

Chapman's *Iliad* and Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*

Though much of Shakespeare's plot derives from Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, his treatment differs in a number of respects, evidencing his use of *other* sources for the Trojan War legend. His knowledge of Caxton and Lydgate, his use of Ovid, have been demonstrated, but his use of the Homeric *Iliad*, seven books of which had been recently (1598) translated into English by Chapman, remains under-studied. In his departures from Chaucer's version Shakespeare makes sustained reference to scenes available in Chapman's translation, the first into English, of books 1-2, 7-11 of the *Iliad*. For instance he makes the duel between Hector and Ajax the focal point of his plot, mentioned repeatedly from 1.3 - 4.5. The duel is completely absent from Chaucer, but newly available in Chapman's translation of Book 7. However, Shakespeare establishes a highly nuanced Homeric backdrop in order to distance his own work from it, manipulating Homeric particulars for opposite purposes.

Though retaining some Chaucerian details, Shakespeare carefully reworks the *Iliad* for parodic effect, as evident in a number of alterations. By erasing the gods, a complete departure from Homer, he furthers an anti-heroic, even parodic, stance, undercutting the *Iliad's* seriousness. He greatly increases Thersites' role, giving a Lucianic tone to the scenes in which he appears. The *Doloneia* (*Iliad* 10) is pivotal for his reading of the *Iliad*: the Greeks at their most anti-heroic. He reverses the audience's identification with Trojans instead of Greeks. In other ways he gives medieval characters Homeric trappings and functions. His *teikhoskopia*, for instance (1.2), features the Trojan heroes, not the Greeks, with Cressida, in Helen's place. In his first Trojan assembly, Troilus successfully overcomes Hector's opposition, arguing they should keep Helen (2.2), as Paris overcomes and insults Antenor in *Iliad* 7. These are but few of many indications that in his own plot *Troilus and Cressida* parallel and parody the two Homeric lovers at the *Iliad's* core, Paris and Helen.

Removing the gods is one of several means Shakespeare uses for inserting realism into the Trojan War tale, resulting in a satiric take on the *Iliad* (cf. Muir 22-23, contra Bloom 333), much like Euripides' comic undermining of the Trojan war in the *Helen*, and similar distancing, or reversal of perspective, in the *Orestes*. The extreme Latinate diction he employs should be seen as mock epic (contra McAlindon in Muir 25-26). His modification of the *Iliad* demonstrates Shakespeare's participation in larger renaissance currents, and its reception of classical culture.