

**TROILUS
AND CRESSIDA**

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Troilus and Cressida by William Shakespeare

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

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AND CRESSIDA**

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the central text. The flowers are large and light-colored, with detailed leaves and stems. The border is composed of several repeating floral motifs.

Booklovers Edition

by
William Shakespeare

*With Introductions,
Notes, Glossary,
Critical Comments,
and Method of Study*

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TROILUS AND CRESSIDA.

Preface.

The Early Editions. In 1609 two quarto editions of *Troilus and Cressida* were issued, with the following title-pages:—

(i.) "The | Historie of Troylus | and Cresseida. | *As it was acted by the Kings Maiesties | seruants at the globe. | Written by William Shakespeare. | LONDON | Imprinted by G. Eld for R. Bonian and H. Walley, and | are to be sold at the spred Eagle in Paules | Church-yard, ouer against the | great North doore. | 1609.*"*

(ii.) The | Famous Historie of Troylus and Cressid. | *Excellently expressing the beginning | of their loues, with the conceited wooing | of Pandarus Prince of Licia. | Written by William Shakespeare. | LONDON | Imprinted by G. Eld for R. Bonian and H. Walley, and | are to be sold at the spred Eagle in Paules | Church-yard, ouer against the | great North doore. | 1609. |*

The text is identical in the two quartos, the difference being merely the variation in the title-page, and the addition of a preface to the latter edition. There is no doubt that the leaf with the preface was not in the original issue, and that the first quarto was published with the statement that it had been acted by the King's servants at the Globe. The Cambridge Editors believe that the copies with this title-page were first issued for the theatre, and afterwards those with the new title-page and preface for the general readers, and they are of opinion that in this case the expression "never staled with the stage, never clapper-claw'd with the palms of the vulgar" must refer to the first appearance of the play in type, unless we suppose

* *Vide Shakespeare Quarto Facsimiles, No. 13.*

that the publisher was more careful to say what would recommend his book than to state what was literally true. It seems, however, scarcely plausible that the expression can refer to mere publication, and not to actual performance; it is probable that the quartos differed in some important respects from the version of the play acted by "the King's servants," and the new title-page and preface were perhaps due to some remonstrance on the part of the author or "the grand possessors."

In the First Folio *Troilus and Cressida* is found between the "Histories" and "Tragedies"; it is not mentioned in the Table of Contents, and the editors were evidently doubtful as to its classification. "*Coriolanus*," "*Titus Andronicus*," "*Romeo and Juliet*," "*Troilus and Cressida*," was the original order of the Tragedies, and the first three pages of the present play were actually paged so as to follow *Romeo and Juliet*,* but *Timon of Athens* was subsequently put in its place, and a neutral position assigned to it between the two main divisions. The Folio editors' view that the play was a Tragedy was certainly neither in accordance with the sentiment of the prologue (first found in the Folio and seemingly non-Shakespearean) and the quarto preface, which make it a comedy, nor with the title-page and running title of the quartos, which treat it as a history. *Troilus and Cressida* presents perhaps the most complex problem in the whole range of Shakespeare's work. It has been well described as "a History in which historical verisimilitude is openly set at nought, a Comedy without genuine laughter, a Tragedy without pathos."

There are many points of difference between the Quarto and Folio text of the play, and the Cambridge

* "The editors cancelled the leaf containing the end of *Romeo and Juliet* on one side and the beginning of *Troilus and Cressida* on the other, but retained the other leaf already printed, and then added the prologue to fill up the blank page, which in the original setting of the type had been occupied by the end of *Romeo and Juliet*" (Cambridge Ed.).

editors are probably correct in their conclusions that the discrepancies are to be explained thus:—the Quarto was printed from a transcript of the author's original MS., which was subsequently slightly revised by the author himself; before the First Folio was printed this revised MS. had been tampered with by another hand, perhaps by the writer of the prologue.

Date of Composition. The publication of the quartos in 1609 gives us one limit for the date of *Troilus and Cressida*, but (i.) certain discrepancies in the text, (ii.) differences of style, thought, language, and metrical qualities, and (iii.) important pieces of external evidence, make it almost certain that the play passed through various stages of revision, and was in all probability composed at different times. Under (i.) must be noticed that "in Act I. Sc. ii. Hector goes to the field and fights, in Act I. Sc. iii., after this, we find him grown rusty in the long-continued truce"; again "the rhyming couplet, V. xi. 33. 34, which almost terminates the last scene, is by the Folio editors repeated at the end of Act V. Sc. iii., which fact strongly suggests that Scenes vi.-xi. are a later insertion." As regard (ii.), the general style of those parts of the play dealing with the Love Story contrasts strongly with the parts belonging to the Camp Story; the former bear the impress of Shakespeare's earlier characteristics,* the latter of his later.

(iii.) External evidence points to Shakespeare's connexion with the subject of *Troilus and Cressida* at least as early as 1599, for in the old anonymous play of *Histrionomastix* (written by Marston and others about that year) a satirical production called forth by the famous

* Perhaps we should note in this connexion the characteristically early 'echo of Marlowe' to be found in this portion of Act II. Sc. ii. 82, where the reference is to Marlowe's famous lines in *Faustus*:—

"Was this the face that launched a thousand ships
And burnt the topmost towers of Ilium?"

Preface

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

Battle of the Theatres, associated with the quarrels of Marston, Dekker, Jonson, etc.—occurs the following burlesque passage:—

"*Troy.* Come, Cressida, my cresset light,
 Thy face doth shine both day and night,
 Behold, behold *thy garter blue*
*Thy knight his valiant elbow wears,**
 That when he SHAKES his furious SPEARE,
 The foe, in shivering fearful sort,
 May lay him down in death to snort.

"*Cress.* O knight, with valour in thy face,
 Here take my *skreen*, wear it for grace;
 Within thy helmet put the same,
 Therewith to make thy enemies lame." †

There can be no doubt that we have here a travesty of an incident (cp. Act V. ii.) in a play on the subject of *Troilus and Cressida* and that this play was by Shakespeare.

* The text is obviously corrupt; a line has dropped out ending in a word to rhyme with "*blue*"; "*wears*" should be "wear," rhyming with "*speare*."

† This passage lends colour to the hypothesis that *Troilus and Cressida* originally had some real or supposed bearing on the theatrical quarrels of the day, Ajax representing Jonson, and Thersites standing for Dekker; "*rank Thersites with his mastic jaws*" has been brought into connexion with Dekker's *Satiromastix* (1601), and Jonson's description of him in *The Poetaster*, "one of the most overflowing rank wits in Rome." Mr. Fleay has suggested that the "physic" given "to the great Myrmidon" (I. iii. 378; III. iii. 34) is identical with the "purge" administered by Shakespeare to Jonson in *The Return from Parnassus*. The early *Troilus and Cressida* may have contained topical allusions, but these allusions were intentionally 'overlaid' in the revised form of the play; minute criticism has probably detected fossil remains of theatrical satire. Even the doubtful Prologue with "its prologue armed" seems reminiscent of the armed Prologue, in Jonson's polemical *Poetaster*.

It is worth while noting that the Envy Induction in the latter play imitated the old play *Mucedorus* (1598, 1st ed.); we have a reference to the end of *Mucedorus* in *Troilus and Cressida*, II. iii. 23, "*Devil Envy, say Amen!*"

We know, from Henslowe's *Diary*, that about the same time, during the early part of 1599, Dekker and Chettle were preparing a play which was at first to be called "*Troylles and Cresseda*," but afterwards *Agamemnon*; and it is just possible that both this and Shakespeare's *Troilus* were based on some older production. Under the date of Feb. 7th, 1603, there is an entry in the Stationers' Register to "the book of *Troilus and Cressida*," as it is acted by "my Lord Chamberlain's servants"; the book is entered for James Roberts to be printed "when he had gotten sufficient authority for it." This must have been Shakespeare's play. Roberts did not get the necessary authority, and hence the re-entry in the Register (Jan. 28, 1609) before the publication of the Quarto edition. It is impossible to determine how far the play burlesqued in *Histrionastix*, the 1603 play, and the 1609 quarto were identical.*

The safest course is to assign "*circa 1599*" to the play in its first form, "*circa 1602*" to the second and main revision, allowing for subsequent additions between the latter date and its publication in 1609.† This perplexing "comedy of disillusion," with its dark irony, its wistful melancholy, its travesty of the faith of *Romeo and Juliet*, its depreciation of ancient heroism and medieval chivalry, its scoffing worldly wisdom, helps us perhaps to realise, somewhat at least, the deepening changes in Shakespeare's aspect of life, which lead him from farce to comedy, from comedy to sombre tragi-comedy, and thence to soul-racking tragedy.

Source of the Plot. The main sources of *Troilus and Cressida* are:—(i.) Chaucer's *Troilus*, which formed

* The title-page of the first quarto evidently claimed that the version was the same as that acted by the Chamberlain's men in 1603; the second quarto, with the preface, withdrew the statement.

† *Troilus* invites comparison with *Timon of Athens*, which belongs probably to (about) 1606, but its authorship is only Shakespeare's in part (*vide* Preface to *Timon*).