I have a kind of self resides with you,
But an unkind self that itself with leave
To be another's feel. I would be gone.
Where is my wit? I know not what I speak.
"Troilus" - III ii (147-150)

Of all Shakespeare's "problem comedies" "Troilus" has proved to be the toughest challenge to the critics. Everybody knows that since the days of its first editors its critical history had been full of dispute. The title page of the Quarto calls it a 'history' but in the address to be the reader it is spoken of more than once as a 'comedy,' and the First Folio describes it as "The Tragedie of Troilus and Cressida". Even the most prominent critics are baffled by this strange and peculiar play. Coleridge, one of the greatest nineteenth century critics, had declared that there is no play by Shakespeare harder to characterize.¹

To Swinburne it is a "wonderful play", "one of the most admirable among all the works ...... the least beloved of all".\textsuperscript{2} And to W.W. Lawrence it is a brilliant play having many ugly features.\textsuperscript{3} O.J. Campbell calls it a "Comical satire" written in the manner of Ben Jonson and John Marston\textsuperscript{4} while E.K. Chambers calls it a tragedy of disillusionment.\textsuperscript{5} Following O.J. Campbell, the Cambridge editor, A.W. Walker tells of Shakespeare's "comprehensive comic purpose" with which the play was written.\textsuperscript{6} But Nevill Coghill vehemently opposes any comic interpretation for the play and says, "The play was initially put on the Globe as the tragedy of Hector and the chivalric values represented by the Trojans; only the sick criticism of our sick century finds the play comic."\textsuperscript{7} Mere recent critics are of the

\textsuperscript{2} Quoted in Case Book Series of "Troilus" (Macmillan) A.E. Dyson ed. (1976), p. 55.


\textsuperscript{4} "Comicall. Satyre and Shakespeare's 'Troilus and Cressida' (Oxford Univ. Press, 1938).

\textsuperscript{5} Quoted by A.W. Walker in the Introduction to the Cambridge Edition, 1957, p. x.

\textsuperscript{6} Introduction to the Cambridge Edition (1957), p. xvi.

\textsuperscript{7} Quoted by A.E. Dyson in the Introduction to the Case Book Series of 'Troilus and Cressida' (Macmillan, 1976), p. 13.
opinion that the play is a tragedy though it is slightly different from a conventional tragedy while some others think that it is a category-defying play.⁸

There is no doubt that "Troilus" is remarkable for its intellectual brilliance, incisive irony and burlesque, sophisticated satire and profuse use of legal vocabulary. In view of Shakespeare's considerable use of legalistic rhetoric, Peter Alexander has suggested that the play was especially designed for performance at one of the Inns of Court. This view was accepted by many critics and has been very much emphasized by O.J. Campbell, Alice Walker and many others. But it is needless to say that there is no external supporting evidence for it.⁹ It is not unlikely that its cynical temper, satiric vein and legalistic rhetoric might have been well-appreciated by the sophisticated and better-educated audience of the Inns of the Court. And there seems to be some plausibility in Campbell's suggestion that Hector's plea for restoration of Helen to the Greeks on the ground of the "law of

⁸ Philip Edwards, "Shakespeare and the Confines of Art" Methuen, 1972, p. 11.

⁹ Recent critics believe that the special audience theory is untenable for want of external evidence. Daniel Seltzer says, 'If this is the case, it is the only example during Shakespeare's career of any play actually subsidized for a special production in this manner'. (Introduction to Signet Edition, p. XXV) In "Time and the Trojans" John Bayley writes, "For this, of course, there is no direct evidence" (Case Book, Macmillan, p. 228).
nature and nations" was especially appealing to the Inns of the Court audience having legal education. But we know that Shakespeare had made use of metaphors drawn from law in other plays too. And being the most popular and professional playwright of the Elizabethan theatre he would not have written a play for a limited audience. It is also likely that Hector's allusion to the contemporary international law was not a hard nut to crack at least to some Elizabethan playgoers of more general sort. Because we know that during the Elizabethan age learning was not strictly departmentalized.\(^{10}\) Moreover, the cynical mood and the bitter satiric spirit are well-compensated by excellent poetry containing some epic grandeur, mature political philosophy and realistic characterization though the play cannot be suitably compared with the popular comedies and the great tragedies written before and after it. The youthful Elizabethan audience might have got some dramatic pleasure in the romantic love-story of the "matchless" Troilus and the enchanting Cressida though ending in disaster. The frank sensuality of Troilus and the charming coquetry of Cressida might have been tantalizing to an audience with a love of beauty and sensuality. The extravagant scurrility of Thersites and the ghastly murder of Hector might not have been thoroughly disliked by the contemporary popular audience whose tastes were not squeamish and could accept a lot of grossness. On the whole, it may be stated that Shakespeare,

\(^{10}\) Hardin Craig, "The Enchanted Glass" (New York Oxford Univ. Press, 1936) p. 111.
tireless in experimentation, keenly conscious of writing new plays for his own theatre-group, possibly had two audiences in mind (if we believe that he was too much audience-oriented) while he wrote "Troilus" — the Inns of Court audience and the popular audience, while writing his most experimental venture. For, it seems to be true to say that if Hector's allusion to "law of nature and nations" was incomprehensible to the popular audience, Pandarus's allusions to "sisters and brethren of hold door trade" were well-directed at them. And in view of strong evidence that the play was performed by the most popular and professional theatre group we have some reason to believe that it was written for any audiences both popular and sophisticated, though it is likely that it was not a popular success.

Though "Troilus" is one of the least popular plays of Shakespeare, it is the product of the most fertile and creative period of his dramatic career. As we all know, this is a period of intense experimentation in which the dramatist had already written his comic masterpieces and was trying his hand in the great tragedies. In spite of

12 It is almost a consensus of the modern critics that Shakespeare's company had acted the play.
so-called cynicism, bitterness, harsh and critical spirit, Shakespeare does not seem to be disinterested in his intense interest in depicting human nature in this amazing and baffling play. This important feature has already been observed by such prominent critics like E.M.W. Tillyard and Theodore Spencer. As we have already mentioned in the preceding chapter, Tillyard found Shakespeare's acute interest in observing and recording the details of human nature in the problem plays. Theodore Spencer also seems to be right in thinking that "Troilus" marks an extension of awareness in Shakespeare's presentation of man's nature. Because, in spite of the stubborn and intractable material of the Troy story, Shakespeare has given us some interesting and living characters who can claim some universality of appeal. The uniqueness and the peculiarity of the play seem to lie in ambivalence of characterization, and the duality or mixture of contradictory elements such was comic and tragic, and epic and burlesque or heroic and mock-heroic. As it has already been noted in the introductory chapter, Shakespeare seems to have been keenly conscious of the immense potentiality and impotence which co-exist in man's nature while he wrote the "problem comedies." He seems to be out to show how good and ill, rational and irrational, magnificent and trivial, sublime and ridiculous elements exist simultaneously in a single human character. In fact,

the play may be seen as the product of Shakespeare's ambivalence and his love of doing two things at once. It is written in such a way that it can evoke contradictory responses from the audience and the critics. The nature of the play is such that some critics are able to call it a comedy with good logic while others with equally forceful arguments are able to claim it as a tragedy. In fact no critic seems to have been able to say the final word about the genre of the play; the riddle still remains unresolved.

In "Troilus" Shakespeare seems to have displayed his marvellous capability of doing two things at once. In it, he dramatizes two stories — the love story of Troilus and Cressida and the war story of the Greeks and Trojans. The love story, in return, falls into two — in one Troilus, Cressida and Diomedes are involved, and in the other Menelaus, Helen and Paris are involved. Of course, the Menelaus-Helen-Paris story is slightly touched in reference to the war story. Both love and war have been traditionally the main subjects of romance and romanticism. Both again are associated with basic human instincts. One can easily notice that this two-fold feature has been presented in "Troilus" though not so forcefully as in other tragedies dealing with love and war themes. But, interestingly enough there is a pair of comic characters — coarse-mouthed Pandarus and foulmouthed Thersites, the former, as a go-between brings Troilus and Cressida to bed but also
cheapens their love-story; and the latter debases and degrades the war-story with devastating raillery. These two comic characters, who are regarded by some as vicious or obnoxious, particularly Thersites, very often make us aware of the harsh and unpleasant realities associated with the sentiment of love and the institution of war.

It is acknowledged by the critics that Shakespeare's primary source for the love-story was Chaucer's great poem "Troilus and Creseyde" and for the war story he relied upon Homer directly or indirectly. It is also pointed out by some critics that Shakespeare's treatment of both the stories were greatly different from his illustrious predecessor. And a great number of critics hold that in his delineation of the great heroes of the Trojan war, Shakespeare was strongly influenced by tradition. Since the days of Chaucer up to the last decade of the sixteenth century there had been considerable denigration of the love story and the war story. The legendary heroes of the Homeric epic had become "stupid bullies" and "lustful brutes", and Chaucer's most sympathetic heroine, Cressida, had dwindled into a symbol of faithlessness and, his gentle Pandarus had become an eponym for all panders. According to this popular

14 Critics like Mark Van Doren and others have rightly observed that Pandarus and Thersites cheapen and degrade the love story and war story respectively.

opinion, the character of Troilus, though not as consider-
ably debased as that of Cressida, had also been seriously
affected. He has ceased to become a great hero and has
become a butt of satire. Moreover, some older critics, more
biographical in their interest, are of the view that in
depicting "the mad and blundering" world of "Troilus",
Shakespeare was expressing a strong personal mood charac-
terized by cynical despondency and deep pessimism which are
reflected in his sonnets as well.

So far as the critical opinion about Troilus is
concerned, the majority of the critics have some good words
for him. He is often said to be an honest, brave and
inexperienced young idealist who is almost ruined by a
shameless wanton. There are also some critics who think that
Troilus and Cressida are meant to be despised. Troilus, in
this view, is an expert sensualist, and his infatuation with
Cressida is never allowed to engage our sympathies, his
predicament does not contain any dignity of tragedy, rather it
conveys an impression of futility which is the object of
satire. But we would like to suggest that some degree of
ambivalence is evident in Shakespeare's portraiture of
Troilus. Shakespeare does not seem to paint Troilus in the
darkest colours nor does he paint him in the brightest.
There seems to have been a considerable effort on the part
of Shakespeare to engage our sympathy for Troilus though

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15 This view is emphatically put forward by O.J. Campbell
and supported by Alice Walker and many others.
sometimes he also alienates our sympathy and admiration from him. Though Troilus seems to be an idealist to a greater extent, he also seems to be a sensualist. Though, at times, he is a passion's slave; he is "dangerous in battle" and can do "mad and fantastic execution".

In the very first scene, we see that he is unwilling to fight:

Call here my varlet; I will unarm again:
Why should I war without the walls of Troy
That find such cruel battle here within?\(^{16}\)

(Act I. Sc. I. 1-3)

He seems to be a weakling made incapable to cope with the rough Greeks in the battlefield:

But I am weaker than a woman's tear,
Tamer than sleep, fonder than ignorance,
Less valiant than the virgin in the night,
And skilless as unpractised infancy.

Act—I Sc. I. (9-12).

After that we hear Troilus is "mad in Cressid's love". But this is only one side of the picture. In the next scene

\(^{16}\) All textual quotations are from the Cambridge Paperback edition, 1957.
when Pandarus and Cressida are watching the passing Trojan princes, Pandarus tells Cressida, "Troilus is the better man than Paris" (59-60) and again "Brave Troilus! the prince of chivalry" (229-230).

In the Trojan Council scene, which is acknowledged as one of the brilliant scenes Shakespeare has ever written, we are struck and fascinated by the chivalric enthusiasm and heroic temper of Troilus, and it is important to note that here Troilus seems to gain the upperhand over other characters. In reply to Hector's plea that Helen should be returned to the Greeks because she was not worth the cost of holding her, Troilus says:

Fie, fie, my brother

Weigh you the worth and honour of a king
So great as our dread father in a scale of common ounces?

Act-II. Sc. ii (26-29).

Against Helenus's charge that Troilus is devoid of reason, Troilus clearly points out the lethargic effect of reason:

Nay, if we talk of reason,
Let us shut our gates and sleep. Manhood and honour
Should have hare hearts, would they but fat their thoughts
With this crammed reason; reason and respect
Make livers pale and lustihood deject.

(Act-II. Sc. ii (45-50)

He vehemently criticises Hector's attitude when the latter
argues that it is "mad-idolatry" to give too much value on
an worthless object in strong words:

... O, theft most base,
    That we have stolen what we do fear to keep
(Act-II, Sc. ii (92-93)

He also throws cold water on Hector's suggestion that he
(Troilus) should pay heed to their sister's prophetic
warning:

... Her brainsick raptures
    Cannot distaste the goodness of a quarrel
    Which had our several honours all engaged
    To make it gracious.
(Act-II. Sc. ii 122-125)

Furthermore, he speaks magnificently to convince Hector of
the glory associated with the Trojan cause:

    But worthy Hector,
    She is a theme of honour and renown,
    A spur to valiant and magnanimous deeds,
    Whose present courage may beat down our fees,
    And fame in time to come canonize us;
For I presume brave Hector would not lose
So rich advantage of a promised glory
As smiles upon the forehead of this action
For the wide world's revenue.

Act-II. Sc. ii (198-207)

If Shakespeare had only a comprehensive satiric purpose he would not have invented so many brilliant and eloquent speeches to be made by Troilus, and we cannot despise such a character; rather, we are likely to admire. So the suggestion made by many critics that Chaucer's most sympathetic hero and chivalric Knight has dwindled into a dolt in Shakespeare's play is, as a whole, ill-supported by the play itself.

On many occasions he has displayed his undaunted nature and heroic spirit. While handing over Cressida to Diomedes, Troilus says:

I charge thee use her well, even for my charge;
For, by the dreadful Pluto, if thou dost not,
Though the bulk Achilles be thy guard,
I will cut thy throat.

(IV-iv. 126-129)

Ulysses, who is regarded by some critics as the most sensible voice of the Greek camp, has made a fine speech on Troilus's character and, in it Troilus appears in
his true colours. It is, after all, a fair estimate though we are made aware that Troilus is immature and vindictive in nature. It is made absolutely clear that though Troilus is not an image of perfection, he is endowed with many enduring and attractive traits:

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;

(IV. v 96–100)

He is in no way inferior to Hector:

Manly as Hector, but more dangerous;
For Hector in his blaze of wrath subscribes
To tender objects, but he in the heat of action
Is more vindictive than jealous love;
They call him Troilus, and on him, erect
A second hope, as fairly built as Hector:

(IV.v. 104–109)

Even after his disillusionment, Troilus does not seem to lose his prowess as a warrior, rather he strives to perform his obligation to Troy with greater determination though he is bitterly angry and desperate. He is unwilling to unarm
even at Hector's bidding:

Who should withhold me?
Not fate, obedience, nor the hand of Mars
Beckoning with fiery truncheon my retire:
Not Priamus and Hecuba on knees,
Their eyes overgalled with recourse of tears;
Nor you, my brother with your true sword drawn,
Opposed to hinder me, should stop my way,
But by my ruin.

(V. iii. 51-58)

Ulysses, while describing the events of the war going on between the Greeks and the Trojans refers to Troilus's heroic activities in the following words:

Azax had lost a friend,
And foams at mouth, and he is armed and at it,
Hearing for Troilus; who had done to-day
Mad and fantastic execution,
Engaging and redeeming of himself
With such a careless force and forceless care
As if that luck, in very spite of cunning,
Bade him call.

(V. v. 35-42)

Hector also admires Troilus:
Yea, Troilus 0, well fought, my
Youngest brother!

(V.vi. 13-14)

In the concluding scenes Troilus is shown rising to great heights of heroism:

.... Fate, hear me what I say
I reck not though thou end my life to-day

(V.vi. 26-27)

His inspiring words to the Trojan warriors such as "Strike a free march to Troy with comfort go;" amply demonstrate his chivalric heroism. And, in this way, Shakespeare seems to manipulate our response in favour of Troilus.

It has already been mentioned that in the very first scene Troilus seems to have been portrayed somewhat as a weakling and a sentimental lover. It is odd to find Troilus, who is one of the stalwarts of the Trojan army, as "mad in love" and say:

Peace, you ungracious clamours! peace, rude sounds!
Fools on both sides! Helen must needs be fair,
When with your blood, you daily paint her thus
I cannot fight upon this argument;

(I. i. (91-96)

But, at the same time, Shakespeare seems to have taken
enough care to invent a beautiful speech for Troilus, steeped in romantic sentiment, addressed to Pandarus:

... Thou answerest she is fair;
Pourrest in the open ulcer of my heart
Her eyes, her hair, her cheek, her gait, her voice;
Handlest in they discourse-0, that her hand,
In whose comparison all whites are ink
Writing their own reproach, to whose soft seizure
The cygnet's down is harsh, and spirit of sense
Hard as the ploughman.

(I.ii - 54-61)

The last part of the soliloquy (I.i. 100-106) is also romantically beautiful despite its conventional Petrarchan imagery. It may be said here that the youthful Elizabethan theatregoers would not have totally disliked such golden speeches made by a Shakespearean lover; and they might, have even identified to some degree with the speaker.

I am giddy: expectation whirls me round.
The imaginary relish is so sweet
That it enchants my sense. What will it be
When that the watery palate taste indeed
Love's thrice repured nectar?—death, I fear me
Swooning distraction, or some joy too fine,
Too subtle-potent tuned too sharp in sweetness.
For the capacity of my ruder powers;
I fear it much, and I do fear besides
That I shall lose distinction in my joys,
As doth a battle, whom they charge on heaps
The enemy flying.

(III. ii-18-29)

It should also be borne in mind that this "refined and calculated sensuality" does not give us the complete Troilus. The moralistic critics may disapprove such frank revelation of voluptuousness by a young man at the prospect of his first meeting with the lady of his desire but this is not unnatural but only real and human. This particular scene which is dramatically significant for the climatic development of love story is mostly written in traditional style of romantic poetry. Only the speeches of Pandarus are written in uncouth prose style and some thirty lines between Troilus and Cressida written in prose. In this prose dialogue romantic love-making is mildly satirized:

Troilus: O let my lady apprehend no fear: in all Cupid's pageant there is presented no monster.

Cressida: Nor nothing monstrous neither?

Troilus: Nothing, but our undertakings: when we vow to weep

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seas, live in fire, eat rocks tame tigers;
thinking it harder for our mistress to devise
imposition enough than for us to undergo any
difficulty imposed. This is the mostruosity in
love, lady, that will is infinite and execution
confined, that the desire is boundless and the
act a slave to limit.

Cressida: They say all lovers swear more performance than
they are able and yet reserve an ability that
they never perform vowing more than the perfect-
tion of ten and discharging less than the tenth
part of one. They that have the voice of lions
and the act of hares, are they not monsters?

(III. ii. 73-95)

E.C. Pettet complains that this prose dialogue is "stilted
and rhetorical in manner and sophisticated and slightly
cynical in its matter".\(^{18}\) and suggests that this betrays
Shakespeare's boredom with the whole manner of romantic
love-making.\(^ {19}\) But we may say that the prose dialogue is
not wholly mechanical; some lines, especially lines (79-92)
seem to express genuine emotion. The concluding part of
the scene in which both lovers take their oaths of fidelity
and constancy is written in high romantic style. And there

\(^{18}\) "Shakespeare and the Romance Tradition" 1949. Methuen

\(^ {19}\) Ibid.
is no indication as yet that love-making was nothing more than a physical affair. On the whole, it may be said that the scene was only partly written in anti-romantic vein, and it has many touches of genuine romanticism.

The ennobling spirit of heroism displayed by Troilus in the Trojan council scene and his superiority over other personages have already been mentioned. In fact, Troilus, the idealist, is best seen in this enchanting scene, and he earns for him a great deal of our admiration. Throughout this scene, Troilus, with a marvellous oratorical brilliance, has been forcefully arguing that the Trojans cannot disown what they have once owned. To him Helen is worth keeping:

... She is a pearl
Whose price had launched above a thousand ships
And turned crowned kings to merchants.

(II. ii. 81-83)

Moreover, she is a "theme of honour and renown" and "a spur to valiant and magnanimous deeds". We see that even "great and worthy" Hector seems to succumb to the force of Troilus's idealistic oratory.

The scene where Troilus and Cressida bid farewell to each other is also significant for the revelation of Troilus's character. It is saturated with genuine
emotion and we see that both the lovers are stricken with grief. But, here also Troilus is not shown to behave just like a sentimental weakling but like a practical man. Being asked by Cressida whether she would have to go from Troy and Troilus, he consoles her by saying that "injurious time with a robber's haste" has something to do with it. And though both lovers promise that they will remain true to each other, Troilus seems to have some misgivings. Though he has some confidence in Cressida, he thinks that she may be tempted because the Grecian youths may play subtle games of love to win her. So he repeatedly exhorts Cressida to remain true and untempted. And being questioned by Cressida whether he had any doubt, he tries to explain the cause of his doubt in terms of frailty of human nature:

But something may be done that we will not,
And sometimes we are devils to ourselves,
When we will tempt the frailty of our powers
Presuming on their changeful potency.

(IV.iv. 94-97)

By putting such wise words into the mouth of Troilus, Shakespeare is probably enlisting our sympathy for him while leaving plenty of room for later qualifications.

It is interesting to note that there are certain points in the dramatic action when our sympathy for Troilus diminishes to a certain extent. When Thersites calls
Troilus a "doting foolish young knave" and a "young Trojan ass that loves the whore" Troilus's image is sufficiently impaired. Furthermore, Thersites demolishes the glory of Troilus and the Trojan war by saying that it is about "a cuckold and a whore" because Troilus is sentimentally involved in it. Though we know that Thersites is a "privileged fool" and a "licensed jester" who rails for the sake of raillery, the deflating effect of his speeches cannot be totally ignored.

Another noteworthy point about Troilus is that like Hamlet, he seems to be an ambivalent character. As Hamlet believes and disbelieves the ghost, so also Troilus believes and disbelieves Cressida in her oaths of fidelity. In the parting scene he has expressed both doubt and faith in Cressida more than once. Moreover, he also sees the both sides of the Helen question. Because in the very first scene of the play he says:

Helen must needs be fair,
When with your blood you daily paint her thus.

(I. i. 93-94)

And in the second scene of the second act:

.... She is a pearl
whose price hath launched above a thousand ships
And turned crowned kings to merchants

(II. ii. 81-83)
In fact, Troilus does not seem to be a mere individual in a lighter vein but seems to suggest the Renaissance mind filled with faith and obsessed with doubt in an age of acute conflict characterized by "contradictions and paradoxes".

There seems to be no doubt that the play gives some solid evidence to show that Troilus in a sensualist. But, on the other hand, there is even much more to prove that Troilus is an idealist. According to David Kaula Troilus is not basically a sensualist nor an idealist but the real Troilus seems to lie between these two extremes. Such an observation appears to be true and valid and it is in conformity with Shakespeare’s ambivalence. Because though we are likely to despise a sensualist, we are unlikely to despise an idealist.

Cressida is one of the most controversial female characters portrayed by the dramatist in his greatest creative period. She has been created with such subtlety and dexterity that she also evokes contradictory responses just like Troilus. From the nineteenth century onward, many critics have debunked her. There is only a handful of them who have some words of praise for her. Many of them are of the opinion that Shakespeare has made her a villain and meant

his audience to reject her, and by portraying her in the blackest colours Shakespeare was reflecting a contemporary attitude because due to the influence of Hentyson's poem Cressida has become a symbol of faithlessness. But there are also some critics who hold that she is one of the most enchanting characters and G. B. Shaw claims that she is Shakespeare's first real woman, though there is a touch of iconoclasm and exaggeration in his view. To Coleridge there is shameless inconstancy on the part of Cressida, to Sidney Lee, Shakespeare has presented Cressida as a heartless coquette. Una Ellis Fermor calls Cressida a "light woman", a "daughter of the game", and E. C. Pettet while comparing Shakespeare's Cressida with that of Chaucer calls Shakespeare's Cressida "one of the most repulsive female characters", "a kind of meaner unredeemed Cleopatra, a shallow, sensuous, theatrical utterly selfish creature whose every word or gesture is a pose sultry with suggestiveness." To Kenneth Muir, she is a coquette by

21 Quoted from Case Book, Macmillan, 1976, p. 57. (Source "Transactions New Shakespeare Society, 1884").
22 Ibid, p. 41 (Source "Table Talk, 1833").
23 Ibid., p. 60 (Source "A Life of William Shakespeare, 1898").
24 Ibid., p. 73, "The Universe of Troilus and Cressida" p. 73 (Source "The Frontiers of Drama", 1945).
temperament sharpening the appetites of both men by her tactics. Contrary to this, we may refer to some significant statements made by some distinguished modern critics. A.P. Rossiter thinks that she is highly sexed by nature and her passion is quite genuine; Jan Kott asserts that she is one of the most amazing of Shakespeare's characters; she is our contemporary because of her self-distrust. Looking at such conflicting and contradictory opinions given by so many outstanding critics, we may tentatively suggest that Shakespeare has displayed a great deal of ambivalence in delineating Cressida's character. Throughout the play Shakespeare seems to have manipulated our responses to her in such a way that we are likely to be sympathetic and unsympathetic towards her at the same time. Though, at times, she appears to be a hateful creature; she also appears to be a lovable creature at other times. And her betrayal of Troilus, however, gross in appearance, is not absolutely monstrous. It is important to note here that such an interpretation may be supported by some sound text-ual evidence.


It seems largely true to say that Cressida as portrayed by Shakespeare is a light-hearted young woman coquettish in temperament. But this should not make us ignore her attractive qualities. In the second scene of the first act when Pandarus informs Cressida about Troilus's love for her she seems not to be overawed by it and says in a soliloquy:

Yet hold I off: women are angels, wooing;
Things won are done — joy's soul lies in the doing.
That she beloved knows nought that knows not this:
Men prize the thing ungained more than it is.
That she was never yet that ever knew
Love got so sweet as when desire did sue.
Therefore this maxim out of love I teach:
'Achievement is command; ungained beseech'
Then though my heart's content firm love doth bear,
Nothing of that shall from mine eyes appear.

(I. ii. 287-296)

Here Cressida is shown to behave like a practical-minded woman and we are unlikely to dislike a character who speaks with such common sense.

The second scene of the third act is one of the finest scenes which is written in prose and poetry, both in anti-romantic and romantic vein. Troilus being "mad in
Cressida's love speaks the following impassioned words about the infinite nature of love:

... This is the monstruousity in love, lady—that will is infinite and the execution confined; that the desire is boundless and the act a slave to limit:

(III. ii. 79-82)

In reply, Cressida makes the following speech which reveals a practical scepticism about romantic hopes and dreams:

They say all lovers swear more performance than they are able, and yet reserve ability that they never perform; vowing more than the perfection of ten and discharging less than the tenth part of one ......

(III. ii. 83-87)

Some lines after, Cressida declares her love in a beautiful speech:

Boldness comes to me now and brings me heart:
Prince Troilus, I have loved you night and day
For many weary months.

(III. ii. 112-115)

Such speeches are touched with genuine emotion, and it seems to be very difficult to believe that Shakespeare was obsessed with a "spirit of bitterness and contempt" while he
was dramatizing the love story of Troilus and Cressida.

Moreover, it is significant to note that she innocently confesses to Troilus the frailty of her nature:

Cressida - Pray you, content you.
Troilus - What offends you lady?
Cressida - Sir, mine own company.
Troilus - You cannot shun yourself.
Cressida - Let me go and try.

I have a kind of 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.

(III. ii. 141-150).

She makes another excellent speech pregnant with great wisdom:

... but you are wise,
or else you love not: for to be wise and love
Exceeds man's might; that dwells with gods above.

(III. ii. 154-156)

Such a speech, which may imply that their love relation may suffer because wisdom and love are irreconcilable things, seems to evoke our sympathetic response to Cressida.
since we cannot despise a character who has such sound sense,
These speeches prepare us to believe that if her love later altered it was due to the frailty of her nature and not because of any ruthless deliberate design on her part. Moreover, there seems to be no touch of insincerity or artificiality when Cressida declares that if she be false, she would become a universal symbol of falsehood.

In the second scene of the fourth act we meet Troilus and Cressida at the court of Pandarus after they have spent their night. In this scene, Cressida is shown to behave as a highly sexed and sensual woman. She seems not to have complete gratification and complains that the night has been too brief. When Troilus tells Cressida to go in because the morning is very cold, she expresses her displeasure:

Prithee, tarry.
You men will never tarry.
O foolish Cressid! I might have still hold off,
And then you have tarried ...

(IV. ii. 17-20)

It is very likely that our sympathy towards Cressida suffers a great setback at this point of the dramatic action. Referring to this O.J. Campbell claims that Shakespeare's satirical intent is best seen in this scene because their matutinal exchange is not greeted by the sweet notes of the
lark but by the cawing of the ribald crows. And, at this point, we may not be sympathetic to Cressida. But shortly afterwards, Cressida is again presented in a much more favourable light. When Pandarus gives the news that she would have to leave Troy and Troilus because she has been exchanged for Antenor, she seems to be completely unnerved and is profoundly emotional in her protest:

Cressida: O you immortal gods I will not go.

Pandarus: Thou must.

Cressida: I will not, uncle. I have forgot my father; I know no touch of consanguinity; No kin, no love, no blood, no soul so near me As the sweet Troilus .......

(IV. ii. 94-99)

She would go in and weep and:

Tear my bright hair and scratch my praised cheeks, Crack my clear voice with sobs and break my heart With sounding Troilus. I will not go from Troy.

(IV. ii. 107-110)

In fact, we cannot but feel sympathy towards Cressida as she is overpowered with genuine grief at the shocking news of her imminent parting from Troilus. Despite the sensuality of Cressida shown at the beginning, Shakespeare's

29 "Shakespeare's Satire" (New York, Oxford Univ. Press, 1945, p.113).
treatment of the scene is, on the whole, naturalistic and sympathetic.

The assertion that Chaucer's gentle Cressida has been debased into a loose and faithless woman, of course, cannot be totally overlooked. The play provides some good examples in support of Cressida's fickleness. Those critics who condemn Cressida outright refer to the fifth scene of the fourth act in which Cressida makes her first entry into the Greek camp and to the eaves-dropping scene in which Cressida falls into the arms of Diomedes. These scenes show Cressida in a highly unfavourable light. Her voluptuous nature and conquettish temperament is masterfully exhibited and when compared with Chaucer's Cressida, she appears to be somewhat despicable. As soon as Cressida appears, Agamemnon and Nestor welcome her with their kisses. Then Ulysses proposes that she should be kissed in general. All the Greeks kiss her with greater abandon and Cressida does not show the slightest hesitation to satisfy the Greek voluptuaries. But, strangely enough, when the turn of Ulysses comes, he makes the following speech:

Fie, fie upon her
There is a language in her eye, her cheek, her lip
Nay, her foot speaks; her wanton spirits look out
At every joint and motive of her body.

(IV. v. 53-56)
Then he calls her a "daughter of the game". But, it may be noted that in the previous scene Shakespeare has already made Troilus express his fear to Cressida that she might change when she passed among the licentious Greeks.

Again, in the eavesdropping scene, Cressida's lascivious behaviour is carefully detailed by Shakespeare. Here she is shown to behave like an experienced coquette whetting the desire of Diomedes. And in this context it is significant to remember that Chaucer's Diomed had to use all his wiles to win the love of Creseyde. Though Shakespeare's Cressida entreats Diomedes she does not appear to be a thoroughly despicable slut on the whole. That is to say, Shakespeare's treatment of the scene does not seem to be wholly un-Chaucerian or anti-Chaucerian; there is a difference in degree not in kind. Because, despite a strong Elizabethan rumour of her harlotry, Shakespeare seems to be a little kinder to Cressida. We see that when she gives Troilus's sleeve to Diomedes and surrenders herself to him she is not ungrateful to Troilus. Rather, she bids farewell to Troilus in a language which expresses her helplessness and where ambivalence is dramatically shown in the conflict between the eyes:

Troilus, farewell! one eye yet looks on thee,
But with my heart the other eye doth see.

Ah, poor our sex this fault in us I find,
The error of our eye directs our mind;
What error leads must err— 0, then conclude
Minds swayed by eyes are full of turpitude.

(V. ii. 107-112)

Such a speech seems to evoke sympathy from us
towards Cressida in spite of her lightheartedness.

Modern criticism has established the fact that
Shakespeare's "Troilus" cannot be simply dismissed as merely
a satirical play or most unpopular play of Shakespeare. It
seems to have successfully explored the themes of the play
which have universal significance. Joyce Carol Oates regards
the play as a contemporary document because it is the
investigation of numerous infidelities; it shows what is
essential in human life and what is only existential.31
According to Kenneth Muir the play is a fusion of three
important themes — first the play might be regarded as the
quintessence of Ibsenism, secondly it is a dramatic statement
of the power of Time, and thirdly it shows how we are devils
to ourselves.32 Alvin Kernan suggests that the play may be
looked upon as a pitiful demonstration of human weakness and

ineffactuality\textsuperscript{33}. According to Philip Edwards the play constantly tells us of inconstancy.\textsuperscript{34} If we look at the play through these thematic interpretations, the character of Cressida may appear in a better and clearer perspective.

E.C. Pettet has pointed out that Chaucer has presented Troilus and Cressyde as two doomed, star-crossed lovers and that Chaucer's Troilus had to face his tragedy partly through the weakness of Cressyde but more through the sudden inexorable turn of Fortune's wheel, but Shakespeare's treatment of the story does not create such a sympathetic impression.\textsuperscript{35} He has also suggested that if Shakespeare intended us to sympathise with Troilus he would not have made Troilus responsible for his own misery and suffering through his infatuation to a worthless trull.\textsuperscript{36} But, though Shakespeare seems to have ignored the implacable sway of fortune over human affairs he frequently draws our attention to the changeful effect of "time" in this play.\textsuperscript{37}


\textsuperscript{34} "Shakespeare and the Confines of Art", Methuen, 1972, p.103.

\textsuperscript{35} "Shakespeare and the Romance Tradition" 1949, Methuen, 1970, p.143.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., p. 143.

\textsuperscript{37} There are few references to fortune's sway over human affairs in the play; only Troilus's statement,"But still sweet love is food for fortune's tooth" (IV.v.293) is significant and oft-quoted. But there are many references to the changeful effect of "time" and the importance of the "time" theme in the play has been recognised by many distinguished modern critics.
As pointed out by so many critics the importance of the "time" theme cannot be exaggerated, and at some key points of the play, we are made aware of the destructive power of "time." We know that the scene in which Troilus and Cressida meet each other is very significant. Here both declare their love for each other frankly and sincerely. Troilus tells Cressida that he would always remain true to her and people would always use his name as a symbol of truth when they would write poetry of love. Cressida also declares that if she proved false to Troilus, her name would be universally associated with falsehood. Then our attention is shifted to the Greek camp in the next scene. We see that Agamemnon, Nestor and Ajax pass "strangely" by Achilles and when Achilles wants to talk to them they do not oblige. Achilles is very much perturbed to see the strange behaviour of his kinsmen and asks Ulysses whether his great deeds have been forgotten. Then Ulysses calls "time" an ungrateful monster:

> Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back
> Wherein he puts alms for oblivion,
> A great sized monster of ingratitude.  

(III. iii. 142-144)

Then he refers to the all-devouring capacities "time":

For beauty, wit,
High birth, vigour of bone, desert in service,
Love, friendship, charity, are subject all
To envious and calumniating Time.

(III. iii. 171-174)

The immediate purpose of this speech is to arouse sulky
Achilles into action, but we may also remember by reflex
action that in the preceding scene both Troilus and
Cressida have taken their oaths to remain true to each
other for ever in their love which (we are told here) is
the subject of "envious and calumniating Time". In the
parting scene also Troilus seems to hint Cressida that
"time" has hastened their separation:

Injurious Time now with a robber's haste
Crams his rich thievery up ...

(IV. iv. 42-43)

Hector is also aware of the far-reaching power of "time."
when Ulysses tells that the walls and the towers of Troy
with kiss the ground Hector says:

I must not believe you.
There they stand yet; and modestly I think
The fall of every Phrygian stone will cost
A drop of Grecian blood. The end crowns all;
And that old common arbitrator, Time,
Will one day end it.

(IV. v. 222-227)
Such frequent references to the supreme power of "time" by the most important characters of the play may well illustrate the importance of "time" theme in the play. With this subtle method Shakespeare seems to have given such an impression that Cressida's fall from fidelity may be, to some extent, due to the changeful effect of "injurious Time", and thereby reserves some sympathy for his heroine like Chaucer, though his manner is different and more ingenious than that of his illustrious predecessor.

The modern critics' emphasis on the theme of inconstancy or inefficacy has already been referred to. In the "mad", "devastating" and confusing world of "Troilus" ruled by passions, dominated by the "old common arbitrator", Time nobody seems to be able to remain constant in his words and deeds. For Troilus, "Helen is a spur to valiant and magnanimous deeds" but she is also "too starved a subject for his sword" Hector, who eloquently argues for the return of Helen, ultimately succumbs to the general opinion that the retention of Helen is a prestige issue for them. Hector's 'volteface' may serve to show the yawning gap between human thought and action. In fact, it appears that Hector with his superior kind of rationalism cannot achieve anything significant in the Trojan Council scene. Troilus with his "truth and "simplicity" cannot avert his "tragedy of disillusionment"; nor is he able to save Troy with his "death-before-dishonour" approach. Though Ulysses has made
a superb diagnosis of the sickness of the Greek camp, he is also ineffectual in spite of his "policy" because he could not rouse Achilles into action at the right moment. As Thersites has said:

On the other side, the policy of those crafty-seecarking rascals, that state old mouse-eaten dry cheese, Nestor, and that same dog-pox Ulysses, is proved not worth a blackberry.

(V. iv. 8-11)

Thersites, in his own turn, also, achieves little. Despite his realistic approach superiority complex and violent condemnation of others, he cannot do anything noble and significant but only gets beatings from Ajax. Even "godlike" Agamemnon with his great commanding capacity is helpless to do away with the lethargy of the Greek army. Nestor, with his age-old experience and fine sense of courtesy, is also incapable of doing anything worthwhile. On the Trojan side also, Priam, despite his royal splendour is an "ineffective chairman". Andromache with her fervent appeal and Cassandra with her prophetic warning cannot debar Hector from going to the battle on the most ominous day. In such a baffling and enigmatic world where almost all the characters seem to be ineffective and inconstant we cannot and should not confidently expect Cressida to remain constant in her love towards Troilus with her frail womanly nature in the
tempting and voluptuous environment being surrounded by the lascivious Grecians. And perhaps, Shakespeare also does not want us to do it. So we may tentatively suggest that by laying stress on the "time" theme and the theme of inconsistency and inefficacy, Shakespeare has been able to whitewash Cressida's character to a certain extent, who has been degraded very much in the contemporary literary tradition, to engage our sympathy towards her, though at times he is also seen to blacken her character to alienate our sympathy from her.

As it has already been noted, it is almost a consensus of the historical critics that the character of Cressida in the Troy story had degenerated into a harlot when Shakespeare was dramatizing the love story of Troilus and Cressida. Critics have also suggested that Henryson's bitter sequel, "The Testament of Cresseid" was mainly responsible for this degradation, Kenneth Muir has affirmed with a supporting evidence that Shakespeare himself read Henryson's poem.38 In his poem Cressida is shown to have been abandoned by Diomedes becoming a mistress of a succession of Greek warriors, being smitten with leprosy and reduced to beggary, and she is condemned by her faithlessness, treachery and pride. Under such circumstances Shakespeare who seems to be more of a traditionalist than an iconoclast possibly

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hesitated to reproduce Chaucer's "gentle and almost flawless" Cressida completely flouting the traditionally accepted opinion nor did he intend to portray Cressida as an incarnation of falsehood, treachery and pride as in Henryson's poem because in that case his work will lack novelty and flexibility and perhaps it would also deny him the opportunity of showing sympathy to all sorts and conditions of man which was his usual characteristic habit. Hence, the best way for Shakespeare, it may be assumed, was to strike a middle ground between Chaucer and Henryson in delineating the character of Cressida which also suited his especial fascination for seeing both sides of the coin at this stage of his dramatic career.

Of course, it is difficult to disprove the contention that Shakespeare has blackened Chaucer's heroine to a great deal. When Thersites calls her "a whore", "a dissembling luxurious drab" and when Troilus says that "bonds of heaven are slipped, dissolved and loosed" on seeing her surrender to Diomedes, our sympathetic response to her is seriously disturbed. But this should not make us overlook the sincere efforts of Shakespeare to give psychological credibility to his heroine, to give her some sparks of nobility and to make her acceptable as a human being. And, in view of the above discussions, we may tentatively explain Cressida's sudden and complete degradation with which she has been accused, and say that she has been more sinned against than sinning. In fact, we may be justified in saying that "there is a soul of goodness" in this so-called despicable slut. And, we hope, we may be justified in writing the following words regarding
Cressida just in the same vein of the Cambridge Editor of "Measure" who wrote about Isabella:*

"We cannot hate you O Cressida! the reason why we cannot tell".39

The majority of the critics hold that among all the characters Hector is most magnificent; he has nobility, dignity and human worth to arouse our sympathy and admiration. G. Wilson Knight has suggested that in "Troilus" the Trojan party stands for human beauty and worth and the Greek party stands for bestial elements in man.40 But looking at the play as a whole it is difficult to endorse such a view. One can see that in the midst of the Trojan war the Trojans are futilely discussing whether Helen is worth-keeping or not and then desperately follow the unreasonable sentiment of honour to sacrifice themselves and their city. Clifford Leech has rightly suggested that "Troilus" is not a simple pro-Trojan and anti Greek play; "there are fools on both sides" and there is practically no right side, the madness is shared.41 Symbolist critics suggest that Hector is an impersonation of Reason and those who want to extract the personality of Shakespeare from his

39 Arthur Quiller Couch, Introduction to "Measure", p. XXX. Of course Arthur Quiller Couch's statement is negative: "We do not love the, Isabel,. The reason why we cannot tell".


characters suggest that Hector in the mouthpiece of Shakespeare. But if we look at the play as a whole we can see that Hector is also not a flawless character, nor is he consistently magnificent.

Of course, the fact remains that he has been idealised into a medieval chivalric Knight at certain points of the dramatic action. But, sometimes, Hector is also made to appear as a vain and disagreeable personality. In fact, Shakespeare's ambivalent attitude towards human nature seems to be manifest in the making of Hector's character though he is not written down by Shakespeare so much like other Homeric heroes.

In the second scene of the first act, we find Alexander's information to Cressida about Hector's wrath:

Hector, whose patience
Is as a virtue fixed, to-day was moved:
He chid Andromache and struck his armour;
And, like as there were husbandry in war.

Before the sun rose he was harnessed light,

And to the field goes he; where every flower
Did, as a prophet, weep what it foresaw
In Hector's wrath.

(I. ii. 4-11).
When Cressida asks Alexander the cause of Hector's wrath, Alexander replied that the previous day Ajax met Hector in the battle and struck him down, and the disdain and shame kept Hector fasting and walking. Such a report may take away some of Hector's nobility and magnificence.

The majesty and splendour of Hector's character are best seen in the great Trojan Council scene. In this scene Hector argues for the return of Helen with great eloquence and all his arguments are based on impeccable logic. Once Hector begins his speech we are spell-bound by his magnificent rhetoric. When Priam seeks Hector's opinion, the latter says that Helen should be returned to the Greeks. Because since the first sword was drawn every tenth soul among many thousand tens died and there was no reason why there should be so much bloodshed in guarding a thing which actually do not belong to them. Troilus argues that in the retention of Helen the "worth" and "honour" of their great father are involved, and says that reliance upon reason makes man lethargic. Hector retorts by saying that compared to colossal loss of human lives, Helen is not worth-keeping. Troilus asserts that they have highly valued Helen as an honourable subject for war. And Hector promptly answers:

But value dwells not in particular will:
It holds his estimate and dignity
As well where it is precious of itself
As in the prizer. It is mad idolatry
To make the service greater than the god;

(II. ii. 53-57)

But, still, Troilus is determined to continue the war and retain Helen because the question of Trojan honour demands it. Paris also declares that he would have "the soil of her fair rape wiped off in honourable keeping her". Then Hector continues his arguments with these beautiful words:

Paris and Troilus, you have both said well,
And on the cause and question now in hand
Have glozed—*but superficially; not much
Unlike young men, whom Aristotle thought
Unfit to hear moral philosophy.
The reasons you allege do more conduce
To the hot passion of distempered blood
Than to make up a free determination
'Twixt right and wrong: .......

(II. ii. 163-171)

After that Hector pleads for the return of Helen on the basis of the "law of nature and nations" and says:

Then to persist
In doing wrong extenuates not wrong,
But makes it much more heavy. Hector's opinion
Is this in way of truth ............

(II. ii. 186-189)
Up to this point, everything goes right with Hector. We are enchanted by his marvellous eloquence, convincing arguments and his sincere efforts to persuade people into reason. We cannot but admire and love such a debater and our whole sense of sympathy seems to be in store for him. But this scene, on the other hand, seems to be the "grave-yard" of Hector's rationalism because a moment later we read Hector's sudden 'volte face':

... Yet, nevertheless,

My sprightly brethren, I propend to you

In resolution to keep Helen still;

For it is the cause that had no mean dependence

Upon our joint and several dignities.

(II. ii. 189-193)

We are now shocked to see Hector throwing all his reasonable arguments to the winds and embracing an unreasonable sentiment of honour and our sympathy towards him seems to be considerably diminished. The Cambridge editor suggests that by inventing the 'volte face' Shakespeare had made Hector a legitimate object of satire, and it is compatible with his "comprehensive comic purpose". But it may be noted that though we cannot highly admire an inconsistent character like Hector at this point, we are unlikely to

42 Introduction, p. XX.
find fault with him when we think of inconsistency as the hallmark of a real and living human being. As Aldous Huxley has put it, "Only dead men are thoroughly consistent." 43 Here, it may be assumed, Shakespeare has given us the universal truth that even a most reasonable man may act most unreasonably and impulsively under some circumstances extremely uncongenial to reason. Though it is rare, it is a universal paradox, a devastating irony of human life. In fact, Shakespeare seems to have displayed extraordinary skill in manipulating our responses towards Hector. We first admire a most reasonable Hector, then we deplore a most inconsistent Hector, and then again, appreciate a realistically portrayed Hector.

On many occasions Hector has been idealised into a medieval chivalric Knight and is portrayed in brightest colours. We know that Aeneas has told of Hector's infinite valour (IV. v. 78-80) when Hector expresses his unwillingness to continue his fight with Ajax because the latter is his kinsman, Ajax complements him:

I thank thee, Hector.
Thou art too gentle and too free a man
(IV. 138-139)

Agamemnon welcomes him as "great Hector", and Nestor, the "good old chronicle" provides us with an ennobling image of Hector:

I have, then gallant Trojan, seen thee oft,
Labouring for destiny, make cruel way
Through ranks of Greekish youth; and I have seen thee,
As hot as Perseus, spur thy Phrygian steed,
Despising many forfeits and subduements,
When thou hast hung thy advanced sword in the air,
Not letting it decline on the declined;
That I have said to some my standers-by
"Lo, Jupiter is yonder, dealing life"
And I have seen thee pause and take thy breath,
Like an Olympian wrestling. This have I seen;
But this thy countenance, still locked in steel,
I never saw till now. I knew thy grandsire,
And once fought with him. He was a soldier good;
But, by great Mars, the captain of us all,
Never like thee. O, let an old man embrace thee;
And, worthy warrior, welcome to our tents.

(IV. v. 182-99)

This shows that even enemies appreciate Hector's greatness as a warrior. When Achilles proudly tells Hector that he will kill Hector, Hector retorts in the similar vein and also frankly confesses his pride which was aroused by Achilles in
the following words:

You wisest Grecians, pardon me this brag:
His insolence draws folly from my lips;
But I will endeavour deeds to match these words,
or may I never—

(IV. v. 257–260)

Again, the third scene of the fifth act shows
Hector in glorious and heroic moments. He does not pay any heed to the entreaties and persuasions of Andromache and Cassandra:

Hector. Hold you still, I say;
Mine honour keeps the weather of my fate.
Life everyman holds dear; but the dear man
Holds honour far more precious—dear than
life.

(V. iii. 26–29)

Then Hector tells Troilus of his "vein of chivalry" and advises Troilus to unarm. Troilus is unwilling and accuses Hector:

Troilus: Brother, you have a vice of mercy in you,
Which better fits a lion than a man.
Hector: What vice is that Good Troilus, chide me for it.

Troilus: When many times the captive Grecian falls,
            Even in the fan and wind of your sword,
            You bid them rise and live.

Hector: O, it is fair play.

(V. iii. 37-42)

Our sympathy and admiration seem to be considerably greater for a valiant warrior who shows "vice of mercy" and "fair play" in battle. Even Thersites, who rails at and tramples down almost all the characters does not seem to denigrate Hector, and when they meet, their conversation seems to be friendly:

Hector: What art thou, Greek? Art thou for Hector's match? Art thou of blood and honour?

Thersites: No, no; I am a rascal; a scurvy railing Knave; a very filthy rogue.

Hector: I do believe thee. Live.

(V. iv. 24-29)

Here again, Hector shows his nobility by refusing to fight with Thersites since the latter is not "blood and honour". Furthermore, we feel admiration for Hector when he spares Achilles when the latter's arms are out of use. We are also
enamoured with Hector for his higher sense of courtesy in contrast with that of Achilles.

But immediately afterwards, Hector meets a Greek dressed in a "sumptuous armour" and bids him to stop, as the rich armour arouses his greed. The Greek flees and Hector follows; and kills him, and says:

Hector. Most putrefied core, so fair without,
Thy goodly armour thus hath cost thy life.

(V. viii. 1-2)

Here we see the "dram of ill" in Hector's character and our sympathy and admiration for Hector seems to be greatly diminished when we see our most magnificent Hector doing things most gross. So long, as we have already noted, we admire Hector's martial ardour, his "death-before-dishonour" approach, his courtesy, his "vice of mercy", his emphasis on "fair play" in battle. But, now, we cannot admire the same Hector being suddenly infected by wrath, falling a victim to temptation and greed and thereby becoming passion's slave.\footnote{One may argue here that Shakespeare was following the source. But it may be said that had Shakespeare been only interested in depicting Hector in brightest colours, he could have improved upon his source material.}

In fact, it seems true to say that the character of Hector is a magnificent illustration of the "amazing contradictions"
ingrained in human nature. He is a valiant general no doubt but also a savage killer. Moreover, we know that the killing of Hector is one of the glorious events in Homer but in Shakespeare the picture is almost opposite. In "Troilus" we see that Hector is barbarously butchered by Achilles and his Myrmidons when Hector is unarmed and alone and his body was "dragged in beastly sort through the shameless field." According to Kenneth Muir, Shakespeare has increased Achilles's guilt and the horror of Hector's murder by having Hector disarm Achilles at the first encounter and his Myrmidons murder Hector.\footnote{"The Sources of Shakespeare's Plays" (London, Methuen, 1957), p. 146.} Anyway, Shakespeare's treatment of the scene considerably lessens the dignity of Achilles. Hector's dignity also seems to be impaired. Many critics contend that Hector's death does not contain the dignity associated with the death of a tragic hero; his death is brutal and pathetic but not purely tragic. But, soon afterwards, Shakespeare evokes a sympathetic response towards the hero who had lately been deflated. When Ajax hears the news of Hector's death from Diomedes, Ajax acknowledges Hector's greatness in the following words:

If it be so, yet bragless let it be;
Great Hector was as good a man as he.

(V. ix. 5-6)
Troilus also speaks the following to the Trojans about Hector:

... But march away.

Hector is dead; there is no more to say.

(V. x. 21-22)

Such a speech immediately reminds us of Hamlet's words — "The rest in silence". These words, spoken of Hector immediately after his death by two important characters are significant and they seem to contain the ennobling note of a tragedy which sufficiently salvages the dignity of Hector.

Though the character of Paris has not been developed to a greater extent, still Shakespeare's ambivalence seems to be manifest in him. When such a legendary hero like Paris says "I would fain have armed to-day, but my Nell would not have it so" (III. 138) neglecting his martial duties and being busy in petty personal interests, our sympathy towards him seems to be completely evaporated.

But in the Trojan council scene, Paris is shown to behave as the true brother of Troilus. We see that like Troilus he seems to be deeply committed to maintain the honour of the Trojans. He strongly protests Hector's contention that Helen should be returned to the Greeks:
Yet, I protest,
Were I alone to pass the difficulties
And had as ample power as I have will,
Paris should never retract what he had done,
Nor faint in the pursuit.

(II. ii. 138-142)

After that when Priam says that Paris would naturally
speak so because he is enjoying the honey, Paris retorts:

But I would have the soil of her fair rape
Wiped off in honourable keeping her.

(II. ii. 148-149)

Such speeches couched in heroic sentiments are likely to
arouse our sympathy and admiration for the speaker.

Critics often say that Chaucer's Pandarus is a
lovable character while Shakespeare's Pandarus is a
despicable 'leering pimp'. It is almost a majority view
that Pandarus is depicted by Shakespeare in such a way as
to fit the word derived from his name. E.C. Pettet thinks
that he is one of the "brethren and sisters of the hold
door trade" in which capacity he addresses his audience
several times. 46 There seems to be no doubt that Pandarus

46 "Shakespeare and the Romance Tradition" 1949, Methuen,
with his bawdy jokes and salacious chatter cheapens and coarsens the love story though acting as a go-between which we have already noted. But the important thing about Pandarus is that he keeps the comic interest of the play alive. The Helen scene in which Pandarus sings a song on love is extremely interesting. The statement which is often made about Pandarus is that he is only a disreputable go-between who gets a vicarious sensual pleasure by mating the lovers does not seem to be the whole truth about him. Shakespeare seems to have displayed ambivalence in delineating the character of Pandarus also. In fact, Pandarus is not a thoroughly heartless pimp only to invite "ignominy and shame" from the critics. In the second scene of the fourth act when Aeneas brings the news that Cressida is to be sent to the Greeks in exchange for Antenor, Pandarus seems to feel genuine grief for Troilus:

Is it possible? no sooner got but lost? The devil take Antenor. The young prince will go mad. A plague upon Antenor! I would they had broke's neck.

(IV. ii. 75-77)

We see that Pandarus is also unable to give this sad news to Cressida. Only after her repeated appeals and requests, he speaks the following words tinged with heart-felt sorrow:
Thou must be gone, Wench, thou must be gone; thou art changed for Antenor; thou must be to thy father, and be gone from Troilus: it will be his death; it will be his bane; he cannot bear it.

(IV. ii. 90-93)

Here Pandarus does not seem to behave like a detached commentator but as a real human being deeply involved in the affairs of Troilus and Cressida. And our sympathy seems to have been drawn towards Pandarus to some extent.

Among the Grecians Ulysses seems to the most attractive character. His "degree speech" and Speech on "time" are two magnificent set speeches in the play. The "degree" speech has been acknowledged by most of the critics to be an exquisite poetic statement of the Elizabethan concept of society where "degree" or order is all-important. However, it is just well to remind ourselves that the grand speech is made against a background of utter confusion. Further, it does nothing to improve the situation. The speech on "time" which was made to arouse the sulky Achilles into action is also remarkable in its poetic beauty and universal applicability. When we are reading or enjoying a play we are likely to be hypnotized by the marvellous effect of such speeches and are moved to love and admire the speaker.
In the Greek council scene where Ulysses makes his famous "degree" speech, he finds out the root cause of the Greek failure in the war. According to his analysis, the Greeks are unable to achieve their goal because of the collapse of their army discipline. "The speciality of rule has been neglected" and as the "degree is sacked", the "enterprise is sick". When Agamemnon asks Ulysses about the remedy, Ulysses proposes to send Ajax to meet Hector's challenge in spite of Achilles being the obvious choice. Ulysses is confident; "Ajax thus employed will pluck down Achilles's plume". His "policy" is quickly endorsed by Agamemnon and Hector. Thus Ulysses appears to gain the upper hand in the Greek council scene by his wise speeches and the nicely calculated stratagem. But the succeeding events show that Ulysses's strategy cannot deliver the expected goods.

It is true that when the Greek generals pass by Achilles and mocks at him and do not answer his questions, Achilles feels that his "reputation is at stake" and "his mind is troubled as a fountain stirred". Confronting Hector after his duel with Ajax, Achilles declares his firm determination to kill Hector the next day. But he gets a letter from Polyxena, his "fair love" which reminds him to keep his word not to fight. Then Achilles declares that he would not fight because he would obey his major vow. Ulysses's
other scheme to build up Ajax's pride is also unsuccessful because Ajax also refuses to fight. So Ulysses's intelligent stratagem, in its ultimate analysis, appears to be an empty vessel which sounded too much. As Thersites tells us:

On the other side, the policy of those crafty-swearers, that stale old mouse-eaten dry cheese, Nestor, and that same dog fox, Ulysses is not proved worth a blackberry.

(V. iv. 8-11)

And at this point our admiration for Ulysses suffers a jolt.

It may be a reasonable conjecture that Ulysses also has a dual and ambivalent nature. When Agamemnon welcomes Cressida on her arrival at the Greek camp with a kiss, Ulysses proposes that she should be "kissed in general" and his proposal has been immediately accepted. We see that Cressida is kissed by all, but when Ulysses's turn comes he insultingly rejects the kiss which Cressida is willing to give. And when Cressida goes away with Diomedes Ulysses labels her as "daughter of the game". His denunciation of Cressida, though true to a certain extent, seems to be brutal. His estimate of Troilus that the latter is "not yet mature but matchless", "more dangerous than Hector in battle" seems to be quite sensible. To sum up it, may be said that like other characters, Ulysses also displays startling contradictions.
We are likely to be fascinated by his grand political theories on one hand, and likely to be repelled by the cheap tricks improvised by him to be applied on Achilles, on the other.

In depicting the character of Diomedes, Shakespeare may also be seen to have displayed ambivalence. We see that when Paris asks Diomedes whether he or Menelaus was the worthy possessor of Helen, Diomedes refuses to glorify either of them and says:

Both merits poised, each weighs nor less nor more;
But he as he, the heavier for a whore.

(IV. i. 67-68)

And when Paris charges him that he has been too bitter to his countrywoman, Diomedes gives a fitting reply:

She is bitter to her country. Hear me Paris:
For every false drop in her bawdy veins
A Grecian's life had been sunk; for every scruple
Of her contaminated carrion weight
A Trojan hath been slain; since she could speak
She hath not given so many good words breath
As for her Greeks and Trojans suffered death.

(IV. i. 70-76).

A character who has perception to discover such a universal
truth, however, unpleasant, evokes a positive response. On the other hand, in the famous eavesdropping scene Diomedes plays subtle games of sexual life with Cressida and there is almost depicted as a lecher. And we cannot form a good impression of Diomedes in this important scene.

Of all the Greek heroes, Achilles seems to have got the worst treatment from Shakespeare. Here the great hero of the Homeric legend has almost dwindled into a dolt. Nobody likes him as he sulks in his own tent with Patroclus taxing the policy of others, mimicking the generals. Nobody approves his decision not to go to the war because of his obligation to the service of love to Polyxena. In fact, he is depicted as an extremely whimsical fellow whose lethargy has done enough damage to the success of the Greek army. He is roused into action by the killing of Patroclus. He kills Hector by a base trick which does not bring any credit to him. In this way the greatest event of the Homeric epic has been debased into a treacherous murder. However, on one occasion Shakespeare makes Achilles speak some words pregnant with great wisdom. After the strange behaviour shown to him by the other Greek generals, Achilles meets Ulysses who is reading an extract from a strange writer. Asked by Achilles, Ulysses says that the gist of the extract was that a man cannot always take pride in his past achievements. Then Achilles makes the following speech in support of the writer's contention:
This is not strange, Ulysses.
The beauty that is borne here in the face
The bearer knows not, but commends itself
To other's eyes; nor doth the eye itself,
That most pure spirit of sense, behold itself
Not going from itself; but eye to eye opposed
Salutes each other with each other's form:
For speculation turns not to itself
Till it hath travelled and is mirrored there
Where it may see itself. This is not strange at all.

(III. iii. 101-111)

Here, at this point, it is difficult to despise Achilles
capable of such aphoristic wisdom.

There seems to be little doubt that Thersites is one
of the most complex of Shakespeare's fools. Some critics
hold that he is the most un-Shakespearean figure and to some,
he is a chorus and a clown. To O.J. Cambell, he is a
satiric commentator in the manner of Carlo Buffone, and to
Alvin Kernan, he is the most intense image of satiric
character in all Elizabethan literature. Some critics


48 "The Satiric character of Thersites" (1959) in Case Book, Macmillan, 1976, p. 96. Kernan has given a very intelli-
gent discussion on the imagery used by Thersites in this essay.
confidently suggest that Thersites voices the cynical contempt and bitter spirit of the dramatist himself. Others hold that Thersites is a foulmouthed railer, who being lost "in the labyrinth of his fury" vehemently criticises or denigrates others without any motive. But the characterization of Thersites may also be seen as indicative of the author's slight ambivalence.

There is no doubt that the appearance of Thersites in a particular scene evokes mirth and laughter which is somewhat cynical and derisive. He uses the satiric images of diseases, decay and bodily functions and thereby mercilessly denigrates others, and he seems to be successful to a certain extent to persuade us in taking his own point of view that human beings are nothing more than stupid animals. But a close examination of his satiric and venomous speeches will show that they are sometimes responsible and authentic and sometimes irresponsible and unsound. Speaking about the Trojan war, when Thersites says that "all the argument is a cuckold and a whore" he almost discovers a fundamental truth though it is unpleasant. Because looking from a realistic perspective, the Trojan war is meaningless as it has caused enough human slaughter. On the other hand, when Thersites describes the love-relationship between Troilus and Cressida as "the young Trojan ass that loves the whore" he seems to be an extremist and an extravagant railer. Again, when he says that Agamemnon has no such brain as ear-wax, and calls Nestor
"an old mouse-eaten dry chese", and Ulysses, a "dog fox"
his statements are irresponsible and unjustifiable.

Looking at the infatuation of Achilles towards Patroclus,
Thersites has said that "with too much blood and to little
brain these two will run mad". Such statements sound
quite logical in the context of the lethargic atmosphere
prevailing in the Greek camp. But when Thersites calls
Patroclus Achilles's "male varlet" he is again an irrespon­
sible slanderer. In life as well as in literature, we love
and admire the speaker who speaks realistically and
responsibly and hate and disapprove the slanderer.

Though Thersites is a violent railer who curses man­
kind, still, Shakespeare seems to have preserved some amount
of sympathy towards him. In his conversation with Achilles,
Thersites frankly confesses that he is a fool among many
fools. (II. iii. 55-59). Though Ajax has beaten Thersites
for his foul abuse, Achilles is happy to talk to Thersites.
Even Hector who meets Thersites in the battlefield does not
scold him but allows him to live because Thersites has
confessed before Hector that he is a "rascal", "a scurvy
railing Knave", "a very filthy rogue".

In fact, it may not be an oversimplification or
 supersubtlety to suggest that Shakespeare was actuated by a
sense of ambivalence when depicting the Greeks. Though he
has blackened the Homeric heroes following a strong
contemporary tradition he has also portrayed them in
brighter colours. We are fascinated by Agamemnon's dignity and magnanimity though his lack of judgement is deplorable.\textsuperscript{49} Nestor's sense of courtesy is highly commendable though his garrulity is repulsive.\textsuperscript{50} Thersites's raillery is sometimes, venomous, repulsive and obscene but his attitude towards the Trojan war is realistic and commendable. Though we are repelled by the caprice and egoism of the Greek and Trojan heroes we are also struck at times by their wisdom and friendship.

Apart from Shakespeare's ambivalence in characterization "Troilus" also shows the duality of mixing the two genres — comedy and tragedy. And we know that the two genres — tragedy and comedy are also forms expressive of two different points of view. Hence the formal ambivalence may be traced to content. Some modern critics have suggested that the play defies the conventional forms and principles of comedy and tragedy. Here at this point it is worthwhile to remember the two conceptions of comedy prevalent during Shakespeare's time. The more popular conception was that a comedy started in trouble and ended in happiness.\textsuperscript{51} The other conception was that a comedy was an


\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{51} Nevill Coghill, "The Basis of Shakespearean Comedy" 1950 (Shakespeare Criticism 1935–1960, Oxford Univ. Press, pp. 204–205.)
imitation of the common errors of human life presented in a scornful and ridiculous way. These two conceptions were obviously satirical. Shakespeare's "Troilus" cannot be interpreted as a popular romantic comedy but it seems to have certain glaring affinities with the satirical concept which is in conformity with the Ben Jonsonian comedy. Oscar James Campbell has put forward many cogent arguments to prove his thesis that Shakespeare's "Troilus" is a conscious imitation of the "comical satyres" written by Ben Jonson and John Marston. Campbell's viewpoint was strongly supported by Alice Walker who thinks that Shakespeare's "comprehensive comic purpose" is clearly discernible in the play. In fact, almost all modern critics acknowledge the presence of satirical elements but they do not support the view that the satirical temper controls the whole play. Even Campbell admits that the profundity of tone obscures the satiric thrust of the drama.

52 Ibid.
53 Campbell in his two books "Comical Satyre and Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida" and "Shakespeare's Satire" has held this view.
54 Introduction to the Cambridge Edition, 1957, p. XVI.
55 W.W. Lawrence has rightly said that satirical elements do not determine the temper of the play "Problem Comedies". Alvin Kernan also observes, 'Despite certain tonal similarities to the new dramatic satires, "Troilus and Cressida" is not finally a satiric play (The Satiric Character of Thersites", 1959, Case Book, Macmillan, 1976, p. 98).
56 "Shakespeare's Satire", p. 120.
and Alice Walker is also of the view that Troilus is not insincere or without attractive qualities; he grows in stature and has some dignity. On the other hand, it may be seen that the play has certain remarkable aspects which look forward to the mature Shakespearean tragedies. In fact, it seems reasonable to say that the play oscillates between satirical comedy and incipient Shakespearean tragedy. And this seems to be in accord with the experimental nature of the play. This feature of the play has already been noted by many distinguished critics. Mark Van Doren wrote the following:

"Troilus and Cressida" is either Shakespeare's revenge upon mankind for losing its power to delight him or his revenge upon the theme for refusing to tell how it should be treated. Shall it become a tragedy or comedy? He does not know."

W.W. Lawrence has also suggested that at the time when Shakespeare wrote it, he had forsaken the more conventional types of early comedy but he had not given himself over to the full current of tragedy and he calls Shakespeare's picture of the Troy story is an experiment in the

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57 Introduction to the Cambridge Edition, 1957, p. XIX.
middle ground between a tragedy and comedy.\textsuperscript{59} Looking at the non-conformity of the play with the conventional forms of tragedy and comedy one may say that it is a tragi-comedy. But we know that though tragi-comedy is one of the most elusive things to define, it tends to give less emphasis to portrayal of character. Shakespeare\textsuperscript{3}\textquotedblright Troilus\textquotesingle does not seem to suffer from this blemish and as we have already noted, its characters have a great deal of psychological credibility.

O.J. Campbell holds that Troilus is an object of satire because of his infatuation for wanton Cressida and his unreasonable course of action based on self-will and mad idolatry\textsuperscript{60}. He has also said that Troilus\textquotesingle s disillusionment is futile and not at all tragic, it provides the audience with a kind of cynical amusement appropriate to satire. The actions of the characters only arouse disdainful laughter and the end of their actions is futility.\textsuperscript{61} Alice Walker has also suggested that Hector\textquotesingle s sudden 'volte-face' is Shakespeare\textquotesingle s invention to portray the great legendary hero in a satirical vein.\textsuperscript{62} And the characters of Thersites and


\textsuperscript{60} "Shakespeare\textquotesingle s Satire", New York Oxford Univ. Press, 1945, pp. 117-118.

\textsuperscript{61} "Shakespeare\textquotesingle s Satire", (pp. 117-118)

\textsuperscript{62} Introduction to Cambridge Edition, 1957, p. XV.
Pandarus are appropriately delineated to serve the satiric purpose. 63

But this type of "satirical-comical" interpretation seems to ignore the brilliant and enduring qualities with which the characters of Troilus have been endowed. Moreover, such an interpretation fails to explain the peculiar nature of the ending of the play. Because we know that in a satirical comedy two kinds of denouements are possible; the characters chosen as butts of ridicule were either purged or reformed or scornfully ejected from the action of the play. Seeing the non-conformity of "Troilus" with such denouements, O.J. Campbell suggests that the "finale" of the play is a subtle variation. 64 Thus he seems to fit the play to his pre-conceptions.

Some modern critics have successfully challenged this type of approach and the most important essay in this regard seems to be that of Brian Morris who has convincingly argued that "Troilus" is a tragedy and Troilus is a genuine tragic character. 65

63 Ibid.
The crux of his arguments is that in "Troilus" there are two structural patterns — the pageant pattern and the climactic pattern. The pageant pattern consists in showing the brilliant panorama of the Trojan war and the climactic pattern shows the tragic love story of Troilus and Cressida. The war story, according to him, practically shows no development worth the name but the love story shows climactic development. Troilus's passionate nature, his ruthless singlemindedness, his refusal to compromise and the superlative nature of his qualities mark him as a tragic hero. Moreover, the play displays the sense of waste which is present in all tragedies. The disillusionment scene is neither comic nor artificial but intensely tragic; so is the end of the play because it is the inevitable result of Troilus's involvement in a great and misguided love. Joyce Carol Oates also holds that "Troilus" is a tragedy of special sort — of the darkest and least satisfying variety.

67 Ibid., 489.
68 Ibid., p. 488.
69 "Essence and Existence" (1967) in Case Book. Macmillan, 1976, p. 167. Oates also holds that the experience of Troilus is not a satirized experience; it is quite clear that Shakespeare is sympathetic with his hero and expects his audience to share this sympathy, p. 176.
Here we may point out some features which may show the play's affinities with Shakespeare's great tragedies which seems to have been often overlooked. Critics of Shakespeare seem to agree that a typical Shakespearean tragedy is a conflict between Reason and Passion, and we can easily notice that "Troilus" does meet this criterion. We see that both the Trojans and the Greeks have failed miserably because, very often, their actions seem to spring from the "hot passions of distempered blood". Moreover, the most magnificent scene of the play may be seen as a dramatic conflict between Reason and Passion. Hector, in a way, stands for Reason, Troilus and Paris stand for Passion. Moreover, like in other tragedies, Shakespeare seems to have created a sense of inevitability. The scene in which Troilus, Cressida and Pandarus declare that they will live down to ages as symbols of moral qualities seems to generate a sense of inevitability. Troilus believes that his name will be associated with eternal truth in all love relationships. Cressida declares that if she be false, she will become a symbol of faithlessness, a permanent subject for disdainful comparison in love poetry. Pandarus also says:

If ever you prove false one to another, since I have taken such pains to bring you together, let all pitiful goers—between be called to the world's and after my name—call them all Pandars: let all constant men be Troiluses,
all false women Cressids, and all brokers-between Pandars say 'amen'.

(III. ii. 198-203)

There is no doubt that such speeches are rich in symboli­cal suggestiveness but they also seem to create a sense of inevitability which is a pre-requisite of a tragic composition.

But all such explanations cannot wholly account for the peculiarity and strangeness of the ending. Because, we know that in a tragedy the protagonists die but here Troilus does not die nor does he kill faithless Cressida. Troilus has only disillusionment and Cressida is dismissed into the arms of Diomedes. Hector meets his death in an undignified manner. The Aristotelian sense of catharsis, if there is any is seriously impaired by Pandaros's farcical presence and his address at the end to the bawds and whores present in the audience. The obnoxious commentaries of Thersites also seem to be irreconcilable with the ennobling note of tragedy.

Some critics hold that the eavesdropping scene is comic while some others believe that it is one of the most poignant tragic scenes that Shakespeare has ever written. When Cressida submits herself to Diomede Troilus is shocked and overwhelmed with despair and bitterness. Out of extreme disappointment he says that it is not his
Cressida but Diomedes's and in the next moment he feels that "the bonds of heaven are slipped, loosed and dissolved". Such speeches do not seem to suit a comic hero who triumphs over adverse circumstances, rather they suit a tragic hero who reminds us of King Lear in the famous storm scene. Another point to be noted here is that the plot material of the story which Shakespeare sought to dramatize was potentially tragic and his contemporaries regarded the story as a tragedy. And it seems quite unlikely that Shakespeare would impose upon it a "comprehensive comic purpose" defying a strong contemporary tradition. So it was quite likely that Shakespeare would seek a reconciliation between a satirical comedy and a tragedy, which was in keeping with his inspiration and intention as a Renaissance humanist writer. And, in doing so, he seems to have displayed extraordinary imaginative power and a penetrating insight into the duality of things, and a great deal of refinement and sophistication. As a result "Troilus" has become a unique creation, a "category-defying" play.

Philip Edwards wrote, "He is a lucky man who keeps a working balance between his epic and burlesque visions". The statement perceptibly refers to writers. Here it may be said that Shakespeare had these two visions and sometimes

he might have aimed at reconciliation of these contradictory visions in some of his dramatic experiments and "Troilus" may be regarded as a unique creation of such contradictory visions. Because, in this play there is enough to suggest that the great and the small, the trivial and the magnificent, the sublime and the ridiculous go together. Sometimes we see that the dialogue of the play is full of bawdy jokes and sometimes it is couched in superb lyrical poetry invested with epic grandeur. When we read the opening lines of the prologue, we find that they are written in heroic temper and epic tone:

In Troy there lies the scene. From isles of Greece
The princes orgulous, their high blood chafed
Have to the port of Athens sent their ships,
Fraught with ministers and instruments
Of cruel war; sixty and nine, that wore
Their crowned regal, from the Athenian bay
Put forward Phrygia, and their vow is made
To ransack Troy, within whose strong immures
The ravished Helen, Menelaus's queen.

With wanton Paris sleeps — and that is the quarrel.

But we know that in the Epilogue in which Pandarus directly addresses the audience, especially the bawds and whores, his speech is written in a somewhat obscene, coarse and bawdy language which seems to degrade the "dignified proposition"
of the Prologue. In the first scene of the play Troilus frankly declares that he is madly in love with Cressida and his statements are full of high class poetry steeped in romantic sentiments. But, as we all know, Pandarus's speeches are crude, full of bawdy suggestions which seem to cheapen the intensity of Troilus's genuine passion.

The epic and burlesque design is also noticeable in the second scene of the first act. We see that Queen Hecuba and Helen are passing; Cressida does not know them, and so asks Alexander who they were and where they are going. Alexander replies in a dignified language:

Up to the eastern tower,
Whose height commands as subject all the vale,
To see the battle. Hector, whose patience
Is as virtue fixed, today was moved:
He chid Andromache, and struck his armour:

............

(I. ii. 3-7)

Asked by Cressida, Alexander says that Hector was angry because of Ajax and when Cressida wants to know about Ajax, Alexander speaks in a prosaic, mock-heroic language:

This man, lady, hath robbed many beasts of their particular additions: he is as valiant as the lion, churlish as the bear, slow as the elephant — a man into
whom nature bath so crowded humours that his valour is 
crushed into folly, his folly forced with discretion.

(I. ii. 19-23)

And when Pandarus appears in the scene, the farcical vein 
becomes much more prominent. He lightheartedly describes 
that Helen had found two and fifty hairs on Troilus's chin 
and one of them was white which stood for Priam 
(I.ii. 161-167). This farcical episode seems to keep the 
mock-heroic strain alive. Then, at the end of the scene, 
our attention is again drawn towards the great Trojan 
heroes passing by the street as observed by both Pandarus 
and Cressida.

The Greek council scene seems to be another fine 
example of Shakespeare's heroic and mock-heroic design. 
Here Agamemnon, Nestor and Ulysses try to discover cause of 
Greek failure in the Trojan war. The scene is brilliant 
for its high poetry, intellectual power and mature 
political philosophy. All of them speak magnificently; 
Agamemnon attributes the Greek failure to the "protractive 
trials of great Jove"; Nestor approves Agamemnon's analysis 
and expressed his heroic opinion that "in the reproof of 
chance lies the true proof of man". Then Ulysses makes his 
famous "degree" speech the magnificence and grandeur of 
which have been acknowledged by all. A moment after Aeneas
comes from the Trojan camp who brings Hector's challenge to the Greeks in the following words:

We have, great Agamemnon, here in Troy
A prince called Hector—Priam is his father—
Who in this dull and long-continued truce
Is resty grown. He bade me take a trumpet,
And to the purpose speak: kings, princes, lords
If there be one among the fairest of Greece,
That holds his honour higher than his ease,
That seeks his praise more than he fears his peril,
That knows his valour and knows not his fear,
That loves his mistress more than in confession
With truant vows to her own lips he loves
And dare avow her beauty and her worth
In other arms than hers—to him this challenge.'

(I. iii. 260-272)

Agamemnon heroically declares that he would meet Hector if none else. But Nestor's reply seems to create a mock-heroic impression:

Nestor. Tell him of Nestor, one that was a man
When Hector's grandsire sucked. He is old now;
But if there be not in our Grecian host
One noble man that hath one spark of fire,
To answer for his love, tell him from me
I will hide my silver beard in a gold beaver
And in may vantbrace put this withered brawn,
And, meeting him will tell him that my lady
was fairer than his grandam and as chaste
As may be in the world: his youth in blood,
I will prove this truth with my three drops
of blood.

(I. iii. 291-301)

It is ridiculous that the old senile Nestor with his
"silver beard" should challenge the greatest hero of the
Trojans.

The Trojan council scene, as has been already
stated is one of the richest scenes in Shakespeare in its
profundity of tone, chivalric sentiments, high poetry and
marvellous oratory. Troilus and Paris almost behave like
epic heroes of Homeric legend. Troilus justifies the
retention of Helen because:

..... She is a pearl
Whose price hath launched above a thousand ships
And turned crowned kings to merchants.

(II. ii. 81-83)

Paris says:

Then, I say,
Well may we fight for her whom we know well
The world's large spaces cannot parallel.

(II. ii. 160-162)
Hector, after arguing so eloquently and reasonably for the return of Helen to the Greeks ultimately says:

For it is a cause that hath no mean dependence
Upon our joint and several dignities.

(II. ii. 192-193)

But immediately after this scene we meet "rank" Thersites who opens his "mastic jaws" to give a running commentary on the situation violently condemning and cursing the warmongers. The following speech of Thersites scoffs at, and belittles the glory that was associated with the Trojan war:

Then there is Achilles—a rare enginer. If Troy be not taken till these two undermine it, the walls will stand till they fall of themselves. O thou great thunder-darter of Olympus, forget that thou art Jove, the kind of gods, and, Mercury, lose all the serpentine craft of thy caduceus, if ye take not that little little less than little wit from them that they have which short-armed ignorance itself knows is so abundant scarce, it will not in circumvention deliver a fly from a spider without drawing their massy irons and cutting the web. After this vengeance on the whole camp or rather Neopolitan boneache for that, methinks, is the course dependent on those that war for a placket. I have said my prayers; and devil envy say "Amen"....

(II. iii. 7-20)
At the same time it also seems to throw cold water on the chivalric enthusiasm and heroic sentiments expressed by the Trojan heroes in the previous scene. Because, in the previous scene, we are told that "Helen is a theme of honour and renown", "a spur to the valiant and magnanimous deeds" but here we are emphatically told that the Greeks and the Trojan heroes are warring for a "placket". Shakespeare, being a mature dramatist at this stage, seems to make use of brilliant contrast of attitudes which is an asset of effective drama.

The first scene of the third act, also seems to have written mostly in farcical vein but there is also a faint touch of epic design. First, we are made to hear a song on love sung by Pandarus; then we are told that "hot blood, hot thoughts and hot deeds constitute the generation of love" and 'they are vipers". Then the heroic picture of the legendary Trojan war is brought before our minds eye by Paris who says that all the gallantry of Troy are fighting. But, at the same time, it is also burlesqued by the statement that Paris could have armed that day because his Nell would not have it so. Again, there seems to be burlesque intent when Paris tells Helen to disarm Hector after his return from the battle-field.

In their first meeting at the Pandarus's orchard Troilus and Cressida behave like romantic lovers and the major part of their conversation has been written in superb
lyrical poetry containing some epic touches. But the poetic beauty of their conversation and the intensity of their genuine passion are vulgarized by Pandaros's coarse and wooden prose-chatter which may illustrate Shakespeare's intermingling of the trivial and the magnificent, the sublime and the ridiculous.

The fifth scene of the fourth act opens in an atmosphere of chivalry when Ajax sounds his trumpets signalling his challenge to Hector. Cressida arrives at the Greek camp for the first time led by Diomedes. Suddenly the chivalric atmosphere is replaced by an atmosphere of dissoluteness. All the Greeks, irrespective of young and old, begin to kiss Cressida wantonly and Cressida too obliges them without any protest. Such an irresponsible behaviour of the Greek heroes considerably damages their dignity and worth. Just after this our attention is shifted towards the Hector-Ajax fight which is fought according to the code of chivalry. But the battle is inconclusive, Hector does not like to continue the fight with his "cousin-german" and so the outcome is embrace. Then Hector and Ajax are being introduced to the Greeks and they welcome the Trojans with high sense of courtesy and hospitality. Their refined manners and courteous words are in complete contrast with their lascivious behaviour shown to Cressida at the earlier part of the scene. But the following conversation which takes place between Hector and Nestor again looks forward to
Hector. Let me embrace thee, good old chronicle,
    That hast so long walked hand in hand with time:
Most reverend Nestor, I am glad to clasp thee.

Nestor. I would my arms could match in contention,
    As they contend with thee in courtesy.

Hector. I would they could.

Nector. Ha

By this white beard, I would fight with thee to-morrow.

Well, welcome, welcome! I have seen the time.

(IV. v. 202-209)

The "mingled yarn" of the epic and the burlesque is also observable in the closing scenes of the play. In the third scene of the fifth act we see Hector in a chivalric and heroic mood. Andromache, Cassandra and Prais, despite their fervent appeal, cannot dissuade Hector from fighting because he holds "honour far more precious than life". Troilus is also in the same mood; nothing and nobody can hinder him and stop his way. But Pandarus's farcical presence may be a part of burlesque design which succeeds the former epic strain.

In the next scene Thersites appears to give his
bitterest commentary on the situation in a language marked with extreme vituperation and thereby tramples down the warriors and the lovers:

Thersites: Now they are clapper-clawing one another; I will go look on. That dissembling abominable varlet, Diomed, has got that same scurvy doting foolish young Knave's sleeve of Troy there in his helm. I would fain see them meet; that the same young Trojan ass that loves the whore there, might send that Greekish whore-masterly villain with the sleeve back to the dissembling luxurious drab of a sleeveless errand. On the other side the policy of those crafty-swearers rescalts, that stale mouse-eaten dry cheese, Nestor, and that same dog fox, Ulysses, is not proved worth a blackberry. They set me up in a policy that mongrel cur, Ajax, against that dog of as bad as kind, Achilles; and now is the cur, Ajax, prouder than the cur Achilles, and will not arm to-day; where upon the Grecians begin to proclaim barbarism, and policy grows into an ill opinion. Soft! here comes sleeve and the other.

(V. iv. 1-16)

Then we hear Troilus's challenge to Diomedes:

Fly not; for shouldst thou take the river Styx
I would swim after.

(V. iv. 17-18)
But the heroic sentiment is immediately marred by Thersites:
Thersites. Hold thy whore Grecian! Now for thy whore, Trojan! Now the sleeve, now the sleeve!

(V. iv. 22-23)

Hector appears in a fighting mood but he is confronted with foul-mouthed Thersites whom Hector allows him to live. Some time after Hector meets Achilles but spares the latter following the rules of Chivalry but runs after an unknown Greek to kill him for his sumptuous armour which considerably diminishes Hector's nobility and worth as an epic hero. Some time after, Troilus reenters and declares bravely:

... Fate, hear me what I say
I reck not though thou end my life to-day.

(V. vi. 25-26)

Menelaus and Paris come fighting, and Thersites comments:

The cuckold and the cuckold maker at it.

(V. vii. 9)

Then Margarelon, one of the bastard son of Priam, comes and meets Thersites and gets the following reply:

Thersites. I am a bastard too; I love bastards. I am a bastard begot, bastard instructed, in bastard in mind,
bastard in valour, everything illegitimate. One bear will not bite another, and wherefore should one bastard? Take heed; the quarrel is most ominous to us; if the son of a whore fight for a whore, he tempts judgement. Farewell, bastard. (goes)

Margarelon. The devil take thee, coward.

(V. vii. 16-23)

After that we see Achilles and his Myrmidons attack Hector in the cruelllest manner when the latter is unarmed and alone. After killing him savagely Achilles orders his Myrmidons:

Come, tie his body to my horse's tail;
Along the field I will the Trojan trail.

(V. viii. 21-22)

As it has been pointed out by many critics, the way in which Hector is killed is not a befitting event for an epic or a tragedy. But critics seem to be unmindful of Shakespeare's subsequent attempt to redeem Hector's status as a epic or tragic hero. He makes Ajax and Troilus say the following words on Hector's death:

Ajax. If it be so, yet bragles it be;
Great Hector was as good a man as he

(V. ix. 5-6)

Troilus. ... But march away.

Hector is dead; there is no more to say.

(V. x. 21-22)
But this serious and dignified tone is not maintained at the final moments of the play. Our attention is shifted from the sublime to the ridiculous. Troilus meets Pandarus for the last time and curses him to have "ignominy and shame" in his life. Pandarus, also, in his capacity as a bawd, addresses the audience directly bequeathing them his diseases. After all we are given a "double ending" where such contradictory strains as tragic and comic, or heroic and mock-heroic are deftly interwoven.

Before concluding we should like to point out how two mutually opposite and contradictory attitudes or points of view have been persistently put forward by the characters concerning a particular subject matter. We may easily see that regarding the worth and validity of the Trojan war, the most important characters of the play voice two opinions which are opposite and contradictory to each other. In one way, Troilus, the golden boy of Troy, seems to be the champion of Trojan war, and he argues intelligently and eloquently for the retention of Helen. To him "Helen is a theme of honour and renown"; "a spur to valiant and magnanimous deeds". He seems to be almost successful in pointing out the lethargic effect of reason and in convincing others to take his point of view that Helen is worth-keeping. Paris also firmly expresses the same opinion:
There is not the meanest spirit on our party
Without a heart to dare or sword to draw
When Helen is defended; nor none so noble
Whose life were ill-bestowed or death unfamed
Where Helen is subject. Then I say,
Well may we fight for her whom we know well
The world's large spaces cannot parallel.

(Act.II. Sc. ii)

We also see that the great and wise Hector ultimately succumbs to this point of view:

For it is a cause that hath no mean dependence
Upon our joint and several dignities.

(Act. II. Sc. ii.192-193)

On the other hand, we can easily notice the other point of view that Helen is not a worthy cause for a great and devastating war, is often reiterated throughout the play. Even, in the very first scene of the play, Troilus makes the following speech hearing the ungracious clamours" and "rude sounds" coming from the battle field:

Fools on both sides! Helen must needs be fair,
When with your blood you daily paint her thus:
I cannot fight upon this argument;
It is too starved a subject for my sword.

(I. i. 92-95)

Here, it may be suggested that Troilus is expressing the mood of the moment; his mind is stirred by the "dribbling dart of love", and he is thinking of meeting his lady-love. But we know that very often Shakespeare's opening scenes are significant for revelation of thought and character and in this thoughtful and philosophical play such a speech cannot be dismissed as purely incidental. We also know that very often Shakespeare's speeches have primary and secondary meanings; they reflect the mood of the moment and also transcend it. Hamlet's "to be or not to be soliloquy" and Ulysses "degree speech" and "time" speech" reflect the mood of the moment no doubt but also rise from the particular to the universal. The above speech may be taken as belonging with those speeches, considering the repetition of its viewpoint at other key points of the play by some important characters. In the earlier part of the Trojan council scene, we see that Hector eloquently and convincingly puts forward his arguments to restore Helen back to the Greeks. He says that on all rational considerations, and according to the "law of nature and nations", a wife should be given back to her husband. Moreover, to stop the colossal wastage of human
lives, the return of Helen has been absolutely necessary. So he boldly tells both Troilus and Paris that to fight for Helen is a "mad idolatry" and the reasons that are put forward by them for favour of keeping Helen come out from the "hot passion of distempered blood".

Even the Greeks seem to be aware of the hollowness and the meaninglessness of the war. In the first scene of the fourth act when Paris asks Diomedes who is the more worthy possessor of Helen — he or Menelaus, Diomedes unhesitatingly replies "Both alike", "Both merits poised". Then Paris tells Diomedes that he (Diomedes) had been bitter to his countrywoman. To that charge Diomedes gives a fitting reply which seems to express his dispassionate and importial views about the war fought for a mere woman:

She is bitter to her country. Hear me Paris:
For every false drop in her bawdy veins
A Grecian's life hath sank; for every scruple
Of her contaminated carrion weight
A Trojan bath been slain; since she could speak,
She hath not given so many good words breath
As for her Greeks and Trojans suffered death.

(Act. IV. Sec. I. 70-76).

Thersites, perhaps the most caustic and venomous satiric commentator in all Shakespeare, also seems to reveal some
truth about the war when he says that "all the argument is a whore and a cuckold", "the cuckold and cuckold-maker are at it". Of course, Thersites is a "licenced jester", a "privileged fool" and a foul-mouthed railer who rails for the sake of raillery on many occasions. Though we do not consider him to be mouthpiece of Shakespeare, we cannot dismiss his ruthless but realistic analysis of the Trojan war as merely an extravagant and irresponsible raillery. This seems to be one way of looking at the great legendary war even if we do not consider it to be the whole truth.

Looking carefully into these mutually contradictory points of view set forth by the characters so convincingly, we are not in a position to make a clear-cut judgment as to who is right and who is wrong or what is correct or what is incorrect. Both these views appear to be true and valid and every speaker seems to be justified in his own way and it becomes extremely difficult to see where Shakespeare stands. This ultimately seems to lead to the universal problem of value which is debated by Hector and Troilus. However, this peculiar nature of the play seems to be a clear illustration of Shakespeare's dramatic exploitation of the duality and contradiction inherent in the Greaco-Trojan situation, and he makes us see both sides of the question. So, in a way, "Troilus" may be regarded as a sincere expression of the Renaissance mind which accepted mutually contradictory

71 Hardin Craig has suggested that the Renaissance mind accepted the mutually contradictory things and ideas as true and valid ("The Enchanted Glass", p. 3).
things as true and valid. And Troilus, one of the most brilliant portraits of Shakespeare seems to have a positive-negative attitude towards 'honour' associated with the Trojan war and Hector, one of the most magnificent portraits seems to have a positive-negative attitude towards 'reason'. On the whole, we may say that this is a manner befitting a problem play if we want to give the term "Problem play" some of its Ibsenite connotation. Moreover, it seems to conform to Charlton's definition of Shakespearean problem plays which present the problem and do not provide the answer.  

It may also be added here the play shows duality in some other ways. We can easily perceive that the major characters are complex individuals and some of them live vividly in our imagination; but in spite of their complexity and individuality, they sometimes tend to embody some allegorical or symbolic suggestion at certain moments of the dramatic action. For example, in the Trojan council scene, Troilus, appears to be an impersonation of Honour, and even Hector, in the earlier part of the scene, seems to be an impersonation of Reason rather than vividly realized individuals or vigorously animated personalities. Of course, we must be careful to note that it is only momentary. This allegorical or symbolic nature of the characters has been

already noticed by such critics as S.L. Bethel and S.C. Sengupta. In fact, this character-symbol duality which is also observable in other plays of Shakespeare, seems to be partially present in "Troilus". Furthermore, we may easily see that the themes of the play may be associated with pairs—love and war, love and honour, reason and passion, honour and craft, appearance and reality, value and valued.

To conclude, we may be justified in saying that "Troilus" is a complex work of art which evokes an ambivalent response in a variety of ways. We have already seen how Ulysses is a grand political philosopher and a mean schemer. Hector is a magnificent speaker, a champion of reason and a valiant warrior but also savage killer. Troilus, at his best, is the champion of the Trojan cause, a matchless warrior, but at his worst, a sensualist. Both of them seem

73 S.L. Bethel, in his "Shakespeare and the Popular Dramatic Tradition" has suggested that characters of "Troilus" show morality flavour.

74 S.C. Sengupta, in his "Shakespearean Comedy" (Oxford Univ. Press, 1977, p. 166) has also expressed the view that in "Troilus" each principal figure is portrayed as a symbol of some virtue or vice or attitudes.

75 Marion Bodwell Smith in her "Dualities in Shakespeare" (Univ. of Toronto Press, 1966, pp. 16-17) has noted that the themes of Elizabethan and Jacobean literature may be associated in pairs that involve overt and latent oppositions.
to be slaves of passion in spite of their lofty idealism and grand heroism. The formal ambivalence seems to lie in the intermingling of such opposite genres—heroic tragedy and satirical comedy. This again leads to the duality of mixing contrasting tones and moods which is also one of the important features of the play. If the tone of a particular scene is predominantly serious and dignified that of another is too much comic and light-hearted. We have already seen how in the Trojan council scene Helen has been magnificently described as an object of honour and glory, but when we meet Helen in the first scene of the third act, we see her relaxing in a sensual atmosphere of "love love, nothing but love" with Paris. And perhaps due to the interfusion of contradictory factors the play has aroused endless controversies regarding its genre.