Cressida and her uncle on the edge of the apron-stage, for this scene in 1956, peering over the stalls to watch the return of the (unseen) Trojan soldiers, was successful in maintaining a focus on, what they called, the verbal 'excesses' of the obviously excited Pandarus. Pandarus' comments about the returning Trojan men are eager and repetitive descriptions, such as 'O brave Hector! Look how he looks! There's a countenance!' (1.2.194-5) and 'Look ye yonder, niece, is't not a gallant man too, is't not? Why, this is brave now' (1.2.205-6). Without the Trojans being present, the audience was allowed to fully concentrate on Pandarus' excited comments and the arousing effect that the parade of men would have on both the 'wily' Cressida and her uncle (Wood and Clarke, 1956).

Max Adrian played Pandarus in two of the century's major productions of *Troilus and Cressida*: first in 1938, in Michael Macowan's ground-breaking modern-dress version at the Westminster Theatre, then in 1960, in Stratford, for the Hall/Barton 'sandpit' production. Although separated by twenty-two years, both productions featured Max Adrian as a Pandarus who displayed some of the veiled suggestions of staged homosexuality seen in the mid-century period. Comments from reviewers, in both 1938 and 1960, shared keywords and themes, such as 'decadence' and 'vulgarity', and often expressed a sense of moralising distaste; these suggestions of staged depictions of homosexuality had also been present in reviewers' descriptions of Achilles and Patroclus. On viewing Adrian's interpretation of Pandarus in the earlier production, Ivor Brown saw an 'affected, elderly roué' and a 'chattering and repulsive fribble of the glassily squalid night-club type' (Brown, 1938). Within the stage history of *Troilus and Cressida*, this is a particularly early example of words such as 'affected', 'chattering' and 'squalid' being used, in a codified way, to mark the reviewer's recognition of a staged depiction of a homosexual man. In 1960, one reviewer stated that Adrian played Pandarus with 'immense, dirty, quivering gusto' (Levin, 1960) and Frances A. Shirley recalled that the actor found 'vulgar joy in his role as pander, giggling and almost dancing with delight in the decadent atmosphere' (Shirley, 2005, p. 39). The veiled homosexuality of Pandarus in these productions was also tied up with perceptions of general corruption and seediness in his procuring role, together with an acknowledgement of humour. The reviewers seemed to enjoy this sort of comic depiction. The older, non-active male homosexual could be accepted at this time as a figure of fun. The rather eccentric, elderly uncle in a silk

scarf, for example, was tolerated in a way that the depiction of a mutual, physical homosexual relationship between Achilles and Patroclus was not.

By the end of the twentieth century, depictions of Pandarus as a homosexual man had not disappeared from the stage: Russell Jackson included 'campy performances of Pandarus' in his list of devices repeatedly attached to late-century productions of *Troilus and Cressida* (Jackson, 1997, p. 212). An added note of a particular yearning for Troilus had become a common, although not universal, choice when staging the play. By this time, reviewers and commentators used terminology far more freely to refer to the homosexual desires of Pandarus. The reception of Ian Judge's 1996 RSC production and Trevor Nunn's 1999 National Theatre production certainly showed examples of this. Clive Francis' Pandarus in 1996 was a man who, according to Robert Smallwood, 'swayed and writhed and minced his way through his pandering, making it perfectly clear that he would be delighted to supply Cressida's place in Troilus' bed if she continued to delay' (Smallwood, 1997, pp. 212-3). Charles Spencer similarly saw a character who was 'presented as a voyeur with the hots for Troilus' (Spencer, 1996). David Bamber's Pandarus in 1999 was 'a hyperactive old fruit', according to John Peter, (Peter, 1999), whose procuring actions had, again, one goal: 'an obsession with bringing his niece and Troilus together in order to feed his desire for the prince' (Smallwood, 2000, p. 259). The motivation of Pandarus in these two examples was clearly expressed as displaced, vicarious homosexual desire, and reviewers positioned at the end of the twentieth century understood it in this way and wrote about it without recourse to the disguised terms of 'decadence' and 'vulgarity'.

Francis' Pandarus for the RSC was dressed for most of the performance in an Oriental-looking white robe, accessorised with high chopines, long hair arranged in ringlets, lipstick and ostentatious earrings (Performance recording, 1996). Like the 1956 version at the Old Vic, the excessive excitement of Francis' Pandarus whilst watching the return of the soldiers in 1.2 was noted. The character was highly animated and excited, bouncing on the spot with delight, as he watched the soldiers from his elevated vantage point. Robert Butler commented that 'He tug[ged], winsomely, at his black ringlets and barely control[led] his excitement when Hector (Louis Hilyer) passe[d]' (Butler, 1996). Three years later, feminised accessories were also added to a long-sleeved floor length robe for Bamber's Pandarus at the National, including a frilled parasol in 1.2 and a fly-whisk which was wafted around elaborately (Performance recording, 1999). The real feelings of Bamber's Pandarus were for Troilus, with a distinct lack of true concern for the welfare of his niece; a fact which was shown by the manner in which he almost struck Cressida, and had to stop himself from doing so, when he learnt that she had to move to the Greek camp. His line, 'Would thou hadst ne'er been born! I knew thou wouldst be his death' (4.2.86-7), was delivered with fury, as he realised that his manipulative use of Cressida to get closer to Troilus would be coming to an end.

The reviewers' comments about the 1996 and 1999 portrayals of Pandarus often shared a common reading of the character in their use of terms of out-dated, overtly theatrical, camp/gay 'showbiz' iconography. Clive Francis' performance repeatedly reminded critics of Frankie Howerd, Kenneth Williams, John Inman and Larry Grayson; performers not at the height of their popularity by the late 1990s.

Additionally, several commentators referred to other theatrical traditions, including pantomime, in their reviews. There were several variations, by the reviewers, of a description of 'an absurd Widow Twankey get-up' (Gross, 1996). There were comments that Pandarus looked 'like Ko-Ko in *The Mikado* ... [and] a sour pantomime poof' (Macaulay, 1996). David Bamber's version of the character prompted a similar response: he was seen as 'sub-Frankie Howerd' (Brown, 1999), and Michael Coveney wrote that 'with his lascivious asides, red fez and fly-whisk he looks like a refugee from Carry On Up the Khyber' (Coveney, 1999). The century's most visible and audible manifestations of a homosexual Pandarus were bound up in specifically out-dated, tired theatrical and televisual images. By the final decade of the twentieth century, the theatre's representation of a stereotypically effeminate gay man revealed a deep sense of sexual conservatism.

The subtext of an older man secretly yearning for Troilus was a common directorial choice, but it had not become a fixed feature in all performance versions of the play in the 1980s and 1990s. In RSC productions from 1985, 1990 and 1998, productions which also played down the sexual nature of the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus, Pandarus was far more a kindly uncle, a rather nonsexual figure in a Panama hat, warmly nurturing his niece in her burgeoning relationship. In Howard Davies' 1985 production, Pandarus was played by Clive Merrison, a casting choice which led reviewers to comment on him being portrayed as 'younger than usual' (Warren, 1986, p. 118; Trewin, 1985). Merrison's apparent youth did not preclude the potential for a sexual interest in Troilus, of course, but the reading of Pandarus bringing together the young lovers for his own sleazy benefit was not evident in this

production. Stage versions of *Troilus and Cressida* from the previous five decades had regularly used established older actors in the role; at the SMT in 1948, Noel Willman had created a Pandarus who was 'almost senile' (Shirley, 2005 p. 29) and Anthony Quayle in the 1954 SMT production had been a 'study of senile blethering and fussing' (Keown, 1954). The portrayal of a younger Pandarus in 1985 was noteworthy, then, and it also had an effect on the relationship between uncle and niece, and hence an effect on the depiction of Pandarus' sexuality. This Pandarus was actively seeking to help his niece, rather than actively trying to attain the affections of Troilus. Nicholas Shrimpton stated that 'Clive Merrison was no salacious procurer but a sympathetic relative, more cousin than uncle' (Shrimpton, 1987, p. 203). Merrison's Pandarus was closer in age to Cressida than had often been seen in productions of the play, and also displayed similarities with the experiences of his niece. Rather than being a foolish old man during the Helen scene (3.1), for example, Pandarus was subjected to aggressively physical bullying, man-handled by the group of party guests. This stage action foreshadowed the later physically rough treatment which would be suffered by Stevenson's Cressida during the scene of forced kisses (4.5).

As well as the character's younger age, the absence of a homosexual 'yearning-for-Troilus' motivation for Pandarus in 1985 was also noted by reviewers, indicating that, by the mid-80s, certain stage traditions had accumulated around the role; traditions and trends which could, by this time, be challenged. Michael Coveney wrote of Merrison's version: 'I liked his original line in asexual wheedling' (Coveney, 1985). The 'asexuality' of Clive Merrison's Pandarus shared a similarity with the

interpretation of the character in the RSC's next production of *Troilus and Cressida*. Norman Rodway's Pandarus, in Sam Mendes' 1990 production, whilst reverting to the image of the ageing social climber, did not utilise an interpretation of overt homosexuality. He was called a 'neutered voyeur' (Billington, 1991), and, in her analysis of Pandarus' role in the opening of the Helen scene, Carol Chillington Rutter, punning, claimed that he 'played straight man, for once, to an even camper servant' (Rutter, 2001, p. 120). In removing or avoiding the notion of a homosexual man seeking an 'avenue' into Troilus' affections, the production instead projected 'the devoted attentions of a beaming old relative' (Holdsworth, 1990), and put on display an 'excessively fond matchmaker' (Hassell, 1991). The companionable relationship between uncle and niece was highlighted in 1990, as Pandarus and Cressida were seen, in 1.2, sitting closely together on the floor and dipping their bare feet into the small onstage pool (Performance recording, 1990). Five years earlier, Stevenson's Cressida and Merrison's Pandarus had also been seen sitting side by side, sharing a picnic blanket, with mirrored body posture (Performance recording, 1985); a similar method of displaying the friendly, informal nature of the relationship.

By 1990, however, many reviewers had seen enough versions of *Troilus and Cressida* to have developed a belief in the play as a dark, pessimistic work. The avuncular actions of Rodway's Pandarus in 1990 caused some of them to be confused, since they had formed their own expectations about the bleakness of the play: 'Not everything slots into place' wrote Martin Hoyle, 'Norman Rodway makes Pandarus such a jolly old sport, without either the self-interest or lubricious prurience usually seen in the role, that we wonder what's in it for him' (Hoyle, 1990). The

depiction of a 'pleasant' Pandarus can make his angry, sudden rejection of Cressida at 4.2 difficult, and it also leaves problems for the Epilogue. Nicholas Shrimpton had felt confusion about the syphilitic textual references during the 1985 production, when spoken by a younger, companionable Pandarus, and commented that: 'When, in the last line of the Epilogue, he bequeathed us his diseases, it was for once not at all clear what they were meant to be' (Shrimpton, 1987, p. 203). The final degeneration of the 1990 Pandarus also created a disjunction for R. V. Holdsworth: 'Norman Rodway's Pandarus is engagingly arch but never sinister or sleazy, which leaves his venereal Epilogue awkwardly marooned' (Holdsworth, 1990). Pandarus is absent from the stage for much of Act 5, and so audiences, including those from 1985 and 1990, who have seen only images of a kindly uncle can feel that, when the character finally returns in 5.11, the tone of the Epilogue feels 'marooned'.

In 1998, in his touring production for the RSC, Michael Boyd avoided the potential problem of the Epilogue being 'marooned' by transposing the 'diseases' speech to 5.3, the letter scene. This was Pandarus' final exit, a poignant scene, as, left alone, he tried in vain to collect the pieces of Cressida's letter which Troilus had torn and thrown down to the floor. As he spoke his final words he was 'absolutely shattered by the defeat of his plans' (Smallwood, 2000, p. 260). The audience's last sight in Boyd's production was not the ailing pander bequeathing his diseases, but, instead, the furiously homicidal Troilus, repeatedly saying 'I 'reck not though thou end my life today' (Prompt book, 1998). This 'closed off' the role of Pandarus and his part in the love plot at the earlier position, and removed the potential issue of the oddness of his appearance, as a civilian, in the midst of the battle.

Several reviewers, including Alastair Macaulay, referred to the 'melancholy' and 'romantic' aspects of this linen-suited Pandarus (Macaulay, 1998). None of the reviewers used any terms connoting homosexuality to describe Hanlon's creation of Pandarus, nor did they discuss him being motivated by desire for Troilus. Carole Woddis specifically referred to the rejection of the interpretation of Pandarus as a homosexual and wrote: 'Best of all is Roy Hanlon's Pandarus, not the usual queeny sybarite but an almost kindly Irish romantic, utterly crest-fallen when his love-match between Troilus and Cressida turns to ashes' (Woddis, 1998). This Pandarus wore no feminised accessories and, whilst the comfortable banter between uncle and niece was maintained at the start of 1.2, the parade of young Trojan men, a stage moment which has often been used to show Pandarus' excitement when ogling the soldiers, was completely omitted from this production. There was no direct physical contact between Troilus and Pandarus either. The notion of Pandarus' sexuality, as in 1985 and 1990, was rather irrelevant. It did not need to be an issue. Boyd's production was positioned at a time of increasing visibility and acceptance of same-sex relationships: *Queer as Folk* aired on Channel Four in 1999, for example, the controversial Clause 28, prohibiting the 'promotion' of homosexuality by local authorities, was removed in 2003 and in 2005 civil partnerships became legal. Other productions of *Troilus and Cressida*, such as those directed by Ian Judge and Trevor Nunn, which did make a spectacle, or a comical issue, of the homosexuality of Pandarus were widely perceived as being out of touch.

Boyd's decision in 1998 not to draw specific attention to the sexuality of Pandarus may have been viewed by many as more fitting to its contemporary climate, but to

dismiss Pandarus at 5.3, and to end with Troilus, was unusual, as I discussed in chapter 2. From the mid-1950s it had become far more common practice to end with the Epilogue. Both approaches have some textual justification. Roger Apfelbaum has provided a summary of the major theories about this textual question, of which there are many, in his book *Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida: Textual Problems and Performance Solutions*. Apfelbaum states that 'commentators have constructed a vast array of explanations to account for the variant readings [...] These theories have been continually recycled in an attempt to explain how the F only lines (at the end of 5.3) are a sign that Q, F or both contain either textual corruption or theatrical interpolation' (Apfelbaum, 2004, p. 196). As detailed by Apfelbaum, theories have included notions of authorial 'first shot' and 'second shot' attempts with accidental failure to delete one of the passages. There have also been long-running debates about whether the inclusion of the Epilogue can offer evidence about the nature of the intended audience and the possible location of the play's first performances: Peter Alexander's 'Inns of Court' theory, stating that the play was specifically written for the raucous tastes of a private audience of clerks, and that it was 'unlikely that this play was ever performed to an audience at the Globe' (Alexander, 1928, p. 278), was highly influential. Nevill Coghill believed that a public, Globe performance came first, with no Prologue or Epilogue, followed by a later revival at the Inns of Court, when the opening and concluding material was added to the play. In *Shakespeare's Professional Skills*, published almost four decades after Alexander's initial 'Inns of Court' work, Coghill stated that the 'fierce' Prologue and the 'salacious' Epilogue were added especially for a revival at the Inns of Court, at Christmas 1608, to protect the play 'from a bad reception by rowdy young cynics' and that 'in doing so he

[Shakespeare] has accidentally crossed the wires of criticism for the twentieth century' (1964, p. 78). Alexander and Coghill entered into a published correspondence on the matter, arguing against each other across the letters pages of the *Times Literary Supplement*, during the spring of 1967 (Apfelbaum, 2004, p. 200).

The scandalous subject matter of the Epilogue has also been cited as evidence of an addition by a different writer, particularly by Victorian critics who were keen to preserve the purity, both moral and bibliographic, of the 'true Shakespeare'. In the 1888 Henry Irving Edition of Shakespeare, for example, A. W. Verity provided a note to Pandarus' Epilogue: 'one would gladly believe that the ribald rubbish with which the play ends was not written by Shakespeare' (Irving and Marshall, 1895, p. 340). In the midst of all of these competing theories, what does seem clear is that theatre practitioners have been keen to take advantage of the different possibilities of ending the play. The differences between Q and F, and the textual ambiguities of the different versions, have not been problematic to the stage, but have offered an attractive range of interpretative stances.

In performance, the choice of ending has strong implications for the tone of the piece as a whole. Using Pandarus' Epilogue at the end of a production maintains a cynical, satirical tone, implicating the audience in a world of vice and disease. Given the 'venereal' subject matter of the Epilogue, and the fact that Pandarus' immorality had long been viewed as one of the 'problems' of the play, it is perhaps not surprising that for at least the first half of the twentieth century, directors were keen to locate the

rejection of Pandarus to 5.3, and to leave the audience with a concluding, memorable view of the heroic Troilus.

In 1912 William Poel, directing the production and playing Pandarus, denied himself the opportunity for a final solo spot, and made his last exit at 5.3, leaving the audience with Troilus' lament for his brother's death (Bevington, 1999, p. 302). Following this, Stratford audiences became accustomed to a play which ended tragically, as Poel's version had, with the lone figure of Troilus on the stage. As their prompt books show, Ben Iden Payne in 1936, Anthony Quayle in 1948 and Glen Byam Shaw in 1954 all used this ending, dismissing Pandarus at the earlier point, 5.3. However, although these three Stratford directors seemed to be favouring the Folio version, by removing Pandarus at 5.3, they did not completely follow the hypothesised deletion of the Epilogue. Iden Payne, Quayle and Byam Shaw seemingly wished to preserve some of the language of disease and corruption which can be found in the Epilogue, but had not wanted to afford Pandarus the final, and perhaps defining, word. All three directors utilised varying cut versions of the Epilogue for Pandarus to speak, including a few of the 'diseases' lines, transposed to a position as he was about to make his exit at the earlier point, 5.3. They were reluctant to lose all the material of the Epilogue, but preferred to end with a heroic, though woeful Troilus. Half a century later, this was the format used in Michael Boyd's production when Pandarus, being rejected by Troilus, made his last exit during the letter scene. The 1998 Pandarus still made use of the direct address to the audience and the content of the Epilogue, even if not placed at the end of the production.

Michael Macowan's production in 1938 was an exception to the early pattern of ending the play with the emotional words of Troilus. Macowan 'adventuresomely pioneered' (Bevington, 1999, p. 303) the use of the Quarto version, with Pandarus reappearing in 5.11 to speak the Epilogue at the very end of the play. Tyrone Guthrie, in 1956, also concluded the play with Pandarus' Epilogue (Wood and Clarke, 1956). The choice of ending seems to offer directors a key to their understanding of the piece as a whole. It is noticeable, as Roger Apfelbaum points out, that two of the earliest proponents of the concluding Epilogue, the inclusion of which causes a production to end on an unsavoury, dispiriting note, both made use of a modern, twentieth-century setting (Apfelbaum, 2004, p. 215). Macowan used contemporary references in design, with 1930s costuming, cigarettes, cocktail glasses, barbed wire and the sound of roaring aeroplanes (Shirley, 2005, p. 24). Guthrie chose an upper-class Edwardian setting, with some aspects of design recalling Macowan's staging, including Helen's white baby grand piano (Shirley, 2005, p. 33). For these directors, Pandarus' coarse and cynical Epilogue seemed to offer a fitting, sleazy final flourish to a play which became viewed more and more as a suitable commentary on the disillusionment of the twentieth century.

When the Epilogue is used, the decline of Pandarus, from the bantering busybody of 1.1 to the diseased figure of the finale, has often been used as a framing device for the play in performance. As the play-world collapses and disintegrates so does Pandarus. RSC productions in 1985 and 1990 made this framing function very clear.

In 1985, Clive Merrison's Pandarus was present onstage as soon as the audience entered the theatre. He was seated at a table, calmly reading a newspaper and sipping wine. Pandarus was removed from the brutal reality of war, not even noticing when the Prologue was spoken by an unnamed soldier who had helped to carry an injured, dying comrade (Performance recording, 1985). The juxtaposition of bloody death with Pandarus' relaxed, oblivious manner set up a stark visual image. This image made a connection with the end of the production, when Pandarus was again present, though isolated, within a scene of destruction. It caused Pandarus to be the centre of the play. Five years later, in Mendes' production, the notion of Pandarus as the centre of the play was taken further. Merrison's Pandarus had been present onstage during the delivery of the Prologue in 1985, but Norman Rodway actually spoke it in 1990 (Performance recording, 1990). Reviewers and commentators were impressed by the opening and the use of Pandarus to begin the action. Pandarus' use of direct address to the audience at other parts of the play, such as his couplet addressed to 'all tongue-tied maidens' at 3.2.205, seemed to make sense of his delivery of the opening lines in Mendes' production. When Rodway's Pandarus finally delivered the Epilogue, alone onstage, jacketless and dishevelled, an image was efficiently provided of decay; a distorted reflection of the initial view of the nattily dressed Prologue.

Pandarus with Thersites at the end of productions

The stage has been keen to make a concluding connection between Pandarus and Thersites, as many literary critics had done. When John Barton stated that 'by the end of the play, his philosophy achieves a monstrous domination' (Barton, 1968), the

director was referring to the philosophy of Thersites, a character central to his reading of *Troilus and Cressida*. Yet, when productions use the Epilogue, as Barton did, Pandarus, and not Thersites, is present onstage at the end of the play. The director, therefore, displayed an eagerness to round off the play with his central figure, Thersites, united with Pandarus. In 1968, in Barton's RSC production, David Waller's 'fussy, maternal, vicariously predatory' Pandarus (Bannock, 1968) shared the stage with Thersites for his concluding lines (Prompt book, 1968). As Pandarus spoke the Epilogue, Thersites banged on a tambourine, visually and aurally fusing the roles of the two characters; the two characters which Joyce Carol Oates had written about the year before as a kind of amalgam (1967, p. 174). In Barton's next version of the play, in 1976, there was a similar reprise of the final element of unity, described by Roger Warren as 'a song and dance routine' shared by Pandarus and Thersites during the Epilogue (Warren, 1977, p. 174). Following the Epilogue in 1976, however, there was a more elaborate stage spectacle as Thersites opened a trap to allow Pandarus to descend into his grave (Prompt book, 1976). The descent, both literal and figurative, of the diseased Pandarus was reinforced by the sight of the equally diseased Thersites.

Thersites as Prologue

Pandarus may be the character more usually heard at the end of a production of *Troilus and Cressida* of recent times, as an air of sour disillusionment has come to predominate, but the interpretative stance taken at the beginning of a production has also had a significant shaping effect upon understandings of the play throughout its stage history. During the twentieth century, when the Prologue was included, and

when it was spoken by one of the major characters, Thersites was most likely to be chosen to open proceedings in this way. Macowan in 1938, Judge in 1996 and Boyd in 1998 all had Thersites to speak the Prologue (Bowen, 1993, p. 46; Performance recordings, 1996 and 1998). In 1976, in the Barton/Kyle production, John Nettles doubled as Thersites and the Prologue, but did not speak the opening lines in character. Nevertheless, several reviewers noted that Nettles spoke the production's opening lines (Apfelbaum, 2004, p. 49) and thus the association between the character of Thersites and the framing, commentating function of the Prologue was still in evidence.

The delivery of the Prologue by Thersites can set up the character, in some ways, as the spokesman of the play, making him outside the action at this point, as it simultaneously accentuates the notion of him as an observer and commentator. Other Shakespearean Prologues seek approval from their audiences, such as *Henry V's* 'Gently to hear, kindly to judge, our play' (line 34). The *Troilus* Prologue is bolder, more nonchalant, 'Like or find fault; do as your pleasures are;/ Now good or bad, 'tis but the chance of war' (30-1); a tone well suited to the outsider, Thersites.

Literary criticism of Thersites

In terms of the literary criticism of Thersites, the areas which came to the fore were his comic and choric functions within the play, (as discussed in connection with Pandarus), the foul, though bitter, brilliance of his use of language and, for many commentators, the idea that he represented the playwright's own jaded view of life.

An aspect of the character often seen in stage performance, although not mentioned in literary criticism of the play, is the status or social class of Thersites.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was an early reader and commentator on the play and on the intellectual power and wit of Thersites' utterances. He wrote, in 1833, that Thersites was:

the admirable portrait of intellectual power deserted by all grace, all moral principle [...] just wise enough to detect the weak head, and fool enough to provoke the armed fist of his betters [...] in short, a mule [...] made to bray and be brayed, to despise and be despicable. – Ay, sir, but say what you will, he is a devilish clever fellow.

(quoted in Hawkes, 1969, pp. 270-3)

In 1967 Joyce Carol Oates considered that Thersites could match the intellect of the character that she, along with other critics, was interpreting as the true, clear-sighted observer in the play: Ulysses. She stated that 'he [Thersites] speaks with an intelligence equal to Ulysses' but without any of Ulysses' control' (Oates, 1967, p. 173). There was often an almost grudging acceptance of the cleverness of Thersites, and an acknowledgement that the 'pyrotechnic versatility of his abusive language is captivating' (Bevington, 1998, p. 66).

Jan Kott wrote: 'Only the bitter fool Thersites is free from all illusions. This born misanthrope regards the world as a grim grotesque [...] Grotesque is more cruel than

tragedy. Thersites is right. But what of it? Thersites is vile himself' (Kott, 1964, pp. 82-3) and Joyce Carol Oates stated 'he is the very spirit of the play itself, a necessary balance to its fraudulent idealism' and that 'it is certainly Shakespeare's belief, along with Thersites, that "all the argument is a whore and a cuckold"' (Oates, 1967, pp. 173-4). These interpretations of the character from literary critics, that Thersites is obscene yet 'right' about the world, were also prevalent in many twentieth-century stage depictions of him. Increasingly, Thersites gained significance in performance. He became the mouthpiece of the play itself.

Thersites in performance

Before the growth in prominence of Thersites as the speaker of harsh 'truth', the central feature of the character in earlier performance, as with Pandarus, was often his potential for comedy. In 1912 Thersites was played by Mrs Robertson Scott, in Poel's production, and was depicted as 'the camp jester, dressed as a clown and speaking with a Scots accent' (Speaight, 1954, p. 196). Poel's production was an experimental and partly amateur situation and hence was unlikely to raise specific questions about gender in the way that more recent productions of *Troilus and Cressida* have. Audiences would be unlikely to have many preconceptions about the play, and certainly not the play in performance, and so the humour of Thersites could be the main factor, rather than the appearance of a woman onstage in the role. Poel's Elizabethan setting was also likely to have reinforced the function of Thersites as the familiar stock figure of the fool or jester. The comic nature of the role, albeit a distorted, jaded sort of comedy, has been accentuated in later times when well-known comedians have been cast as Thersites, such as Jack Birkett (The Incredible

Orlando) in Miller's 1981 BBC TV version and Matt Lucas in Dromgoole's 2000 production for the Oxford Stage Company.

Comedy has not always been the defining feature of Thersites, however. In 1938 Macowan directed a Thersites who played up the choric, rather than the comic, features of the role, in an interpretation which was to be frequently used. As Barbara Bowen commented:

Macowan's brilliant and much-copied idea was to express Thersites' detachment as well as his voyeurism by making him a war correspondent for a left-wing newspaper. Sporting a bedraggled raincoat and a red tie, (his leftist leanings), Macowan's satirical Thersites set the tone for the entire production and helped to establish *Troilus and Cressida* as the bitter exposé of war many recognise today.

(Bowen, 1993, p. 46)

Thersites' anti-establishment sentiment, his mockery of the leaders and the war itself, became signified by the red tie, expressing political dissent. This Thersites spoke the Prologue whilst leaning against the proscenium (Apfelbaum, 2004, p. 44), positioned at the point of transition, neither quite inside nor outside the play-world.

In 1956 at the Old Vic, Tyrone Guthrie also had a war correspondent role for Thersites, who often set up his box camera on a tripod to record the failings of those around him (Wood and Clarke, 1956). At the end of the twentieth century, a

photographer or figure from the press was still a useful image for an observant, questioning, yet detached individual on the stage, whenever modern costuming was used. The interpretation was in evidence in Michael Boyd's 1998 RSC production, as Lloyd Hutchinson's Thersites, permitted by his role as journalist to move around the Greek camp, snapped images, and was added into scenes, such as the Greek council scene, 1.3, and the kissing scene, 4.5, to circle silently, observing and recording (Performance recording, 1998).

In his three RSC productions, John Barton, and his collaborators, rejected the modern dress utilised by Macowan and Guthrie and each of his productions incrementally increased the significance of Thersites. Barton saw the character as crucial to the meaning of the play and highlighted the theme of disease, filth and corruption. In 1960, the sandpit set allowed Peter O'Toole's Thersites to step, quite literally, out of the action in order to comment upon it (Shirley, 2005, p. 37). In 1968, Norman Rodway was Thersites in what Robert Speaight disapprovingly called 'a four-letter costume' (Speaight, 1968, p. 374) and which was described by Barbara Bowen as 'a kind of living *phallogos*' (Bowen, 1993, p. 55). Where the 'war correspondent' interpretations had found a focus in the aspect of satirical commentary within the role of Thersites, for Barton, although maintaining the role of commentator, the obscene, vulgar and diseased features were also brought to the foreground. By 1976, Thersites had achieved the 'monstrous domination' of which Barton had written in the 1968 theatre programme. Noticeably, the very same theatre programme carried a quotation from Thersites: 'On the cover, in letters of red, appears: "All the argument is a cuckold and a whore"; so the production stood solidly

behind Thersites' stated Ralph Berry (Berry, 1981, p. 60). Berry's view is certainly borne out in Barton's examples of work, where Thersites became a much more central figure in the play, from the audience's view of his words on the cover of their programmes as they entered the auditorium to the addition of the character into the final scene.

The centrality of Thersites could also be seen in the reception of Sam Mendes' 1990 RSC production. In his review in *Shakespeare Survey*, Peter Holland wrote 'in the Greek camp all else paled into insignificance beside Simon Russell Beale's Thersites' (Holland, 1992, p.173), a view shared with almost every newspaper reviewer of the production. Noticeably, many reviewers, after commenting positively about the production as a whole, left their comments about Beale's performance until the final paragraph of their piece, often using their adjective-laden descriptions of his characterisation as the final and vivid embellishment to their writing, end-stopping their reviews with a descriptive flourish. The visual image of Beale in costume as Thersites, hunchbacked and diseased, complete with long dirty mac, became the most striking, and possibly most used, image of this eclectically-costumed production; the image was included, for example, on the front cover, spine and back cover of Peter Holland's *English Shakespeares: Shakespeare on the English stage in the 1990s*.

There is a strong correlation between the productions which find a central focus in Thersites and his bitter commentary with significant times of war. Macowan's 1938

version prompted an article in *The Times*, noting that the production had opened 'on the eve of Mr. Chamberlain's second visit to Germany' and that the play was 'a tract for the times – a lesson for the very moment' (*The Times*, 1938b). The theatre programme for the RSC's 1968 production included comments from John Barton that the play was a 'Vietnam situation' (Barton, 1968), and Simon Russell Beale commented about his 1990 portrayal: 'We performed *Troilus and Cressida* in Stratford on the night that war was declared in the Gulf and I was powerfully aware then that Thersites's despair was shared by everyone in the theatre' (Beale, 1993, p. 173). The relevance of the play to the 1990 audience was, in Beale's view, specifically related to the bleak hopelessness of the 'addictive game' of war (p. 173), and that sense of despondency was a significant characteristic of his Thersites.

During the stage history of *Troilus and Cressida* the depiction of the character of Thersites has often been viewed as an indicator of the social or class divisions inherent in the particular play-world chosen for a production. A regional accent has, at times, been used to make Thersites sound different from the other figures on the stage. The RSC production immediately preceding Mendes' version, the 1985 production directed by Howard Davies, included Alun Armstrong, whose noticeable Geordie accent and role as a waiter in the Officers' Mess made class division an obvious sign of Thersites as a moveable, lowly outsider. Thersites' potential for comedy was also played up in 1985, with Armstrong wearing thick, pebble glasses and struggling with a saucepan stuck on his head (Performance recording, 1985). Lloyd Hutchinson's Northern Irish accent also set up political resonances when heard amongst the English accents of the business-suited Greek leaders in Boyd's

production (Performance recording, 1998). In Mendes' production, the portrayal of Thersites went against the grain of theatrical tradition somewhat, and refused to mark the character as different in social class to the officers. Simon Russell Beale's version of Thersites, as a man who had originally come from the same class as the officers he served, afforded the actor an explanatory backstory and understanding of the bitter fury heard in many of his verbal attacks.

Together with the designer, Anthony Ward, Mendes and Beale put together signifiers of public-school establishment and a class-based view of male Englishness: filthy pin-striped trousers held up by an MCC tie at the waist, a string vest, a long mac accommodating a large distinct hump at the actor's left shoulder and a tight, leather bonnet or skull cap tied under the chin. Aurally, too, the decision not to use a regional accent, or an accent denoting a lower social class, but to have Thersites speaking 'with the elaborate precision of a school swot in a rather sporty public school' (Beale, 1993, p.163) was significant. It not only revitalised the role of Thersites by rejecting what had become a theatrical trend, but it also unlocked a rationale for Thersites being a non-combatant. If he is seen, as Mendes suggested, as 'a posh person being forced to do a menial task', like 'a beaten fag at public school kicked around by the prefects' (Leipacher, 2011, p. 56), then even though the character is an insider to that particular class and form of culture, he is also simultaneously an outsider, distanced from the elite group of warriors.

Beale's explanation for his Thersites serving the other men, rather than fighting alongside them, was that his character was physically incapable, an idea which connected with the multiple images of disease and illness in the play. Rather than wearing white cotton gloves to serve Ajax his meal, as a butler might, the actor decided to use plastic, surgical gloves, which added 'a rather unpleasant air of mystery to the question of what precise diseases Thersites had contracted' (Beale, 1993, p. 164). Similarly, the close fitting cap was seen by one reviewer as 'concealing some ghastly scaly disorder of the skin' (Edwardes, 1990). The word choices made by Thersites himself when he is speaking about other people show that the character very quickly and readily resorts to references concerned with diseases of the skin. His very first words reveal the relish with which he pictures the Greek leader with a skin affliction: 'Agamemnon – how if he had boils, full, all over, generally?' (2.1.2-3) and verbally attacks Ajax with 'I would thou didst itch from head to foot' (2.1.25). He wishes to curse the whole subject of the war with 'the dry serpigo' (2.3.71) and refers to 'lazars' (emended for clarity to 'lepers' in the 1990 prompt book) at lines 2.3.31 and 5.1.63. In the 1990 production, it was as though, like Pandarus in the final speech, Thersites wished his own diseases onto others, a tone which Beale felt had 'a grim, self-hating bite' (1993, p. 166).

A connection between Pandarus and Thersites was created by an element of stage business. Several critics and commentators have written about the moment when Beale's Thersites, after the eavesdropping/double watching at 5.2, alone on stage, picked up Cressida's discarded shawl and raised it to his nose to smell it, only to become confused and uncertain, caught in 'a moment of uncharacteristic quiet and

disorientation' (Taylor, 1990). Peter Holland viewed it as a moment when the isolation of Thersites was brought to the fore: 'The object which had been invested with such value by Cressida and Troilus was simply beyond his comprehension. He could make nothing of their passion' (Holland, 1992, p. 175). What has not been so readily commented upon is the fact that in the few moments before the interval, Troilus and Cressida had exited hand in hand through the rear curtain, to spend the night in 'a chamber with a bed' (3.2.202-3), leaving Pandarus alone on stage. He, too, was seen to pick up an item discarded by Cressida, this time the veil, which had previously covered her face, and to breathe in its scent. This mirrored action economically enhanced the connection between Thersites and Pandarus, suggesting their similarities as emotional outsiders. Although Thersites was not included in the final scene and was not present for Pandarus' Epilogue in the way that Barton had connected the two characters, the significance and centrality of Beale's performance as Thersites was marked by the fact that his was the only character in the production to have extra lines ascribed. The prompt book, based on the Penguin edition, follows the Folio at 5.1, using a shorter list of diseases in which the final few ailments after 'cold palsies' are replaced with 'and the like' (Foakes, 1987, 5.1.19-20). Mendes' production, however, imported the longer list from the 1609 Quarto edition, approximately double the length of the Folio speech (Prompt book, 1990). In addition, Thersites was included in the Act 5 battle scenes for longer than the text dictates. He became a kind of diabolical ringmaster, 'in top-hat as Master of Ceremonies, compèring the war' (Holland, 1992, p. 175), so that 'the battle was presented by Thersites as a deadly circus act' (Beale, 1993, p. 173). For his speech at the opening of 5.4, 'Now they are clapper-clawing one another; I'll go look on' (5.4.1-2), Thersites

was centre stage, lit by a bright, circular spotlight, reminiscent of the same '*The Entertainer*'-type spotlight used to light Pandarus' delivery of the Prologue (Performance recording, 1990). He also remained onstage, releasing a scream of 'triumph and pain', for Hector's death (Beale, 1993, p. 165-6). The movement which had been continuing through the second half of the twentieth century, of Thersites gaining prominence in theatrical productions, had reached its height in Mendes' 1990 production.

The next two RSC productions of *Troilus* both used Thersites to deliver the Prologue, though neither gave the character the same degree of overall significance that Mendes had done. In 1996 the dark humour of the role was, again, much in evidence. Richard McCabe, in Ian Judge's production, was like an acerbic stand-up comedian at the beginning, using a 'disbelieving interrogative lilt' to turn the line 'and that's the quarrel' (10) into a contemptuous question (Smallwood, 1997, p. 212). As Russell Jackson noted, McCabe's Prologue was 'not "armed" at all and [was] holding the very word up with amusement at its inappropriateness' (Jackson, 1997, p. 213). There were several clownish aspects of McCabe's interpretation on display throughout the production, including a costume made out of a colander and other kitchen utensils for the pageant of Ajax (Performance recording, 1996). In 1998, Lloyd Hutchinson's Thersites was a reporter, 'armed' with his camera as he spoke the opening lines, accompanied by a slideshow. The dusty, checked suit and bowler hat used as Hutchinson's costume also carried a suggestion of the vaudevillian (Performance recording, 1998). Although the two openings differed in tone, both uses of Thersites to speak the Prologue created a sense of ironic interrogation of the

heroic material. For late twentieth-century audiences, the stand-up comedian was often a lone figure onstage, not just broadly humorous, but offering up a slanted, often politically motivated commentary which could implicate an audience in social criticism.

In 1999 at the National Theatre, Nunn's production featured a Thersites who, visually at least, seemed to hark back to Barton's ragged, scabrous commentators of the 1960s and 70s. Peter Porter wrote that Jasper Britton's appearance 'suggests Dorian Gray's portrait come down from its frame, all weals, scabs, blotches and falling hair', (Porter, 1999) and several reviewers commented that he was reminiscent of a vulture, including Robert Smallwood who wrote of seeing the character 'wafting in and out of the play with flapping sleeves and bald, sore-encrusted head' (Smallwood, 2000, p. 257). The image of the vulture was reinforced by Thersites' action of looting the corpse of Patroclus. This Thersites downplayed the humour of the role, causing Georgina Brown to label him 'a low key, unamusing Thersites' (Brown, 1999) and Smallwood to note that he was 'harsher and less funny than some recent performances of the role' (Smallwood, 2000, p. 257). Nunn also felt the pull to increase Thersites' involvement in the final, defining moments. Following Troilus' 'Hence broker-lackey' couplet, rather than moving straight into the closing lines of Pandarus, the prompt book (1999) shows that Nunn inserted two sections of speech for Thersites, taken from much earlier in the play, from 2.3:

After this, the vengeance on the whole camp – or rather, the Neapolitan bone-ache, for that methinks is the curse dependent on those that war for a placket.

[from 2.3.16-9]

Now the dry serpigo on the subject, and war and lechery confound all!

[from 2.3.71-2]

Thersites made his final exit after ‘war and lechery confound all’, leaving Pandarus onstage with Cressida. Thersites’ curses of bone-ache and serpigo made an aural connection with the ‘diseases’ bequeathed by Pandarus a moment later. For Nunn, Thersites is an ‘obsessed satirist’ who can ‘see how the world actually is’ (quoted in Bate and Rasmussen, 2010, p. 187), and for Nunn the world of *Troilus and Cressida* was one of grim, harsh tragedy.

By 2012, the portrayal of Thersites in the RSC/Wooster collaboration had a wide array of stage images to draw upon. The trope of bodily frailty and physical disease, so frequently seen in staged interpretations, had become physical disability, with Zubin Varla’s Thersites using a wheelchair (Performance recording, 2012). Notions of theatrical performance and satirical commentary became manifest in the use of drag costuming, smeared facial make-up, several changes of wig, a circular spotlight and a radio microphone. A regional accent was again used, this time from the north of England. The drag-queen performance ‘front’ was finally rejected as Thersites, delivering his last speech, stood up from the wheelchair, revealing the legs which had been tucked beneath him, ‘defiantly stripped himself naked, dumping his “uniform”, exiting the play AWOL, head high, prim, pushing his wheelchair’ (Rutter, 2014, p.

372). The production did not make any connection between Thersites and Pandarus, and neither character was used to provide a framing function for the play's action. Reviewers were so busy in lamenting the 'bizarrely disjointed spectacle' (Billington, 2012) of the joint offering, that there were few comments about individual performances. For Thersites, when Varla's interpretation was mentioned, the focus was on the wheelchair, theatricality and the bitter verbal sniping.

Although missing from the 2012 RSC/Wooster collaboration, the choices made by directors to make associations between Pandarus and Thersites, together with the framing functions of the two characters, have become a mainstay of *Troilus* productions. In this regard, the interplay between criticism, editorial practice and staging choices has been particularly close in the case of the interpretations of these two characters. The moralising sense of distaste for the character's language expressed by earlier literary critics was reflected in the early twentieth-century stage's decision not to afford Pandarus a final spot. He could be removed in 5.3 and deliver a shortened, sanitised version of the 'diseases' speech, which after all, it could have been reasoned, did not necessarily have to be the correct way of ending the play. As changes in society led to a growing sense of cynicism about warfare, so the role of Thersites, his satirical words and his stage time, began to grow. He could be given the Prologue to speak, and he could be added into the final scene too, especially if it was accepted that he should form an amalgam with Pandarus. His statement, that 'All the argument is a whore and a cuckold' (2.3.69) could be the statement of the whole play, printed on posters and programmes. As beliefs around homosexuality altered through the decades, so the depiction of Pandarus moved from an eccentric,

scarf-wafting figure of fun to become again the kindly, helpful uncle so beloved by Wilson Knight back in the 1930s. Those theatre practitioners who chose to have Pandarus remain an effeminate caricature in later years were subject to censure from reviewers for their outdated interpretations. The unfixed nature of the text, the detachability of the Prologue and Epilogue, was an advantage to the theatre. It gave legitimacy for the reinterpretations of Pandarus and Thersites which came to be shown.

CHAPTER 6 - ACHILLES AND PATROCLUS

Comrades or lovers?

Stanley Wells, in *Looking for Sex in Shakespeare*, labels the bond between Achilles and Patroclus as 'the only unquestionable allusion to a homosexual relationship in Shakespeare' (2004, p. 88). Earlier writers, such as G. Wilson Knight in the 1930s, showed little or no acknowledgement of homosexuality in the play: Achilles and Patroclus could be read as examples of brothers-in-arms, and the narrative drive which pulls Achilles back into the war could be the loss of his most dear comrade. During the period that literary critics moved from an avoidance of the subject of homosexuality to a position characterised by Wells' view of the 'unquestionable allusion' of Achilles and Patroclus as lovers, the British stage was also finding its own way to portray the two characters' relationship. The interpretative stance of stage interpretations of the relationship between the two men, including the degree of explicitness when they were shown to be lovers, and the moments when changes occurred, will be compared with the revisions in literary criticism. Did societal change concerning attitudes to homosexuality have an influence on literary critics' writings about Achilles and Patroclus before changes were found on the stage? Or did theatrical practice lead the way in terms of how the relationship between the two men was understood?

In *Looking for Sex in Shakespeare*, Wells states: 'I am not aware of any attempt to identify homosexuality in the texts of the plays, or to portray it in performances of them, until the twentieth century' (2004, pp. 72-3). During the twentieth century,

attempts to identify homosexual characters in Shakespeare displayed variation. To provide what he believed to be two of the most clear-cut passages referring to male homosexuality in the canon, Eric Partridge, in his introduction to *Shakespeare's Bawdy*, quoted examples from *Troilus and Cressida* and *Henry IV Part 2*. Partridge mentioned the exchange between Patroclus and Thersites from 5.1 of *Troilus*, the references to 'male varlet' (line 15) and 'masculine whore' (line 17), together with the more oblique statement from the Hostess in *Henry IV Part 2*, that Falstaff's 'weapon' will 'spare neither man, woman, nor child' (2.1.15-18) (Partridge, 1968, p. 14). Simon Shepherd, in his essay 'Shakespeare's Private Drawer: Shakespeare and Homosexuality', included in Graham Holderness' 1988 *The Shakespeare Myth*, first named the two Antonios, from *Merchant* and *Twelfth Night*, as homosexual characters who had been 'spotted' (p. 96), before going on to discuss a more pernicious use of the label of homosexuality. The label has been applied to characters, according to Shepherd, in order to 'sort out inexplicable villainies', such as those observed in Iago and Leontes. Shepherd went on: 'Queerness helpfully links things together. The foppish fairy Richard II, the sulky Achilles and that mummy's boy Coriolanus all make a muck of their countries' (p. 96). Stephen Orgel, in *Impersonations*, referred to *Twelfth Night's* Antonio and Sebastian as 'the only overtly homosexual couple in Shakespeare except for Achilles and Patroclus' (1996, p. 51). Stanley Wells himself, in his above-mentioned work, began his survey with Richard II, the two Antonios, Don Pedro and Iago, before moving onto Achilles and Patroclus. In other words, no matter what the dimensions of the list of Shakespearean male homosexual characters, no matter what the criteria for the list,

whenever literary critics make these lists, Achilles and Patroclus always seem to make it in.

Literary criticism of Achilles and Patroclus

The examples of lists cited above begin rather late in the twentieth century with Eric Partridge's work from 1968. In the first half of the twentieth century, when British stage productions of *Troilus and Cressida* were still relatively rare, literary critics were already dealing with Achilles and Patroclus in their readings of the play. Their references to the nature of the relationship between the two men, however, were often reduced to brief, incidental statements and the notion of any form of homosexual relationship was likely to be avoided or veiled. As I will show, up until the 1960s, whilst homosexuality was still a punishable offence in Britain, literary critics dealt with the relationship between Shakespeare's Achilles and Patroclus in several ways. Sometimes Patroclus was hardly mentioned at all, despite appearing onstage and speaking in five scenes. Sometimes Achilles' character was interpreted solely in terms of his indolence; the possibility of a sexual relationship between him and Patroclus was absent in critics' work, although, as I will go on to discuss, the heterosexual attachment between Achilles and Polyxena came to be highlighted instead. Sometimes the notion of homosexuality was present, but was relegated to a footnote or disguised in ambiguous terminology. By the 1960s, however, as societal change took place and as performances of *Troilus and Cressida* became more common, literary critics' direct references to Achilles and Patroclus as homosexuals became more evident, although the references were often negative and judgemental. Later on in this chapter, I will go on to discuss how similar tactics of evasion or

disguise were also evident in early portrayals of Achilles and Patroclus on the British stage, together with the responses given to those portrayals by newspaper reviewers.

In terms of literary criticism, my first example comes from the chapter 'The Philosophy of *Troilus and Cressida*' in G. Wilson Knight's 1930 work, *The Wheel of Fire*. The critic wrote about 'the 'scurril jests' and 'lazy pride of Achilles' (p. 47) and pictured the famous Greek officer 'sulking in his tent [...] a man of bodily strength, supreme egotism, and lack of intellect' (p. 55). In his interpretation, Wilson Knight drew far more associations between the characters of Achilles and Ajax, than any mention of an association between Achilles and Patroclus. Whereas Patroclus is mentioned only once, in reference to his mocking mimicry of the Greek commanders, Wilson Knight drew together the names of Achilles and Ajax several times. He wrote that 'The figures of Achilles and Ajax are selected for especial satire' (p. 55) and that 'Achilles and Ajax are both hopelessly spoilt by egotism and pride' (p. 56). He also used the statement 'Both Achilles and Ajax – the latter conceived as a hopeless blockhead – are butts for the invectives of Thersites' (p. 57). Patroclus, also the butt of some of Thersites' most memorable railing, received no mention at this point, although Wilson Knight seemed keen to note the heterosexual attachment of Achilles to Polyxena of Troy (p. 57), a female character who never speaks, or even appears onstage, during the play. For Wilson Knight, writing in 1930, the possibility of a sexual relationship between Achilles and Patroclus remained impossible, invisible or, perhaps, unmentionable.

Harping on Polyxena

A year later, in 1931, in W. W. Lawrence's *Shakespeare's Problem Comedies*, a similar focus was displayed. Like Wilson Knight, Lawrence referred very little to Patroclus at all. However, within his chapter about *Troilus and Cressida*, a play which he commented was 'seldom performed on the stage' (p. 115), Lawrence mentioned Achilles' vow to Polyxena, and his love for her, seven times. A brief statement of the rumours of Achilles' 'immoral fondness' (p. 130) for Patroclus seems rather coy and modest in comparison with the multiple instances of Polyxena's name in the chapter. A heterosexual attachment, dealt with rather minimally and kept very much in the background within the playwright's text, thus became drawn more to the forefront in these critics' discussions. The text of the play, as read on the page, could, at this time, highlight the Polyxena/Achilles oath, whilst causing Patroclus to all but disappear. W. W. Lawrence's analysis seems to suggest that only in death could Patroclus have a force or function within the play: to cause his friend and fellow soldier, Achilles, to re-enter the fray in vengeance.

The understanding of Achilles and Patroclus as examples of close 'fellows in arms' was in evidence, too, in Oscar J. Campbell's 1938 book *Comical Satyre and Shakespeare's 'Troilus and Cressida'*. Campbell likened Achilles and Patroclus to 'sworn brothers' and examples of 'the bosom friend' (p. 222). Whilst Campbell gave more attention to Patroclus, and his relationship with Achilles, than Wilson Knight and W. W. Lawrence before him, the 'amorous complication' of the heterosexual attachment to Polyxena was still mentioned: 'Achilles is in love with one of Priam's

daughters, and chivalric love forbids him seek the death of her kinsman' (p. 200). Where Campbell's work differed significantly, however, was in the way that the possibility or the suggestion of a homosexual relationship was tentatively in evidence, including the direct use of the word 'homosexual', albeit in a footnote. Referring to the playwright's sources, Campbell noted 'Shakespeare's version of the friendship [between Achilles and Patroclus] is the only one that suggests a homosexual relationship between the two Greeks. And then it is only Thersites, the detractor, who calls Patroclus Achilles' "brach" (bitch) and his "masculine whore"' (footnote, p. 222). Writing in 1938, Campbell felt able to state that Shakespeare 'suggests' there could be more to the relationship between the two men than had been evident in the sources, and more than other critics had previously been prepared to discuss, but it is still 'only Thersites' who says so.

By the 1940s, *Troilus and Cressida* had begun to gain a British stage history. In *The Frontiers of Drama*, Una Ellis-Fermor, in 1945, devoted her fourth chapter to an analysis of *Troilus and Cressida*, and wrote that her 'repeated readings of the play' had been 'helped greatly by seeing it on the stage' (p. 56). By this time, major British productions had included Ben Iden Payne's version (1936) and Michael Macowan's modern-dress version (1938). Ellis-Fermor's understanding of the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus owed something to the notion of positioning and sequencing of scenes, and was also closely connected to her negative condemnation of Cressida. Ellis-Fermor described Cressida as 'a light woman' and accepted, unquestioningly, Ulysses' appraisal of the character as, 'by nature' no better than a 'daughter[s] of the game' (p. 59). Ellis-Fermor wrote:

The highest altitudes of chivalry are touched in the scene of Hector's visit to Agamemnon, where a noble code makes possible this courteous friendship between honourable enemies. The scene is set between that which sees Cressida 'wide unclasp the table of her thoughts To every ticklish reader' and that in which Thersites denounces Patroclus's relations with Achilles. This does not seem like accident. (Ellis-Fermor, 1945, p. 61)

For Una Ellis-Fermor, the kissing scene (4.5), in which Cressida is criticised by Ulysses for her 'unclasp'd' moral looseness and likened to the 'daughters of the game', and the scene in which Patroclus is denounced by Thersites as a 'masculine whore' (5.1), act as rotten bookends, contrasting sharply and deliberately with the courteous nobility of Hector, who is placed in the middle. Ellis-Fermor showed an acceptance of Ulysses' view of Cressida, just as she accepted Thersites' view of Patroclus. The use of the word 'relations' by the critic is also significant. It may show an awareness of a physical, homosexual relationship between Achilles and Patroclus, since, by 1945, the plural term 'relations' could stand in place of 'sexual relations' (*OED*, 'relation', 2014). The meaning of 'sexual relations' became evident by the comparison which Ellis-Fermor drew between Cressida and Patroclus. She was specifically writing about the positioning of scenes featuring, as she saw it, sexual immorality. Although the word 'relations' still offers the possibility of a more modest, coy reading of 'friendship' or 'comradeship' between the two men, the comparison between the two scenes more strongly suggests that Ellis-Fermor was interpreting the relationship of Achilles and Patroclus as sexual too, although she never directly labelled it as such.

An understanding of the two characters as homosexual lovers did not become widespread in the realm of literary criticism at this point, though. In 1950, in *Shakespeare's Problem Plays*, E. M. W. Tillyard utilised devices to deal with Achilles and Patroclus that had been seen in the work of much earlier critics. He brought in Polyxena, concentrated on the distasteful features of Achilles as an individual character, and largely ignored Patroclus. Tillyard, who referred to Achilles as 'the lolling bully' (p. 64), discussed the Greek warrior's inaction and stated that 'he [Shakespeare] first lets us think that Achilles is merely proud and moody and later brings in the medieval motive, his love for Polyxena' (p. 40). Whilst Patroclus was noted briefly by Tillyard as being capable of amusing Achilles with his play-acting and mimicry (pp. 60-1), there was no sense of any kind of relationship, whether sexual or not, between the two men. Tillyard wrote about the return to battle of Achilles, but did not mention that this occurs only after the death of Patroclus.

The period from the late 1950s through the decade of the 60s included much cultural and legal discussion about homosexuality. The Wolfenden Committee, in September 1957, after three years of deliberation, recommended that 'homosexual behaviour between consenting adults in private should no longer be a criminal offence' (quoted in Rebellato, 1999, p. 205). During the same time period, literary criticism also began to utilise more direct vocabulary to deal with the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus. The indirect terminology seen in previous decades, such as W. W. Lawrence's passing reference to Achilles' 'immoral fondness' for Patroclus in 1931, or Una Ellis-Fermor's ambiguous term 'Patroclus's relations with Achilles' in 1945, were replaced in literary criticism with clearer labels. These labels, however, were

often negatively loaded with indignant censure. In his work *Angel with Horns* (written earlier as a lecture series, but published in 1961), for example, A. P. Rossiter stated that Achilles fights ‘only because his catamite Patroclus is killed’ (p. 137). The use of ‘catamite’ together with the sense that Achilles’ decision to fight is not based on a conventional understanding of loyalty or honour, but ‘*only because*’ (my italics) of Patroclus’ death, creates a deflated, almost ridiculous version of the heroic masculine ideal for Rossiter. Jan Kott in *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* (1964) wrote: ‘the legendary Achilles wallows in bed with his male tart – Patroclus. He is a homosexual; he is boastful, stupid and quarrelsome like an old hag’ (p. 75). Even the qualifying function of the semi-colon, present here in Boleslaw Taborski’s translation of Kott’s work, links together ‘being a homosexual’ with a run of disapproving, derisory adjectives. In these two examples, homosexuality was referred to quite openly, but with distaste, and there was no sense of a reciprocal, equal relationship between the two men: Patroclus was characterised as a catamite, that is, a boy kept for sex, or as the ‘male tart’ that belonged to Achilles.

New studies from the 1980s and 1990s

By the early 1980s, scholarly discussions of homosexuality became more subtle and complex, rooted in historical detail, exemplified by Alan Bray’s 1982 work, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*. In his introduction, Bray stated that ‘it is only recently that the history of homosexuality has begun to be written in earnest’ and that it was ‘exhilarating to be with others at the beginning of a new exploration of the past – and the history of homosexuality is exactly that’ (p. 10). It was becoming possible, for the first time, to discuss what the Early Modern playwright may have understood

by male/male relationships, although as Bray wrote, 'To talk of an individual in this period as being or not being 'a homosexual' is an anachronism and ruinously misleading' (Bray, 1982, p. 16). The crime of sodomy in the period was a wider term, encompassing adultery, rape, bestiality, incest – better expressed perhaps as *debauchery*; 'the terms in which we now speak of homosexuality cannot readily be translated into those of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries' (Bray, 1982, p. 17). At the same time, masculine friendships could be incredibly intimate, including bed-sharing and unembarrassed verbal and written declarations of love. One feature of these male relationships, which seems particularly common, was a division in rank, wealth or age between the two men (Bray, 1982, pp. 53-57).

As late in the century as the 1980s, the notion of Achilles and Patroclus as homosexual lovers remained uncertain in the realm of literary criticism and editing, and was often questioned. In his 1982 edition of *Troilus and Cressida*, (second Arden edition), Kenneth Palmer seemed at pains to dismiss the validity of Thersites' derogatory use of 'male varlet' and 'masculine whore' (5.1.15 and 17). Palmer noted that 'There is no certainty that Thersites' imputation [...] is correct [...] for most readers, Achilles and Patroclus were a commonplace example of close friends' (Palmer, 1982, note, p. 263). This may, of course, have been an example of modest reticence on Palmer's part, similar to those examples from earlier in the twentieth century when the insulting terms were seen to be the point of view of 'only Thersites'. In a similar way, in his Penguin edition of *Troilus and Cressida*, R. A. Foakes commented that the 'masculine whore' jibe could be one of many instances where Thersites is 'maliciously exaggerating' (Foakes, 1987, p. 213).

Elsewhere in the 1980s and 1990s, there was a larger range of critical material covering a greater complexity of thought on homosexuality, homoeroticism and dramatic literature, through which it was possible to interpret anew the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus. One development was that Patroclus was no longer always ignored. For example, in his 1991 book, *Sodomy and Interpretation: Marlowe to Milton*, Gregory W. Bredbeck included a section titled 'Constructing Patroclus', concerning the ways in which the character is 'constructed' by Thersites and 'reconstructed' by Ulysses and Agamemnon in their labels for him. In the same year, Bruce R. Smith's book, *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England: A Cultural Poetics*, was published. Smith forwarded the view that Achilles' use of language in his address to Hector, at 4.5.230-245, 'is a violent parody of a lover's blazon' (Smith, 1991, p. 61). His savage murder of Hector, perpetrated by his Myrmidons, became akin to a 'homosexual gang rape' (p. 61). The facets of the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus, together with a sense of the homoerotic nature of violent, physical, man-to-man combat, were up for discussion in critical works. On the British stage, however, productions of *Troilus and Cressida* had been utilising eroticised images of all-male violent warfare for more than two decades. By the 1980s and 1990s, as I will discuss below, overt displays of highly visible homosexuality had begun to seem passé. The relationship between Achilles and Patroclus is an area of *Troilus and Cressida* where developments in the stage's portrayal of them as homosexual lovers have occurred more quickly than changes in the understanding of them in critical thought.

Achilles and Patroclus on the stage – coded signifiers

Up until about 1960, literary critics used tactics of avoidance and disguise when dealing with the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus; the critics were reluctant or unable to directly discuss or label the characters as homosexual lovers. The tactic of disguise was also in evidence in staged portrayals during the first six decades of the twentieth century. However, performance examples of the two characters before 1960 did not completely avoid a depiction of homosexuality; rather, the depictions were present, but were coded. In writing about the period 1925-1958, Nicholas de Jongh, in his book, *Not in Front of the Audience: Homosexuality on Stage*, wrote that 'Since in this thirty-three-year period depiction of homosexuals on stage was prohibited, dramatists, directors and actors collaborated to fashion a homosexual iconography, a series of signifiers and codes [...] the homosexual character on stage would usually be slim, slender or willowy [...] He would be gentle or poetic, nervous and artistic, emotional and loquacious' (de Jongh, 1992, pp. 3-4). In terms of *Troilus and Cressida* in performance at this time, actors and directors often used stereotypical images of effeminacy in order to camouflage depictions of Patroclus, and concentrated their interpretations of Achilles as a figure who was cruel, lazy and louche. A common adjective in theatrical reviews for both Achilles and Patroclus before 1960 was 'decadent': a term used to suggest not only their indiscipline, but also, implicitly to point toward their sexual corruption.

At the Westminster Theatre in 1938, for example, Michael Macowan's modern-dress production featured an Achilles whose cruelty, rather than his sexuality, was brought

to the fore. His cruelty throughout the play was used to deflate the heroic, mythic character: he resembled a Germanic, conceited bully (Shirley, 2005, p. 27). In 1954, Glen Byam Shaw's production at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre included Keith Michell as Achilles. Ivor Brown considered Michell's Achilles to be 'suitably handsome of mien and contemptible of conduct' (Brown, 1956a, p. 5). In Shaw's 1954 production, 'Brief tunics were underpinned by tights and escaped the criticism that greeted later, more revealing productions [...] Patroclus' striped loincloth and languid poses suggested decadence, but *homosexual aspects were not yet emphasized*' (Shirley, 2005, p. 31, my italics). Whilst Frances Shirley's later, retrospective reading of the production photographs suggested that the male costuming of the 1954 production was not as revealing or as overtly suggestive of homosexuality as later productions would come to be, one contemporary 1954 newspaper reviewer felt differently, and was angered that the depiction of the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus had been made, as he saw it, so very obviously homosexual. The reviewer asked 'whether [Achilles'] unhealthy relationship with the effeminate Patroclus need have been quite so flagrantly and emphatically stressed by the producer' (*Daily Mail*, 1954). By the time that *Troilus* was being performed in the 1950s, it seems, there were enough indicators of homosexuality in the staged portrayals of Achilles and Patroclus to provoke condemnation, and, in the case of the *Mail* reviewer, the 'homosexual' interpretation in the theatre was not just hinted at, but was being 'flagrantly and emphatically stressed'.

Tyrone Guthrie's production of *Troilus and Cressida* was referred to by Roger Wood and Mary Clarke as 'a Guthrie gambol that hugely delighted a choice (if curiously

small) public' in their 1956 photographic record of *Shakespeare at the Old Vic*. Decadence was again in evidence, in Charles Gray's large, often drunk Achilles, seen carrying a cigarette and a brandy glass. Henry Hewes also noted Patroclus' decadence and believed Achilles to be guilty of sadism (*Saturday Review*, 12th January 1957, quoted in Shirley, 2005, p. 34). In contrast to the smart, formal, Edwardian-era naval uniforms of the other Greek officers, up until Act 5, Achilles sported a white shirt, opened almost to his waist, and a fringed robe or dressing gown. Patroclus was characterised by Wood and Clarke (1956, unpaginated) as being 'tearful but impassioned' when addressing Achilles, and became 'the trembling Patroclus' when he was 'forced' by Achilles to take part in the play-acting. Patroclus' coded effeminacy, very similar to the signs of 'gentle or poetic, nervous and artistic' homosexual iconography noted by de Jongh (1992, pp. 3-4), contrasted with the aggressively masculine demeanour of Achilles. A note of emotional warmth, albeit considered unpleasant, between the two characters was noted by Wood and Clarke (1956): 'Charles Gray and Jeremy Brett buil[t] between them the distasteful yet curiously moving relationship of Achilles and Patroclus'. At the Old Vic in 1956, it seemed, the portrayal on stage of a homosexual relationship between Achilles and Patroclus, together with the reception of that portrayal, mirrored some of the features seen in the literary criticism of the first half of the twentieth century: coded suggestion and veiled allusion were in evidence.

The 1954 SMT production, directed by Glen Byam Shaw, had included a portrayal of Achilles and Patroclus which had been labelled as an 'unhealthy relationship' by the *Mail* reviewer, and the 1956 Old Vic Guthrie depiction was called a 'distasteful

relationship'. On the British stage in the 1950s, Achilles and Patroclus were having a 'relationship', rather than a friendship. The references to the 'unhealthy' or the 'distasteful' qualities of the relationship were enough to signal the homosexual nature of the bond between the men, but also offered the orthodox moral censure of the time.

In 1960, John Barton's first version of the play, the 'sand-pit *Troilus*' (co-directed with Peter Hall) stepped away from the twentieth-century military uniforms used by Macowan in 1938 and Guthrie in 1956, and moved back in time towards the classical. Male costuming was brief and revealing - short tunics, leather breastplates, and soldiers' bodies which 'were well-muscled and glistened with oil' (Shirley, 2005, p. 37). This began a series of productions of *Troilus*, particularly typified by the work of John Barton, which were interested in displaying male bodies, causing the women characters and the love plot to be marginalised (Rutter, 2001, p. 121). The highly positive contemporary reviews of the 1960 production were much concerned with the successful use of the 'sand-pit' set, the excitement of the fight scenes and the strengths of various actors. A production photograph (in Shepherd, 1988, p. 112) shows a young, blond Patroclus crouching next to an older seated Achilles, gazing up at him, with his hand placed warmly on top of his master's hand. The reviews, however, displayed an absence of commentary about the specific relationship between Achilles and Patroclus. Patroclus was largely ignored by reviewers, the exception being Bernard Levin who referred to 'the gilded weakness of Mr Dinsdale Landen's Patroclus' (Levin, 1960). Levin's reference to 'gilded weakness' seems to

suggest that, again, disguised codes of the 'poetic, nervous and artistic' mask of the staged homosexual, noted by de Jongh (1992), were being employed.

In terms of the visual image of the 1960 Patroclus, Simon Shepherd, writing almost three decades after the production, saw the portrayal as clearly homosexual:

The 1960 *Troilus* may have taken its grape-eating Achilles from a Greek vase, but Patroclus with his glistening blond hair comes from a homo physique mag (the homo ghetto regularly used 'high art' to make legitimate its illicit sex objects).

(Shepherd, 1988, p. 108)

Shepherd admitted, though, that a layer of disguise was still in evidence in the 'homosexual' depiction of the character; 'it may have been possible to miss the stereotype behind the 1960 Patroclus' (p. 108). It was Shepherd's chronological position, writing about a 1960 theatre production from a distance of almost thirty years, at a time when language surrounding issues of homosexuality had changed, which enabled him to read the older stage images in this way.

The 1960 version of Achilles, played by Patrick Allen, was often described solely in terms of his malevolent cruelty. Several reviewers, including John Russell Brown in *Shakespeare Survey*, noted the moment when Achilles maliciously turned over the dead body of Hector with his foot (Brown, 1961, p. 133), and Robert Speaight commented 'I have never seen anything more sinister than the slaying of Hector'

(Speaight, 1960, p. 451). Hall and Barton's 1960 production of *Troilus and Cressida*, then, found its focus in the treatment of war and brutality in the play, and left contemporary reviewers silent on the subject of the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus.

Alan Howard's 'definitive' Achilles – 1968

Eight years later, the reviewers' silence about the potential homosexuality in the play came to an end, with a noisy outpouring of commentary about John Barton's next production. In 1968, under the legitimising and protecting banner of the Royal Shakespeare Company, and a month before stage censorship officially ended, Alan Howard took to the Stratford stage, at one point in drag, (a costuming feature for Achilles which was to be seen again in later productions), as an 'extraordinary Achilles: a prancing, bespangled queen with dyed blonde hair and shaved legs' (Nightingale, 1968). Howard's Achilles was to remain, for several decades, the 'definitive' interpretation on the British stage (de Jongh, 1990). Coded signifiers of homosexuality were replaced with explicit costume-references to gay stereotypes. Furthermore, the signifiers of homosexuality were no longer resting solely on the shoulders of the more minor character of Patroclus, but were placed squarely onto Achilles.

The 1968 reviews show an immediate concentration on the 'lechery' of the production, and were particularly vociferous about the homosexual references in costuming and stage business. These were not confined to remarks about Alan Howard's performance as Achilles, but often concerned the more general, eroticised

portrayals of the groups of men in the warring factions. When looking at reviews of this production, their titles alone can indicate which character and which moments the writers considered to be the emphases of the production: 'Achilles's Fatal Flaw' was the title of Harold Hobson's review (Hobson, 1968), whilst Milton Shulman, punning, called his piece 'Meanwhile, back at the Trojan camp ...' and referred to the entire piece as 'a provocative and rather queer production of *Troilus and Cressida*', (Shulman, 1968). In a companion piece to his review, W. A. Darlington discussed Barton's interpretation of the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus in an article entitled 'A queer twist to Shakespeare' (Darlington, 1968b).

Achilles was everywhere in the 1968 reviews. There had been times in the previous decade when reviewers had demurely alluded to an 'unhealthy relationship' being shown on the 1950s stage. These times had passed, and a new direct lexicon was in evidence. This lexicon was applied by reviewers almost exclusively to Achilles, since Patroclus had once again disappeared from their comments. Within the text, Thersites calls Patroclus a 'masculine whore' (5.1.17), but the action on the RST stage in 1968 caused Harold Hobson to label Achilles, not Patroclus, 'a startling kind of male whore'. Hobson went on to write that Barton had understood the play to be not 'Troilus and Cressida' but 'Achilles and Perversion', and commented that Alan Howard played his role 'as if he were a female impersonator' (Hobson, 1968). Ronald Bryden called Alan Howard's Achilles 'overtly homosexual, a high camp posturer' (Bryden, 1968), whilst Milton Shulman described 'a whoops-my-dear warrior [with] a blonde [sic] hair-do, languid leaps and kisses for all the boys' (Shulman, 1968). Transvestism was, for these reviewers, synonymous with homosexuality. The focus

for their reviews, and indeed the focus in some cases for their outrage, was not just that Achilles had a male lover, but that Achilles dressed up as a woman.

Two years before Barton's 1968 production of *Troilus*, Peter Hall had staged Charles Dyer's play *Staircase* with the Royal Shakespeare Company. The play features Charlie and Harry, a middle-aged, bickering homosexual couple who earn their living as barbers, although Charlie speaks positively about his role as a drag artiste. Nicholas de Jongh states that the production featured 'the caricatures of heterosexual imagination' and 'homosexual cliché', suggesting that 'effeminate men, or men who enjoy dressing up as women, may indeed be homosexual' (de Jongh, 1992, pp. 128-9). The very terms with which newspaper reviewers dealt with Alan Howard's Achilles, ('drag', 'effeminacy', 'homosexuality'), were available to RSC audiences within the same close time period, in a modern play. In the period of the late 1960s, a man wearing a dress on the stage was providing a theatrical, visual shorthand for homosexuality.

Achilles as Helen

The scene in the 1968 *Troilus and Cressida* which generated the most critical commentary at the time, and for decades afterwards, was the one in which, following the aborted duel between Hector and Ajax, a figure entered, on a litter, veiled, yet obviously blonde, looking like Helen. Menelaus stepped forward to claim his estranged wife, but 'when the veils parted, it wasn't Helen but Achilles in drag in a lookalike Helen wig, enticingly opening his woman's wrap, displaying himself naked and inviting Hector to mount him' (Rutter, 2001, p.122). As the revelry continued,

Achilles then proceeded to lie 'prostrate on his couch, and seem[ed] to invite the hideous Thersites to sexual intercourse' (Hobson, 1968). Barton's 1968 production of *Troilus* opened in August, a month before the Lord Chamberlain's powers of theatrical censorship officially ended, a fact not unnoticed by reviewers. Harold Hobson thought that Achilles' gestures in the 'mock Helen' scene were 'as daring [...] as I expect to see even after the censorship is abolished' (Hobson, 1968). Similarly, the skimpily-dressed, oiled, semi-naked soldiers were viewed as sensational and shocking. This caused Ronald Bryden to refer to uncensored performance locations in London, not governed by the Chamberlain's powers, when he wrote that 'in actual area of revealed human skin, London's avant garde cellars lag acres behind the Avon' (Bryden, 1968). This was a significant point in the British performance history of *Troilus and Cressida*: the images seen on the stage were more radical and challenging than those available in any written commentaries. The images of homoeroticism ran ahead more quickly even than the ones available in the uncensored, 'underground' depictions of male homosexuality, according to the *Observer* reviewer.

One of the most common complaints from the 1968 reviewers was that Barton had overdone the homosexual themes. Herbert Kretzmer wrote about 'an overstressed concern with homosexuality' (Kretzmer, 1968) and another reviewer commented: 'the conception is over-pressed' (Trewin, 1968). Again, the playwright's intended meaning of the play as a touchstone was invoked: Milton Shulman referred to 'an atmosphere of homosexual corruption which almost smothers the Bard's original intentions' (Shulman, 1968). The use of female clothing on Achilles had been a consistent

source of shock in many of the newspaper reviews, which tied it to a display of Achilles' sexuality. Barton, however, insisted that his intentions in the controversial 'mock Helen' scene were very different to the way in which the sequence had been understood and written about. One of the crucial issues for Barton was the prevalent notion that his Achilles had been in 'full drag'. In an interview with Michael L. Greenwald, Barton firmly stated: 'I *did not* put Achilles in full drag [...] He put on a piece of cloth and a hair piece. He did it totally masculine. The idea was that he was mocking Helen, not that he was camping it up' (Greenwald, 1985, p. 74). Audiences and reviewers responded differently, however, and saw a drag queen: they linked transvestism to camp effeminacy, and they linked effeminacy to homosexuality.

The notion that the 'mock Helen' scene was the clear indicator of Achilles as a homosexual was refuted by Barton. In an interview with Gareth Lloyd Evans, published in *Shakespeare Survey*, he said:

We [Barton and Alan Howard] were attacked for presenting Achilles as an effeminate homosexual, which was something that had never entered our minds. We saw him as bisexual, a view which is surely embodied in Shakespeare's play and is also the view which an Elizabethan audience would have taken. Shakespeare shows him both with Patroclus and in love with Polyxena. What we did was show him *playing* at effeminacy and homosexuality in order to mock and outrage the Greek generals. (Evans, 1972, p. 70)

For Barton, the critical reviewers had missed the significance of the actual person that Achilles was trying to look like. He had not just dressed as any woman, he was not a camp, female impersonator like Charlie in Dyer's *Staircase*, and he had not just put on a dress; Achilles was specifically putting a comical version of Helen, the figurehead and cause of the war, up on the stage-like litter to be ridiculed.

Cultural climate

However, given the cultural and socio-political climate of 1968, perhaps it was inevitable that the production would come to be viewed as having an emphasis on homosexuality. Simon Shepherd states that in the last few years of the 1960s, 'Homosexuality was on the public agenda' (Shepherd, 1988, p. 108). The year before Barton's production, in 1967, a decade after the Wolfenden Committee's recommendations, 'homosexual acts in private between two consenting adult males over 21 were exempted from prosecution' in England and Wales, (de Jongh, 1992, p. 140). September 1968 saw the end of the Lord Chamberlain's role as theatrical censor, and 1969 saw the beginning of the Gay Liberation movement in America, a movement in which '[d]rag was used as a political challenge to straight masculinity' (Shepherd, 1988, p. 108). Wittingly or not, Barton's *Troilus and Cressida*, featuring a large area of male flesh on view on the stage and a man dressed as Helen of Troy, coincided with a time of cultural, political and legal discussion of homosexuality. The production instigated a discussion about homoerotic desire in Shakespeare's play, in the writings of newspaper reviewers, many years before theorists and literary critics like Alan Bray and Bruce Smith would analyse these issues in depth. Society and the stage seemed to be moving more quickly in their dealings with homosexuality than

the study of the issue in literary criticism itself. In addition to this, it seems likely that the immediacy of the *visual* spectacle of the imagery on the stage, the fact that male bodies were being used to represent these scenes, made the issue more readily understood and more powerfully rendered than any written account could be.

In 1976, two major British productions of *Troilus and Cressida* took place. Elijah Moshinsky directed for the National Theatre, and John Barton revisited the play for the RSC, this time co-directing with Barry Kyle. The casting of Mark McManus in the National's production at the Young Vic was questioned by many reviewers who were accustomed to a physically impressive Achilles: he was viewed as 'an undernourished Achilles' (Marcus, 1976), 'a bantamweight rather than the expected heavy' (Cushman, 1976) and a 'puny Achilles' (Wardle, 1976a). What McManus was not described as, however, unlike Alan Howard from eight years earlier, was a 'homosexual Achilles'.

In the same year, 1976, at the RSC, John Barton and Barry Kyle's production of *Troilus and Cressida* spawned reviews which compared it with Barton's previous version. Roger Warren wrote: 'Mr Barton carried over several features from his controversial 1968 version: the Trojans were virtually naked when they went into battle [...] Achilles was showily effeminate' (Warren, 1977, p. 174), and Irving Wardle commented that 'Robin Ellis echoes a previous performance by Alan Howard by turning Achilles into a camp queen' (Wardle, 1976b). Michael Billington's note that Achilles and Patroclus were seen 'wandering sulkily through the camp hand-in-hand'

(Billington, 1976) suggests that the nature of the relationship between the two men was clearly and visually in evidence: comrades-in-arms do not walk hand-in-hand.

A new label for Achilles – ‘bisexuality’

When defending his 1968 production a few years after it had been performed, Barton had insisted on the bisexual nature of Achilles, but the reviewers at the time had only labelled as ‘homosexual’ the figure they had seen on the stage. Barton himself acknowledged the gap between intention and reception, and admitted to Gareth Lloyd Evans that the audience’s understanding of Achilles as homosexual, rather than the intended bisexual, was of value and was significant: ‘if it came over to members of the audience differently, then one must allow that what they thought they saw was perhaps of more weight than our intentions’ (Evans, 1972, p. 70). In 1976, however, at least one reviewer did use the term ‘bisexual’ to describe Robin Ellis’ portrayal of Achilles; J. W. Lambert wrote of the ‘flamboyant motions’ of ‘this vicious bisexual Achilles’ (Lambert, 1976). By the mid-1970s, the label of bisexuality was becoming a fashionable term. David Bowie had stated that he was bisexual and, in the novel *Class Reunion*, Rona Jaffe wrote: ‘It was the Seventies now, and the rock stars and Beautiful People had made it suddenly chic to be bisexual’ (Jaffe, 1979, p. 238). Literary critics, at the time, were still ‘discovering’ homosexual characters in the Shakespearean canon, whilst the British stage and its audiences had presented and discussed homosexuality in *Troilus and Cressida* for many years. Theatre practitioners were now developing their readings of the play and were beginning to move onto portrayals of Achilles which were understood in terms of bisexuality.

By the time of the RSC's next production of *Troilus* in 1985, however, the sexuality of Achilles and Patroclus did not seem to be specifically or overtly of any concern at all. In a kind of reversal of situation, where the discussion of Alan Howard's Achilles in 1968 had taken up so many of the reviewers' words that Helen Mirren's Cressida had hardly been mentioned, so Howard Davies' 1985 production prompted so much examination of Juliet Stevenson's 'feminist' Cressida, that Alan Rickman's Achilles was referred to very little. Patroclus, again, was largely absent from reviews. When Rickman's portrayal was referred to, it was in terms of the character's discontented, sickly demeanour: for Michael Coveney, he was 'a temperamental, idly articulated slouch, lacing his wine with medicine after seven years' draining participation in the war' (Coveney, 1985). Francis King saw Achilles' 'moodiness and vanity' (King, 1985) and Michael Billington thought he was 'stubbly and neurotic [...] a picture of individual decadence' (Billington, 1985). By the time of the transfer to the Barbican in 1986, Achilles was played by Clive Mantle, in a portrayal which seemed reminiscent of G. Wilson Knight's connection of the character with the 'blockhead' Ajax in his criticism from 1930. Michael Coveney described Mantle's Achilles as 'a giant traumatised stumblebum' (Coveney, 1986) and Michael Billington drew the analogy even closer with his comments; 'Clive Mantle, replacing Rickman as Achilles, gives a curious performance: virtually a mirror-image of Ajax in his nasal, bovine stolidity' (Billington, 1986). Despite the differences in interpretation, and Billington wrote 'I sorley [sic] miss Alan Rickman's Achilles', the 1985 and the 1986 versions of Achilles were not labelled with homosexuality. In a selection of more than twenty reviews, ranging across local newspapers, national broadsheets and academic journals, including the 1985 RST production and the recast 1986 Barbican version, there are no instances

of the words 'homosexual' or 'bisexual' in any of the reviewers' dealings with the work. Neither are there any references to effeminacy.

That is not to say, however, that a sexual relationship between Achilles and Patroclus was entirely absent in this production. Although offering a far more muted depiction than in Barton's productions, Howard Davies' Achilles and Patroclus were still lovers. This could be understood from the way that the two characters made many of their entrances onto the stage together from the top, curtain-swathed balcony of the huge, ornate staircase, suggesting that they had both come from a bedroom (Performance recording, 1985). When Thersites began his name-calling in 2.1, and here the prompt book (1985) shows that 'Achilles' brach' was changed to 'Achilles' bitch', Alan Rickman's Achilles seemed unconcerned, not demonstrating any anger at the implied accusation, as he remained seated at the table, drinking. His line, 'There's for you, Patroclus' (2.1.113), was delivered wearily, with a dismissive flap of his hand, as if to ask Patroclus to deal with yet another, annoying comment. Two scenes later, Thersites' knowledge of a sexual relationship between Achilles and Patroclus was demonstrated by a meaningful glance. Patroclus was seen on the top balcony, calling to Thersites below to 'come in and rail' (2.3.22). Patroclus then descended the stairs. On his line, 'Where's Achilles?' (2.3.32), Alun Armstrong's Thersites gave a deliberate, knowing look up to the top balcony to show that he knew exactly where Achilles was; he was in the same bedroom from which Patroclus had just appeared. Implicit suggestions of homosexuality were back on the RST stage in the 1985 *Troilus*, but were no longer a coy smokescreen to avoid homophobic censure: instead the muted suggestions were now all that were needed. Besides which, as I

have discussed in chapter 1, the production had other, more unambiguously stated concerns in its revision of *Cressida*.

In 1990, in the Swan theatre, Sam Mendes' production of *Troilus and Cressida* was very well received, and particular praise was given to Ciaran Hinds' performance as 'a balefully magnificent Achilles' (Wardle, 1990), 'a dark, mocking hoodlum in leather, who might be on loan from a Los Angeles street gang' (Nightingale, 1990). Reviewers stressed the chilling, sinister nature of the portrayal of the character by Hinds: R. V. Holdsworth (1990) called him a 'contemptuous psychopath' and several other reviewers referred in passing to Patroclus as his 'lover' or his 'boyfriend' (for example: Taylor, 1990; de Jongh, 1990). The relationship between the two men was clearly depicted as homosexual, including the use of contemporary visual references such as black leather, but by 1990 there was no gasp of shock. It was no longer modesty or distaste which relegated the nature of the men's relationship to a sub-clause in a review. It had become an accepted convention of the play in production.

The review in the *Guardian*, by Nicholas de Jongh, was particularly interesting, since it compared the 1990 Achilles with the 1968 version: 'Ciaran Hinds as the bisexual Achilles, in an astonishing performance which even surpasses Alan Howard's once definitive portrayal, prowls suave, quiet and watchful in black leather and a nasty smile. He exudes all the charm of a python – except with his boyfriend Patroclus' (de Jongh, 1990). During the run at the Swan in 1990, de Jongh used the term 'bisexual' for Achilles, whilst most other reviewers were concentrating their description of the

character on his threatening, sinister quality. By the time the production transferred to the Barbican, a year later in the summer of 1991, there had been an enormous increase in the frequency of the use of the word 'bisexual' to describe Ciaran Hinds' Achilles in the reviews. For example, Graham Hassell used the term 'sinister bisexual pragmatist', (Hassell, 1991) to describe the role; 'a riveting study of bisexual militaristic narcissism', added Michael Billington (Billington, 1991), and, 'Achilles, the provocative and preening bisexual', commented Georgina Brown (Brown, 1991). At a time when literary critics were dealing with homosexuality in the plays, the stage was ready to offer more complex depictions and was developing and complicating views of so-called 'homosexual' characters which had been in place for more than two decades. In 1991, exactly the same year that Bruce R. Smith published *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England*, the reception of Ciaran Hinds' portrayal of Achilles had moved beyond a reading of clearly-labelled homosexuality, and was displaying a more multi-dimensional focus on bisexuality, viciousness and self-interest.

Images become a cliché

When Ian Judge directed *Troilus* for the RSC in 1996, a sense that the stage images it employed were hackneyed and well-worn was prevalent in its reception. Russell Jackson called it a 'somewhat old-fashioned evening in the theatre' (Jackson, 1997, p. 208). In a production which featured a great deal of male flesh on view, an overtly effeminate Pandarus and long, passionate kisses between Achilles and Patroclus, Robert Butler commented 'sexuality is everywhere and nowhere, spreading a tired theatrical gloss on passion and eroticism' (Butler, 1996). Where male semi-nudity and homoeroticism had been shocking and challenging in 1968, although criticised

for being 'overstressed', by the time of Judge's production almost three decades later, the same images were considered old and clichéd. Carol Chillington Rutter wrote: 'Ian Judge recycled the same worn sensations' so that the 'homosexualized narratives read like self-parody' (Rutter, 2001, p. 139). In 1992, Bruce R. Smith, in 'Making a difference: Male/male 'desire' in tragedy, comedy, and tragi-comedy' (Smith, 1992, pp.127-149) was dealing with the ways in which the rhetoric of homoerotic desire was connected with masculinity and combat in plays such as *Edward II*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Coriolanus* and *Sejanus*. Only four years later, when visual connections were made between homoeroticism and combat on the RST stage, the images were considered passé. Judge's production used what Benedict Nightingale called 'so many jockstraps, rippling pectorals and rolling buttocks' that 'the Trojan War might be the battle of the Chippendales' (Nightingale, 1996), and included a scene set in an all-male, post-battle bath-house. Lisa Jardine contributed an academic piece to the theatrical programme, with a title, 'The Greek Camp', reminiscent of the punning newspaper reviews of Barton's 1968 production. Jardine's piece concerned the literary tradition of the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus, ranging across Homer, Chapman and Shakespeare, and included quotations from the more contemporary work of Alan Bray from the 1980s. But Judge's production was not generally viewed as contributing either to literary conventions or to an ongoing cultural discussion: it was viewed as being out of touch. In terms of the specific aspect of homosexuality and homoerotic desire, theatrical productions of *Troilus and Cressida* had, for several decades, tackled, shown and then moved on from sites of interest which were still prevalent in critical thought. The

play itself had, by this time, its own series of familiar stage devices from its performance history, devices which could be considered old-fashioned.

A female Patroclus

In 1998, for the RSC, Michael Boyd threw another factor into the discussion of gender, sexuality and desire in *Troilus and Cressida*: Patroclus was played by a woman, Elaine Pyke, with short cropped hair, and dressed in a 1920s style man's suit. Reviewers were keen to mention the gender ambiguities and confusion surrounding Patroclus in the production as a whole, often rather negatively. Alastair Macaulay wrote, for instance, 'we are tripped up by one gender issue too many' (Macaulay, 1998). There did not seem to be a consensus amongst reviewers about the gender of Patroclus. Instead, they were aware of multiple layers of gender and pretence. Jane Edwardes saw Patroclus as being 'confusingly played by Elaine Pyke pretending to be a schoolboy' (Edwardes, 1998), whilst John Peter saw 'a schoolgirl [...] trying to impersonate Vesta Tilley doing her Champagne Charlie' (Peter, 1998). They saw a woman in a waistcoat and trousers, but were unsure what this meant for their understanding of Patroclus. If Patroclus, in Boyd's version, had been clearly remodelled or reimagined as a female character, in the way that Helen Mirren's Prospera was remodelled as Miranda's mother in Julie Taymor's film production *The Tempest* in 2010, then Achilles' dilemma in this version would have been the fact that he was in love with two women, one on each side of Troy's walls. The 1998 Achilles would not have been homosexual at all.

However, the cross-casting, when combined with cross-dressing, did not enable such clear-cut readings. Evidence from the prompt book (1998) and video recording of the production shows that the gendered pronouns applied to Patroclus in the text were maintained in the masculine form. For example, at 2.3.101-2, the lines were spoken as 'Here comes Patroclus./ No Achilles with him.' This Patroclus was understood to be male by the other characters within the play-world; he was a younger man, of slighter build, with some feminine characteristics. Benedict Nightingale referred to Patroclus as an 'androgynous Dorian Gray' (Nightingale, 1998). The casting of Elaine Pyke created a visual set of signifiers akin to the 'slim, slender or willowy' disguised codes of male homosexuality on the stage, noted earlier by de Jongh (1992, p. 3). The fact that the audience saw a woman, however, led to a deliberately ambiguous set of readings of the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus. Robert Smallwood felt that the casting of Elaine Pyke created 'an extra twist of the unconventional to the sexuality of the relationship' (Smallwood, 2000, p. 260). The casting displayed a refusal to categorise the sexuality of Achilles, and encouraged the viewer to take on the role of interpreter. What became of greater significance was the narrative drive occasioned by the murder of Patroclus. A vicious Achilles, with a leaning towards voodoo, finally returned to battle following the death of his loved one. Whether that loved one was male or female remained uncertain.

Unusually, the QF form 'brooch', Thersites' pejorative label for Patroclus, was used at 2.1.111 in Boyd's production (Prompt book, 1998). Most stage productions use Rowe's emendation of 'brach', or modernise it to 'bitch', in order to clarify the point that the name-calling is, at once, both feminising and demeaning to the male

Patroclus. In Boyd's production, Pyke's masculine attire caused Carol Chillington Rutter to write that the costume was 'not erasing the actor's gender but inviting the audience to read the female body beneath' (2001, p. 141). Already feminised by the visible woman playing the part on the stage, this Patroclus did not provoke the label of 'brach', since the femaleness was obvious. Instead the derogatory connotations of 'brooch', (bauble, decoration, accessory), were applied.

An increase in ambiguity

In Trevor Nunn's 1999 production at the National Theatre, no such gender complications were in evidence. A muted tone of homosexual intimacy was created. Raymond Coulthard's Achilles was largely defined, as in productions from pre-1968, in terms of his indolence. He wore a loose kaftan, in contrast to the battered leather greatcoats of the other Greeks. A long ponytail and eyeliner added a note of vain effeminacy. He lounged on a daybed, feeding grapes to Patroclus (Performance recording, 1999). Nicholas de Jongh and Robert Butler referred briefly to Patroclus as the 'boyfriend' of Achilles, (de Jongh, 1999; Butler, 1999), but many reviewers did not mention the relationship. By the end of the twentieth century, staged suggestions of homosexuality and physical intimacy created by grape-feeding and bed-lolling lacked novelty and, so, became almost invisible. Examples of far more blatant, overt signifiers of homosexuality had been seen in previous productions. For Peter Porter, in *The Times Literary Supplement*, this understated quality was a positive feature of Nunn's production. He wrote, 'It is important not to overdo the suggestion of homosexuality in Shakespeare's version of Achilles – after all he is seriously courting a daughter of Priam – and Nunn insists on a sexual ambivalence which is more

threatening than anything explicit could be' (Porter, 1999). By this point in the stage history of *Troilus and Cressida*, the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus defied specific labelling and, as seen too in Boyd's work, an air of ambiguity came into play.

Peter Stein's production of the play in 2006, however, did not follow this pattern of growing ambiguity in its depiction of Achilles. Vincent Regan's Achilles wore a long, red silk dressing gown, further feminised by a matching red scarf or band on his long hair (Performance recording, 2006). Quentin Letts remarked that Achilles looked like 'something off *La Cage Aux Folles*' (Letts, 2006). Achilles frequently embraced a bare-chested Patroclus, who was clearly his lover in this version. Following the death of Patroclus, Achilles openly wept, sobbing loudly. Stein's work drew inspiration from Barton's 1968 production, to which it was dedicated (Bate and Rasmussen, 2010, p. 178). The explicit representation of the homosexual Achilles in the production was certainly reminiscent of Alan Howard's performance in 1968. Although Howard's interpretation, together with revealing male costumes, had been considered outrageous and overdone by some reviewers, it had still been thought of as 'definitive' and it had seized attention, providing a model for many subsequent productions. By 2006, however, these visual markers had ceased to shock, and the production as a whole was widely considered to be 'unengaging' by reviewers such as Michael Dobson (2007, p. 310). The portrayal of an Achilles which utilised stereotypical camp homosexuality, such as the red hairband and the theatrical sobbing, was considered to be unacceptable to modern tastes and rather pointlessly overdone.

Achilles takes centre stage, again

In 2012, the RSC/Wooster Group collaborative production featured an article in its theatrical programme which gave a clue about the significance that Achilles would have in this version. The article was written by Madeline Miller, the author of the Orange prize-winning novel, *The Song of Achilles*, and was entitled 'Only We Two'; a quotation from Homer's *Iliad*. Like Lisa Jardine's contribution to the 1996 RSC programme, it dealt with the representations of the relationship of Achilles and Patroclus through centuries of literature. This 2012 production, or at least the RSC-led Greek side of the production, was centred on Achilles. Achilles became the focus of many of the Greek scenes, necessitating the decision that Joe Dixon was the only RSC actor who did not double Achilles with another role. Textually, for example, the Greek council scene, 1.3, does not include Achilles or Patroclus onstage. In Achilles' absence, the other Greek generals discuss the destabilising effects of his refusal to fight and his enjoyment of Patroclus' disrespectful playacting. In 2012, however, this first entry of the Greeks at 1.3 was converted into the grand entry of Achilles. Loud drumming accompanied the arrival of the Greeks onto the stage, clad in contemporary combat fatigues (Performance recording, 2012). They brought on Achilles who stood, elevated above them, stripped to the waist, sporting a white towel, desert boots and tattoos. He revelled in their adoration, flexing his muscles as they shouted his name. This image was then punctured and revealed to be false. The soldiers sank down as the drumming slowed, and were seen coughing, spluttering, reaching for an asthma inhaler, adjusting bandages and, in Nestor's case, gratefully sinking onto a folding stool; images which sought to capture the play's widespread

use of disease imagery. Achilles was not standing on a pedestal after all; he had been wheeled in on a hospital gurney, onto which he collapsed.

Despite the fracturing of the initial visual image of Achilles' potency, the noisy, ceremonial arrival of the character into the action had memorably left its mark. Additionally, Achilles was often visible onstage, silent and unconscious on the gurney, during moments when the character is usually not included in a scene, such as 1.3 and the opening section of 2.1. Many of the opportunities that the audience had to view the Greek camp included an extra sight of Achilles. At the opening of 3.3, after the interval, the stage revolve moved around once to reveal a glimpse of Achilles still prone on the trolley. As well as being high profile, the character gained a sympathetic dimension in this production. This Achilles was obviously ill. Achilles' inactivity, which during the stage history of the play has usually been represented as laziness or idle decadence, was redefined here as the immobility of severe illness. In 1985 Alan Rickman's Achilles had been seen adding medicine to his drink, but in 2012 the notion was taken further. At times, Achilles suffered some kind of seizure, collapsing and reaching out for help to Patroclus, who, it became clear, was his regular carer during such repeated events.

Unsurprisingly, given the added time on stage and the novel, sympathetic slant, Joe Dixon's Achilles was given a degree of prominence in reviews. The interpretation of Achilles, and the more traditional approach of the RSC to the Greek scenes in general, were viewed more favourably by newspaper reviewers. The reviews were

often so concerned with criticising the quirks and vagaries of the Wooster Group's contributions, that other individual actors received little comment. Alexander Gilmour, for example, found many features of the production to be 'baffling' and 'pretentious', but stated that '[some] elements are successful: Joe Dixon's Achilles – "great Thetis's son" – prances in a white sarong, vain, grasping, cruel, yet also pitiable' (Gilmour, 2012).

The most frequently mentioned element in reviews about Dixon's Achilles was the use of a long evening dress; 'a scarlet Hollywood goddess gown' according to Patrick Carnegy (Carnegy, 2012). Since the reception of Alan Howard's performance in 1968, discussion of the use of drag in staging Shakespeare's Achilles had moved from earlier outrage to rather neutral acceptance. Only Michael Billington, in 2012, seemed to feel that the costuming was an example of the homosexual signifier being too blatantly overdone. He wrote: 'Ravenhill obliges some talented actors, initially clad in combat fatigues, to indulge in flamboyant posturing. In case we miss the point about Achilles's sexual ambivalence, Joe Dixon turns up for a pre-battle feast in a scarlet evening gown' (Billington, 2012). Other reviewers noted the red dress, or mentioned it in passing, but offered views which were devoid of disapproval. This may have been due to the prevalence of cross-dressing in the production as a whole: Thersites was a transvestite cabaret performer, Patroclus wore gold high heels and Scott Handy became Helen of Troy. Within this context, Achilles in a red dress did not warrant specific, negative commentary. In addition, decades of examples of the theatrical Achilles in feminised apparel, from Alan Howard's blonde 'Helen' wig in

1968 to Vincent Regan's silk dressing gown and hairband in 2006, had made the image a normal part of the set of visual stage images of *Troilus and Cressida*.

Inside/outside the theatre industry

Dan Rebellato has written of the ways in which British theatre has been a physical location which has had an affinity with homosexual men and a site where they could hold power. During the 1940s and 1950s the theatre offered, writes Rebellato, 'the promise of a relatively tolerant space for homosexuals to work' (1999, p. 161). This was exemplified, most famously, by Sir John Gielgud's arrest, on 21st October 1953 in Chelsea, for 'persistently importuning', which was followed by a standing ovation by the audience during his next theatre performance (Rebellato, 1999, p. 162 and note p. 233). At a time when homosexuality was not tolerated in the world 'outside' the theatre, a homosexual actor was welcomed and received affirmation within its walls. Productions of *Troilus and Cressida* in the twentieth century, then, could begin to display depictions of a homosexual relationship between Achilles and Patroclus, first in quite disguised ways, years before the 'outside' world of politics and legal reform had changed. In a similar way, the 'outside' world of the newspaper review was slower to adjust, and reluctant to adjust to these interpretations, epitomised by the reaction of scandalised outrage which poured out in response to Alan Howard's performance in 1968.

The responses of literary critics and editors to the relationship of Achilles and Patroclus also changed during the period. In his work, *A Life of William Shakespeare*, first published in 1898, Sir Sidney Lee's reading of the character of Achilles was

typical for its time, and also characterised the reading of the character which would hold sway in the study until much later in the next century. Without mentioning Patroclus, Lee described Achilles as the 'brutal coward' who demonstrated 'selfish, unreasoning, and exorbitant pride' (Lee, 1908, p. 185). Although subsequent literary critics, from the late 1930s, began to allude to a homosexual relationship between the two men in disguised phrases or brief references in footnotes, the concentration on Achilles' unpleasant and ruthless qualities remained at the fore of critical discussion for several decades. It was within the theatre, in the realm of stage practice, that more rapid, radical interpretations arose. It was theatre practitioners who chose to 'flaunt a highly visible homosexuality' (Bevington, 1998, p. 28) more openly, both between Achilles and Patroclus as lovers, and in the general portrayal of the male bodies on view.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has been concerned with the reinterpretations of *Troilus and Cressida* in the sites of theatrical performance and literary criticism. Specifically, I have been interested in the time-difference between the changes in one site and the other, given that this play offers the special case of a Shakespearean dramatic work which was read on the page for three centuries before it was regularly performed. Different meanings, in some cases radically different meanings, began to be attached to the play once stage performances had begun. This was especially true within the field of gender and sexuality, a field where huge social and cultural change took place at the same time that the play was gaining its own performance history. Changes in society, particularly in the later decades of the twentieth century, gave commentators and theatre practitioners an ability to discuss and explore the characters of the play in new ways. Both the theatre and literary criticism reflected and responded to social change in their dealings with this play, but they did so at different points and at different rates. By using the case of *Troilus and Cressida*, then, it has been possible to ask whether it is theatrical practice or academic literary criticism which has acted as the more efficient cultural barometer.

Generally, my findings show that theatrical representations of characters in this play have been slow to change in relation to the revisions seen on the pages of literary criticism. Developments in sympathetic readings of Cressida, my central example, were observed firstly in literary criticism, from the 1970s onwards, at the time of second wave feminism, when the character came to be seen as a 'pawn' in the war,

rather than as a fickle, promiscuous villain. Similar changes on the stage occurred later on, from 1985 onwards, when the RSC production featured a Cressida who was brutally passed around by the Greek men, a stage moment which was initially received with some opposition, but has since become an accepted interpretation of the scene. Helen has been the most unfixed character from the play in performance, and although her character in Shakespeare's play has not received the same quantity of attention as Cressida, some more recent examples of literary criticism concerning her have followed a similar trajectory to the readings of Cressida, increasingly pointing out the vulnerable position of tradable, and traded, women.

The representations of male characters in the play have also changed, but in a different way to the changes in the representation of women. Troilus, originally understood as a knightly hero, albeit young and misguided, was the subject of an array of positive literary readings until the 1970s. The theatre then clung onto the image of the noble, heroic Troilus, and the play as a whole remained 'the tragedy of Troilus', to use G. Wilson Knight's phrase (1930, p. 69), for even longer on the stage than it had done in literary criticism. When flaws began to be observed in the character of Troilus on the stage, many reviewers found them unacceptable. Literary readings of both Ulysses and Hector have changed through the decades, with a greater number of imperfections being cited compared to the previously unquestioned, positive appraisals of the two characters. However, only Ulysses has changed significantly on the stage, a change which has been necessitated by the see-sawing elevation of Cressida. Hector, meanwhile, has been maintained as the manly, moral centre of the play in many productions, a course which is continuing

into the twenty-first century. Although reinterpretations of Troilus and Hector have been in evidence in literary criticism for several decades, representations of both characters on the stage have shown a marked reluctance, by theatre practitioners and reviewers, to move away from idealised images of masculinity.

Representation of male homosexuality in the play, and it is specifically *male* homosexuality in this case, has shown a different chronological order of change. Evasive, or coded, depictions of a homosexual relationship between Achilles and Patroclus were seen on the stage early on, then more overtly from 1968 onwards, at a time when literary criticism was still coyly negotiating the area. By the time that academic writing was examining literary and dramatic representations of homosexuality more fully, and finding that the term 'homosexual' was inappropriate for studies of the Early Modern period (Bray, 1982, p. 16), the stage had moved on, in many cases, to more muted signifiers of the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus. When productions used old-style images of gay camp, then reviewers were the first in line to point out that such blatant images were clichéd. Portrayals of a homosexual Pandarus have roughly followed the same trajectory as portrayals of Achilles/Patroclus, although the depiction of him as an eccentric, avuncular non-active homosexual man was in evidence in even earlier productions. A comical representation of an older homosexual man was a 'safer', more tolerated choice than the image of two younger soldiers involved in a sexual relationship, it seems. Earlier readers of the play had expressed distaste for the coarse, sexual language of Pandarus and Thersites, finding it to be one of the 'problems' of the play, but from the late 1960s, the cynical voices of both characters grew in significance on the stage.

The depiction of male homosexuality was a significant exception to the tendency of literary criticism to offer new readings of this play before changes became evident in the theatre: the stage was willing to incorporate images of male homosexuality into productions at an earlier date. The British theatre of the 1940s and 1950s offered what Dan Rebellato called 'a relatively tolerant space for homosexuals to work' (1999, p. 161), and the wider working conditions of the industry seem to have been reflected, too, in its greater tolerance of onstage representations of gay men. However, in terms of gender, the stage has adhered to conservative notions of idealised military manliness and the 'evils' of female sexuality in this play at times when academia was offering more progressive views in its re-readings of *Troilus*.

By 'progressive', here, I am referring to understandings of the play which seek to question, or bring into critical focus, traditional, conservative ideologies of social organisation centred on gender and sexuality. I am referring to readings and productions of *Troilus and Cressida*, then, as progressive, if they attempt to use the multiple possibilities within the text to reveal and subvert instances of stereotypical images of gendered characters and dominant attitudes to sexuality. A progressive reading or stage production would prioritise elements of the play which communicate the modern preoccupation with eliminating sexual and gender discrimination. These progressive examples would be likely to find ways to undermine and challenge Ulysses' denunciation of Cressida as 'sluttish spoils', for example, and to offer sympathetic, explanatory and complex motives for her acceptance of Diomedes. The performance examples may choose to present the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus as a sexual one, but would not be limited to hackneyed signifiers of camp

effeminacy. The progressive examples would be unlikely to present an unquestioned, or unquestioning, set of meanings of heroic masculine militarism.

Although the term 'progressive' carries with it Whig-like overtones, as does the use of the term 'development' when discussing changing portrayals of characters, it is not the rightness or the wrongness of these understandings that are, ultimately, significant: rather, it is the moments at which changes occurred, and the chronological order of those changes, which pinpoint something about the use of this play within the wider culture. The timing of the changes can indicate the areas in which the stage chose to take a relevant, progressive stance more readily than academic literary criticism. They can also show the areas in which criticism responded more quickly and directly to socio-political concerns. Whether the fictional character Cressida suffers when being kissed by a group of men, or happily bestows kisses on them, is of little importance compared to the wider social and cultural changes for women which can prompt and which can be evinced by such reinterpretations. Whether the fictional characters Achilles and Patroclus are understood to be lovers or comrades, similarly, is of little consequence, but the manner in which the relationship is represented does give important indicators of changing societal perceptions of male/male relationships. The continual claims for the relevance of *Troilus and Cressida*, the claims that it is 'our play', make it pertinent to raise questions about the relative efficacy of academia and the theatre to respond to contemporary concerns.

I have used the word 'radically', when describing the manner in which some of the meanings attached to the play changed, in order to indicate that the meanings changed 'a great deal'. The term 'radical', of course, can also take on meanings associated with the political left, referring to advocates of social reform and to individuals and institutions which are decidedly anti-establishment, and are seeking thorough change. The British theatre in general has widely been held to be an institution of left-wing values, certainly since the socially aware 'kitchen sink' productions of the post-war period. The near-absence of right-wing theatre was commented on by Graham Holderness in his 1992 work, *The Politics of Theatre and Drama*. Holderness noted, in relation to Ian Curteis' *The Falklands Play*, a play which was commissioned but then initially rejected by the BBC, that 'the example of the stridently pro-Thatcher dramatist Ian Curteis [...] is unusual enough to stimulate curiosity. In the accepted use of the word, Ian Curteis is, oddly, a right-wing political dramatist' (1992, p. 3). Examples of this kind appear across contemporary, twenty-first century culture too, including Nicholas Hytner's comment during a radio interview that he seemed unable to find a 'good, mischievous right-wing play' (quoted in Rayner, 2007). For several decades at least, then, there has been the widely accepted perception that new writing for the theatre will, with few exceptions, have a left-wing bias.

It is not just new dramatic writing which garners this perception, however. In April 2016, the televised performance of Shakespeare Live! from the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, marking the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death, included a section from the play *Sir Thomas More* performed by Sir Ian McKellen. The speech

concerning the treatment of sixteenth-century refugees, ('Imagine that you see the wretched strangers,/ Their babies at their backs and their poor luggage'), was delivered at a time when the *More* manuscript was newsworthy, having been recently digitised and placed on the website of the British Library, and when the recent European migrant crisis had been seizing headlines for over a year. The inclusion of the speech in Shakespeare Live! elicited a range of responses concerning what is, or is not, Shakespeare. The responses were not generally concerned with the textual questions surrounding 'Hand D', but revealed concerns with the way in which meanings could be transmitted and validated when associated with Shakespeare. The use of the speech prompted examples of both praise and condemnation for its inclusion. From the left, Michael Billington, in the *Guardian*, stated that 'the evening really took off when Ian McKellen delivered a palpably Shakespearean speech from Sir Thomas More imagining what it would be like to be an asylum seeker undergoing forced repatriation' (Billington, 2016). From the right, under the heading 'Fury as the Bard is dragged into refugee row', *The Mail on Sunday* reported that:

An obscure passage known as the "immigration speech" was never performed in the playwright's lifetime, yet it was selected as one of the excerpts on BBC2's Shakespeare Live! last night. Tory MP Peter Bone said: "They've gone out of their way to find a piece of writing which fits the Left-wing establishment's pro-immigration agenda and it's a shame. You'd have thought they could at least have found something which was published under Shakespeare's name for a start." (*Mail on Sunday* reporter, 2016)

The appeal to empathise with 'strangers' could be supported if it was considered to be part of 'Shakespeare', or could be whisked away by being 'not-Shakespeare', it

seems, and the notion that the theatre, the performance industry, the BBC and the arts in general are politically biased and tend to the left was, again, widespread across many commentaries.

The publication of the so-called 'luvvies' letter' was a further example of this perception of the arts in early twenty-first-century Britain. Within a month of the anniversary celebrations, a letter appeared in the *Guardian* (Stewart and Brown, 2016), calling for the public to vote to remain in the European Union in the upcoming referendum, an event which came to be tied up in many ways with attitudes to immigration. The letter, signed by 250 actors, artists, directors and musicians, including Sir Patrick Stewart, Benedict Cumberbatch and Helena Bonham Carter, argued that Britain 'is more imaginative and creative' inside Europe. It was almost immediately labelled 'the luvvies' letter'. The *Daily Express* responded with a piece under the heading "'Desperate left-wing luvvies!' Anger as A-listers lecture Brits on EU referendum' (Parfitt and Oliphant, 2016). Simon Jenkins wrote a critical piece in the *Guardian* the next day, also calling it the 'luvvies' letter', stating that the letter's use of the fact that many artistic ventures had been financed by EU grants was not helpful to the 'Remain' cause, and indicated 'That our lucky stars of stage and screen benefit from the EU's largesse should hardly be a clincher for anyone else' (Jenkins, 2016). The responses to the letter and to the performance of the *More* speech showed that theatre is a cultural site considered, by some, to have the potential for social inclusivity and progressiveness. At the same time, detractors can characterise the theatre and the arts as institutions of elitism and ridiculous political correctness.

Although commentators have seemed to evaluate the performing arts as essentially left of centre, the Shakespearean text on the page, including *Troilus and Cressida*, has been appropriated for a wide range of political agendas, especially when used selectively. Nigel Lawson famously found that a section of Ulysses' 'Degree' speech could offer validation for the conservative desire for hierarchy. In an interview with Terry Coleman, explaining his preference for the lines 'Take but degree away, untune that string,/ And hark what discord follows' (1.3.109-110), Lawson stated that 'People are different, not equal. The appeal of egalitarianism is I think wholly destructive. It's an appeal to envy' (Coleman, 1983). This is a section of text which, for Lawson's purposes, had to be removed from the dramatic context, where Ulysses' clever oratory about 'order' and 'degree' is undercut within the same scene by his own actions in fixing, or 'dis-ordering', the lottery to choose Hector's opponent. There was also a sense that Lawson, like many earlier critics of the play, was conflating the words of one particular dramatic character with the essential beliefs of Shakespeare. In a similar way, of course, McKellen's delivery of the 'strangers' speech from *Sir Thomas More* also operated in isolation, removed from its own dramatic context. In Coleman's *Guardian* interview, Lawson also stated that 'Shakespeare was a Tory, without any doubt' (Coleman, 1983). This was a statement which led Margot Heinemann to reflect on the ubiquitous nature of Shakespeare and to consider that arguments and appropriations such as Lawson's should be taken seriously, since, she stated, 'as the right knows if the left does not, Shakespeare is *there*, deeply embedded in the culture, the language, the media and the educational system of Britain' (1985, pp. 203-4, italics in original). The validation offered by an association with Shakespeare may have always been up for political grabs, especially when

textual quotation can be isolated and used selectively, but a generally accepted view of the theatre, by the time of Lawson's comments in 1983, was that the British stage was more likely to offer images which were decidedly non-Tory, and that, in theatrical performance at least, Shakespeare was likely to be appropriated for the left.

Like some of the responses to the use of the *More* speech, the performance history of *Troilus and Cressida* has shown a similar pattern of provoking outbursts against the representation of non-conformist elements. It is useful here to consider which of the theatrical images from the performance repertoire of the play have been deemed to be unorthodox or challenging to the status quo. In many cases, these challenges to dominant forms took on two strands: they challenged the accepted, long held view of the meaning of the play itself and, at times, they also challenged assumptions in the wider culture. Stage images/examples which initially provoked condemnation from reviewers were bound up almost exclusively with sensitivity to notions of gender and sexuality. A prime example of this is Michael Coveney's denunciation of the 'RSC feminist puritans' in 1985 (Coveney, 1985) in relation to the reinterpretation of the kissing of Cressida in Howard Davies' production. This displayed an acceptance, albeit an annoyed acceptance, that the RSC, like other theatre companies and institutions of the performing arts, was oppositional, in this case in relation to gender politics. The most severe and widespread negative criticism, however, was that generated by Alan Howard's version of Achilles at the RSC in 1968, particularly the use of drag costuming in the mock-Helen scene. The more blatant depiction of Achilles and Patroclus as lovers also raised eyebrows, as did the revealing costumes for the male warriors. Responses included Harold Hobson's comment that the play

should be retitled 'Achilles and Perversion' (Hobson, 1968). Instances where Troilus looked or sounded less than perfectly or heroically masculine, in 1985 and 1996 for example, were deemed to have weaknesses. Anton Lesser's physical stature was the object of disparagement and he was labelled 'a disappointingly lightweight Troilus' (Asquith, 1985), and Joseph Fiennes' 'reedy tenor' disturbed Robert Hewison who concluded 'Not much of a hero here' (Hewison, 1996). The disgruntled criticisms of some reviewers revealed a discomfort with watching a version of Shakespeare which did not strongly endorse conventional gender images and gender relations. It was also grudgingly expected, however, that the theatre, with its personnel of 'luvvies', would be likely to challenge the status quo, and to provide a different set of meanings.

For some commentators and practitioners, the possibility for the theatre to intervene in social and cultural politics is a positive one. Barbara Bowen, in *Gender in the Theater of War: Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida*, stated that: 'Performance looms so large in the hopes for a potentially progressive Shakespeare, I think, because the education system, the other institution primarily responsible for the reproduction of Shakespeare, seems so entrenched in its conservatism' (1993, p. 30). For this play, however, Bowen's hopeful claim for the progressive quality of performance is not borne out in its dealings with gender and female sexuality. Performances of *Troilus* have not been in the vanguard of progressive reinterpretations, with the exception of early coded images of male homosexuality. My findings, in many instances, offer a reversal of Bowen's statement. In the majority of cases, the more progressive readings of *Troilus and Cressida*, or certainly the

readings which began to change the accepted perceptions of the play, were in evidence in academic writing before they were witnessed on the stage.

It should be noted that I am linking the realm of literary criticism with the realm of education, more specifically higher education, since a large proportion of literary criticism issues from academic staff at universities. Possibly Bowen was thinking specifically of the teaching of Shakespeare in schools when she referred to the conservatism of the educational system. In the same way, Alan Sinfield, in his chapter, 'Give an account of Shakespeare and education ...' in *Political Shakespeare* (1985, pp. 134-157), concentrated on G.C.E. O'-Level and A'-Level English Literature when he stated: 'In education Shakespeare has been made to speak mainly for the right' (1985, p. 135). For this play in particular, the stage has proved to be the more conservative field, holding onto assumptions about gender and female sexuality for a longer time. Literary criticism concerning *Troilus and Cressida* has been used to question dominant discourses of sexuality and gender more actively, more quickly and more radically than the realm of the theatre. The relatively late 'rediscovery' of *Troilus* as a play for performance at the beginning of the twentieth century has always been connected with its apparent relevance to the modern condition. *Troilus* has been so often claimed to be 'our play', speaking to our modern world, yet in the theatre it has not seemed to keep pace. Carol Chillington Rutter states, quite correctly I think, that many performance examples of the play are 'not radical, but retro' (2001, p. 140). The question remains, therefore: why has the theatre, an institution often credited with the potential for progressive, challenging and new ways

of speaking relevantly to society, used this play with such a definite sense of belatedness?

Firstly, it is important to note that whilst the theatre may have been relatively slow to offer revisions in its understandings of *Troilus*, nevertheless these revisions did occur, and they often occurred within a decade or so of the first evidence of changes in literary criticism. Additionally, reinterpretations on the stage have had a stronger influence, an influence more widely and powerfully experienced, than the changes seen in literary criticism of the play, even if the theatrical revisions were relatively late. When Nicholas Shrimpton commented 'Henceforth we will never again discuss this text in quite the same way' (1987, p. 205), in his review of Howard Davies' 1985 RSC production, it became clear that the reinterpretations in the stage performance of the play were, in some ways, more robust and wider-reaching than the changing perception of Cressida which had already been written about by critics including Carolyn Asp, R. A. Yoder and Gayle Greene. For Shrimpton at least, even given his role as an Oxford academic, it was the surprising *theatrical* spectacle of Juliet Stevenson's Cressida, portrayed for the first time as a victim of war, which made the most significant difference to his understanding of the play. For other viewers, too, it seems likely that the rather insular domain of literary criticism would never be able to have had as great an impact on the general perception of the play as an expensive, main-house RSC production. The wider ripples of influence from the theatrical production would also have been aided by the affiliated posters, advertisements, articles, interviews and reviews in the national press, potentially entering the consciousness of a larger number of people.

The position of British theatre as a marginal, non-populist art form requires consideration, however, when delving into questions about the effectiveness of the stage in dealing with representations of gender and sexuality in this play. *Troilus* is specifically an elitist, non-mainstream example of theatre. In this thesis I have referred, for instance, to the 1960 production directed by Peter Hall and John Barton as the 'famous sandpit *Troilus*'. This 'fame' is very limited, of course. It is limited to people with an awareness of *Troilus and Cressida*, which is a smaller subset of the people who may have an interest in, or some experience of, watching Shakespeare in the theatre, which is, in turn, a smaller subset of people who attend the theatre in any guise. To put this into context, a 2013 survey, commissioned by Ticketmaster, showed that 63% of the UK population had attended the theatre in the previous year, with the most recognised shows among attendees being popular West End musicals such as *Phantom of the Opera* (Brown, 2013). This percentage was considered by many to be surprisingly high: two decades earlier, Graham Holderness had quoted a figure of 5% for the proportion of the UK population who attended theatre, opera or ballet (Holderness, 1992, p. 10), leading him to state that in analysing theatre, 'it must be accepted that we are referring to a minority cultural form' (p. 10). Within the figures for theatre attendance, Shakespearean plays offer an experience for a minority, and *Troilus* offers an even more specialised experience for that minority. A glance at the popular examination study guides available in bookshops shows that, unlike plays such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Macbeth*, attendances at productions of *Troilus* are not bolstered by visits from GCSE or A'-Level student. *Troilus and Cressida* has long been considered to be a piece of elitist, non-populist drama: it was a play to be read in the study by intellectuals and a play

with an emerging performance tradition tied to academic institutions such as the Marlowe Society. Given the strong connection with educational elitism and its niche position within theatre-going, the play's potential for relevant or progressive interpretations must emerge from the very institutions which have used, reproduced or appropriated the play.

It has been noted that one of the most significant reinterpretations in the play has been the movement of Cressida from the category of whore to the category of victim, a process which began in literary criticism in the 1970s. When a closer look is taken at the roots of this period in women's advancement, it is noticeable that the voices of the movement, as well as the earlier, pioneering voices from which the movement drew inspiration, including Simone de Beauvoir and Betty Friedan, were often women who had benefitted from a university education. Although Barbara Bowen, Alan Sinfield and other commentators have remarked upon the conservative tendencies of the educational establishment's dealings with Shakespeare, in many instances the new ways of thinking about gender roles in the plays during the 1970s and 1980s were driven by theorists in higher education. With this in mind, it is not surprising, then, that some of the most far-reaching revisions of ways to read Shakespeare's women at this time should connect, not initially with the theatre, but with university-based literary criticism. The changing perceptions of Cressida were witnessed at an earlier point than the stage's revisions of the character, due, in large part, to the drive of feminism from within academia.

In the theatre, by contrast, the hugely disproportionate balance of male to female roles in the Shakespearean canon seems likely to promote the prioritisation of masculinity, in all its representations. *Troilus and Cressida* calls for twenty-one named male parts, as well as assorted soldiers and servants, and four named female roles. The play itself, then, with its pronounced war plot, its deeply embedded narrative of women as merchandise and the actuality of its male/female ratio on the stage also makes progressive performance problematic.

The male-dominated working conditions of the theatre industry have also had repercussions. In relation to the female actor's working experience in Shakespeare, Fiona Shaw has commented that 'You are often the only woman in the rehearsal room' (Rutter, 1988, p. xvii). This sense of isolation was also encountered by Juliet Stevenson when, according to Neville Boundy, an attendee at the RSC Summer School in 1985 (Boundy, 2015), she was frustrated by the attitudes of the men in the rehearsal room who were unwilling to acknowledge her understanding that Troilus' comments, 'How my achievements mock me' (4.2.71) and 'No remedy' (4.4.54), were offensively dismissive towards Cressida at the moment when she was about to be removed from Troy. Suzanne Burden had a similar experience during her work on the 1981 BBC production: 'I used to get terribly upset in the first days of rehearsal when people would say, "She's nothing but a tart and a sexual tease." Instinctively I would feel quite angry but I couldn't explain why she wasn't' (Tylee, 1989, pp. 72-3). The preponderance and power of men in theatre during the same 1980s period could be encapsulated by the fact that an attempt to establish the RSC Women's Group (Werner, 2001) was met with opposition and proved to be very short-lived.

The performance history of *Troilus and Cressida* has always tended towards making it a play about men and masculinity. Within this scheme, representations of male homosexuality received relatively early acceptance on the stage, endorsed by the association not just with Shakespeare, but with an elitist, intellectual example of Shakespeare. This occurred earlier and to a greater degree than any progressive representations of women. At times, it has become, in passing, a play about women in wartime, but in such representations the women were afforded the roles of victims of war, whilst male 'heroic' characters, especially Troilus and Hector, have only occasionally varied from long-established images.

When *Troilus and Cressida* was reclaimed for the theatre at the beginning of the twentieth century, claims for its contemporary relevance began, and since then they have never been far away. It must be 'our play', it has seemed, if 'we' are the ones who have chosen it for performance. The reinterpretations of the play and its characters, given the special case of a play with a relatively late-starting performance history, had the potential to make its theatrical productions mean something nearer to the sets of meaning in contemporary society. It could be a play about Vietnam, or about Iraq, but it could also reveal changing perceptions of gender and sexuality. On closer examination, however, it was not necessarily the 'progressive' field of the theatre which reacted most quickly to these concerns. When theatrical productions did react by offering reinterpretations of characters and key scenes, the effect on the meaning of the play was far-reaching, but in many cases the older, established field of literary criticism, and the study of the play on the page, was the field which was the first to offer a range of changed perceptions.

APPENDIX**Chronological list of productions of *Troilus and Cressida* referred to in this thesis**

Year	Director	Company/Location
1907	Charles Fry	Great Queen Street, London
1912/13	William Poel	Elizabethan Stage Society
1922	Frank Birch	Marlowe Society
1923	Robert Atkins	Old Vic
1936	Ben Iden Payne	SMT
1938	Michael Macowan	London Mask Company
1938	Nevill Coghill	OUDS
1940	George Rylands	Marlowe Society
1948	Anthony Quayle	SMT
1948	George Rylands	Marlowe Society
1953	Merlin Thomas	OUDS
1954	George Rylands	Marlowe Society
1954	Glen Byam Shaw	SMT
1956	John Barton/George Rylands	Marlowe Society
1956	Tyrone Guthrie	Old Vic
1960	Peter Hall/John Barton	SMT/RSC
1964	Robin Midgley	Marlowe Society
1968	John Barton	RSC
1973	Richard Cottrell	Marlowe Society
1976	Elijah Moshinsky	National Theatre
1976	John Barton/ Barry Kyle	RSC
1981	Jonathan Miller	BBC TV/Timelife
1981	Keith Hack	OUDS
1981	Terry Hands	RSC
1985	Howard Davies	RSC
1990	Sam Mendes	RSC
1996	Ian Judge	RSC
1998	Michael Boyd	RSC
1999	Trevor Nunn	National Theatre
2000	Dominic Dromgoole	Oxford Stage Company
2003	Andrew Hilton	Tobacco Factory, Bristol
2006	Peter Stein	RSC/Edinburgh Festival
2008	Declan Donnellan	Cheek by Jowl
2009	Matthew Dunster	Shakespeare's Globe
2012	Mark Ravenhill/Elizabeth LeCompte	RSC/Wooster Group

SMT Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford-Upon-Avon

RSC Royal Shakespeare Company

OUDS Oxford University Dramatic Society

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