

Troilus and Cressida



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Reviews of the Troilus and Cressida

Burking

Amazon seems to be including all the reviews of different editions and translations of Chaucer's "Troilus and Criseyde" on the same page. If you read the reviews here you will be very confused. Some refer to an original language edition (either the one made by R. A. Shoaf or Stephen Barney's Norton Critical edition), and some refer to a translation, at least one to the translation done by Nevill Coghill. The reader needs to pay careful attention to what edition is actually on the screen when making a selection.

If you want to read the original text, I would recommend Stephen Barney's edition. Barney is the editor who made the critical edition for the Riverside Chaucer, and his Norton Critical edition includes ten excellent critical essays in addition to Chaucer's poem, Giovanni Boccaccio's "Il Filostrato" (Chaucer's source), and Robert Henryson's "Testament of Crisseid." Shoaf's edition is also good, but twice as expensive, and it does not have as much contextual material. Coghill is a fine translator of Chaucer, and for the reader who does not want to tackle the Middle English he will provide an adequate experience. But beware: His smooth couplets sound more like Alexander Pope than the vigorous medieval writer he is translating.

Yla

This is an excellent edition with a thorough introduction, as well as bibliographic apparatus and notes that are easily accessible in the e-book format.

Anaragelv

The price is high, but so is the quality

Slowly writer

Great text with a useful production history.

Ce

The scene-by-scene summary and analysis were very helpful. The introduction was also quite informative.

fetish

The biggest reason to choose The Penguin Shakespeare edition of "Troilus and Cressida" is for the editor's devastating and insightful commentary on the play. The editor is Jonathan Crewe, of Dartmouth College. The way Professor Crewe sees it, Shakespeare was unimpressed with the great events and personalities of Homer's "Iliad," on which "Troilus and Cressida" is based. To the Bard, the story of the Trojan War was more dubious than inspiring. Crewe writes: "'Troilus and Cressida' questions the heroic legend of the Trojan War and strips its leading characters of their legendary charisma, revealing an often shameful although humanly recognizable underlying reality."

Shakespeare even questions whether or not the opposed parties of the war really do represent opposing civilizations on whose respective victory or defeat the future of the world depends. Tellingly, the English poet puts these words into the mouth of his character Thersites: "All the argument is a whore and a cuckold." For Thersites (and by extension Shakespeare), the great events of the Trojan War boil down to little more than farce. In the First Folio, "Troilus" was labeled a tragedy. Performing arts critic Cynthia Greenwood perhaps put it best having referred to the play as a mixture of dark comedy and bitter tragedy. Also, as we shall see, the play is as relevant as today's headlines.

Synopsis—After seven years, the Trojan War is at a stalemate. Inside the walled city of Troy, young Troilus loves Cressida, but she has defected to the Greeks. Troilus persuades her uncle Pandarus to intercede on his behalf. Meanwhile, Hector of Troy issues a challenge to the Greeks, daring any one of their champions to face him in single combat. The one he wants is their most fearsome fighter, Achilles, but he's sulking in his tent. The Greek commander Ulysses offers up the "blockish" Ajax hoping it will inspire Achilles to action. It doesn't. Once again the Greeks offer to abandon the siege if Helen is returned but, though a Trojan prophetess predicts disaster for Troy if the offer is refused, the Trojan leaders decide to continue the fight. In Act III, Pandarus is successful in returning Cressida to Troy, where Troilus and Cressida vow love to one another. Their union is only temporary, as Cressida's father, who has "incurred a traitor's name," seeks to make amends by offering his daughter to the Greeks in exchange for a Trojan leader held captive. In Act IV, they consent so Cressida returns to the Greek side once more. Only this time she falls for one of their commanders, Diomedes, despite her vows of fidelity to Troilus. Hector and Ajax meet in battle in single combat, but after a few blows they stop on account of kinship. In Act V, Ulysses allows Troilus inside the Greek camp so he may see Cressida again. Once there, he sees how faithless Cressida has been, having taken up with Diomedes. The next day in battle, Troilus and Diomedes fight one another but without serious injury to either. At the same time, Hector slays Achilles' intimate friend Patroclus. Achilles is enraged, but fearful of facing Hector alone. He orders his minions to surround the disarmed Hector and slaughter him. Achilles then takes full credit by instructing them to spread the word that he alone faced Hector and killed him in combat. What a guy. Seeing their best fighter has been slain, the Trojans retire from the field as the play ends. And that, Shakespeare seems to be suggesting, is how heroic legends like Achilles are born.

Which brings us back to the play's introduction by Jonathan Crewe, where he writes: "We tend to think of the 20th century as a time of unprecedented historical disillusionment. Repeated, searing experience of military catastrophe, genocide, political corruption, abusive sexual and racial politics, and collapsing ideals have resulted in forms of disbelief that have often been regarded as belonging peculiarly to the 20th century. Yet Shakespeare's play demystified the Trojan War with a critical energy that the 20th century barely equaled." Is it any wonder then that "Troilus and Cressida" while neglected for nearly 300 years has in recent times come into its own? Written in 1603, it seems William Shakespeare's "Troilus and Cressida" is as relevant as today's headlines.

Flash_back

This is a scholarly edition with extensive introduction and notes; however, it is not a great edition to bring to a Shakespeare reading, because the notes appear between scenes and you often have to flip through many pages to get to the next scene. This interrupts the flow, which usually proceeds through scene changes rather quickly when a group are gathered to read a Shakespeare play through. This criticism might not pertain the print version, where one can flip through pages quickly. I judge the quality of the kindle production to be above average.

Better than some better known plays of Shakespeare. Troilus & Cressida themselves just might be the least interesting aspect of this play. I liked everything else about the story. Particularly the portrayal of Achilles as the selfish, arrogant brute, Ajax as the dumb brute and Ulysses as the manipulative, unscrupulous military advisor. Interesting. I liked the play more than I expected to.

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