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Source: *eSharp*, Issue 19: Reality/ Illusion(2012) pp. 158-182

URL: <http://www.gla.ac.uk/esharp>

ISSN: 1742-4542

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The Subversive Homeric Reality in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*

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Shakespeare stigmatizes the tragic aspect of *Troilus and Cressida* by subverting the Homeric narrative which is largely based on Mythos. Instead, he presents a theatrical rendition in which the Logos has the upper hand. In retrospect, Shakespeare uses mythical characters to accentuate the battle between Mythos and Logos: "It has often been maintained, and it is still widely held, that the civilization of ancient Greece underwent a development from myth to reason, or - to adopt the Greek-derived terms which have sometimes assumed talismanic status in relation to the debate-from Mythos to Logos" (Buxton 1999, p. 1). The Shakespearean play displays the flawed human side of these supposedly god-like men by using a Homeric bravado. Some Shakespearean characters in this play represent Logos, others Mythos, or can shift from one to another. By dismissing Mythos as a world of illusion, treachery, and fools, the Shakespearean rendition of the Homeric narrative undermines the commonly perceived tradition of the heroic age as noble or an ideal form of reality. In effect the disappearance of the heroic trait negates the concept of the fallen protagonist which is characteristic of Greek tragedies. Hence, *Troilus and Cressida* becomes a problem play because it is torn between two worlds which is that of Mythos and Logos.

Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* is a play that defies categorization mainly because it is hard to classify. It is

problematically not a tragedy for basically two reasons: firstly, there is the absence of tragic elements. Troilus, for instance, does not die and the play ends bleakly with the destruction of love partly because of falsehood and infidelity rather than the intrusion of any external force such as sudden death, the intervention of fate or any sort of conspiracy. Secondly, there is the presence of comic elements such as dark humour and satire. In general, it is a problem play because the major characters do not suffer the way heroes do in Greek tragedies; neither does the play propose any cathartic experience to the audience through pity and fear. The lovers are involved in a promiscuous love that the Elizabethans would not categorize as quite chivalric or romantic. In other words, the heroes are not tragic heroes in the Aristotelian sense. The question is why Shakespeare seems to shape the play deliberately so differently.

Critics have had a hard time trying to pin this play down to a particular genre. The title page of the Quarto describes it as a History, the Epistle to the reader spoke of it as a comedy, and the Folio as an afterthought put it between the Histories and the Tragedies. The editors Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen elaborate on the historical background of the play in their “Tragical-Comical-Historical?” introduction to their edition of 2010. Because of its late arrival as a last-minute addition, the editors “managed to squeeze it in between the histories and the tragedies, which is a fitting place: it is a tragedy in that the Trojan War [...] was Western tragedy’s foundational theme, but it had been published independently in Quarto format in 1609 as *The Famous History of Troilus and Cresseid*, a title emphasizing a medieval romance accretion to the classical epic tale” (vii). Furthermore, some copies of the Quarto acknowledges “that the play is ‘passing full of the palm comical’” (vii). Oscar J. Campbell remarks that it belongs to the ‘comical satyre of Jonson and Marston’

(Toole 1966, p. 199). Moreover, John Palmer speaks of it as ‘a tragedy in 1912 and as a Comedy in 1914. To Hazlitt it was loose and desultory; Coleridge found it hard to categorize; Swinburne said it was a hybrid’ (Kimbrough 1964, p. 2-6). I will argue here that it is the philosophical interjection into the play more than anything else that disturbs the tragedy and blurs its nature. I am not referring here to moral philosophy because Hector simply is the voice of moral philosophy ‘which would at once acquit Shakespeare of the charge made against him by Dryden in this play, that he was wanting in a moral purpose’ (Birch 1972, p. 337). Hector remarks that Troilus and Paris are superficial. They are usually led by their passions, be it for pleasure or revenge. He dismisses them like ‘young men whom Aristotle thought unfit to hear moral philosophy’ (Act II scene ii, 166). He is the voice of truth. Given that moral philosophy is not the material point of my argument here, I will argue that Shakespeare sacrifices elements of tragedy in order to represent the wider philosophical terrain of the classical struggle between Mythos and Logos. He subverts the Homeric narrative, which is largely based on romanticizing the story of heroes.

The Greek word Logos is often translated into English as ‘Word’ but can also mean thought, speech, reason, wisdom, principle, or logic. In ancient philosophy, Logos was used by Heraclitus of Ephesus, one of the more eminent Pre-Socratic Greek philosophers, to describe human knowledge. Heraclitus, who lived in the sixth century BC, is the first philosopher we know of to give Logos a philosophical or theological interpretation. He used Logos to mean the undifferentiated material substrate from which all things came: ‘Listening not to me but to the Logos it is wise to agree that all [things] are one.’ In this sense Logos is Heraclitus’ answer to the Pre-Socratic question of what the *arche* is of all things (Kaufmann 1968, p.

12-14). By the time of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, Logos was the term used to describe the faculty of human reason and the knowledge men had of the world (Kaufmann 1968, p. 17-18). Aristotle, much more of a practical thinker than an abstract theorist, first developed the concept of logic as a representation of the rules of human rationality in order to better understand the reality of the world. In rhetoric, moreover, Logos is one of the three modes of persuasion (the other two are *pathos*, emotional appeal, and *ethos*, the qualification of the speaker). The term *logic* evolves from Logos. Mythos and Logos were just interchangeable synonyms for “story” until Plato recognizes the semantics of these words, with the result that mythos is opposed to logos in the senses both of verifiable discourse and of argumentative discourse’ (Edmunds 1990, p. 3-4). Mythos idealizes the stories of the Olympian gods and goddesses and speaks of moral faith and mythical beliefs, which renders it to be largely fictional, as opposed to empirical thinking, which describes the world based on actual observation. The two terms, Mythos and Logos, refer to the two conflicting representations of reality. Mythos is illusive whereas Logos is actual and concrete: ‘The former is imagistic and involuntary, and creates and forms on the basis of the unconscious, while the latter is conceptual and intentional, and analyses and synthesizes by means of consciousness’ (Most 1999, p. 27). Mythos is all that is deceptive and unreliable. Logos is the reasonable and the trustworthy. Basically, these two notions are elaborations of the everlasting conflict between reason and passion.

Wisdom, whether political or religious in its implications, had a unifying effect by bringing order and harmony into the Polis. The correlation between the city-state and philosophy was remarkable. Being both commercially democratic and the dominating governmental structure, the Greek Polis provided the

free intellectual ambiance and pulled the world of myth to the world of reason. H. D. F. Kitto (1939, p. 64-65) observes this connection: 'Without a clear conception of what the polis was, and what it meant to the Greeks, it is quite impossible to understand properly Greek history, the Greek mind, or the Greek achievement.' Apparently enough, the Polis was both patron and guardian and its economical status and stability determined to a large extent the advance of philosophy. To cite a case in point, it is not accidental that Ionia, having given birth to Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Heraclitus, and Xenophanes, was one of the wealthiest cities in Greece. To further explain the matter we need to understand, for instance, that the philosophical rejection of the poets, as instituted by Plato in his *The Republic*, is partly because philosophers construct their intellectual world as one opposed to poetic tales. Poetry implies the use of myth. It is a mythological matter: 'Philosophers like Xenophanes and even Plato clearly realized that not all myths are harmful and might contain ethical truth' (Morgan 2002, p. 3). However, they did think that most poets should not tread into the intellectual terrain simply because they did not trust their observations.

Having in mind that the change in perception entailed the urbanization of myth and cult filtered through the Polis' political rationalization, a free path for scientific inquiry had been furnished. This time a mythopoeic answer was no longer satisfactory. It should be maintained, however, that the Olympian gods experienced a transformation under the impact of the Polis before Logos took over. These gods were expected to provide civic service and order; they were 'regulated, legalized and financed by the political community' (Vegetti 1995, p. 268). The Greeks' perception of the world started to take a drastic shift. The real clash was yet to come. The tension

happened when reason as a worldview started to pervade and faith, by time, was relegated to a secondary place. The path from Mythos to Logos was arduous and slow and it clearly started when political-philosophical rationality invaded the abstractions of myths. The evident dominance of Logos over Mythos, however, does not mean the disappearance of one and the prevalence of the other. The replacement of myth by reason was distinctively overlapping. Politics are in the domain of Logos. The politician must be pragmatic, compromising, and a seeker of social order. By contrast, Mythos dwells in visions, superstitions, and battles fought in the illusive name of righteousness. In the world of politics, the domain of Mythos is that of inevitable disasters.

The Trojan story has its roots in the tradition of myth. With every adaptation of the Trojan War story, including the recent film *Troy*, several questions are asked again: is Troy a real place? Was there a ten year siege? Was the war fought because of Helen? Can we say that the war would have ended had the Trojans sent Helen back to her husband? Answers to these questions vary over time depending on historical and archaeological evidence. However, to prove the actual existence of an ancient city called Troy does not necessarily mean that all of Homer's account of the war is legitimate. The story of Troy to Homer is just part of mythical history that was, to a great extent, credible to the Greeks. In *Rediscovering Homer*, Andrew Dalby (2006, p. 33) explains that the Trojan War story is not recent history to Homer and that 'the heroes of the Trojan war belonged to a mighty generation of the past.' Dalby gives textual evidence from the *Iliad* in order to substantiate his argument:

He seized a boulder in his hand,
Tydeus's son did, a big thing which even two men
could not lift

Who were like mortals of today, but he hefted it
easily on his own. (302-304)

This evidence of “who were like mortals of today” drives the point home to us that Homer speaks of ‘a different epoch, an age of heroes’ (Dalby 2006, p. 34). The age of heroes is the age of Mythos, which resonates in the Trojan War story. In *Troilus and Cressida*, Shakespeare offers a narrative that undermines that “age of heroes.” His literary disposition is more characteristic of a Renaissance man whose sceptic attitude is well-matched by the rise of Logos, which paints reality with a rather more tangible perception.

A clear-cut distinction should be maintained between the historical account of the Trojan Wars and the Homeric adaptation: ‘the myth of the Homeric paradigm [...] stands half way between the compulsive ideas of the early magic mentality, and the problems and uncertainties of later empirical and historical interpretation’ (Snell 1953, p. 207). The Homeric narrative, therefore, reveals two features which anticipate the rise of the Greek world of the Logos: ‘the reflexions which the myths are designed to assist usually produce a greater sense of humility’ (Snell 1953, p. 207). Homer’s stories teach men ‘to realize their status as men, the limitations upon their freedom, the conditional nature of their existence’ and encourage ‘self-knowledge [...] and thus extol measure, order and moderation.’ The second feature of the Homeric narrative is that the characters ‘are well-known figures with sharply defined contours [...] they stand on the borderline of history or experience’ (Snell 1953, p. 207). Arguably, the Homeric narrative is not a sheer representation of Mythos as it foresees Logos. The Shakespearean play, *Troilus and Cressida*, however, shows an appreciation of the Homeric nature of the half mythical and half historical narrative and utilizes it to resist the Homeric tendency to idealize heroes as Shakespeare reproduces them on an Elizabethan stage in which everything is regulated, contrived and schematically politicized.

The Prologue to *Troilus and Cressida* is deliberately Homeric to some degree, beginning the story *in media res* (in the middle of things) - an epic convention. The prologue's brief account of the Trojan War indicates the high degree of familiarity that Shakespeare's audience would have had with this mythology. Shakespeare, however, tries ostensibly to maintain an unbiased attitude by offering the audience this thought: 'Like or find fault; do as your pleasures are; / Now good or bad, 'tis but the chance of war' (Prologue 30- 31). Shakespeare here assures his audience that this play is not political propaganda of any sort. However, the sense of uncertainty with which the Prologue ends invokes a sceptical attitude towards war which was suggested earlier in the Prologue: 'Have to the port of Athens sent their ships, / Fraught with the ministers and instruments / Of cruel war' (3-5). The notion that war was fraught with 'ministers and instruments' suggests a world run by Mythos in which the mystic, and by extension the unknown, rules supreme. Shakespeare wants to make sure that the audience completely understands the fictional part of this narrated history. In fact, the insertion of a prologue functions to disturb any sense of realistic representation of the Homeric world that the theatre may impress on the audience.

Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* can be interpreted as a play of war between two camps that represent opposing perceptions of the nature of the world: the Mythos Camp and the Logos camp. Shakespeare makes it clear that Troilus adheres to the Mythos camp. He is shown in the first scene crying over his love. His personality is characteristic of Mythos as he represents the Petrarchan tradition. Cressida in his eyes is ridiculously unreal and angelic. However, in the first scene, Troilus shouts 'Peace rude sounds!' (Act I scene i, 85). Then, in a monologue, he speaks of the irrationality of the Trojan

War and of the unworthiness of the prize that led to the war in the first place. One may ask: is not that logical and therefore descriptive of Logos? Is Troilus in the Logos camp or in the Mythos camp? Let us just remember that Shakespeare does not paint his characters as either black or white or entirely good or evil. In other words, although the assumption here is that characters tend to follow a certain disposition or a worldview, the play does not yield itself entirely as an allegorical dramatization.

Shakespeare turns to the political drama, which is dominated by the figure of Ulysses. In classical Greek tradition, Ulysses (the King of Ithaca) is the hero of Homer's *Odyssey*; he is often given credit for devising the Trojan horse strategy that enabled the Greeks to finally sack the city of Troy. Ulysses is often cited to be one of the wisest and craftiest of the Greeks. Shakespeare follows this tradition by making his Ulysses a witty politician who can readily sway the imprudent warriors such as Ajax and Achilles. As an exemplar of the Logos, Ulysses is a political philosopher, an intelligent and a pragmatic realist, characteristic of the Homeric heroes. In act I, scene iii, he delivers a political speech in which he ascribes their failure to mutiny in the ranks. In other words, when respect for authority disappears, anarchy erupts. Diagnosing the ills of the Greek army, he traces it all to a neglect of the importance of 'degree,' which, he declares, is the glue that holds society together:

Troy, yet upon his basis, had been down,
And the great Hector's sword had lacked a master,
but for these instances:
The speciality of rule hath been neglected;
[...]
The heavens themselves, the planets and this centre
Observe degree, priority, and place,
Insisture, course, proportion, season, form,
Office and custom, in all line of order. (Act I. scene
iii, 75-88)

He says that had they given more attention to single rule and unity, Troy would have fallen and Hector would have been killed. He then proceeds to establish a theory of value upon an assertion. He says that everything in the universe moves according to a plan based on priority and place. When this planetary order drifts, disorder takes over and disasters happen. Similarly, when hierarchy in wartime is shaken, the whole campaign falls apart. Ulysses tells Agamemnon that this disrespect of degree is the root cause of their failure. Finally, he believes that Troy stands triumphant because of the Greeks' weakness rather than its own military glory. Ulysses' famous degree speech is a very serious discussion of fundamental issues, political and philosophical, and therefore characteristic of Logos. An argument that was familiar during the 16th Century: it depends on the notion of order as a harmony of parts, under the rule of a single head and finding analogies in the natural world (Tillyard 1959, p. 25). A Homeric hero, in general, reminds himself that he is noble and he should live up to that notion. Honour, therefore, is a chivalric attribute which is peculiar to the Mythos world which fictionalizes conceptual qualities and romance. In the *Iliad*, Odysseus reminds himself that he is a member of the aristocracy, 'and thereby resolves his doubts how he should conduct himself in a critical situation. He does it by concentrating on the thought that he belongs to a certain social order, and that it is his duty to fulfill the virtue of that order' (Snell 1953, p. 159). The universal indication of nobility is the group. The hero does not reflect on being noble as an abstract but as a member of a larger circle: 'thus gauging his action by the rigid conception of honour peculiar to his caste' (Snell 1953, p. 159). Odysseus is therefore honoured because his lies serve just and proper interest: 'he lies to his enemies. But he lies not only to secure his own private advantage, but in the interest of the Greeks, of his

comrades and his family' (Snell 1953, p. 166). Once this code of honour is destroyed the moral existence of the defeated falls apart.

In act III, scene III, in the Greek camp, Ulysses demonstrates his strategic mindset in the way he manipulates Achilles. He alerts Achilles to his diminishing reputation as a warrior:

Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back,
Wherein he puts alms for oblivion
A great-sized monster of ingratitude
These scraps are good deeds past, which are devoured
As fast as they are made, forgot as soon
As done (Act III. Scene iii, 145-150).

Achilles is further swayed by Ulysses as the latter reveals that he knows all about Achilles's affair with a Trojan princess, which strengthens his grip over Achilles' future decision. In retrospect, Logos becomes a more dominating power as Ulysses asserts his rhetorical superiority. As to the question why Shakespeare uses the name Ulysses and not the Homeric name Odysseus, arguably Shakespeare prefers Dante's Ulysses to that of Homeric name. In Canto 26 of the Inferno of his *Divine Comedy*, Dante meets Odysseus. 'Ulisse' suffers as punishment for his schemes such as the Trojan horse strategy. Dante's Ulisse narrates an un-Homeric voyage in which he set out with his men for one final journey of exploration. Men, says Dante's Ulysses, are not made 'to live like beasts, but to pursue manliness and knowledge' (Dante 1969, p. 221). Shakespeare's adaptation of the character of Odysseus is, therefore, Dantesque rather than solely Homeric, so as to emphasize the lover of knowledge rather than the wry tactician. No character except Ulysses is distinguished for wisdom. He is named Ulysses, the only non-Greek name about a Greek story, so he can be easily identified with Logos as a knowledge-seeker.

In *Troilus and Cressida*, Ulysses points out that Achilles' defiance of his superiors has spread in the camp like a disease, a

situation which needs to be dealt with if the Greeks want to win this war because Achilles' defiance negates the social hierarchy. In the *Iliad*, Homer gives Achilles a reason for not joining the fight. Agamemnon has taken Briseis, a slave girl who Achilles adored, away from him. In Book One, Agamemnon picks up a fight with Achilles:

You are nothing to me - you and your overweening
anger!

But let this be my warning on your way:
since Apollo insists on taking my Chryseis ...

But I, I will be there in person at your tents
to take Briseis in all her beauty, your own prize -

So you can learn just how much greater I am than
you. (213-218)

This statement angers Achilles even more and he is about to draw his sword to kill Agamemnon. However, the goddess Hera sends Athena to stop him and so seemingly he listens to the voice of reason and puts down his sword. Achilles tells his comrade Patroklos to let Briseis go and then he sits sorrowfully by the sea and calls out to his mother, who is Thetis, the sea nymph:

He led Briseis in all her beauty from the lodge
And handed her over to the men to take away ...
But Achilles wept, and slipping away from his
companions,

Far apart, sat down on the beach of the heaving gray
sea

And scanned the endless ocean. Reaching out his
arms,

Again and again he prayed to his dear mother ...

Feeling offended, he resigns and refuses to join the fight. We can assume that Shakespeare knows his audience will already be acquainted with the story of Troy since he does not repeat it. In *Troilus and Cressida*, Achilles is never given a real motive as to why he refuses to fight. The absence of a motive makes him appear much more ridiculous. He is Homer's hero, but in Shakespeare's play he becomes an unpleasant, even villainous, figure in the sense of being a

reduction of the Homeric original. It must be maintained, however, that although in the *Iliad* Achilles' submission to Athens' commands speaks to the importance of Logos he actually obeys to serve self-interest as well. In other words, in listening to the words of Athena when she tells him to bridle his rage against Agamemnon, Achilles does not obey Athena based on moral grounds but he has his own advantage in mind as Athena promises him 'three times over to pay for all his outrage. Hold back now. Obey us both' (250-251). This encounter serves as a good instance of moderation which is, to the Greeks, the knowledge that governs health and well-being, and thus happiness. Moderation is, therefore, profitable: 'it helps the moral block to divest itself of its religious garb, and so the genuine Greek confidence in the power of the intellect finally comes into its own' (Snell 1953, p. 162). Logos, as the product of intellect, tempers Mythos, which evokes passion, and hence produces temperance and prudence. In contrast to the Homeric version of Achilles, in Shakespeare's play Achilles is compared to Ajax while Thersites curses both of them. Thersites is clearly disgusted by the behaviour of those who live around him and mistake themselves to be heroes. His bitterness mirrors Shakespeare's subtle adaptation of both Achilles and Ajax to represent a world of Mythos where reality is molded in the image of fictitious heroes.

In the other camp, in Act II scene ii, we find Hector asking the question 'Who knows what follows?' He suggests that they let Helen go. He is here the indisputable voice of the Logos. He says 'modest doubt is the beacon of the wise.' He continues that since the first sword was drawn, every soul that had been taken by the war was as dear as Helen. By saying let Helen go he means to let go of every unreasonable cause of keeping this war going. The fact that they are fighting for Helen for no reason makes the phrase 'Let Helen go'

synonymous with let Mythos go. Hector argues that order was ruined as passion and lust have the upper hand over reason. He remarks that if great minds gratified the desires of their insentient wills, there were laws in disciplined nations to contain these rebellious and disobedient appetites. If Helen is wife to the king of Sparta, as law and custom proclaim she is, these very moral laws of nature and of nations pronounce that she should be returned. To Hector, therefore, a passionate nature is characteristic of Mythos since it is incompatible with reason as it seeks self gratification. Justice, he insists, is natural and the most natural form is obedience of a wife to her husband. In response, Troilus disagrees and asks Hector if he had considered the notion of risking their father's honour as a great king if they decide to yield to the pressure of war. Troilus says that, supposing he were to marry that day, his choice would be largely based on his eyes and ears, which is dependent on his use of his sensual faculties. This type of thinking is peculiar to the nature of Mythos as it denotes 'a blunt and aggressive act of candor, uttered by powerful males in the heat of battle or agonistic assembly' (Lincoln 1999, p. 17). He continues that even if his will later dislikes the wife that it has chosen, he could not get rid of her. He says that responsibility cannot be evaded, if they wanted to maintain a grip on honour. His error consists in using an example where the intrinsic and the attributed values must necessarily be inextricably confused. Shakespeare, however, wants to present Hector as the most heroic figure in an anti-heroic play simply because he comes to represent the voice of reason in a world ravished by irrationality.

Two acts pass and still there are only debates and no battle between the Greeks and Trojans; obviously the focus is on debate. The play in general seems to spend a great deal of time trying to determine what it is about. The process of argumentation fails to

arrive at clear answers which suggests a limitation in the utility of the Logos because it is being diverted by the intervention of humor and comic digressions such as those introduced through the characters of Ajax and Thersites. Moreover, Troilus and Paris appear to prioritize honour over reason. On the other hand, the first time we meet Helen is in Act III, scene I, when she is revealed as truly unintelligent and given to bawdy humor. The scene also gives an insight into the character of Paris who appears here as weak-willed. Spending their time with musicians, both Helen and Paris are wholly indifferent to the brutal realities of the Trojan War. In effect, Paris and Helen are both shown to be indulgent and superficial. Shakespeare categorizes them to be both in the Mythos camp.

The character of Cressida is enigmatic. She starts off as a Logos character given the fact that she uses her wit and knows that once she gives herself to her lover she will no longer be in a privileged position. In Act III, scene ii, when Troilus asks what offends her, she replies, 'mine own company.' Her later lines show that she is already divided within herself. Hers is a moral and intellectual tension. She is racked between her desire for Troilus and the need to keep the tactical advantage: 'I have a kind self resides with you, /But an unkind self, that itself will leave/To be another's fool. I would be gone: Where is my wit? I know not what I speak' (140). Here, she is lost in this whirl of uncertainty, questioning her good sense all the time. After they consummate their love, in a sense violated by the Mythos element of lust or irrationality, she starts slowly becoming a different person. Sooner than she has expected she realizes her mistake of succumbing too soon to Troilus' entreaties of love. In "The Politics of Desire in Troilus and Cressida," Rene Girard (1985, p. 189) argues how Cressida's theory about Troilus' love is better than her practice: 'A woman who does not know them

[the implacable laws of masculine desire] and does not act accordingly is inexcusable. If she is abandoned, she has only herself to blame.’ She joins Troilus and Pandarus to become a vehicle for a complex kind of frivolity. Her previous exchanges with Pandarus, robust and humorous, could have given her ‘the lively promise of a Beatrice, or even the capacity of a Desdemona to jest in the atmosphere that calls for it, while holding her love and its preoccupations and anxieties concealed in herself’ (Bayley 1981, p. 67). Once reason gets soiled by Mythos, it degenerates into something far worse and beneath Mythos itself. It becomes corrupt and loose, which to Shakespeare is commensurate to the world of comedies; hence the two conflicting realities of the play, the tragic and the comic or the Logos and the Mythos, castigate any effort at categorization. In sharp contrast to the stigmatizing order in *Troilus and Cressida*, the function of Logos in *Romeo and Juliet*, for instance, does not conflict the tragic order of the play as it serves to legitimize the romance.

The difference between the two plays is striking especially in term of the role of the Logos. In *Romeo and Juliet*, love is consummated after marriage, whereas Troilus and Cressida never seem to think in matrimonial terms. The Logos world in *Romeo and Juliet* manifests itself also through Juliet’s Nurse who is willing to help in the romance between the young two people so they can be happy. In contrast, there is no romance in Troilus’ love, in the sense that Troilus’ ‘goal is not to touch the soft cheek of his mistress but to share her bed’ (Harrison 1963, p. 116). Ironically, instead of Juliet’s Nurse there is Pandarus, Cressida’s aged and licentious uncle who arranged the affair between Cressida and Troilus. There is no gruesome fight between Mythos and Logos in *Romeo and Juliet* as their love is brought in a noble manner intended for marriage with

the help of Friar Laurence. The heroic but tragic elements are based on the Logos whose absence in any relation reduces it to instinctual and debased affair.

Towards the end of the play we encounter instances of Shakespeare's acts of debunking the epic proportions, which typify the world of Mythos. In Act IV scene I, heroes are described as vicious and immoral. Helen and Paris, for instance, are reduced by Diomedes to merely a 'whore' and a 'lecher.' He tells Paris: 'You, like a lecher, out of whorish loins / Are pleas'd to breed out your inheritors: / Both merits pois'd, each weighs nor less nor more; / But he as he, the heavier for a whore' (70-73). Moreover, in Act V Scene III, Troilus speaks of Hector's vice, which is that of showing mercy to the Greeks by allowing them to live when they are down. What Hector considers to be fair play, Troilus dismisses as 'Fool's play.' Troilus explains how war is not about the heroic act of seeking justice but about wreaking vengeance: 'Let's leave the hermit pity with our mother; / And when we have our armors buckled on / The venom'd vengeance ride upon our swords, / Spur them to ruthless work, rein them from ruth!' (45-47). In contrast to Troilus's vindictive attitude, Hector belongs to the tradition of fair play and that any other way of killing the enemy is characteristically instinctive and Mythos-like. Another incident which demonstrates how heroes like Hector do not yield to superstitious misgivings is when Andromache attempts to persuade Hector not to go into battle because she has had an ominous dream. Hector refuses to listen to her, the way Caesar refused to listen to Calpurnia's plea not to go out on the Ides of March in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. This is also a departure from the Homeric text and an emphasis on the power of reason over dreams and rituals. However, it really becomes perplexing when, in act V scene VI, Hector's mercy proves to be

deadly. He graciously spares Achilles' life, when he should have killed him. This scene marks his end; Hector here is not naive but he fully represents the embodiment of moral or ethical philosophy that is part of the Logos. The final triumph of Achilles over Hector constructs a tragedy that allegorizes the fall of the Logos under the treachery of the Mythos. In doing so, Shakespeare successfully subverts the Homeric world even further as he explicitly attributes Achilles' triumph to deviousness and not to fair fight, which disparages the heroic age. It is interesting to note that the argument can be reversed here to see Hector as representative of Mythos and Achilles as Logos. Arguably, Hector embodies the idealized, romanticized kind of man who could only exist in some kind of mythic fantasy (always heroic, fair, just, brave by instinct), while Achilles looks in some way like a perfect representation of Logos in the sense of being cold, calculating and natural. He kills Hector when he is wounded because that is the way wars are resolved in victory with no romanticizing at all. However, Hector represents Logos because he is the voice of reason, although he might not be as empirically Machiavellian the way Achilles is.

The play ends with the story of the love affair falling apart. In Chaucer's poem, 'it has endured for three happy years before Criseyde is sent over to the Greeks,' and 'the tragedy of Troilus is completed by the defection of Criseyde' (Bayley 1981, p. 98). In Shakespeare the love affair lasts only for one night and it ends with the death of other heroes and neither of the two lovers. The betrayal and desolation of the Troilus story are "made more aching in Chaucer by the slow and miserable fadeout and the adjuration to the reader to turn to God and the consolations of the Christian religion" (Bayley 1981, p. 98). Shakespeare converts the sense of desolation with which Chaucer concludes the Troilus story in the poem into a

means to an end. He dismisses the Aristotelian or moral consolation and makes deft changes in order to serve a kind of instant moral and spiritual bankruptcy. He demoralizes the Troilus story by the intervention of fickle fate, the absence of any inward certainty and faith. The Troilus story, robbed of its Chaucerian sense of morality and Homeric heroism, thrives in the momentary world of the play and in its own condition of brief existence. However, one must maintain the Chaucerian aspect in the play. While Shakespeare would have based his story on George Chapman's translation of *The Iliad*, the Troilus and Cressida plot itself is not in Homer:

The military plot concerning Achilles, Agamemnon, Ajax, Hector, and the rest is derived primarily from Homer and his descendents, most notably George Chapman's 1598 translation of seven books of *The Iliad* into elevated English verse. The love plot concerning Troilus and Cressida, the efforts of Pandarus to bring them together, and the infidelity of Cressida in the Greek camp, is derived primarily from Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*. The handling of each plot is equally cynical. (Bate and Rasmussen x).

Moreover, other Chaucerian shades can be found in the mythic delineation of the characters of Ulysses, an exemplar of Logos, and Cressida as a representation of the Mythos element in romantic narratives: 'Not only does Ulysses echo Chaucer's narrator, but his assessments also have parallels with authorial moralizing throughout the legend. The condemnation of Cressida and the explicit or implicit generalization of her conduct as a comment on all women can be seen to be debated in many different versions of the story' (Apfelbaum 2004 p. 152). It is the infusion of the medieval,

Chaucerian elements of romance and cynicism that complicates the tragic reality of the play.

John Bayley, in his “Longing and Homesickness: Troilus and Cressida,” (1981, p. 61) speaks of the appearance of a visible cynical bent: ‘Shakespeare here seems to indulge himself, free to indulge, to parody a bit, to summon up without effort the ripple of laughter and guffaw, as of keen intellectual enjoyment and amusement.’ This cynical attitude seems to pervade the play and bring about a sense of disillusionment that projects a certain harsh reality: ‘There was some kind of disillusion in Shakespeare’s generation which shows itself in a cynical disgust at all that the older generation had held valuable – a feeling that after all the elders, far from being wise, brave and prudent, were just a set of dirty old men, that the romance of sex was no more than tinselled bawdry’ (Harrison 1963, p. 116). Shakespeare expresses bitterly this kind of cynical attitude towards idealism in several of his tragedies and *Troilus and Cressida* is definitely one of those plays which shows Shakespeare as an embittered man: “it is not the bitterness of a man who has no belief, but rather of one who has an acute sense of moral values and is embittered because they are so generally despised” (Harrison 1963, p. 116). The representation of the Homeric heroes in this play is a dramatization of this haunting disillusionment. The effect of estranging the audience from the Homeric tradition is Shakespeare’s point of departure from a heroic age that can now only be projected as a mark for derision. This is how the highly admired Homeric world descends into a source of ridicule for Shakespeare.

Myth is brought up as a representation of this rhetoric of a deteriorated heroic age: ‘The rational response to myth – where myth is understood as a stage in a culture characterized by a naïve, unreflective faith in traditional stories of gods and mortals – played

out over a wide field of activities, including the philosophical, historical, and scientific, but also literary and poetic' (Wians 2009, p. 3). This is not to assume that Shakespeare had knowledge of the Mythos versus Logos discourse but rather to acknowledge that the ongoing debates that happen within the two camps have their origin in Elizabethan regulations and education: 'But we need to remember that rhetoric – the construction of elaborate edifices of argument that are expounded pro and contra with both words and sentence structures arranged in highly complex ways – was the absolute staple of each long day's work in the Elizabethan grammar school classroom' (Bate and Rasmussen xii). Nevertheless, it must be maintained that parodying Greek heroes is neither peculiar to Shakespeare nor is it an exclusive Elizabethan trait. It goes beyond the time of Chaucer back to the days of Greeks themselves: "And, indeed, there is no better witness to Shakespeare's acute awareness of the Aristophanic tradition of *vetus comoedia*, a genre committed to parodying known individuals instead of generic vices, than this play" (Stritmatter 2009, p. 66). Shakespeare turns a critical gaze in this play on the partly Homeric heroic age and its chivalric code of honour. The play can be considered as "a tract for the times than comment upon the conventions and manners of a by-gone age" (Shalvi 1972, p. 162). Shakespeare sees these ideals as still present – though in a corrupt or artificial form – in his own time. If Shakespeare's purpose, therefore, is to drive this truth-seeking concept home, of the decline of the heroic age for the Elizabethans, then his intention comes at the expense of a completely rounded representation of tragedy. Characters have other roles to play and functions to perform, in relation to the worlds of Mythos and Logos, in order to deliver this semi-allegorical message. Shakespeare sacrifices the tragic form, as it

sets the characters in a normative direction, in favour of a tragedy of thought.

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