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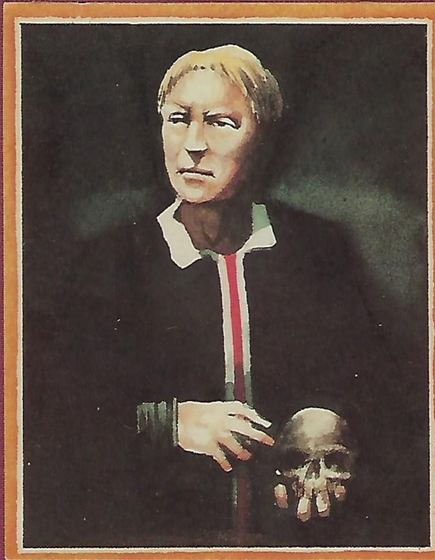

THE GUILD

Shakespeare

HAMLET

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

BY

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

EDITED BY

JOHN F. ANDREWS

Forewords by
Derek Jacobi and Celeste Holm

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FOREWORD
to
HAMLET
by Derek Jacobi

As an actor I thank God for William Shakespeare. An extraordinary, superhuman genius—I mean, where did he come from? And he wrote most of his plays while still a man in his 30s! Where did he get all that knowledge? Where did all that wisdom come from? If you go through all the plays, you find that he knew something about everything. He had a phrase or a sentence, a word for every conceivable human situation and emotion.

I think Shakespeare is for all ages. He is always relevant and exciting. He is loved and understood and respected and thrilled

DEREK JACOBI has acted in three professional productions of *Hamlet,* including one at the Old Vic and one that permitted him to perform the title role in Elsinore. In 1988 he made his directorial debut with the play in England. A veteran of the Royal Shakespeare Company, Mr. Jacobi has won the theatre's most coveted awards, and his television credits include such BBC series as *I, Claudius* and *The Shakespeare Plays* (for which he played both Hamlet and Richard II).

to no matter where you are in the world, no matter what age you are. He's survived four hundred years of reverence and idolatry. And during those four centuries he's also survived a great deal of iconoclasm. You can muck about with Shakespeare. You can do all sorts of things with and to him. It doesn't matter. He always survives.

He was a true man of the theatre, and he wrote wonderful parts. And I so hope he's looking down and approving of what we're doing with his plays when we try to be true to them. Whatever changes we make—textual transpositions, little felicities, whatever—we do so that the play and its characters will shine through. Our job is not to glorify any particular actor or director or designer, but to make the play as fresh and new-minted as we can.

I constantly remind myself that Shakespearean actors should approach their parts, in a sense, as they do contemporary roles. "Forget it's Shakespeare," I said to the actors I recently directed in *Hamlet,* and in a certain sense I meant it. When they come to Shakespeare, many actors tend to block off all those wonderful juices that naturally flow into modern parts. They cease to think, imagine, react, and feel as they would do normally. Their voices become different. Their bodies become different.

They must learn to make Shakespeare's language sound like the language they speak every day. They must live in the moment, create the words out of the air. They must forget that Shakespeare wrote them; get rid of the smell of ink; forget that anybody's ever said them before; pluck them out of the feeling and the situation and make them new.

I think that spontaneity comes from the immediacy of emotion. If actors regard these lines as speeches, famous speeches, then that is how they'll come out. Actors must not think that what they say and do is the result of what Shakespeare wrote. What actors say and do must be the result of what they're thinking and feeling, of what is happening in the play as the company has chosen to present it.

Of all of Shakespeare's plays, *Hamlet* probably holds the most interest for an actor. Because one of the things it's about is acting and pretending to be what you're not. It's a play that very much inhabits the world of the imagination: the world of what if, the world of finding out who you are, what you are, where you are in relation to other people and to the universe. This is true of most of Shakespeare, but *Hamlet* in particular comes very close to what acting itself is about, how actors react to a situation, and the whole craft of pretense, of being someone else.

Another reason *Hamlet* is so interesting for an actor is that a performance can never be definitive. There are as many *Hamlets* as there are actors to play Hamlet. Each one is different, because each production, to a great extent, turns on the personality of the actor who is playing Hamlet, and most actors have a Hamlet within them.

Hamlet is probably the clearest and most accessible of all of Shakespeare's plays, largely because it's such a wonderful story, with wonderful dramatic sweep rhythmically throughout the evening. Hamlet goes on a voyage of self-discovery. I don't believe he's ever truly mad. There are three occasions in the play, maybe four, when he drives himself to the edge of madness, but he never actually topples over that edge. He is in control of his own destiny for a great deal of the play.

This play has always been very important to me. Hamlet was the first major role I ever played as a schoolboy. That was when I was seventeen or eighteen. It really started my career as an actor, because my performance got a great deal of press and attention. I was very lucky in that respect. And so I had a very fond memory of the play long before I came to play it professionally in 1977. I played it again in 1979 at the Old Vic. Then I did it for television in 1980. And most recently, in 1988 I directed the very talented young actor, Kenneth Branagh, in a production for the Renaissance Theatre Company.

Over the years since I first began playing Hamlet, I have become more and more convinced that "To be or not to be" is to be treated not as a soliloquy, but as a dramatic speech to Ophelia. And my reasons are very much rooted in the text.

The way the Nunnery Scene is set makes it clear that Hamlet is not merely wandering round the castle with thoughts of death on his mind. Claudius has just told Ophelia that "We have closely sent for Hamlet hither." So Hamlet is on his way to a particular place at a certain time to fulfill an appointment.

The person he sees when he gets there is the person he least expected to see. For the last few weeks, every time he's met Ophelia she's run the other way; she's avoided him. If he saw her at the end of the corridor, she would turn the other way and off she'd go. Now he sees her and she doesn't run away. Of course, the last thing Polonius has said to her is "Walk you here. Read on this book." But most Ophelias have to not "walk you here" but go to the wings or hide behind a pillar, or do something to get out of Hamlet's way, whereas the whole point of the scene is for her to confront him.

If we presuppose that they have been lovers, that they are in love, then what better opportunity for him to be able to say "This is where my head is at the moment: I'm thinking about committing suicide." He speaks at her, through her, around her. He soliloquizes to her, if you like.

Well, what does Ophelia do while he's doing this? Does she just sit there? Yes indeed. What else can she do? She's in a very false situation, having been placed there by her father and the King. She knows they are listening behind the curtain. She doesn't want to be there. She knows she's a decoy. It's a completely false situation to her. Hamlet is the man she loves.

I played Hamlet this way with two Ophelias, and both said it helped them with their character. Because the irony is that the speech is about the very things that happen to Ophelia—madness and suicide. She goes mad, and commits suicide, virtually. Hamlet talks about both but experiences neither. In effect, though, hearing this speech plants the seed in Ophelia's mind.

The speech ends with "Soft you now, the fair Ophelia." This line is usually taken to mean "Oh look, there's Ophelia," but I take it to be one of those little titles he gives her, that we all give each other: the tedious Polonius, the villainous King. This is the way he sees her and he wants her to know it. Then he goes on to call her "Nymph." What he is saying is "Soft you now . . ." "I don't need you to say anything. Now you know where I am. Just remember me in your prayers. Now, off you go."

But of course, she's been placed there by her father and the King, so she's got to keep him there, however she can. "Oh, good my Lord," she blurts out, "how does your Honour for this many a day?" "How have you been lately?"

So the first thing she says is false, and immediately Hamlet knows that the whole situation is phony. We don't have to see the curtains moving to know that Hamlet senses Polonius' presence. From the beginning of the scene Hamlet has suspected that something is wrong, something is out of kilter. "She didn't run away like she usually does. She's had the most extraordinary reaction to what I've just said. Then she goes on to give back all these tokens of love and remembrance. Something is extremely wrong." And then when he confirms it by testing her, by asking her "Where's your father?" and she answers "At home, my Lord," in spite of the fact that everything in her being might be struggling to tell him the truth, their relationship, and their lives, can never be the same again.

From this point on, Hamlet realizes that there is no one in his world that he can trust. Everyone is acting, and survival will depend on choosing and playing one's own role as shrewdly as possible.

FOREWORD
by
Celeste Holm

The times in life we cherish most stay with us forever. Never can I forget the deep pleasure in the writings of Will Shakespeare that began when I was—what? six, I think—when I did a monologue of the balcony scene from *Romeo and Juliet* at our family camp in the Kittatinny Mountains, minus my front teeth. "The more I give, the more I have, for both are infinite"—a phrase I've always cherished and lived by. My father was very moved, and I was very proud.

CELESTE HOLM has played such diverse roles as Anna in *The King and I*, Anna in *Anna Christie*, Ado Annie in *Oklahoma!*, Judith in *Hay Fever*, and the title roles in *Mame* and *Candida*. Knighted by King Olav of Norway, jailed by the Mayor of New York, and appointed to the National Arts Council by the President of the United States, she is an ardent board member of the "Save the Theatres Committee" in New York City. She received the 1947 Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress in the film *Gentlemen's Agreement*. Her latest film was *Three Men and a Baby*, her latest play *The Road to Mecca*.

The following summer he and my grandfather found an ideal setting on the side of our hill, where they placed a cement stage with trees and shrubbery to provide wing space at each side. The background was one of mountains and the valley. One year we did a montage of several scenes, and my grandfather played Shakespeare—he had a beard anyway. I remember his magnificent lace ruff and the brass buckles on his shoes; and his voice, low and rhythmic as he presented the introduction to each scene from one of Shakespeare's plays, which he had written in iambic pentameter with great skill and charm.

That year I played Portia with a neighboring farmer's daughter, corralled into the role of Nerissa. But it was my mother's sleepwalking scene from "That Play!" which I remember with gut-wrenching clarity. She was so moving, so piteous, so mesmerizing in her anguish! My father and a cousin, playing the Doctor and a Gentlewoman, were rendered quite speechless, coming in late with the lines that should have followed. No Lady Macbeth I have ever seen could even touch her.

When I was about eleven, Fritz Leiber came to Chicago with his Shakespearean Company. We saw him in each production, *Hamlet, The Merchant of Venice,* and *King Lear.* Two weeks before we were to see the performance, my father would start reading aloud each of the plays. He spoke six languages without an accent in any of them and was fascinated with the subtleties of language. Whenever he came upon a word or phrase I could not understand, I would say so. What was Shakespeare trying to say in that scene? It took a long time! But my excitement grew in the anticipation of seeing what we had so lovingly and scrupulously examined—to see that our expectations were fulfilled. And oh my!

they were! Shakespeare's wisdom, his perception of people, his ability to make us identify the people with ourselves, all bespoke his infinite artistry. And I thought Fritz Leiber was wonderful! I believed him. He made all that elaborate language sound perfectly natural. And then he was quite different in every role, in shape and sound and look.

I remember sitting on a trunk backstage and looking up high into the dark flies and thinking, "This is where I will spend my life!"

My mother was a portrait painter, and *The Merchant of Venice* became a very special experience, because I saw change take place. The first time we saw the play Mr. Leiber played Shylock with an evil relish—with real villainy. My mother was not happy with this interpretation. She felt Shakespeare had written much more than that. By this time we had met the Leibers socially and my mother had arranged to do three portraits of him in his three major roles. I sat quietly when they discussed the role of Shylock. Surely this man was to be pitied as much as scorned. He had been ill treated, called upon only as a moneylender and not respected for that. His desire for vengeance was understandable, and his pathetic anguish at his daughter's desertion could be an agony for the audience. When he finally left the stage, the whole audience's heart could go out to him.

About two weeks later we came to see it again. And it was so! The "quality of mercy" was indeed felt by the audience in several directions. The play was infinitely richer. Was there an echo of this memory when I was given the opportunity to play in the film *Gentleman's Agreement,* which dealt with anti-Semitism?

And then my very first engagement in a major production

was touring the country in Leslie Howard's *Hamlet,* in which I understudied Ophelia. I had adored Leslie Howard on the screen, but now, to have the opportunity to appear on the same stage with him! Oh my!

Leslie Howard had opened in New York just three weeks after John Gielgud's triumphant *Hamlet,* which I much admired and in which Lillian Gish played Ophelia with red stockings. The critics were unkind—Leslie had not really been ready. But by the time he decided to take it on tour Leslie had grown tremendously in the part. We, the new members of the company, rehearsed under the stage manager's direction in the basement of a church on West 48th Street which had lots of pillars. It meant that much of the time we could not see each other, let alone the stage manager. We played ladies and gentlemen of the court, and we joined the company in Chicago. I never did see the show from the front.

We met Mr. Howard and company on Christmas Eve—the night before we opened at the Shubert Theater. We were lined up like servants on Boxing Day, and then the English contingent, Leslie, Mrs. Howard, Wilfred Walter (Claudius), Clifford Evans (Laertes), and Pamela Stanley (Ophelia) passed before us, formally shaking our hands. I was startled when Leslie suddenly leaned toward me and, gazing intently into my eyes, said, "Welcome to our company." I nearly swooned! Later I discovered he could only see when he was that close. How he and Clifford managed that duel in the last scene without killing each other or falling into the pit, I still cannot imagine.

The next night I entered Stuart Cheney's dark castle of Elsinore and was swept into the tragedy of the Danish Prince.

I asked Wilfred Walter how it was he could make his prayer so moving every night. He looked at me and said simply, "I've lived another day, haven't I?" He was a fine watercolorist and went out to paint wherever we were.

We played every major city between Chicago and Santa Barbara. It was a marvelous experience seeing America under such comfortable and exciting circumstances—our own sleeping cars, an observation car, and a diner was put on when needed. We played huge auditoriums; where the circus had played the week before, we could still smell the elephants. In the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville the dressing rooms were nil—all kinds of theaters, all filled with history. And we found ourselves in Shakespeare and Shakespeare in us, and we gave it to enraptured audiences every night! Once Pamela Stanley had a high fever, but I never got to play Ophelia.

Whenever I experience anything by Shakespeare, I am returned to that wonderful time when my father shared his enthusiasm so patiently with me. "Then" becomes "Now," which is what the arts are all about. They permit us to hold the "Now" a little longer; even to return to it again and again. Because of course "Now" is all we ever have.

Editor's Introduction to *HAMLET* and *TROILUS AND CRESSIDA*

In an eloquent review of *Ulysses,* the most celebrated novel of the twentieth century, T.S. Eliot praised the brilliance with which James Joyce deployed classical myth and legend to mirror "the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history." What Eliot commended in his fellow writer was what he himself was endeavoring to accomplish in *The Waste Land,* our century's most famous poem. And something akin to what both authors had in mind was what Shakespeare appears to have been doing more than three centuries earlier when he produced *Hamlet* and *Troilus and Cressida.*

Of all the plays he wrote, these are the two that have most persistently been described as "modern." *Hamlet* features the most intellectually intriguing of Shakespeare's characters, a protagonist of dazzling wit and incomparable complexity whose irreducible "mystery" (III.ii.395) has made him the very emblem of man's problematic identity in the post-medieval world. The

Prince of Denmark is a figure in whom entire nations have claimed to see their psyches registered, and his dilemmas have stimulated a body of commentary so vast that the literature generated by *Hamlet* is itself a subject of considerable significance. Meanwhile *Troilus and Cressida,* which crushes all the grandeur of antiquity into a squalid "Argument" about "a Whore and a Cuckold" (II.iii.82–83) and which seems to have been conceived as the most overtly provocative of Shakespeare's plays, has proven to be precisely that: a conundrum so riddling in its generic and thematic ambiguity that it has thus far defied even a consensus on how the work should be classified.

Both plays reflect the waning of an Elizabethan era whose glories were receding into gloom. As the sixteenth century gave way to the seventeenth, Shakespeare's contemporaries grew increasingly anxious over the position they felt placed in by a declining Queen who adamantly refused to forestall future chaos by naming her successor. A cosmos they had long thought stable and secure seemed threatened on every side by skepticism, pragmatism, and a Machiavellian "realism" that appeared to leave no room for traditional values. As they looked around them and saw the old order succumbing to what John Donne called the "new Philosophy," a way of thinking that cast "all in doubt," there were many who feared that they had been set adrift with neither moorings nor anchors. And they must have found their own uncertainties echoed in many of the characters, situations, and speeches of *Hamlet* and *Troilus and Cressida.*

Hamlet appears to have been written between late 1599 and early 1601; *Troilus and Cressida* appears to have been completed between late 1601 and early 1602. The two plays share a preoccu-

pation with the lusts—the perversions of reason and will—that corrupt civic harmony and bring great kingdoms to ruin. They focus on appetite and disease as metaphors for the causes and consequences of fatal error. They dramatize the disillusionments that occur when men and women discover that "Words, Words, mere Words" offer no real defense against "the hot Passion of distemper'd Blood" (*Troilus and Cressida,* V.iii.109, II.ii.168). They allude to the great theological and philosophical debates of the Renaissance. And they share so many links in language, atmosphere, and subject matter that it is hard to resist the notion that there must have been some overlap between them as Shakespeare brought the two works to fruition. What little we know about the production and publication history of *Troilus and Cressida* would seem to make it the perfect candidate for what the Prince of Denmark describes as a play that "was never acted, or if it was, not above once"—a drama that "pleas'd not the Million" because it was "Caviary to the General" (*Hamlet,* II.ii.467–69). And the fiery speech that the Prince and the First Player recite about the Fall of Ilium in II.ii of *Hamlet* would almost seem to have been written as a backdrop for the events and non-events that constitute the "action" of Shakespeare's play about "the matter of Troy."

Troy was a city with symbolic ties to the London of Shakespeare's day. According to a tradition popularized by a twelfth-century chronicler known as Geoffrey of Monmouth, "Troynauvaunt" had been founded by a great-grandson of the same Aeneas who had established the original "new Troy" in Latium. This Trojan descendant had supposedly given his name, Brutus, to the island that became known as Britain, and in the process he

had forged a kinship, both lineal and spiritual, that extended back from London through Rome (whose Republic had been instituted by another Brutus and defended by a third) to the plains of Phrygia. When an Elizabethan audience heard reference to the Fall of Troy, in other words, it was likely to connect that cataclysmic event both with the founding of London and with the cautionary moral that it was only through vigilance that a modern Troy could avoid the same fate that had overtaken its legendary forebears.

To a contemporary of Shakespeare's, then, "the matter of Troy" was closely related both to "the matter of Britain" and to "the matter of Rome." But Troy's significance was by no means limited to those associations. Like Rome, Troy was also an instance of what Saint Augustine had labeled "the City of Man." As such it frequently served as a metaphor not only for human civilization in general but for individual nations and individual human beings in particular. In a number of his plays, Shakespeare treats Troy as a figure for what Macbeth calls the "single State of Man." Troy's walls become symbols of the defense a soul must maintain against the siege of temptation, and for women those walls represent the virtue required to preserve chastity and honor. Troy's towers, her "wanton Tops," are emblems of pride, male lust, and a full panoply of ungoverned ambitions. And of course Troy's fall can be viewed as another version of the Biblical Fall of Man.

In many ways the battlements of Elsinore Castle function as a Danish counterpart to the walls of Troy, and it is thus very much to the point in *Hamlet* when the Prince of Denmark asks one of the visiting players to recite Aeneas' tale about "Priam's Slaughter."

Hamlet calls for this speech because he hopes to model his own vengeance after the mayhem the "hellish Pyrrhus" delivers in retaliation for his father's death at the hands of the Trojans. In Pyrrhus' cause the Prince sees an image of his own. Eventually, following a delay that recapitulates Pyrrhus' pause, the Prince succeeds in his aim to emulate his classical predecessor. As he does so, however, he himself dies and the kingdom of Denmark collapses around him.

The ironic consequence of Hamlet's Pyrrhic victory is that the crown he has been trying to wrest from the murderer of his father now falls to a Norwegian prince who has been skirting the borders of Elsinore in search of an opening that will enable him to avenge *his* father's death at the hands of the elder Hamlet. With no one left to rule Denmark from within, the expiring Hamlet correctly surmises that "th' Election lights / On Fortinbrasse."

Just what an Elizabethan audience would have made of Fortinbrasse's "Election," his conquest by default, is difficult to say. But it seems more than likely that many of the Globe's patrons would have read the play's conclusion as confirmation that a Troy-like Denmark had sown the seeds of its own destruction through vices analogous to those that had proven fatal to the original Ilium. Anyone who stopped to consider the implications of the Hamlet-Pyrrhus parallel, moreover, would probably have found it interesting that the Prince's role model is not a Trojan but a Greek. The effect of the playwright's allusion to the Fall of Troy is thus to align Hamlet with "Troy's" adversaries and portray him as the unwitting agent of another avenger who is left with nothing more to do than pick up the pieces and claim what remains of Denmark for Norway.

Like the Troy that Shakespeare depicts in *Troilus and Cressida*, the Elsinore the Prince seeks to set right in *Hamlet* is "rotten" at the core. For the Prince as for Thersites, the "Argument" is largely about "a Whore and a Cuckold." But of course in this case the cuckolder is also a murderer and a usurper; and that, for Hamlet, is the "necessary Question of the Play" (III.ii.49–50).

The protagonist appears to believe that there is only one real issue to be resolved before he proceeds with his "Course": he must "catch the Conscience of the King" (III.ii.633,641) and thereby determine whether the Ghost has spoken truthfully about how the elder Hamlet died. It may be that this is the only issue the playwright wanted his audience to consider, too, but it would seem more likely that Shakespeare expected the "judicious" (III.i.31) to ponder a pair of additional questions: (a) whether even a truth-telling Ghost should be regarded as "Honest" in a sense that would call for it to be taken at face value and obeyed, and (b) whether the Ghost's command should be weighed in the light of Biblical injunctions against private vengeance (most notably Romans 12:17–13:7).

The opening scenes of the play draw a significant contrast between the Prince's response to the Ghost and the reactions of more cautious observers such as Horatio and the Danish guard. And a number of Hamlet's speeches in the play, particularly the one he delivers as he observes Claudius at prayer in III.iii, would suggest that the Prince's approach to what he considers a sacred duty is difficult to reconcile with Christian precepts that are shown to be applicable elsewhere in the play. In the Prayer Scene, for example, Shakespeare arranges to have Hamlet look in on Claudius at a moment when the King's "Conscience" has been

caught in a way that the Prince would not have wished for. At this juncture it is just possible that even so wicked a man as Claudius might repent. We are surely meant to be surprised at this development, and to ask ourselves what kind of "Consummation" is now most "devoutly to be wished" (III.i.60–61). Then, a moment later, we are probably meant to ask whether Hamlet's decision to delay his revenge until some time when the King's "Heels may kick at Heav'n" (III.iii.93) isn't one that raises questions about the Prince's own relationship with Heaven. In similar fashion we are probably expected to be brought up short when Hamlet tells Horatio in V.ii that he has arranged for Rosencrans and Guildenstern to be "put to sudden Death, / Not Shriving-time allow'd" and then says that "They are not near my Conscience."

The Prince's dealings with his former schoolmates offer a particularly instructive insight into the way *Hamlet* would appear to operate as a work of drama. On the one hand we have the Prince's view of Rosencrans and Guildenstern as "Adders fang'd" (III.iv.199), willing and presumably knowing tools of the King's treachery. On the other hand we have what might be said to be "the play's" more objective portrayal of them, as a pair of loyal public servants who come to Court at the request of the new King, who seek to help the Queen find out why her son is acting so strangely, and who then proceed to function in what they assume to be the best interests of a legitimate monarch. So far as we can determine, they know nothing of what Claudius has done in the past and they are never made privy to the King's plots against Hamlet.

Like Polonius, and indeed like virtually every other character in this world of deception and counter-deception, Hamlet at-

tempts "by Indirections" to "find Directions out" (II.i.63). More often than not, for Hamlet as well as for others, those "Indirections" either result in or contribute tragically to "Purposes mistook / Fall'n on th' Inventors' Heads" (V.ii.396–97). To what extent the Prince himself is to be held accountable for the consequences of his misjudgments is a question the play leaves unresolved. A close examination of even his most eloquent soliloquies will disclose that Hamlet is frequently a man whose pride and passions get in the way of "That Capability and God-like Reason" that allows a person to discover the way "rightly to be Great" (IV.iv.35,50). But in the end he acts with a nobility that garners him what may well be the most touching benediction a tragic hero ever received: "Good night, sweet Prince, / And flights of Angels sing thee to thy Rest" (V.ii.371–72).

The pathos that marks the closing moments of *Hamlet* is generally absent from *Troilus and Cressida.* Drawing on a variety of sources, from Renaissance versions of Homer's *Iliad* and Vergil's *Aeneid* through such medieval treatments of the Trojan War as John Lydgate's *Sege of Troye* (circa 1412–20), William Caxton's *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye* (1475), Geoffrey Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* (1382–85), and Robert Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid* (1532), Shakespeare depicts most of the Greeks and Trojans as unheroic figures who bear little of the dignity associated with the honorifics tradition has bestowed on them.

"After sev'n years' Siege," as we learn in the Greek Council Scene near the beginning of the play (I.iii), Agamemnon and his fellow generals have nothing to show for their efforts to force the Trojans to surrender Helen. Menelaus, the Spartan King whose wife has been taken away from him by Paris to start this senseless

war, remains a laughingstock to Greek and Trojan alike. Achilles, the champion of the Greeks, lies tented with his "masculine Whore" Patroclus. Meanwhile Aiax, second only to Achilles in might, grows "factious" and breeds dissension in an army that has degenerated into little more than a contending assembly of petty fiefdoms. As Ulysses makes clear in his splendid speech on "Degree," the Commander has lost his command, and "Hark, what Discord follows."

But if things are in disarray on the outside of Troy's walls, they are even worse on the inside. Hector, the champion of the Trojans, proclaims in the Trojan Council Scene (II.ii) that after many thousand dead it should now be clear that Helen "is not worth what she doth cost / The Keeping." The "Moral Laws / Of Nature and of Nations speak aloud," he says, "To have her back return'd." The "Divinations" of the prophetess Cassandra warn of retribution if the Trojans "persist / In doing Wrong." And only men with "Ears more deaf than Adders" would fail to heed such pleadings and enact "true Decision." So Hector affirms; but before he finishes speaking, he disregards everything he has just said and announces that he is more inclined to proceed on "Resolution" than to be rendered unmanly by what Hamlet would call "the pale Cast of Thought." Like his "spritely Brethren," Hector is more interested in doing what promotes "Honor and Renown" than in using his influence to guide Troy toward a settlement of the conflict that would save thousands of additional lives and preserve the city from ruin.

Hector's non sequitur is typical of what happens and fails to happen in this curious play. Over and over we see debates that lead to invalid or foolish conclusions, plots that turn out to be

counterproductive, schemes that end either in comic frustration or in abject defeat. Small wonder, then, that in his 1982 television production of *Troilus and Cressida* Jonathan Miller hit upon *M*A*S*H* as the most appropriate twentieth-century analogue for Shakespeare's depiction of a war that represents the triumph of unreason, ennui, and debased nobility.

But of course *Troilus and Cressida* is about more than warfare. A love-plot is at the root of the conflict, and as long as Troy stands there would seem to be more than enough time for the leisure activities that Cressida associates with "Merry Greek" Helen. It may eventually turn out, as Helen jests, that "this Love will undo us all," but in the interim the "hot Blood" that is not being directed into battle may be devoted to Mars's more pleasurable pursuits with Venus.

In his choral comments on the action, the corrosive Thersites reduces every manifestation of love to lechery and the venereal diseases that follow. There can be no doubt that Thersites has a point, and the play's concluding bequest by an ostracized Pandarus makes it even more tellingly than do the railings of a deformed Court Fool. At the same time, however, a sensitive reading of the text will show that what draws Troilus and Cressida together for the first time is not limited to the base carnality we witness once events sweep Cressida over to the Grecian camp. The lovers clearly care for one another, and Cressida appears to speak her vows with just as much sincerity as Troilus. Later, as Cressida gives in to the degradation that is destined to define her name, Shakespeare allows us to witness an inner conflict and an awareness of consequences that earns her at least a degree of tragic pity. Like Troilus, she is a deeply flawed character, but

there would seem to be at least some distinction between the charges leveled at her by Ulysses and Thersites and the qualities in her that make Troilus lament her fall from grace.

By and large, the final scenes of *Troilus and Cressida* are as dark in their portrayal of human depravity as anything in the modern Theatre of the Absurd. After fighting gloriously and chivalrously in a battle that offers us a glimpse of what Troy might have been, Hector gives in to a baser impulse and thereby makes himself vulnerable to an Achilles who has none of the magnanimity that Troy's champion displayed in an earlier encounter. Once this happens, the Greek champion reveals a streak of barbarity that proves to be the most shocking thing in a work that was evidently designed to assault its audience's sensibilities.

When the copyright for *Troilus and Cressida* was first registered in 1602, the play was described as a "History" that had been acted by Shakespeare's company at the Globe. That designation remained on the initial title-page for the Quarto that was printed in 1609. A different title-page was substituted before the print-run was completed, however, and in the "Epistle" that accompanied it the play was commended as a "Comedy" that had never been "stal'd with the Stage." A little more than a decade later, when the publishers of the First Folio began printing *Troilus and Cressida* for the volume that would be issued in 1623, their initial plan was to put the play in the section of the book reserved for "Tragedies." Owing to some problem that developed after work commenced, they abandoned their original intention, withheld the pages that had been printed, and eventually repositioned the play in a no-man's-land between the "Histories" and the "Tragedies."

In many ways the publishing history of the play has proven prophetic. Some of today's editors and commentators group *Troilus and Cressida* with the Comedies and some with the Tragedies. Others have pointed to its affinities with those histories that are now referred to as the Roman Plays. But most have found it more helpful to link the play with the "Comical Satires" that enjoyed a brief vogue during the period of thespian mudslinging known as the War of the Theatres. It may well be that Polonius would have been able to classify *Troilus and Cressida* under one of his ludicrously composite headings in II.ii of *Hamlet:* "Tragical-Comical-Historical-Pastoral" comes close to capturing the play's mixture of genres. But it probably makes best sense to cite the authority of Cressida's Servant in I.ii of *Troilus and Cressida* and affirm only that this is a work that "stands alone."

The control text for the Guild edition of *Troilus and Cressida* is the 1609 Quarto, which appears to have been printed either from an authorial manuscript or from a close transcript of one. The Folio text offers several passages not found in the Quarto, and those have been incorporated in this edition. The Folio also contains a number of variant readings that may or may not be authorial. In most cases the Quarto's readings have been retained here in preference to the Folio variants, but the notes provide information about a number of the Folio readings that have been adopted by other editors of the play.

The control text for the Guild edition of *Hamlet* is the 1604 Second Quarto. Here again the Quarto text has been supplemented on occasion with passages that appear only in the 1623 Folio. And in many cases where the Folio text is manifestly superior to the Quarto, the Folio's readings have been adopted in

preference to those in the Quarto. Far more often than in most editions of *Hamlet,* however, the reader will find here the version of the text first printed in the Second Quarto, which may well have been set from Shakespeare's own manuscript of the play. Among other things, the Guild edition preserves the original names of such characters as Fortinbrasse (Fortinbras), Gertrard (Gertrude), Ostrick (Osric), and Rosencrans (Rosencrantz).

A corrupt version of *Hamlet* was published in 1603 in what is now known as the First Quarto. It appears to have been compiled from memory by one or more of the actors who had performed minor roles in the play, and it was probably consulted to some extent by the typesetters of the Second Quarto. None of its readings are adopted here in preference to readings in either of the more authoritative texts.