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AN INVESTIGATION OF CERTAIN SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURY RELIGIOUS ANXIETIES AS A CONTEXT FOR READING SHAKESPEARE'S "TROILUS AND CRESSIDA".

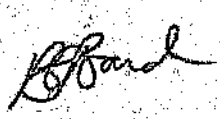
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The dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, for the degree of Master of Arts.

Degree awarded with distinction on 6 December 1995.

DECLARATION.

I declare that the dissertation is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, nor has it been prepared under the aegis or with the assistance of any other body or organisation or person outside of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Candidate: 

05.06.95

AN INVESTIGATION OF CERTAIN SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURY RELIGIOUS ANXIETIES AS A CONTEXT FOR READING SHAKESPEARE'S TROILUS AND CRESSIDA.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the possibility of reading Troilus and Cressida in the context of the changing religious debate of the era, and certain differences to be found in protestant as compared with catholic/christian humanist discourses. The dissertation undertakes a study of a variety of religious texts, particularly pertaining to the works of Calvin, Erasmus and More. Particular attention is paid to religious views regarding human action and value, and the various struggles which existed around these ideas. A close contextual study of the play is then undertaken, once more with emphasis on those voices of the play which appear especially informed by Elizabethan religious anxieties. This dissertation therefore uses Elizabethan religious debates around the issues of human action and value to broach questions which at the least complement similar anxieties present in the play.

PREFACE

I would like to thank my supervisor Professor Martin Orkin, who has been an invaluable guide throughout this dissertation. He has provided particular assistance both conceptually and stylistically. I would like to thank him also for his patient and repeated reading of the document in its various stages of completion, and for the encouragement he has provided throughout the process. I would like to thank my family for their love and support; my mother, Peggy van Coller who has given up much of her time to take care of my son so that I could do the work required for this dissertation; my father, Sam van Coller for his encouragement and reading of the document; My husband, Charles Brand for his unfailing patience and encouragement, and my son David Brand who is the inspiration in all that I do.

This thesis is the result of my own particular interest in Calvinism and protestant doctrines which began some ten years ago. I would like to thank the many people who have been involved in the variety of discussions I have had around these ideas through the years. Of particular influence have been John Newby of the George Whitfield Theological College, the Rev. Martin Morrison, and Jerram Barrs of L'Abri Fellowship in England.

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INTRODUCTION

"The ample proposition that hope makes
In all designs begun on earth below
Fails in the promised largeness. Checks and disasters
Grow in the veins of actions highest reared,
As knots, by the conflux of meeting sap,
Infects the sound pine and diverts his grain,
Tortive and errant, from his course of growth."
(I, iii, 2ff)

Agamemnon's speech as he opens the Greek council expresses an immense longing that human action will prove successful, as well as a profound awareness that the longing is perpetually confounded by disappointment. The expectations which arise from "ample proposition", "hope" and "designs", all of which suggest a certain greatness in the human subject, are dashed by the failure which is suggested to underpin aspirant human action. The image of the "sound pine" whose internal blemmish distorts what should be the grace and beauty of natural growth, bears the suggestion that there is something which lies deep within the human being which prevents the subject from attaining the "largeness" of action which she or he so desires.

The fact that Agamemnon locates the "checks and disasters" in some internal place, a mysterious infection which deforms and perverts natural growth, rather than in the external workings of the gods, marks a significant shift from earlier versions of the Troy story.(1) The idea that external disaster derives from internal illness was not an unproblematic one in the context into

which Agamemnon was originally speaking. This view is in fact found predominantly in the relatively new ideas which were being propogated by protestants, and particularly by Calvinists. Calvin interestingly uses a very similar language to Agamemnon, in his discussion of our experience of disaster:

> "Our destruction comes from the guilt of our flesh, not from God, inasmuch as we have perished solely because we have degenerated from our original condition...Let us accordingly remember to impute our ruin to depravity of nature, in order that we may not accuse God himself, the Author of nature. True, this deadly wound clings to nature, but it is a very important question whether the wound has been inflicted from outside or has been present from the beginning. Yet it is evident that the wound was inflicted through sin. We have, therefore, no reason to complain except against ourselves." (2)

The remarkable similarity of language and ideas found between Agamemnon and Calvin, suggests that Agamemnon is drawing extensively from some of the ideas which were present in the religious context from which the play derives. It is not only Agamemnon however, who expresses a profound anxiety about an infected human nature, and the combined problem of acting heroically. A struggle exists throughout the play between an heroic desire and idealism, and the disastrous outcome of these longings. Indeed in their discussion of "Puritans and Predestination", Princiss and Lockyer suggest that in Troilus and Cressida, Shakespeare "dramatizes a view of human nature that is close to that of the Puritans, for the Trojan hero, Hector, while recognising what is right and just, is unwilling (or, as the Puritans would have put it, unable) to make this his goal. Instead he advocates a course of action that he knows to be wrong." (3)

Shakespeare's play is acutely concerned with the struggle between heroic desire and human failure, where even the loftiest hopes seem to give way to disaster. This concern was also deeply engraved in much of the religious thinking which was going on at the time of the play's writing. This being so, a study of the play within the context of Elizabethan religious debates could provide helpful insight into the struggles and anxieties which are present in the play, and which would have been present for a seventeenth century audience, in a way which is often not fully appreciated in our own century.

i

Religion and Calvin in Seventeenth Century England.

The culture from which Shakespeare's play derives was greatly influenced by theological discourses. Douglas Bush argues that one cannot overestimate the importance of religion in Elizabethan life:

> "Religion, it does not need to be said, was a main and often intense concern of greater multitudes of people during this period than in any other before or since, and in many ways it profoundly affected the lives of those who were not especially devout." (4)

Citing Jaggard's Catalogue of 1619, Bush goes on to claim that nearly three-quarters of the books published around this time were religious. (5) These books were both widely read and circulated:

> "Next to the Bible the best-sellers of this period were such books as John Norden's Pensive Man's Practice (1584), which had gone beyond forty impressions by 1627; Arthur Dent's Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven (twenty-five editions, 1601-40); John Dod's Plain and Familiar Exposition of the Ten Commandments (nineteen editions,1603-35); and Lewis Bayly's Practice of Piety (1612), which achieved some fifty reprints during the century". (6)

While there is very little evidence (7) to prove conclusively that Shakespeare read either these texts or other religious texts which were readily available to him , Frye argues convincingly that "Shakespeare was quite literate in Christian theology , and easily conversant in its categories." (8) Indeed, given the availability of religious material which found its way into the schools and universities, and the importance of the seventeenth century sermon (9) it seems likely that Shakespeare was in close contact with the religious doctrines of his day.

The religious context of Elizabethan England was highly complex and heterogeneous, with even protestant discourses being delineated between Calvinist and Arminian dialogues. (10) A full examination of the richness of discourses would require a separate and more extensive study than is possible within the confines of this thesis. However, the protestant concern with human potential, and its application to human value and action, which is also a central concern in Shakespeare's play, is well represented in the works of Calvin.

Calvin probably had more influence on European and English protestant discourses that any other theologian, and Calvinism was arguably the characteristic theology of the Elizabethan protestant. (11) Collinson suggests that from the beginnings of

the Reformation in England which is early in the reign of Edward VI, the local fortunes of Calvinism and the place of England in international Calvinism were matters inseparably intertwined." (12)

John T. McNeill in the History and Character of Calvinism discusses Calvin's influence on, and interaction with a large number of English theologians. The most notable among these are Bucer and Bullinger, whom he argues introduced Calvinism to the English mind. Archbishop Cranmer consulted and protected Calvinist scholars during the reign of Edward VI, and John Knox, Christopher Goodman, William Whittingham, and Anthony Gilby led the English congregation in Geneva during their exile. With the reign of Queen Elizabeth, the exiles returned to England and "Calvin was prompt to resume his counsel of the English government, and in January 1559, writing to arouse the lagging zeal of Cecil, he makes it clear that he has already admonished Elizabeth to keep to the right path." (13)

Calvin's Institutes were first published in England in 1576, and by 1580 they had been translated into English. (14) Also important was the publication of the Genevan Bible, first published in 1560, with additional Calvinist comments on the relevant scriptural passages. (15) Between 1579 and 1615 there were at least thirty-nine editions of the Genevan Bible, all of which were printed in England. McNeill notes that as early as 1579 the word "Calvinist" first appears in printed English, with the equivalent "Calvinian" appearing as early as 1566, and "Calvinism" appearing in 1570. (16)

Literary critics have also noted the important influence of Calvin on Elizabethan England, and have thus argued for the importance of his doctrines in the understanding of the literature of this period. Frye, in his discussion concerning the relationship of Christian doctrine and Shakespeare, holds that:

> "As author of the protestant summa, Calvin not only exerted a wide influence both direct and indirect upon sixteenth-century religious developments, but he also included the full range of doctrine with such clarity and balance that virtually every theological development of the period can be charted by reference to agreement and disagreement with his expressions." (17)

Sinfield also suggests that Calvin had a strong influence on Elizabethan doctrine and writing. Thus in his study Literature in Protestant England, on which I have drawn extensively in this thesis, Sinfield argues that:

> The Elizabethan Church looked not to Wittenberg, where Luther's successors had moderated his doctrine, but to Geneva. The libraries of theological students at the turn of the century were replete with works by Calvin, Peter Martyr, Beza and Bullinger; the sermons of the Calvinist preacher William Perkins were a chief feature of the life at Cambridge between 1592 and 1602." (18)

Calvinism was not however, a unified voice within Elizabethan religious discourses. From the onset of the Reformation in England a controversy emerged which centred primarily on the extent of the sinfulness of human nature, and what the human subject could achieve in view of the nature which was ascribed to her or him.

Of interest to this thesis is that part of the controversy which debates the degree to which the human being has been infected by sin, and in turn how sin has affected the subject's ability to act righteously or in conformity with her or his desire.

Calvinists and puritans believed in the total depravity of the human subject. Accordingly the subject is unable to do anything which might be considered worthy of salvation, or which might lift the subject from the limitations of the earthly body, to the realm of the divine. This dilemma leaves the subject utterly dependent on God for salvation. Catholic, Arminian, and Christian humanist discourses resisted the doctrine of predestination inherent in these views, and argued instead that through the performance of certain sacraments and rituals or good works, the subject is able to ready herself or himself for the work of God's grace. Thus, the subject instead of being passive in the work of salvation, participates with God through the effective performance of various actions, in the securing of eternal life.

The relationship of human sin to value and action is debated at length among Calvinists and other Christian theologians. The fact that the extent of human sinfulness and its influence on human action, was a matter of controversy, is important when considering the intensity with which heroic aspirations exist in tension with human doubts in Shakespeare's play. Like the context from which it derives, Troilus and Cressida is marked by

competing discourses and struggling dialogues where the possibility of action which is worthy of applause becomes the matter of debate.

ii

The Use of Religious Texts and Terms.

By the seventeenth century, the debates which had been sharply defined fifty years earlier, had become more diverse and widespread. For the purposes of this thesis where I am primarily concerned with the debate around human sin, action and value, I have gone to some of the sources of this discussion in religious texts. I have therefore used texts from the latter part of the sixteenth century where the arguments both for and against total human depravity, are clearer and more concise than the complex and detailed discussions which emerged out of them.(19) When drawing on protestant discourses I have primarily used John Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion, along with Certain sermons or Homilies (1547), which were a set of sermons designed as an aid to ignorant preachers and were "incisive formulations of a new and relatively uncompromising Protestantism". (20). During her reign Elizabeth authorized a reprinting of the Homilies, and the first book of the Homilies was reprinted at least eleven times during her reign. (21) While her authorization of the book was ambiguous (22) and "neither it, nor its earlier companion, could claim officially to define doctrine in the English Church, thousands of Englishmen grew up and lived their lives with the weekly sound of its contents droning past their

ears and occasionally impressing its teaching on their minds." (23)

In this thesis I am primarily interested in protestant, and more specifically Calvinist views of the relationship between human depravity and value and action, given the play's apparent anxiety about the failure of human action to achieve that which it sets out to do. However, the presence of an heroic ideal in the play, which points to a certain greatness on the part of the human subject, makes it important to provide some understanding of those religious discourses which represented the human subject in a more optimistic light. When drawing on those discourses which existed in tension with protestantism, primarily because of their higher view of human potential, I have tried to use theologians who are well known in their opposition to protestant doctrines on human depravity. Erasmus' famous debate with Luther surrounding the problem of free will and salvation, first published in 1524, is one example where protestant and catholic humanist discourses are clearly delineated, and where a view is put forward which suggests that the human subject is able to contribute in some way to her or his salvation through effective action. Another example of an even more vehement opposition to protestantism appears in the views and writings of Thomas More. Drawing, primarily on Utopia (1516) as well as on "Responsio ad Lutherum" (1523) and a "Dialogue concerning Heresies" (1529), More's views on the social production of effective action provide insight into a decidedly more optimistic view of human potential, where human value derives directly from social approval.

My discussion of More and Erasmus has been included in order to provide an understanding of religious debates as they existed in dialogue with each other, thus creating a society which was both complex and heterogeneous in structure, and where systems of belief were mobile rather than static and unchanging. While I predominantly use protestant discourses in order to understand some of the anxieties which are present in Troilus and Cressida, an awareness of those discourses which challenged dominant protestant ideas helps to provide an understanding of a play which is essentially dialogical in its own construction. Thus we find in the play that human heroism is not just abandoned as it is in protestant discourses, but instead is the site of a tragic struggle between human aspirations and human failure.

Anxieties which existed in Elizabethan religious debates can therefore be traced in some of the struggles which occur in the play. It is interesting therefore that the president of the theological school in Geneva in 1835, J.H. Merle d'Aubigne, writes of the controversy which emerged at the time when Colet founded the celebrated school of St Paul during the early years of the English Reformation, by using the language of the Trojan battle:

> "Two parties, the Greeks and the Trojans, entered the lists, not to contend with sword and spear, as in the ancient epic, but with the tongue, the pen, and sometimes the fists. If the Trojans (the obscurants) were defeated in the public disputations, they had their revenge in the secret of the confessional. Cave a Graecis ne fias hereticus, was the watchword of the priests - their daily lesson to the youths under their care. They looked on the school founded by Colet as the monstrous horse of the perjured Sinon, and announced that from its bosom would inevitably issue the destruction of the people...Not more numerous were the contests witnessed in times of yore on the classic banks

of Xanthus and Simois" (24)

When referring to the presence of these contesting discourses, I frequently use the terms "protestantism" and "christian humanism". In this thesis, "protestantism" has been used to denote that voice which sees the human being as totally depraved and thus unable to effect action which is both good and right, and is therefore dependent on God alone for salvation. "Christian humanism" on the other hand signifies that voice which argues for a higher potential in the human subject, making good and right action possible through the observance of certain rituals or sacraments (for example the sacrament of penance) usually set down by the church. However, in important senses labels are problematic. For instance while christian humanism had its foundations in the Catholic Church, probably because of their particular emphasis on the importance of the sacramental system as a means for readying the subject for the working of God's grace, it would be wrong to assume that all catholics were humanists. Again, there are protestant discourses such as arminianism, which could be argued to have some roots in christian humanism, as they too rejected the doctrines of predestination inherent in Calvinism, and thus sought to make some space for human participation in the gaining of salvation. Once again, it would be impossible within the confines of this thesis to pay attention to such and multiple other variations of seventeenth century religious discourse. While I use "protestant" and "christian humanist" as a working distinction in this thesis, this is not to deny the larger full and multifaceted complexity of voices which contribute to opposing sides of the debate. The distinction provides a useful working means of drawing together those voices in a dialogue which have basic similarities, and

differentiating between those voices which are in opposition around some central issue.

(iii)

Some Critical Perspectives of the Play as a Site for the Struggle between Heroic Aspirations and Human Failure.

My examination of religious discourses present in Elizabethan England which occurs later in the thesis, shows that ideas about effective human action were highly problematic for the seventeenth century subject. It is of interest to me then that some of the existing criticism on Troilus and Cressida reveals an awareness of the way in which the voices in the play struggle with the concepts of human action and value. Spencer (1961) argues that Shakespeare's play is the acting out of the distance between what the subject hopes to achieve, and the reality in which the subject lives, where achievements fall far short of the desire. Thus the play "describes in a new way the difference between man as he ought to be and man as he is. He ought to be part of an ordered state in an ordered universe; he ought to act according to reason and not according to passion." (25)

Similarly discussing action and value which fails to match the original intention in Shakespeare's play, Rossiter (1961) comments:

> "They all fancy or pretend they are being or doing one thing, whereas they are shown up as something quite different: something which egoism, or lack of moral insight, prevents their recognizing." (26)

Rossiter's observation is interesting as he draws attention to the disjunction which exists in the play between human aspiration and human achievement. Furthermore, he argues that the play locates the source of this disjunction in the internal imperfection of the human subject. This observation about the play is remarkably similar to Calvin's account of human depravity which is worked out in failed and corrupted action.

In his discussion of Ulysses, Brower (1971) notes a similar dissolution of heroic action. Brower argues that "Through his (Ulysses) role Shakespeare dramatizes the public philosophy of the Renaissance hero-prince, t[illegible]view that supports and validates the heroic ideal in Chapman and in many other Elizabethan writers." However, "the nobility of the views he expresses, treated with seriousness elsewhere in Shakespeare, makes the irony of his inaction the more devastating. Failure to connect word and deed was never plainer." (27)

Linda Charnes (1989) draws attention to the problematic way in which Shakespeare represents heroism in the play, and thereby contrasts the play with earlier representations of the Troy story: "far from lamenting lost heroic ideals, Shakespeare's play betrays the awareness that all notions of heroism, of "true" honor and glory, are in their very moments of conception always located in the past, always conceived as irretrievably lost." (28) Charnes therefore also shows an awareness of the struggle which is present in the play between heroic aspirations and the difficulty of transforming those aspirations into a present reality. Foakes (1971) notices a similar relationship of

Shakespeare's play with the heroes present in the older versions of the story; "The whole play carries an element of general parody in relation to the grand Homeric legend of the Trojan war, as the heroes of that are displayed in the fumbling and insecure postures of Shakespeare's characters." (29)

Each of these critics draws some attention to the struggle which takes place in the play between the desire to act heroically and a reality in which these desires at best amount to nothing, or at worst end in the very opposite of what they first aspired to. It is this dilemma which is the source of my own interest in the play, and forms the basis for my study of the play in relation to Elizabethan religious dialogues, for the question of human heroism was central to Renaissance religious debates.

iv

Structure and Method.

While I argue in this thesis that an understanding of Elizabethan religious discourses will help inform a particular reading of the play, I do not claim any direct relationship between the play and the religious discourses of the day. Instead I attempt to draw on the central ideas being debated by those participating in religious discourses, in order to gain some understanding of the cultural context from which the play derives, and within which many of the anxieties with regard to the problem of human potential which the play manifests, enact themselves. However, there are instances in the play where the dialogue seems especially invested with religious language and meaning. Here I

will attempt to draw a closer religious analogy from the text. In spite of this, I finally make no attempt to claim that the play is an acting out of religious discourses, but argue instead that a reading of the play in the context of these discourses enriches both an understanding of the anxieties present in the play, and an understanding of some of the ways in which an Elizabethan audience would have received the play.

In order to undertake this task, it seemed important to provide as much of the context from which I draw my observations on the play, as early in the thesis as possible. The first part of the thesis therefore deals entirely with the struggles which I found in the play, as they were debated by theologians. Drawing primarily on the writings of Calvin, Erasmus and Thomas More, I have considered the ways in which religious thinkers of the late sixteenth century debated issues of action in heroism and love, the location of value in the public or private self, and the problemmatic relationship between woman's action and woman's value. Once I have provided some of the religious context in which these issues were specifically dealt with, I turn to the play in the second part of the thesis. In my study of the play I have selected only those dialogues which seem to me to be particulary illuminated by an understanding of religious context.

(v)

Some Theoretical Assumptions.

In this study of the play I have endeavored to highlight its structure as dialogical. I have been reluctant therefore to provide a reading which claims the play is either a protestant or a Christian humanist view of the world. Instead I have argued that the play is made up of a number of differing voices, each of which tries to make sense of reality in a different, but meaningful way, and each of which can be appreciated more comprehensively in the context of the then current religious debates.

The argument in this thesis draws on the works of Alan Sinfield's Literature in Protestant England (1983), Stephen Greenblatt's Renaissance Self Fashioning (1980), and Jonathan Dollimore's Radical Tragedy (1989). These critics argue that literature is never written in a vacuum, but instead emerges out of a network of ideological and political practices. The signifier thus shifts from one age to the next, making an ahistorical fixture of meaning problematic. Any study of literature must therefore to some degree attempt to unravel some of the threads in the vast social network from which the work issues. In this vein Sinfield argues that, "We may think of the literary text as a particularising pattern laid across the (changing) grid of social possibilities. It heightens and affirms some customary structures, disconfirms others, and perhaps discovers new lines of force." (30) In the vein of these critics, I believe that Troilus and Cressida emerged out of an era of intense theological controversy, where human potential and worthy action were highly

contentious. A reading of the play which draws on this context, must provide some helpful insight into the struggles and anxieties which exist in Shakespeare's play, and which might otherwise seem baffling to the reader who comes to the play with hope of finding the heroism and chivalry which are present in the classical and medieval accounts of the story.

NOTES:

1. Bullough, Geoffrey; (1966); The Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare; Vol 6; Routledge & Kegan Paul: London; Columbia University Press: New York; Page 95. Bullough makes the observation that in Shakespeare's play things go wrong because of human error, whereas earlier accounts of the Troy story locate disappointments in the workings of the gods or Fortune.
2. Calvin, John, 1559, The Institutes of the Christian Religion, ed. John T. McNeill, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, Page 253.
3. Princiss, G.M. and Lockyer, R. (eds), 1990, Shakespeare's World, Background Readings in the English Revolution, Continuum: New York, Page 52.
4. Bush, Douglas, 1945, English Literature in the Earlier Seventeenth Century, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, Page 294.
5. Bush, Douglas, 1945, English Literature in the Earlier Seventeenth Century, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, Page 294.
6. Bush, Douglas, 1945, English Literature in the Earlier Seventeenth Century, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, Page 294.
7. In his discussion of Shakespeare and Christian doctrine, 1963, Frye disagrees with the school of G. Wilson Knight which holds that Shakespeare's writing is essentially and pervasively Christian, and therefore reads all of his work with reference to its Christian significance. He argues further that there is no concrete evidence to suggest that Shakespeare read any specifically religious texts, and that Shakespeare's use of religious material seems to derive from a background of ideas rather that from identifiable books.
8. Frye, Roland Mushat, 1963, Shakespeare and Christian Doctrine, Oxford University Press; Page 10.
9. Douglas Bush has argued for the importance of the sermon in seventeenth century England. Collinson in International Calvinism 1541-1715 (1985), comments on the fact that in Elizabethan England sermons were preached in six or seven languages. Frye discusses Shakespeare's attendance at church based on documentary evidence which shows that he also lived and died as a conforming member of the Church of England.
10. For a discussion of those protestant discourses which did not adhere to Calvin's views on total depravity and election, and which in consequence had a higher view of human potential than did Calvinists, see Tyacke, Nicholas; (1987);

Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism; Clarendon Press; Oxford.
11. Tyacke, Nicholas, 1987, Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism, Clarendon Press, Oxford; Page 1.
12. Collinson, Patrick, England and International Calvinism, in International Calvinism 1541-1715, 1985, ed. Menna Prestwich, Clarendon Press: Oxford Page 198.
13. McNeill, John T. 1962, The History and Character of Calvinism, Oxford University Press; Page 313.
14. Calvin, John, Institutes of the Christian Religion, Edited: John T. McNeill, Westminster Press, page xlviii.
15. Tyacke, Nicholas, 1987, Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism, Page 2.
16. McNeill, John T. 1962, The History and Character of Calvinism, Page 309.
17. Frye, Roland Mushat, 1963, Shakespeare and Christian Doctrine, Page 15.
18. Sinfield, Alan, 1983, Literature in Protestant England, Croom Helm: London & Cranberra, Barnes & Noble books: New Jersey, Page 13.
19. By the Seventeenth Century protestant discourses had already become delineated between Puritans who were rigidly Calvinist in their doctrines, and Arminians who rejected Calvin's views on election and predestination.
20. Bond, Ronald B. 1987, Certain Sermons or Homilies, University of Toronto Press, Page 3.
21. Haugaard, William P. 1968, Elizabeth and the English Reformation, Cambridge University Press, Page 276.
22. According to Haugaard, the authorisation finally given by Elizabeth to the second book did not place ministers under an obligation to read the homilies during services. This is of some note because Elizabeth's authorisation for the first book expressly required that the Homilies be read each Sunday in services, and Cox proposed this again for the second edition.
23. Haugaard, William P. 1968, Elizabeth and the English Reformation, Page 276.
24. d'Aubigne, J.H. Merle, 1846, History of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century, Baker Book House: Michigan, Page 722.
25. Spencer, Theodore, 1961, Shakespeare and the Nature of Man, The Macmillan Company: New York, Page 121.
26. Rossiter, A.P. 1961, Angel with Horns and Other Shakespearean Lectures, ed Graham Storey, Longmans: London, Page 134.
27. Brower, R.A. 1971, Hero and Saint: Shakespeare and the Graeco-Roman Heroic Tradition, Oxford University Press, Page 274.
28. Charnes, Linda, 1989, "So Unsecret to Ourselves": Notorious Identity and the material Subject in Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida", Shakespeare Quarterly, Vol 40, No 4, Page 417.
29. Foakes, R.A. 1971, Shakespeare: The Dark Comedies to the Last Plays, Routledge & Kegan Paul: London, Page 44.
30. Sinfield, Alan, 1983, Literature in Protestant England, Page 4

CHAPTER 1

SETTING A CONTEXT - THE PROBLEM OF HUMAN ACTION AND THE RENAISSANCE RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSY

"It is from the conflict of such exaggerated views that have been born the thunders and lightnings which now shake the world. And if each side continues to defend bitterly its own exaggerations, I can see such a fight coming as was that between Achilles and Hector whom, since they were both equally ruthless, only death could divide" Erasmus. (1524)

Erasmus' use of the language of the Trojan story to represent conflict which was emerging in the religious dialogues during the Renaissance, is particularly interesting given that Shakespeare's own Troilus and Cressida reflects many of the anxieties which formed the content of these debates. Erasmus' famous debate with Luther centred around the issue of what the human subject could and could not achieve through her or his own efforts. The debate is essentially a dialogue about the efficacy of human action, and as such asks what would have been a central concern for Renaissance thinkers, "can the human subject contribute to, or achieve her or his salvation through effective action?" While Erasmus answers in the affirmative to this question, Luther argues vehemently that human action is ineffective and ultimately ends in failure when the subject endeavors to perform that to which she or he most aspires. Troilus and Cressida relates a remarkably similar discussion as the efficacy of human action in the areas of love and heroism becomes the centre of a tragic

struggle where human aspirations finally end in failure and disillusionment.

Erasmus' warning might well be considered prophetic in the light of the blood letting which emerged out of England's Reformation history, and to which Foxe's Book of Martyrs bear gruesome testimony. In the light of Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida, with its overtones of brutality and human violence, where lofty ideals end in a horrifyingly different reality, the warning takes on a grim significance.

The religious context in which Shakespeare's play was written, was thus marked by vastly differing ideas about human potential. The Reformation gave rise to a darkly pessimistic view of what the human subject could achieve, given that the subject was inhibited by a depraved nature. In contrast to the ideas of the Reformation, there was at the same time a renewed optimism in the heroic potential of humanity, as Christian humanists drew their inspiration from a classical view of the world. A brief study of Calvin, Erasmus and More, shows three differing, and even conflicting arguments about human effectiveness, coming out of an age where such different beliefs were held together in an uneasy, and at times explosive, tension.

(i)

Calvin: Human Depravity, Failed Human Action and the Grace of God.

Certain literary critics have drawn attention to what they have perceived as the presence of struggle in Renaissance religious discourses. Greenblatt, for example, notices an increase in this struggle during the sixteenth century, where particular Christian discourses which "brought a growing suspicion of man's power to shape identity", were juxtaposed with the more optimistic ideas relating to the possible fashioning of a human identity which acted and behaved in a desired way (1). According to Sinfield's particular analysis, this increased struggle is located in the emergence of the protestant reformation, and particularly in the more radical views propagated by Calvin, which Sinfield argues had a profound influence on sixteenth century England (2).

Central to the religious debate between the reformers and the Church of Rome was the issue of the manner of the sinner's justification before God (3) The controversy surrounding the possibility and extent of the sinner's participation in her or his salvation, through the cultivation of virtues and the performance of good works, was essentially a debate about the potential of human action. The Reformers, in opposition to the Church of Rome which held that the performance of good works in some way rendered the sinner meritorious of salvation, held instead that salvation was dependent solely on the unmerited grace of God. (4) Speaking into this controversy and in opposition to the views of Rome, Hooker argues for a view of the

subject which denounces the possibility that the subject might justify herself or himself, or anyone else, before God through righteous action:

> "A strange and a strong delusion it is wherewith the Man of Sin hath bewitched the world, a forcible spirit of error it must needs be, which hath brought men to such a senseless and unreasonable persuasion as this is, not only that men clothed with mortality and sin, as we ourselves are, can do God so much service as shall be able to make a full and perfect satisfaction before the tribunal seat of God for their own sins, yea a great deal more than is sufficient for themselves, but also that a man at the hands of a bishop or a pope, for such and such a price, may buy the overplus of other men's merits, purchase the fruits of other men's labours and build his soul by another man's faith...The reason is this: we are justified by faith; for Abraham believed, and this was imputed to him for righteousness...God beholdeth us in the righteousness which is imputed, and not in the sins which we have committed." (5)

Much of the protestant doctrine present in Elizabethan England, such as that put forward here by Hooker, derived directly from the works of Calvin (6). These works, the most famous of which were his Institutes of the Christian Religion, provide a profound insight into protestant views of human potential and action. It is here that one finds a full argument for the fall of humanity, the subsequent depravity of human nature, and the incapacity of the human being to achieve anything through her or his actions which might be worthy of applause, much less God's recognition.

Calvin begins his argument with the presupposition that God is the creator of all things, the prime actor from whom all other action derives:

> "For, quite clearly, the mighty gifts with which we are endowed are hardly from ourselves; indeed our very being is nothing but subsistence in the one God"(7).

In order to validate this presupposition, Calvin draws attention to the greatness and beauty of the natural world, and in particular the human subject, claiming that the testimony of the creation imprints on the mind of every human being some knowledge of God as creator. This in itself has certain ramifications regarding human action. The subject, who owes all life to God, must therefore ascribe all action to him through obedience to his laws:

> "For how can the thought of God penetrate your mind without your realising immediately that since you are his handiwork, you have been made over and bound to his command by right of creation, that you owe your life to him? - that whatever you undertake, whatever you do, ought to be ascribed to him? If this be so, it now assuredly follows that your life is wickedly corrupt unless it be disposed to his service, seeing that his will ought for us to be the law by which we live."(8)

In response therefore to the presupposition that God is the author of all life, and the initiator of all action, Calvin concludes that the only valid human action is that which conforms to the laws set down by the creator. Before the fall these were communicated directly to Adam and Eve, while after the fall they were set down in scripture, which was believed to be the revealed word of God. The execution of right action therefore results in reward, while wrong action brings upon itself due judgment:

> "For the pious mind realizes that the punishment of the impious and wicked and the reward of life eternal for the righteous equally pertain to God's glory. Besides, this mind restrains itself from sinning, not out of dread of punishment alone but, because it loves and reveres God as Father, it worships and adores him as Lord."(9)

Thus the universe was believed to be governed by a God who upon creation conformed all things to the likeness of his nature. The created order was therefore believed to be the reflection of God's nature, and as such offered instruction to the human subject on how she or he was to act. The basis of Calvinist doctrine rests on the belief in the sovereignty of God over all of life, and the subjection of the human subject to that sovereignty. It is from this basis that the rest of Calvinist theology finds its meaning.

Once Calvin has clearly established this basis, his discussion of the human subject covers two areas, the human being before, and then after the fall. An understanding of these is vital to an understanding of the tensions which emerge both within Calvinist doctrine, and between this largely protestant way of thinking and other Christian discourses which were present at the time.

It is argued that, prior to the fall, the human subject bore in her or his being the very image of God, an image which Calvin discusses at great length preceding this section of the Institutes, in which the idea of the trinity is elaborated on in great detail. This will however, not be explored in this thesis as it falls outside of the main topic of analysis. It is this image which Calvin argues, distinguishes the human subject from animals, and testifies to the greatness of the creator:

> "In short, the many preeminent gifts with which the human mind is endowed proclaim that something divine has been engraved upon it; all these are testimonies of an immortal essence... the nimbleness of the human mind in searching out heaven and earth and the secrets of

> nature, and when all ages have been compassed by its understanding and memory, in arranging each thing in its proper order, and inferring future events from the past, clearly shows that there lies hidden in man something separate from the body."(10)

This something separate is the soul, which is the immortal part of the human subject, able to apprehend God and conform to his will. Prior to the fall the human subject had a free will which enabled her or him to choose between good and evil, and then act in accordance with that choice:

> "Therefore God provided man's soul with a mind, by which to distinguish good and evil, right from wrong, and, with the light of reason as guide, to distinguish what should be followed from what should be avoided. To this he joined the will, under whose control is choice. Man in his first condition excelled in these preeminent endowments, so that his reason, understanding, prudence, and judgment not only sufficed for the direction of his earthly life, but by them men mounted up even to God and eternal bliss. Then was choice added, to direct the appetites and control all the organic motions, and thus make the will completely amenable to the guidance of the reason."(11)

The argument claims therefore, that the human subject was created with the capacity for effecting right or perfect action, which was action which conformed to the laws inherent in creation itself. Not only was the subject capable of right action while on earth, but also had within herself or himself the capacity of attaining salvation or eternal life. Thus the attainment of salvation was directly linked to the execution of right action:

> "In this integrity man by free will had the power, if he so willed, to attain eternal life."(12)

According to Calvin the unfallen soul consisted of two faculties, understanding and will. The presence of an uncorrupted understanding and will made possible the uniting of lofty desires and noble action. However, while righteous action was possible, it was not inevitable, but was the product of a choice made on the part of the individual. Thus while God is sovereign, the subject is still responsible for her or his actions which issue from choice. A tension emerges therefore between a God who regulates all things according to his divine plan, and the human subject who had the freedom to choose between right and wrong, and who did indeed choose wrong and was held responsible for that choice. Calvin makes no attempt to resolve this tension, instead holding both to be true and crucial to his entire argument.

Calvin, along with all Christian thinkers of the time, held to a belief in the fall of the human subject, which for Calvin was an historical event rather than a myth fabricated to explain the presence of evil. How Calvin, and most other protestant thinkers differed from other theologians, is in the extent to which the fall was applied to the present human condition. For Calvin, and for others such as Luther and Tyndale, the entire human being was affected by the fall, and all human capacity for reason, language and action became corrupted or tainted with sin. Sin for Calvin was the "deprivation of a nature previously good and pure"(13), which infects the entire subject, both mind and heart:

> "Here I only want to suggest briefly that the whole man is overwhelmed - as by a deluge- from head to foot, so that no part is immune from sin and all that proceeds from him is to be imputed to sin."(14)

It is this utter corruption of the human subject which Calvin termed "total depravity". Calvin goes on to claim that this corrupt nature becomes inherited from one generation to another, for nothing but corruption can issue from corruption:

> "we are corrupted not by derived wickedness, but we bear inborn defect from our mother's womb."(15)

It was with the onset of the fall that the gap emerged between desire and action. It is this very gap which Agamemnon draws attention to in Troilus and Cressida, as he points out the failure of action to reach its desired potential. Calvin explains the presence of lofty desires in corrupt vessels by arguing that although our entire nature became corrupted, there remain glimpses of our original nobility, and reflections of God's perfection are still manifest in his creation.

> "First, in man's perverted and degenerate nature some sparks still gleam. These show him to be a rational being, differing from brute beasts, because he is endowed with understanding. Yet, secondly, they show this light choked with dense ignorance, so that it cannot come forth effectively... we see implanted in human nature some desire to search out the truth to which man would not aspire if he had not already savored it. Yet this longing for truth, such as it is, languishes before it enters upon its race because it soon falls into vanity. Indeed man's mind because of its dullness, cannot hold to the right path, but wanders through various errors and stumbles repeatedly, as if it were groping in the darkness, until it strays away and finally disappears."(16)

Calvin argues here that the human life is a life lived in tension between lack and desire, and the inability to fulfill that desire. While there is on the one hand a longing for truth, there

is on the other an incapacity for discerning truth. There is a desire also for good and right action, while at the same time an inability to effect right action. The tension is essentially the tension between the subject as it once was and what it now is, which exists as a gap between desired perfection, and inhibiting imperfection. Calvin argues then for a life of profound anguish which longs for something it is unable to even discern, let alone attain.

For Calvin, salvation, the ultimate goal of all human action, remains always beyond our grasp. He occupies an entire book of his Institutes, in order to argue at great length the incapacity of the human subject to effect right action and thus attain salvation. So strong is his argument rejecting human capacity for good, that for most of this large portion of his Institutes he seems to ignore his earlier claims, that some reflection of God's image remains in the human subject, making it possible for her or him to long for what she or he is unable to bring into effect. Calvin therefore argues that the human subject is without true wisdom which must be necessary for the carrying out of right action:

> "Flesh is not capable of such lofty wisdom as to conceive God and what is God's, unless it be illumined by the Spirit of God."(17)

Where Calvin and the protestants differ so markedly from other Christian discourses of the era, is in their emphasis on the utter brokenness of the human mind and therefore human reason. Right action becomes impossible when the subject is unable to fully perceive and articulate that action. The emphasis in this

section of the Institutes is therefore on the incapacity of human reason and understanding. Referring to Paul, Calvin subsequently observes that:

> "He admits that men's minds are incapable of sufficient understanding to know their own calling."(18)

At the same time however, Calvin maintains that while our reason has been corrupted, it has not been utterly destroyed. It is therefore possible to distinguish between justice and injustice, even if the subject is unable to know and effect justice fully and perfectly. It is for this reason that we are held accountable for our wrong understanding and action:

> "natural law is that apprehension of the conscience which distinguishes sufficiently between just and unjust, and which deprives men of the excuse of ignorance, while it proves them guilty by their own testimony."(19)

A tension emerges once more as Calvin makes reference to the gap between our very limited aspirations and our even greater inability to achieve those aspirations:

> "For we know all too well by experience how often we fall despite our good intention. Our reason is overwhelmed by so many forms of deceptions, is subject to so many errors, dashes against so many obstacles, is caught in so many difficulties, that it is far from directing us aright."(20)

It is in his arguments rejecting the human capacity for right reason and action, that Calvin begins to pave the way for his famous and controversial views on election and predestination.

Thus he argues that since the entire human being has been marred by sin, it is impossible for her or him to achieve perfect good through her or his own effort. All right reason and action is therefore attributed to the working of God:

> "the way to the Kingdom of God is open only to him whose mind has been made new by the illumination of the Holy Spirit."(21)

Our incapacity to choose and effect good is therefore a universal and irreversible problem. Our only hope must therefore lie in God's miraculous intervention:

> "Because of the bondage of sin by which the will is held bound, it cannot move toward good, much less apply itself thereto, for a movement of this sort is the beginning of conversion to God, which in Scripture is ascribed entirely to God's grace."(22)

God, by an act of mercy and grace transforms the will, which by nature is bent away from doing good, to one which is able to achieve good through the working of his power. Good works, Calvin argues, can never be attributed to the human subject, but instead are always the work of God's Spirit:

> "But since the whole of Scripture proclaims that faith is a free gift of God, it follows that when we who are by nature inclined to evil with our whole heart begin to will good, we do so out of mere grace."(23)

Calvin further argues that it is not the human subject who will be rewarded for her or his good works, but rather it is God and his grace which will be glorified:

> "The first part of a good work is will; the other, a strong effort to accomplish it; the author of both is God. Therefore we are robbing the Lord if we claim for ourselves anything either in will or accomplishment.(24)

Thus quoting Augustine, Calvin asserts that:

> "God does not crown our merits but his own gifts; we call "rewards" not what are due our merits, but what are rendered for graces already bestowed!"(25)

It is out of the argument that the human subject is unable to will and effect what is good, and must therefore rely wholly on the grace of God, that Calvin's ideas on election and predestination stem. For it must follow that not all wills are bent towards good, and therefore grace has been bestowed on some and not on others. Calvin maintains however that those on whom grace is bestowed, in no way merit that grace in and of themselves. Instead, all are guilty before God, and are deserving of his eternal punishment. It is thus by his divine mercy, which remains a mystery, that God bestows his grace on some. Quoting Augustine once more, he argues that:

> "We know that God's grace is not given to all men. To those to whom it is given it is given neither according to the merits of works, nor according to the merits of the will, but by free grace. To those to whom it is not given we know that it is because of God's righteous judgment that it is not given."(26)

This argument is not without problems for both the believer and the unbeliever. For the believer must come the total acceptance that no good action can ever be attributed to her or him, for it is always God who is the author of such action. The idea of

reward is therefore problematic and must be seen rather as an increased and undeserved blessing. In addition to this, it is held both in Calvin and in the Scriptures that perfection is always unattainable this side of death, for both the believer and the unbeliever. Thus the believer must live always in desire and anxiety. Desire because she or he has been made conscious of a perfection which is other than her or his immediate reality, and for which she or he must always be striving, even if that striving must also be attributed to God; and anxiety because whenever she or he confronts her or his constant failure, she or he must consider the possibility that maybe she or he is not one of the elect and is destined for eternal punishment. The unbeliever, according Calvin, maintains within herself or himself some vestiges of God's image, in which she or he was originally created. There is thus some awareness of a perfection that has been lost, and life is thus spent in longing after that perfection, but never being able to achieve it because of the bondage of sin and the depravity of the will.

According to Calvin's interpretation of the Scriptures, God's grace is not without a price, in order that his justice may be satisfied. However it is God, and not the human subject who pays this price in the person and divinity of Christ. It is the action and value of Christ rather than the action and value of the human subject, which are central to the believer. The hope of the believer therefore rests not in her or his action and value, but rather in the action and value of Christ who becomes the perfect substitute for human incapacity. Calvin, drawing extensively on Scripture, argues at great length concerning the divine and human nature of Christ:

> "In short, since neither as God alone could he feel death, nor as man alone could he overcome it, he coupled human nature with divine that to atone for sin he might submit the weakness of the one to death and that, wrestling with death by the power of the other nature, he might win victory for us."(27)

From the moment of the fall, it is claimed that God promised a way back to himself, which was the sacrifice of Christ in space and time. Prior to Christ's sacrifice, the Old Testament speaks of a sacrificial system which looked forward to Christ's substitutionary death, through which God's judgment was to be appeased:

> "Therefore, under the law, Christ's image was set forth in sacrifices to give believers the hope that God would be gracious to them, after having been reconciled to them through atonement made for their sins. Surely, since in every age, even when the law had not been published, the Mediator never was promised without blood, we infer that he was appointed by God's eternal plan to purge the uncleanness of men; for shedding of blood is a sign of expiation."(28)

Christ while on earth lived a life free from sin. In other words he willed and acted in conformity with God's law, and therefore earned for himself, through his right action, eternal life. Yet he suffered the punishment deserved by a sinner, for in his death on the cross he experienced separation from God and descent into hell. Thus it is said that God punished Christ instead of the sinner, so that his righteous actions are attributed to the believer, and the believer's sinful actions are dealt with in Christ:

> "If the effect of his shedding of blood is that our sins are not imputed to us, it follows that God's judgment was satisfied by that price...the burden of condemnation from which we were freed, was laid upon Christ... for God has given the price of redemption in the death of Christ; thus he bids us take refuge in Christ's blood, that having acquired righteousness we may stand secure before God's judgment"(29)

The way in which Christ's righteousness is imputed to the subject is by faith in his substitutionary death on the cross. However, since the mind and reason are unable to apprehend Christ, it is God the Holy Spirit who works faith in the subject:

> "Paul shows the Spirit to be the inner teacher by whose effort the promise of salvation penetrates into our minds. A promise that would otherwise only strike the air or beat upon our ears. Similarly, where he says that the Thessalonians have been chosen by God "in sanctification of the Spirit and belief in the truth" (II Thess 2:13), he is briefly warning us that faith itself has no other source than the Spirit."(30)

Th[illegible] is by faith in Christ's substitutionary death, and not by the action of good works, that Calvin and the protestants maintained the subject was saved. This was primarily because, according to their interpretation of Scripture, the subject was incapable of willing or effecting perfect action which is the requirement of God. Thus, even when the believer (who has believed only by the work of the Spirit, and not by her or his own understanding and effort), has come to faith and therefore been transformed in both mind and will, she or he is still utterly reliant on the work of the Spirit for the continuance of faith, and for a life lived in obedience to God. However, the fact that the human subject is unable to will and effect the right action, does not absolve her or him of responsibility. For although the subject sins by necessity, she or he does not sin without compulsion:

> "Nonetheless the will remains, with the most eager inclination disposed and hastening to sin. For man, when he gave himself over to this necessity, was not deprived of will, but of soundness of will... Therefore simply to will is of man; to will ill, of a corrupt nature; to will well, of grace."(31)

According to Calvinist doctrine then, good and noble action lies beyond human capacity. Whatever good does issue from human endeavor is ascribed wholly to the grace of God. Apart from faith (which itself is a work of God) in the perfect actions and value of Christ, the subject is without hope and is destined for ultimate destruction. There is therefore nothing in and of the human subject which is considered possibly heroic or worthy of praise. It is to God in Christ that all the honour and glory are given, for he alone is able to act justly and mercifully.

(ii)

Erasmus and a more optimistic view of human action.

Calvinist theology was however by no means the consensus of the day, and was but one view (albeit a highly influential and revolutionary view) in the religious debate which was raging during the Renaissance. The controversy was profoundly concerned with the relationship between human action and salvation, or the possibility of human action achieving that which was good and right. The protestant assertion of salvation by faith alone, which itself was the work of God rather than the subject, met with intense opposition from those Christian theologians who were concerned that where everything is dependent on the grace of God,

there is nothing left for human will and action. It was around this issue that Erasmus' "heresy" was first detected, and in 1516 and 1517 his editions of the Greek Testament came under criticism at Wittenberg for their misunderstanding of the full nature of sin and for undervaluing grace.(32) Erasmus, who started out as one of the friends of the Reformation, was to become one of its most bitter opponents, and his famous disagreement with Luther published as the Diatribe on Free Will in 1524, has become one of the classic examples of the controversy which raged between the reformers and the Catholic Church.(33)

Like Calvin, Erasmus and his ideas found a following in England, and his connection with England, and his influence on its theology is well documented. (34) Erasmus made at least six visits to England, the first occurring in 1499, and the sixth in 1517. Erasmus drew his friends from a wide theological circle, and among these were Colet, a protestant, whom he met in Oxford, and Thomas More, a catholic (35). Erasmus has been aptly described as a London Reformer for his outspokeness on the corruption within the church (36). In 1502 Erasmus' Enchiridion Militis Christiani, which has been argued to owe much to Colet (37), was first published in English. It was however The Praise of Folly, which was to become Erasmus' most widely read work, and which gave him international recognition (38). This work was first translated into English by Sir Thomas Chaloner in 1539, although its first edition appeared in Paris in 1511 (39). Unlike Erasmus' later works, The Praise of Folly was held high in the estimate of Luther (40). Erasmus' Greek edition of the New Testament was readily available in England, and was met with mixed responses from theologians (41). One of the criticisms

leveled at the Greek New Testament is summarised in a letter by Spalatin, a close friend of Luther's, wherein he reflects the chief argument which the protestants had with Erasmus:

> "I read our Erasmus and my respect for him daily decreases. He pleases me because, constantly and learnedly, he convicts and condemns monks and priests of inveterate sloth and ignorance; yet I fear he does not sufficiently reveal Christ and the grace of God, in which he is much more ignorant than Lefevre d'Etaples, for human considerations prevail with him much more than divine." (42)

Erasmus' debate with Luther in the Diatribe on Free Will provides us with Erasmus' most concise account of his grievances against the protestants. It must be noted at the outset that there are many similarities between Erasmus and the protestants, and that their point of departure from one another is focussed almost entirely on the extent to which each sought to apply sin to the the human subject. Thus on the one hand, Erasmus seems to agree with the protestant thinkers as he opens the debate by claiming:

> "... may we entreat the mercy of the Lord without which no human will or endeavor is effective; and what is evil in us, let us impute to ourselves, and what is good, let us ascribe wholly to divine benevolence, to which we owe our very being."(43)

On the other hand, arguing strongly in favour of free choice, he claims that:

> "By free choice we mean a power of the human will by which a man can apply himself to the things which lead to eternal salvation, or turn away from them...."(44)

The primary difference between Erasmus and Calvin is the extent to which they apply the fall to the human being. We recall that Calvin, as did Luther and Tyndale, applied the fall to the entire human subject, claiming that the flesh, as well as the intellect and reason had been corrupted by sin. Calvin also maintained that although the entire person had been affected by sin, the human subject still retained some traces of God's image, thus distinguishing her or him from animals, and investing her or him with certain value. However, these traces of God's image were not considered enough to make possible the execution of right action. Speaking of the protestants in general, Erasmus claims that:

> "They immeasurably exaggerate original sin, by which they would have even the most excellent powers of human nature to be so corrupt that they can do nothing of themselves except be ignorant of God and to hate him."(45)

Erasmus' emphasis is slightly different. He claims that reason has not been so corrupted as to make free choice impossible:

> "For although free choice is damaged by sin, it is nevertheless not extinguished by it. And although it has become so lame in the process that before we receive grace we are more readily inclined toward evil than good, yet it is not altogether cut out, except that the enormity of crimes which have become a kind of second nature so clouds the judgment and overwhelms the freedom of the will that one seems to be destroyed and utterly lost."(46)

Erasmus seems to maintain therefore, that while free choice is a possibility, it is still unlikely that the subject will choose the good. Consequently, in an effort to maintain some area in

which the human being participates in her or his salvation, and thus in the effecting of right action, Erasmus breaks action down into three components:

> "For first, some of the orthodox Fathers distinguish three stages of human action: the first is thought, the second will, the third accomplishment. In the first and third they give no place to the working of free choice; our soul is impelled by grace alone to think good thoughts, and by grace alone is moved to perform what it has thought. Yet in the second phase, that is, in consenting, grace and the human will act together, but in such a way that grace is the principle cause, and the secondary cause our will."(47)

For Erasmus the human will and God's grace either cooperate or are at odds with each other, for the human will may either choose to accept or disregard the grace of God. However, for this choice to be free choice, as Erasmus argues it is, the human being must be able rationally to discern what she or he is choosing or rejecting. Thus while Erasmus does claim that it is God who must initiate the first good thought which ultimately makes righteous action possible, the salvation of the subject depends in the final analysis on the subject's choice. For Calvin the choice remains with God, while for Erasmus the choice is shifted to the human subject. One might say that, in Erasmus' argument, the possibility of right human reason and action is strongly suggested. However Erasmus' argument does not manage to escape the determinism of Calvin's, for where Calvin argues that all are equally morally corrupt and in equal need of God's grace for the execution of right action, Erasmus argues that some are born better than others which makes them more likely to choose to cooperate with God. Erasmus therefore considers human value in an entirely different way to Calvin:

> "Our disputation was about man, whom God made in his image and likeness and for whose sake he created all things. When indeed we see some born with the most comely bodies, with outstanding qualities, as though they were born to virtue, again others with monstrous bodies, others liable to horrible diseases, others with minds so stupid that they are little removed from inanimate brutes and some even more brutish that beasts, and others with minds so prone to crime that they seem almost borne onward by fate, and others openly mad and demoniac..."(48)

Here Erasmus argues that some are inherently better than others, and thus able to choose and execute right action, while others, due to stupidness or deformity are unable to make the right choice, causing them to reject the grace of God. This argument carried to its logical conclusions gives rise to its own struggles. The optimism with which human reason is regarded in certain subjects must result in accompanying anxieties when human reason does indeed fail. The emphasis that Erasmus also places on the body, suggesting that there is some relationship between physical appearance, and effective reason and action, must also lead to difficulties as the reality of a mutable and disintegrating body is daily confronted by the human subject.

(iii)

Thomas More: social consensus and the production of righteous action.

While Erasmus' dialogues with the reformers remained theological and academic in their tone and function, Thomas More's confrontation with protestant thinking was far more political and personal, as he realised the implications of protestant views of

ineffective human action for society, as well as for the individual.

Like Erasmus, More first entered into the controversy by responding to the writings of Luther in "Responsio ad Lutherum", which was printed under the pseudonym of Guillielmus Rosseus, in 1523 (49). By 1519 Luther had already caused a stir in England where his books were readily available and circulated in large numbers. (50) Luther soon came under suspicion of being heretical, and by April 1521 Cardinal Wolsely prohibited any further introduction of Luther's books to England. In May his books were officially burned during a sermon delivered by Fisher, the Bishop of Rochester. (51) In October 1521 a royal orator delivered a paper by Henry VIII to the pope on Luther's errors.(52) Luther's reply was both violent and abusive, claiming the authority of the Word above the King of England.(53) The horror of the humanist community at Luther's tract is seen in a letter from the court of the Archbishop of Mainz, where Wolfgang Capito wrote to Erasmus:

> "With the greatest insults Luther replies slanderously to the English king. If we of the pontifical faction were not more foolish and departed in a major way from the truth, never would the world endure such wanton injury. They have striven up till now with the pen; soon it will be waged with arms. The desire for fighting, for carnage, grows. So many plots kindle, so many leagues are declared and everywhere Christ, the author of peace, is crucified. I desire the old security." (54)

It was in reply to Luther's inflammatory tract that More wrote his "Responsio". It is here that he began his career as a catholic apologist, a career which was to last ten years and include a vast source of anti protestant writings, among which

was his famous debate with Tyndale published as "The confutation of Tyndale's answer" in 1530. In the "Responsio" More sets down his argument that truth is the product of consensus among the church authorities, who are lead by the unfolding revelation of the Holy Spirit. In contrast to Luther, More argues that truth is not found solely in the Scriptures, but is found also, and primarily, in the ongoing teachings of the Catholic Church (55). For More, the individual's salvation depends on her or his membership of the public Catholic Church and the receiving of, and obedience to the sacraments administered by the church. Righteous action is therefore expressed in the carrying out of the rites and rituals of a public consensual religion (56).

In his "A Dialogue Concerning Heresies" (1529), Thomas More enters further into the debate around faith versus works. Unlike the reformers who maintained that our works are insufficient for salvation, More argues that both faith and good works are necessary if we are to be saved. More thus argues with Luther:

> "For he (Luther) sayth that god hath no nede of oure good workys/ but hath nede of our fayth/ and hath nede that we sholde byleue hym. Trouthe is it that he nedeth neyther oure faythe nor our workys. But syth that he hath determyned that he wyll not saue vs without bothe yf we be of dyscrecyon to haue both/ therefore haue we need of both." (57)

More believed that good works are both possible and necessary if the human subject is to be saved, and argues that salvation rests ultimately with the individual rather than God (58). More's decidedly more optimistic view of human potential and the effectiveness of human action is seen also in his earlier, and arguably most famous work Utopia.

Utopia was first published in 1516, with further editions appearing in 1517 and 1518 (59). Writing at a time when there was a "powerful but diffuse upsurge of religious sentiment" (60), More's Utopia does not ignore the human capacity for sin, but offers instead a remedy for this malaise which so afflicts society. Utopia is thus a representation of a society which is governed by laws which curb human sinfulness to such an extent that human sin and its effects are done away with (61). More essentially suggests in this work, that the social corruption which is wrought by human sinfulness, can be eradicated by a system of laws which function to curb and eventually destroy sin. There is thus the inherent suggestion that human beings can triumph over sin and achieve perfection through the institution of rigorous social controls and rituals which individuals are compelled to obey.

While Thomas More's work Utopia represents More's dream of humanity as he would like it to be, rather than a view of humanity as it actually is, it gives some insight into More's profound distrust of protestantism. In contrast to protestant doctrine which urged the need for private repentance and reconciliation with God through faith in Christ alone, More's vision of the ideal society is one in which all spheres of life are made as public as possible, through a highly rigid and structured system of law and social organisation.

Utopia describes a society where all its members work for the common good of all. It is also a society which is controlled by the strictest regulations, where even recreation time, allotted

one hour out of twenty four, must be spent in a manner which is morally uplifting (62). The rest of the hours in the day are carefully divided between compulsory agricultural labour, the practising of a particular trade or craft, sleeping and eating (63). The number of people in each household is regulated, and the oldest male in each household is the ruler (64). Meals are held communally, with the children serving their elders (65).

What is particularly interesting about Utopia is More's frequent assertion of the freedom of its citizens. However, no sooner is a freedom asserted than it is qualified by a series of regulations or presuppositions. Practically, individual freedom is virtually non existent, falling prey to the all pervading notion of the public good. Thus, while the Utopian is free to travel anywhere, she or he must first gain permission from the authorities and family. Travelling does not excuse a person from work, and the traveller is still required to practise her or his craft along the road. The public ownership of the subject is seen as More claims,

> "anyone who takes upon himself to leave his district without permission, and is caught without the prince's letter, is treated with contempt, brought back as a runaway, and severely punished. If he is bold enough to try it a second time, he is made a slave. Anyone who wants to stroll about and explore the extent of his own district is not prevented, provided he first obtains his father's permission and his wife's consent. But wherever he goes in the country side, he gets no food until he has completed either a morning's or an afternoon's stint of work. On these terms, he may go where he pleases within his own district, yet he is just as useful to his community as if he were at home." (66)

The subject's good behaviour is assured through a number of means. The first is the risk of punishment or slavery if she or he disobeys the law (67). The second is the constant public surveillance of the individual: "So you see there is no chance to loaf or kill time, no pretext for evading work; no taverns, or alehouses, or brothels; no chances for corruption; no hiding places; no spots for secret meetings. Because they live in the full view of all, they are bound to be either working at their usual trades, or enjoying their leisure in a respectable way." (68) Lastly the subject is encouraged toward virtue by the promise of reward or punishment in the afterlife (69). There is no consideration given to the problem of perfect obedience, which is considered under the circumstances to be more natural than disobedience.

The only form of acceptance or approval, and therefore pleasure in Utopia, is derived from one's work for the community. Reward and a coherent subjectivity is primarily located in the right performance of those actions which are prescribed by the society. As Greenblatt aptly points out, this kind of society effectively does away with the idea of guilt, which generally arises in other societies due to the failure to perform right action as it is prescribed by the law of God. In Utopia it is no longer God who prescribes right action, but the society, (70) and that action is always external to the subject, a public display of obedience to social consensus.

Although written prior to More's entrance into the theological debates of the time, his account of Utopian life offers some clue to the reader as to More's horror of protestant theology. Greenblatt even suggests that this work is a response to something that More must have sensed in the religious climate of the day, a response particularly to protestantism (71). Contrary to the protestant assertion that truth is found in scripture alone, and that it is God's Spirit who inspires the individual to discern that truth, Utopia describes a society where truth, reality, and action are socially defined. Greenblatt goes so far as to suggest that faith for More was a social phenomenon (72), the shared conviction of the community, where a universal moral code is absent. This notion is certainly borne out in "Responsio" and "A Dialogue concerning Heresies" where truth is located in the consensus and traditions of the Catholic Church. Contrasting the Catholic Church to the emerging reformed churches, More claims:

> "the essence of God's promise lies in the continuity of the solid, public consensus of Christian men and women through the centuries; the sign of the covenant is precisely that the church is known and visible. Christian faith dwells in the light of public knowledge, not the in dark, hidden recesses of the individual soul or in the "no place" of the invisible church."(73)

The difference between More and the protestants was essentially a difference in their views of the human potential to both know and effect right action. The protestant belief in human depravity, their deferral to God as he is revealed in Scripture alone, and their dependence on a private relationship with God, rather than participation in the public religion of the Catholic Church with its traditions and the surety of social consensus, held for More

a deep horror of a life lived in overwhelming doubt (74). For More, the responsibility and possibility of right action lay with the human subject, and was defined by the consensus of the society. Righteous action, according to More, was the product of social consensus, ritualised in a public religion, which was openly accessible to the obedient and diligent subject.

(iv)

The Renaissance anxiety about human action.

This brief discussion of figures occupying differing perspectives of the religious debate which raged in the era, reveals a profound anxiety over what constituted right human action, and the possibility of effecting that action.

For Calvin the human subject is by nature depraved, thus making right action impossible. Salvation therefore cannot be earned, but is instead the gift of God, bestowed on the subject as faith in the perfect action and substitutionary death of Christ.

For Erasmus right action is the necessary precursor to the working of God's grace and the ultimate salvation of the subject. The subject therefore participates or cooperates with God in the process of salvation. As some are saved and some aren't, Erasmus concludes that some must be born better than others, enabling them to align themselves successfully with the working of God's grace.

More, while closely aligned with Erasmus theologically, defines right action in largely social and political terms. According to him, the church, which is inspired by the Holy Spirit, both defines and ritualises right action for the individual. The health and success of a society is therefore dependent on the adherence of its individuals to the laws and rituals of the Catholic Church. Right action as defined by the church is therefore not only possible, but is absolutely necessary if society is to function properly.

The cumulative effect of these doctrines on the sixteenth and seventeenth century subject must have resulted in extreme anxiety over what constituted human subjectivity and human action. Arguably this may well have led, as Sinfield remarks, to a society marked by its dislocation and internal contradictions (75).

Notes

1. Greenblatt, Stephen; (1980); Renaissance Self Fashioning; The University of Chicago Press; page 2. The two discourses referred to here by Greenblatt are the protestant discourse which was suspicious of human capacity to shape identity, and those humanist christian discourses which asserted the possibility of the opposited.
2. Sinfield, Alan; (1983); Literature in Protestant England; Croom Helm Ltd; Londen; page 3.
3. Hughes, Philip Edgcumb, (1982), Faith and Works, Cranmer and Hooker on Justification, Morehouse - Barlow Co., Connecticut, Page 9.
4. Hughes, Philip Edgcumb, (1982), Faith and Works, Cranmer and Hooker on Justification, Page 9.
5. Hooker, Richard, Works, arranged by John Keble, Vol III, 1888, Oxford Clarendon Press, cited by Hughes page 41.
6. This is discussed in the introduction to the thesis.
7. Calvin, J, Institutes of Christian Religion, ed John T McNeill, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, page 35
8. Calvin, J, Institutes of Christian Religion, page 42.
9. Calvin, J, Institutes of Christian Religion, page 43.
10. Calvin, J, Institutes of Christian Religion, page 185
11. Calvin, J, Institutes of Christian Religion, page 195.

12. Calvin, J, Institutes of Christian Religion, page 195.
13. Calvin, J, Institutes of Christian Religion, page 246.
14. Calvin, J, Institutes of Christian Religion, page 253.
15. Calvin, J, Institutes of Christian Religion, page 247.
16. Calvin, J, Institutes of Christian Religion, page 270 - 271.
17. Calvin, J, Institutes of Christian Religion, page 278.
18. Calvin, J, Institutes of Christian Religion, page 279.
19. Calvin, J, Institutes of Christian Religion, page 280.
20. Calvin, J, Institutes of Christian Religion, page 282.
21. Calvin, J, Institutes of Christian Religion, page 284.
22. Calvin, J, Institutes of Christian Religion, page 294.
23. Calvin, J, Institutes of Christian Religion, page 300.
24. Calvin, J, Institutes of Christian Religion, page 302.
25. Calvin, J, Institutes of Christian Religion, page 318.
26. Calvin, J, Institutes of Christian Religion, page 308.
27. Calvin, J, Institutes of Christian Religion, page 466.
28. Calvin, J, Institutes of Christian Religion, page 467.
29. Calvin, J, Institutes of Christian Religion, page 531 - 532.
30. Calvin, J, Institutes of Christian Religion, page 541.
31. Calvin, J, Institutes of Christian Religion, page 295.
32. Smith, P, 1923, Erasmus, Frederick Ungar Publishing CO. New York, Page 339.
33. Dollimore, Sinfield and Greenblatt all refer to this work when discussing Elizabethan religious discourses.
34. Smith, P, 1923, Erasmus, Pages 59 - 100.
35. See Colet, Erasmus, More: The Oxford Reformers, Frederick Seebohm, first published in 1867 and achieved recognition as a classic by being reprinted by Everyman Library 1914.
36. Porter, H.C. (1963), Erasmus and Cambridge, University of Toronto Press, Page 8.
37. Porter, H.C. (1963), Erasmus and Cambridge, Page 17.
38. Smith, P. Erasmus, Page 117.
39. Smith, P. Erasmus, Page 125.
40. Smith, P. Erasmus, Page 128.
41. Smith, P. Erasmus, Page 177.
42. Smith, P. Erasmus, Page 215.
43. Rupp, E Gordon, ed, (1969), Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation, SCM, page 39.
44. Rupp, E Gordon, ed, (1969) Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation, page 47.
45. Rupp, E Gordon, ed, (1969), Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation, page 94.
46. Rupp, E Gordon, ed, (1969), Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation, page 51.
47. Rupp, E Gordon, ed, (1969), Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation, page 80.
48. Rupp, E Gordon, ed, (1969), Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation, page 93.
49. The Yale Edition of the Complete Works of St Thomas More, Volume 5, Part II, Responsio ad Lutherum, Edited by John, M. Headley, 1969, Yale University Press, New Haven and London.
50. The Yale Edition of the Complete Works of St Thomas More, Volume 5, Part II, Responsio ad Lutherum, page 716.
51. The Yale Edition of the Complete Works of St Thomas More, Volume 5, Part II, Responsio ad Lutherum, page 717.
52. The Yale Edition of the Complete Works of St Thomas More, Volume 5, Part II, Responsio ad Lutherum, page 719.
53. The Yale Edition of the Complete Works of St Thomas More, Volume 5, Part II, Responsio ad Lutherum, page 725.

54. The Yale Edition of the Complete Works of St Thomas More, Volume 5, Part II, Responsio ad Lutherum, page 728.
55. The Yale Edition of the Complete Works of St Thomas More, Volume 5, Part I, Responsio ad Lutherum, pages 396-398.
56. More emphasises the importance of the mass as a good work. He argues for its sacrificial character, claiming the prensence of Christ's body in the mass which functions to cleanse the participant of her or his sin, (504). Through the mass the individual, the church and Christ all work together in the procurring of salvation.
57. The Yale Edition of the Complete Works of St. Thomas More, Volume 6, Part I, A Dialogue Concerning Heresies, Edited by Thomas M. C. Lawler, Germain Marc'hadour, and Richard C. Marius, (1981), Yale University Press, New haven and London, Page 397.
58. More argues that it is not God who chooses individuals, but rather it is individuals who choose to do good and thereby merit salvation, pages 402-405.
59. The Yale Edition of the Complete Works of St. Thomas More, Volume 4, Utopia, Edited by Edward Surtz, and J.H. Hexter, (1965), Yale University Press, New Haven and London.
60. The Yale Edition of The Complete Works of St. Thomas More, Volume 4, Utopia, page xciii.
61. The Yale Edition of The Complete Works of St. Thomas More, Volume 4, Utopia, pages ci-cii.
62. Adams, Robert M. trans. and ed. (1975), Utopia, W.W.Norton & Company, New York, Page 40.
63. Adams, Robert M. trans. and ed. (1975), Utopia, Page 40.
64. Adams, Robert M. trans. and ed. (1975), Utopia, Page 45.
65. Adams, Robert M. trans. and ed. (1975), Utopia, Page 46.
66. Adams, Robert M. trans. and ed. (1975), Utopia, Page 49
67. Adams, Robert M. trans. and ed. (1975), Utopia, Pages 67-68.
68. Adams, Robert M. trans. and ed. (1975), Utopia, Page 49.
69. Adams, Robert M. trans. and ed. (1975), Utopia, Page 55.
70. In More's later works his concept of "society" becomes surplanted by the Catholic Church. Society's adherence to the church is ensured by the ongoing revelation of the Holy Spirit, even if that revelation contradicts the Scriptures. ("Responsio") The authority of society, transformed into the authority of the church, links Utopia in its thinking to More's later religious works.
71. Greenblatt, Stephen, (1980), Renaissance Self Fashioning, Page 52.
72. Greenblatt, Stephen, (1980), Renaissance Self Fashioning, Page 60.
73. Greenblatt, Stephen, (1980), Renaissance Self Fashioning, Page 61.
74. The Yale Edition of the Complete Works of St Thomas More, Volume 5, Part I, Responsio ad Lutherum, pages 307-315.
75. Sinfield, Alan, (1983), Literature in Protestant England, Croom Helm Ltd, London, page 3.

CHAPTER 2

CALVINISM AND DEPRAVITY: THE PROTESTANT ANXIETY REGARDING HEROIC ACTION AND THE ACTION OF LOVE.

The progression of thought in Calvin's Institutes gives some indication of the profound difficulties and tensions with which the devout Calvinist must live. From an elaborate and lengthy discussion of the utter depravity and sinfulness of the human being in relation to a righteous and holy God, the Institutes then move to a discussion about how the subject, saved by the grace of God, should in fact live. The grace of God, ensuring salvation through the imputed value of Christ, makes it possible for the believer to lead a better life. However, a life lived perfectly righteously is not considered realisable this side of heaven. The believer made aware of how utterly sinful she or he by nature is, is none the less urged to a life which is considered unattainable in its goodness. The standard by which the believer must live, is therefore at odds with what she or he believes is the nature of every human being.

It has been shown in the previous chapter that within the Renaissance religious context there were marked differences between protestant discourses which asserted the notion of total depravity, and those Christian humanist discourses which were more optimistic regarding human potential. While the previous chapter deals with some of the strands of debate with regard to human potential in the wider religious context, it is important to explore further some of the detailed complexity and tensions with which devout Calvinists understood the problem of human

action.

The devout Calvinist was faced with external as well as internal struggles. She or he was confronted with conflicting views from Christian humanists regarding the potential of the human subject, which contradicted her or his own views of human depravity. In addition to this the Calvinist also had to face the profound tension within Calvinism, where there existed a vast gap between what was believed to be the depraved reality of the human being which made righteous action impossible, and the law which the believer was nonetheless urged to obey perfectly. Calvinist doctrine which claimed that depravity infects every area of life, and which maintained that it is impossible to act rightly in any sphere of human endeavour, also demanded that the faithful aspire to lives which were glorifying to God. Those areas of life which most require obedience and goodness from the Calvinist, remain ever elusive to the sinful and depraved believer, leading to a life of profound desire and extreme despair.

(i)

Calvinism and heroic action

The Calvinist belief in universal human depravity brings with it a profound distrust in the heroic potential of the human subject. So deep rooted is the Calvinist belief in the extent to which sin has infected the lives of women and men, that they would deny any capacity on the part of the subject to reach true greatness. Indeed, Calvin goes so far as to argue that even those deeds which most aspire to heroism, end in perversity and disaster:

> "What power for good will you attribute to human nature in this respect, if in the loftiest appearance of integrity, it is always found to be impelled towards corruption?." (1)

Turning specifically to the question of the possibility of heroism, Calvin implies that it is the very act of aspiring to be heroic, which in the end becomes sinful, leading as he argues, to pride and vainglory, which ultimately excludes women and men from the kingdom of heaven. Using Saul as an example of a man supposedly endowed with heroic qualities, and who in the end fell out of favour with God, Calvin turns his attention to the assertions made by Plato with regard to the heroic potential of the human being:

> "This is the reason why Plato alluding to the Homeric legend, says that kings' sons are born with some distinguishing mark. For God, in providing for the human race, often endows with a heroic nature those destined to command. From this workshop have come forth the qualities of great leaders celebrated in histo' s. Private individuals are to be judged in the s ' ay. But because, however excellent anyone has bee is own ambition always pushes him on - a blemish with which all virtues are so sullied that before od they lose all favor - anything in profane men that appears praiseworthy must be considered worthless.... As for the virtues that deceive us with their vain show, they shall have their praise in the political assembly and in common renown among men; but before the heavenly judgment seat they shall be of no value to acquire righteousness." (2)

Calvin's denunciation of heroic action stems from the fact that heroic action has at its centre the glorification of self rather than the glorification of God. Sinfield draws attention to this as he suggests that "Protestants were quite ready to condemn the presumptuous hero." (3) Sinfield further points out that "the heroic individual ascribes his power to himself" and "Protestants reacted strongly against the notion that men can be

self-determining." (4) Indeed Calvin argues along this vein when he suggests:

> "because of the bondage of sin by which the will is held bound it cannot move toward good, much less apply itself thereto; for a movement of this sort is the beginning of conversion to God, which in Scripture is ascribed entirely to God's grace." (5)

Every human action which resembles good is therefore ascribed to God and the bestowing of his special grace. The question arises here as to whether heroic action is possible for God's elect, or those on whom he has bestowed his grace. The question is in a sense hypothetical as heroic action is a classical concept rather than a Christian one. However, Brower in his discussion of heroic action in Troilus and Cressida makes reference to the moral component of this action as he discusses the "Renaissance moral - heroic style". This style, as Brower argues, is used by Hector in his discourse concerning the "law of nature", wherein he urges that heroic action rises above affection and is able to achieve action which is in conformity with the very laws which govern the universe. (6) According to Brower then, the Renaissance view of heroic action included action which was guided by honour and integrity, as well as by moral perfection. The inclusion of a moral component in Renaissance views of heroic action, makes it possible, theoretically, to substitute the notion of righteous action for heroic action, and so arrive at some idea of a Christian version of secular heroic action. The question then becomes one which wonders at the possibility of action which is characterised by moral perfection on the part of the believer. It is here that protestant views of action become complex and the

source of a profound anxiety, as it becomes apparent that the believer who believes herself or himself to be sinful by nature is still urged to act righteously. Thus, Calvin argues that the first evidence of the grace of God bestowed on an individual, is the subject's awareness of her or his depravity:

> "Since the Lord in coming to our aid bestows upon us what we lack, when the nature of his work in us appears, our destitution will, on the other hand, at once be manifest." (7)

The second evidence that God has bestowed grace is the presence of a desire to act righteously:

> "God begins his good work in us, therefore, by arousing love and desire and zeal for righteousness. He completes his work, moreover, by confirming us to perseverance." (8)

What is of particular interest here is Calvin's choice of the words "desire" and "perseverance" as they characterise what lies at the heart of the protestant anxiety about righteous action. While the protestant's new life in Christ is characterised by the desire for, and love of righteous action, and the perseverance to make such action her or his own, there is no assurance that such action is possible in this life. Cautioning believers against the false hope that their works might be considered righteous before God, Calvin writes:

> "we must not put any confidence in the righteousness of works, and we must not ascribe to works any glory. In teaching that all our righteous deeds are foul in God's sight unless these derive a good odor from Christ's innocence, Scripture consistently dissuades us from confidence. Works can only arouse God's vengeance unless

they be sustained by his merciful pardon." (9)

It is evident here that even those acts which the believer might consider righteous, in fact require God's pardon, which he gives only because the believer bears the imputed righteousness of Christ. Again Calvin warns against confidence based on good works on the part of the believer:

> "For if they begin to judge it (salvation) by good works, nothing will be more uncertain or more feeble; for indeed, if works be judged of themselves, by their imperfection they will no less declare God's wrath than by their incomplete purity they testify to his benevolence." (10)

The only way in which an act is considered acceptable is if it is endowed with the imputed value of Christ. The inadequacy of the action is in a sense pardoned on account of the adequacy of Christ's action:

> "But because the godly, encompassed with mortal flesh, are still sinners, and their good works are as yet incomplete and redolent of the vices of the flesh, he can be propitious neither to the former nor to the latter unless he embrace them in Christ rather than in themselves." (11)

The believer is therefore unable in and of herself or himself to adequately perform the actions which she or he aspires to. The profound anguish of a life which struggles to be obedient to God's law (the Ten Commandments), as indeed the believer is commanded to be, and for whom true obedience is forever elusive, is described by Calvin:

> "For even though they love God deeply and with sincere affection of heart, they have a great part of their heart and soul still occupied with fleshly desires, by which they are drawn back and prevented from hastening forward to God. Indeed, they struggle with much effort, but the flesh partly weakens their powers, partly draws them to itself. What are they to do here, while they feel that there is nothing they are less able to do than to fulfill the law? They will, they aspire, they try, but they do nothing with the required perfection." (12)

The awareness on ~~behalf~~ the part of the believer of her or his inability to live as God demands she or he live, means that protestants were profoundly conscious of their sin and guilt before God. Thus we find a deep awareness among protestant writers of their failure to live as they ought, accompanied by the need to constantly confess their sin to God so they might be forgiven. In "A Hymne to God the Father", Donne expresses his need for continual forgiveness, as he confesses his continual sin:

> "Wilt thou forgive that sinne where I begunne,
> Which is my sin, though it were done before?
> Wilt thou forgive those sinnes through which I runne,
> And doe them still: though still I doe deplore?
> When thou hast done, thou has not done,
> For I have more."

Whatever were Donne's motives for his conversion from catholicism to protestantism, the preoccupation of his divine poems with the sinfulness of the human subject, and the need of God's grace alone for salvation, place his poetry within a Calvinist tradition. Donne describes here a life characterised by perpetual failure, as he confesses that the action which he aspires to constantly eludes him, while instead he continues in those actions which he deplores. The image here is one of Donne constantly sinning, and God having to constantly forgive. This sense of unworthiness is found also in a poem by Edward Tilman,

to whom Donne wrote his lines "To Mr Tilman after he had taken orders". Tilman matriculated from Pembroke Hall, Cambridge in 1609, was ordained deacon in 1618, and priest 1619. (13a) Tilman's poem is of interest not so much for its literary value, but primarily because it draws attention to the paralysing fear experienced by a devout protestant, when considering ordination into a life which demanded active obedience. In his poem Tilman puts forward his argument for not taking orders in the church by bringing various accusations against himself which include inconstancy, wantonness, wrathfulness, and ambition. His description is of a man unable to choose honour, let alone act honourably, and where humility is required, a man who is unable to find such virtue in himself:

> "Refined Faculty, Thou art not rash,
> But dost informe this Clay, that every dash
> Can break itt; that 'tis molded, fram'd and borne
> At th' Potters will to Honour or to Scorne:
> Thy Paradoxe to teach men to aspire
> Is, Friend sitt lower, that thou may sitt higher.
> Tell mee my selfe, if in my selfe I know
> Supple Humility; my selfe saies no" (13)

It is worth recalling here Calvin's argument that the first evidence of God's grace, is an awareness of one's own depravity and unworthiness. The protestant's preoccupation with self abasement arises primarily from this assertion. Thus the more the believer is aware of her or his sin, the greater the assurance that God has bestowed grace. The despair which accompanies this constant awareness of sin is described by John Bunyan in Pilgrim's Progress as a necessary part of conversion. Thus we find Christian lost in the "Slough of Despond" asking Help "why is it that this bog is not filled in so that the poor travellers

can get to the gate more safely?" To which he receives the reply:

> "This miry bog is the kind of place that can't be repaired: all the scum and filth that accompany conviction for sin run endlessly down into it. So it's called the Slough of Despond. Whenever a sinner wakes up to his lost condition many fears and doubts rise up in his soul, many discouraging worries, all of which get together and settle in this place. And this is the reason for the bad state of this ground." (14)

From this discussion it becomes apparent why the notion of heroic action was so problematic for protestants. With the concept of human depravity and sin so rooted in their belief system, the idea of action which is accounted worthy on the part of any human being, whether believer or non believer, would have been impossible. However, that this belief in universal human depravity was held alongside a striving after righteous action or action which aspires to greatness, gives some indication of the anxiety with which protestants were faced in the day to day actions of their lives.

(ii)

Calvinism and the action of love

The following discussion of protestant versions of love and the action of love will draw primarily from the Scriptures, and especially from the Pauline epistles. My reason for this is that the action of love is so central to all Christian thinking that it is important to draw from the sources of these doctrines. The use of Paul is particularly important to an understanding of

protestant versions of the action of love. Paul's importance for protestants stems from his particular emphasis on the problem of sin and therefore the need of God's grace. Indeed, it was from a reexamination of Paul's epistle to the Romans that the Reformation took root. Luther describes his moment of conversion as arising out of a new understanding of Paul's letter:

> "I greatly longed to understand Paul's Epistle to the Romans and nothing stood in the way but that one expression, "the just ce of God," because I took this to mean that justice whereby God is just and deals justly in punishing the unjust. My situation was that, although an impeccable monk, I stood before God as a sinner troubled in conscience, and I had no confidence that my merit would assuage him therefore I did not love a just and angry God, but rather hated and murmured against him. Yet I clung to the dear Paul and had a great yearning to know what he meant.
> Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of god and the statement that "the just shall live by his faith." Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before the "justice of God" had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gate to heaven." (15)

It is therefore through his rereading of Paul that Luther is able to move from a position where he hates God, to one where he is able to love him. For Luther, and for protestants who drew their doctrines from his discoveries, Paul holds the key to understanding the extent of one's sin, the grace of God, and a life calling to the action of love through the grace of God.

In no area would the anxiety about action have been more profound for the protestant, than in the area of love. The action of love, both human and divine, forms the cornerstone of aspirant

Christian action, for Christ himself sums up the law in terms of the subject's obedience to the law of love. In a conversation with the pharisees we read that:

> "One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"
> Jesus replied: ""Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbour as yourself." All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." Matt. 22: 35 - 40. New International Version.

This notion of love as it is found in Christian discourse is all embracing, (as it must be if it is to be the culmination of the law), and therefore incorporates not only what happens in the heart and mind of the human being, but also what happens to the body. Thus Paul affirms the importance of the body in the living of a righteous life:

> "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself?.. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you received from God." 1 Cor. 6: 15 & 19.

Protestant doctrine, with its denial of medieval mysticism and gnosticism, was as concerned with the body, as it was with the heart and mind. Thus we find in Spencer's "Faerie Queen", in the description of the house of Temperance (Booke II, Cant. IX) an allegory of the human body which in places contains fairly detailed descriptions of bodily parts and functions, with appetite, digestion and excretion all being incorporated in a metaphor for the temperate subject. Spenser is as concerned here

with the physical as he is with the spiritual, and so we find that it is the enemies of the castle which are mere shadows without any physical substance; "Flesh without blood, a person without sprite, wounds without hurt, a body without might". (Canto XI)

In keeping with the protestant concern with the body as well as the soul, Donne laments the fallen state of both and the need for a redemption which deals with the body as well as the soul:

> "I am a little world made cunningly
> Of Elements, and an Angelike spright,
> But black sinne hath betraid to endlesse night
> My worlds both parts, and (oh) both parts must die.
> You which beyond that heaven which was most high
> Have found new spheres, and of new lands can write,
> Powre new seas in mine eyes, that so I might
> Drowne my world with my weeping earnestly,
> Or wash it, if it must be drown'd no more:
> But oh it must be burnt; alas the fire
> Of lust and envie'have burnt it heretofore,
> And made it fouler; Let their flames retire,
> And burne me o Lord, with a fiery zeal
> Of thee'and thy house, which doth in beating heal."
> (Holy Sonnets, Divine Meditations, added in 1635)

Donne refers here to sin which relates to the heart; "envie"; and to the body, especially in the area of sexuality; "lust". If the body is as important as the heart in expressing obedience to God, then the law of love, which is the summation of God's Law, must incorporate the body. It follows then that the law of love, and obedience to that law, must ultimately be concerned with human sexuality, as Donne implies it is. This can be seen more specifically as Paul discusses obedience to the law of love in relation to the activities of the body:

> "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law ... So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.." Rom. 13: 8 - 13.

Obedience to the law of love is closely related then to the activities of the body, and so with human sexuality. The centrality of the law of love in Christian doctrine, and the relationship of this law to the area of human sexuality, led to a certain anxiety on ~~behalf~~ the part of protestants, considering their views of human depravity and the inadequacy of their own actions. Calvin himself draws attention both to the importance of obedience to the law of love, and the impossibility of the believer ever achieving such obedience:

> "And there is no reason for any man to deceive himself by concluding that his work is not entirely evil because it is imperfect, and that God nonetheless finds acceptable what is good in it. For unless its rigor be mitigated, the law in requiring perfect love condemns all imperfection. Let him therefore ponder his own work, which he wished to be adjudged in part good, and by that very act he will find it, just because it is imperfect, to be a transgression of the law." (16)

The spiritual and emotional anguish which such a dilemma causes for the believer, manifests itself also as a physical anguish, once more indicating the importance of the body in the manifestation of the believer's obedience to the law. Thus we find Paul describing his desire to keep the law, his inability to do so, and the role his body plays in this struggle.

> "So I find this law at work: when I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law, but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my

> mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members." Rom. 7: 21 - 24.

The relationship of human sexuality and the law of love becomes more apparent here, as Paul implies that it is his body which prevents him from perfectly obeying God's law. This provides some insight into the protestant anxiety regarding sexuality, as it bears directly on their obedience to God and the living of a righteous life. This anxiety is further compounded by the fact that in the Scriptures the sexual relationship between a man and a woman is frequently used as a metaphor for the relationship of Christ to the church. (17) The sublime possibilities which such a usage implies, resulted in a profound desire on the part of the believer, as the sexual union becomes invested with spiritual value. However, accompanying this desire would have undoubtedly also been a dread that the possibilities would remain ever elusive, thereby confirming the believer's depravity and failure to obey the law of love.

(iii)

Desire and Depravity: The division of the Calvinist subject.

The image which Paul employs in the above passage from Romans is of a man divided against himself; both desiring to obey the law, and yet finding that he is unable to do so. This is essentially the heart of the protestant dilemma regarding human action; the righteous action which they long to achieve and which they are commanded to strive after, is ever elusive because the sinful nature makes such action impossible. The idea that the human being might act heroically or even lovingly to the degree of

perfection which God's law requires, would have been impossible for the protestant. Their only hope remained that God would excuse their failure to act as they were required to act, because Christ had already acted righteously in their stead. Thus we find George Herbert in "Sighs and Grones" stricken by his awareness of sin and depravity before a mighty and a righteous God, begging that God might overlook his sin, and grant him pardon:

> "O do not use me
> After my sinnes! look not on my desert,
> But on thy glorie! then thou wilt reform
> And not refuse me: for thou onely art
> The mightie God, but I a silly worm;
> O do not bruise me!...
>
> But O reprieve me!
> For thou hast life and death at thy command;
> Thou art both Judge and Saviour, feast and rod,
> Cordiall and Corrosive: put not thy hand
> Into the bitter box; but O my God,
> My God, relieve me!"

The sinner is reduced here to the mere status of a worm, the lowest form of life imaginable to the poet. By contrast it is God who is the hero, and finally the only true lover as he rescues, or holds the potential to rescue, the sinner from sin and damnation. For the protestant, any action which is great is ascribed wholly to God, while the human being's actions are all marred by the stain of depravity.

Notes:

1. Calvin, J. Institutes of Christian Religion, ed John T McNeill, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, Page 293.
2. Calvin, J. Institutes of Christian Religion, Page 294.
3. Sinfield, Alan, 1983, Literature in Protestant England, Croom Helm Ltd, London and Canberra, Page 83.
4. Sinfield, Alan, 1983, Literature in Protestant England, Page 84.
5. Calvin, J. Institutes of Christian Religion, Page 294.
6. Brower, R.A. 1971, Hero and Saint: Shakespeare and the Graeco-Roman Heroic Tradition, Oxford University Press, page 250
7. Calvin, J. Institutes of Christian Religion, Page 297.
8. Calvin, J. Institutes of Christian Religion, Page 297.
9. Calvin, J. Institutes of Christian Religion, Page 783.
10. Calvin, J. Institutes of Christian Religion, Page 786.
11. Calvin, J. Institutes of Christian Religion, Page 807.
12. Calvin, J. Institutes of Christian Religion, Page 836.

13a. Gardner, Helen (ed), 1978, John Donne, The Divine Poems, Oxford, at the Clarendon Press, page 128. The inclusion of Tilman is due to the fact that the dilemma he faced when deciding whether to take clerical orders, represents the dilemma which Calvinists faced when considering the problem of action, ie. that which they long to do, they believe themselves incapable doing because of the depravity of nature.

13. This poem may be found in Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association, vol 16, 1930.
14. Bunyan, John, 1678, Pilgrim's Progress, ed Rhona Pipe, 1988, Hodder and Stoughton, page 32.
15. Bainton, Roland, 1978, cites Luther in Here I Stand, Lion Publishing, page 65.
16. Calvin, J. Institutes of Christian Religion, Page 836.
17. An example of the use of this metaphor occurs in Ephesians chapter 5, where Paul in discussing the marriage relationship, uses the image of Christ's relationship with the church to further clarify his argument. The effect is to suggest a relationship of love which reaches spiritual heights through its obedience to God's law. The Songs of Solomon, which are specifically sexual in their references, have also been argued to be a description of God's relationship with his people. The book of Hosea provides another example where the sexual relationship between a man and a woman is used as a picture of God's relationship with his chosen.

CHAPTER 3

CALVINISM AND VALUE: PROTESTANT ANXIETY REGARDING AUTHORITY AND POWER.

The centrality of the protestant belief in universal human depravity had a profound effect on how the believer evaluated herself or himself. The protestant's belief in her or his own sinful nature, meant that action which might be considered worthy or righteous lay outside the realm of the individual's capability. This in turn implied that the notion of human value which derived from performance or the achievement of worthy action was not possible for the devout protestant. Value for the protestant was therefore not obtained from recognition of her or his achievements, but instead was dependent on the value which God in his grace bestowed on the believer.

The struggle present in Troilus and Cressida around the location of human value, whether it be private or public, makes it helpful to discuss the potentially revolutionary way in which Calvinists removed the function of bestowing value from the hands of the church and state, and placed it entirely in the hands of God.

i

The privatisation of value

For the protestant, value was located somewhere external to the self. Thus instead of value being ascribed to the individual either for her or his inherent worth, or bestowed in recognition

of worthy action, it rested entirely in Christ's perfect value which was imputed to the relatively worthless human subject. In an extract from the Homilies we therefore find the assertion that salvation comes from God through the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ:

> "Because all men be synners and offendors against God, and breakers of his law and commaundementes, therefore can no manne by his awne actes, woorkes and deedes - seme thei never so good - be justified and made righteous before God; but every man of necessitie is constrayned to seke for another righteousnesse, or justification, to be received at God's awne handes, that is to saie, the remission, pardon and forgevenesse of his synnes and trespasses in suche thynges as he hath offended. And this justificacion or righteousnesse whiche we so receive by God's mercie and Christes merites, embraced by faithe, is taken, accepted and allowed of God, for our perfect and full justificacion." (1)

For the Elizabethan protestant then, the subject is not valued according to how well she or he performed certain actions, as those actions will always fall short of the requirements of God. The sinful believer is instead credited with the righteousness or value of Christ, through the saving work of God alone. According to the protestant, it is God alone who justifies, and therefore bestows value. Ulysses' assertion in Troilus and Cressida, that it is through continual action in the present that the subject achieves value (Perseverance, dear my lord,\ Keeps honour bright), would for the protestant have been tantamount to heresy.

The protestant therefore derived value from her or his private relationship with God. The individual's standing before God remained a mystery, unknown to any but the one who had put her or his faith in Christ, (faith which only God himself has made

possible). The church, and even less so the state, no longer had the power to bestow value as a reward for obedience or worthy action. Religion became increasingly inward and self-conscious among protestants, which stood in stark contrast to the more outward and ritualistic religiosity of the medieval church. Sinfield comments on this phenomenon as he argues, "Centrally, perhaps, protestants wished religion to be more inward; or, more precisely, that it should be more inward for more people than hitherto. Protestants were not content with casual or external observance. Hence the attack on the mediatory functions by which the church had traditionally interposed itself - saints, the Latin Bible and ritual, the priest, indulgences." (2) The devout Calvinist's concept of value and selfhood which exists in the hidden interior of the soul and not in the rituals of religion, made it possible for the believer to see herself or himself as existing as an independent consciousness outside the realm of earthly social structures and the recognition derived from those structures.

Donne's "Holy Sonnets" offer some insight into the protestant self consciousness, as they repeatedly present an image of a soul in meditation, struggling with God in an effort of faith and private reconciliation. In the last lines of "Good Friday" we find such an example, where even the experience of God's anger and retribution is accepted gratefully as sign of God's attention and thus of the self's presence:

> "O thinke mee worth thine anger, punish mee,
> Burne off my rusts, and my deformity,
> Restore thine image, so much, by thy grace,
> That thou may'st know mee, and I'll turn my face"

Here Donne moves through the steps of repentance and self negation, to the hope of God's grace, and his restored self and value which derives from the imputed image of God. In the private negotiation which takes place, Donne finally recedes and God shines forth thereby satisfying the fundamental requirement of the protestant, that her or his life be ultimately for the glorification of God.

That value is derived from a private relationship with God, is seen also in John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, where Christian embarks on his pilgrimage in search of salvation on his own, without friend or family. Thus we find Christian overcome by the terror of his situation, fleeing from the wrath of God, to the forgiveness of God, a journey which the book describes in visionary terms:

> "Now one day he was walking in the fields reading his book as usual, and feeling greatly distressed, when he burst out, as he had done before, with the cry, "What must I do to be saved?" He looked one way and then the other as if he wanted to run. Yet he stood still and I saw that this was because he couldn't tell which way to run.
> Then I saw a man coming to him whose name was evangelist He asked, "Why are you crying?'...
> He answered, "Because I don't know where to go."
> Then the man gave him a parchment in which was written, "Flee from the coming wrath"...
> So in my dream I saw that the man began to run. But he hadn't run far from his own door when his wife and children saw him and began to cry out to him to return. but the man put his fingers in his ears and ran out crying, "Life! Life! Eternal life!" He didn't look back, but fled towards the middle of the plain." (3)

The implication here is that if one is to find salvation, one must ultimately embark on the journey alone. Neither friends nor family nor church can help one, for the subject's status is the matter of her or his private relationship with God.

(ii)

The privatisation of truth

The privacy and interiority which was the natural outcome of this deference to God alone as the one who bestows value, was compounded by the protestant's insistence that it is the responsibility of the individual to interpret Scripture for herself or himself. Thus the church no longer had the authority to illuminate Scripture and so define truth. For the protestant, the Scripture rather than the church is the final authority, and the private individual (lead by the grace of God) is the final exponent of the truths found therein. Dollimore argues that it is this phenomenon which generated much of the intellectual crises caused by the Reformation, as it challenged tradition as the infallible criterion of religious truth, and substituted the word of God and the self-evident criterion of subjective conviction (4). Greenblatt similarly describes the printed English New Testament as above all "a form of power". He goes on to argue that "It is invested with the ability to control, guide, discipline, console, exalt, and punish that the Church had arrogated to itself for centuries." (5)

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The power which Greenblatt sees as issuing from the English New Testament, derives from the notion that once the individual has in her or his hands the Bible translated into the vernacular, she or he is no longer dependent on the authority of the church for the interpretation of the Scriptures. Foxe makes the point that it was the church's refusal to translate the Scriptures, which Tyndale held against them as their chief sin:

> "Master Tyndale considered this only, or most chiefly, to be the cause of all mischief in the Church, that the Scriptures of God were hidden from the people's eyes; for so long the abominable doings and idolatries maintained by the pharisaical clergy could not be espied; and therefore all their labour was with might and main to keep it down, so that either it should not be read at all, or if it were, they would darken the right sense with the mist of their sophistry, and so entangle those who rebuked or despised their abominations; wresting the Scripture unto their own purpose, contrary unto the meaning of the text, they would so delude the unlearned lay people, that though thou felt in thy heart, and wert sure that all were false that they said, yet couldst thou not solve their subtle riddles." (6)

In strikingly similar language to that used by Foxe, Calvin makes particular reference to the protestant belief in the authority of Scripture, and the individual and private interpretation of Scripture, apart from the authority of the church:

> "But a most pernicious error widely prevails that Scripture has only so much weight as is conceded to it by the consent of the church. As if the eternal and inviable truth of God depended upon the decision of men! ... Thus these sacrilegious men, wishing to impose an unbridled tyranny under the cover of the church do not care with what absurdities they can force this one idea upon the simple-minded: that the church has authority in all things. Yet, if this is so, what will happen to miserable consciences seeking firm assurance of eternal life if all promises of it consist in and depend solely upon the judgment of men?" (7)

What is particularly interesting here, is that Calvin is arguing for an assurance of salvation which lies outside of the church, and is located in the private relationship between God and the believer as it is unfolded in the diligent reading of Scriptures. According to Calvin, the freedom of the believer from the laws of the church rests primarily on her or his private valuation by God. Calvin believed that the subject's value is dependent on her or his salvation through the blood and imputed value of Christ, which is revealed to the individual in the Scriptures. Thus speaking once more about the laws insisted on by the church, Calvin argues:

> "But, though such laws be a hundred times unjust and injurious to us, still they (the church) contend that these should be obeyed without exception. For here there is no question of our consenting to errors, but only that as subjects we should bear the harsh commands of our leaders, which we have no right to reject.
>
> But here the Lord best confronts them with the truth of his word, and delivers us out of such bondage into the freedom that he has purchased for us by his sacred blood, the benefit of which he has more than once sealed by his Word." (8)

Here the Word (or Scriptures) and the redeeming blood of Christ become interchangeable in their power to wrest the believer from the "tyranny" of the church. That the believer is saved by the imputed value of Christ, through faith in the shedding of his blood, means that the believer is free from evaluation by church and state based on her or his adherence to the laws and rituals laid down by these structures of authority. In a sense, it is possible to say that protestant doctrine undermined the authority of church and state by doing two things. First, it set the

Scripture and the private interpretation of Scripture, above the laws and rituals of the church. Second, it removed the valuation of the believer from the church and state, and placed it entirely in the hands of God, who by grace bestows the value of Christ on the sinful and depraved believer.

(iii)

The supernatural revelation of truth

One might ask how the protestants reconciled their belief in universal human depravity with their insistence that the individual is responsible for her or his interpretation of Scripture. It is in the resolution of this problem that the role of the Holy Spirit becomes vital. Thus while it is not possible for the depraved individual to understand the Scriptures through her or his own efforts or appeal to human reason, through the work of the Holy Spirit the Scriptures become illuminated, and in a sense interpreted for the individual. Replying to his opponents' accusations, Calvin supports his arguments in favour of the individual's interpretation of Scripture by appealing to the role the Holy Spirit plays in this interpretation:

> "The letter, therefore is dead, and the law of the Lord slays its readers where it both is cut off from Christ's grace and, leaving the heart untouched, sounds in the ears alone. But if through the Spirit it is really branded upon hearts, if it shows forth Christ, it is the word of life... And what has lately been said - that the Word itself is not quite certain for us unless it be confirmed by the testimony of the Spirit - is not out of accord with these things. For by a kind of mutual bond the Lord has joined together the certainty of his Word and of his Spirit so that the perfect religion of the Word may abide in our minds when the Spirit, who causes us to contemplate God's face, shines; and that we in

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> turn may embrace the Spirit with no fear of being deceived when we recognize him in his own image, namely, in the Word." (9)

(iv)

Freedom from the state

For Elizabethan protestants, the private individual is lead to truth through the supernatural intervention of the Holy Spirit who invests the dead letter with the breath of life. The seeds for anarchy which are contained in this type of thinking, indeed took root in the more extreme and radical versions of protestantism which liberated themselves from the tight control and discipline which characterised early Calvinism. Malcom Evans argues that it was precisely the protestant's insistence on the private interpretation of Scripture, aided by the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit, which made possible the emergence of anarchical sects:

> "Finally the Protestant justification of vernacular bibles on the grounds that the Holy Spirit, the speaking Word of God, would descend to illuminate the understanding of the diligent reader - or, in Calvinist theology, the Elect - was transformed at its outer limit into the doctrine of the "Free Spirit", in which the inner voice replaced Scripture as the sole authority, and all forms of external constraint - textual, legal, moral or institutional - became the oppressive structures of the letter." (10)

The rigid discipline and the frequent urging of believers to obey civil authorities, which is found both in the lives of early protestants and in their sermons, particularly in "A Homily against Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion", was necessary

precisely because Calvinism had at its heart the means by which the believer might indeed dissent and disobey. Thus we find in the "Homily against Disobedience and Wilfull Rebellion" a certain urgency around the issue of obedience to rulers:

> "As in reading of the Holye Scriptures, we shall finde in very many and almost infinite places, aswell of the Olde Tastament, as of the Newe, that kinges and princes, aswell the evill as good, do raigne by Gods ordinaunce, and that subjectes are bounden to obey them; that God doth geve princes wysdome, great power, and aucthoritie; that God defendeth them agaynst their enemies and destroyeth their enemies horribly; that the anger and displeasuure of the prince is as the roaring of a lion, and the verye messenger of death; and that the subject who provoketh him to displeasure sinneth agaynst his owne soule - with many other thinges concerning both the aucthoritie of princes and the dutie of subjects." (11)

It is worth noting here that when Elizabeth came to the throne she reissued the first book of the Homilies of which she had supervised revisions and simplifications. In 1663 she delayed publication until she had made the final changes to the copy which had been delivered to her for approval. Throughout her reign she insisted on the durability of the Homilies, ignoring its original purpose as an aid to ignorant clergy, and asserting instead its importance in keeping potentially wayward clergy in check. (12) It comes as little surprise then that we find a specific reference in the "Homily" to the necessary obedience to the queen:

> "Let us all make continuall prayers unto almightie God, even from the bottome of our hearts, that he wyll geve his grace, power and strength unto our gratious Queene Elizabeth to vanquishe and subdue all, aswell rebels at home as forraine enemies, that all domesticall rebellions beyng suppressed and pacified, and all outwarde invasions repulsed and abandoned, we may not only be sure and long continue in all obedience unto our

> gratious Soveraigne and in that peaceable and quiet life whiche hytherto we have lead under her Majestie with all securitie, but also that in al obedience unto God, the Kinge of all kinges, and unto his holy lawes, leade our lives so in this worlde in all vertue and godlinesse, that in the worlde to come we may enjoy his everlasting kingdome. (13)

The devout were therefore urged that in obeying the sovereign, they were also obeying God. The veiled threats of violence both in this life and in the one to come, were the means by which the established authorities sought to secure the submission of subjects. However, it is worth remembering that only ninety years later the puritan Doctor John Bastwick, "eventually mutilated and given a life sentence for his attacks on the popish complexion of the state Church under Archbishop Laud, proclaimed from the pillory against the censorship which had extended even to Foxe's great Book of Martyrs". (14) Foxe's Book of Martyrs is evidence itself of the active disobedience of devout protestants to both church and state. Calvin, like the Homilies, asserts the importance of obedience to the authorities. However it is particularly interesting to note that his Institutes conclude with a qualification of this obedience, namely that the believer ultimately must obey God before she or he obeys earthly rulers:

> "but in that obedience which we have shown to be due the authority of rulers, we are always to make this exception, indeed, to observe it as primary, that such obedience is never to lead us away from obedience to him, to whose will the desires of all kings ought to be subject, to whose decrees all their commands ought to yield, to whose majesty their scepters ought to be submitted ... Far, indeed, is the pretense of modesty from deserving praise, a false modesty with which the court flatterers cloak themselves and deceive the simple, while they deny that it is lawful for them to refuse anything imposed by their kings. As if God had made over his right to mortal men, giving them the rule over mankind!... I know with what great and present peril this constancy is menaced, because kings bear

> defiance with the greatest displeasure. But since this edict has been proclaimed by the heavenly herald, Peter - "We must obey God rather than Men" (acts 5:29) - let us comfort ourselves with the thought that we are rendering that obedience which the Lord requires when we suffer anything rather than turn aside from piety." (15)

Calvin therefore concludes with the assertion of the protestant's deferral to God and Scriptures before any institutions of authority. Thus on the one hand, while protestants were urged to obey their rulers, this obedience only went as far as the ruler's obedience to the law of God which the individual believer had the responsibility to interpret for herself or himself. The inherent danger in this doctrine was further increased by the translation of the Scriptures into the vernacular, thus making the Scriptures, and the personal power derived from the interpretation of Scriptures, accessible to both rich and poor; to both the gentry and the peasantry. The means by which authorities legitimised their power and divine rights as rulers, was increasingly demystified as the peasantry and previously uneducated classes, indeed anyone who could read or find someone else to read to her or him, were given the means by which they could challenge that right and authority. It is interesting therefore that Foxe, whose book of martyrs held popular appeal, argues that it was Tyndale's specific ambition to provide the peasantry with this means of empowerment:

> "Not long after, Master Tyndale happened to be in the company of a certain divine, recounted for a learned man, and, in communing and disputing with him, he drave him to that issue, that the said great doctor burst out into these blasphimous words, "We were better to be without God's laws than the Pope's." Master Tyndale, hearing this, full of godly zeal, and not bearing that blasphemous saying replied, "I defy the Pope, and all his laws;" and added, that if God spared him life, ere many years he would cause a boy that driveth the plough, to know more of the Scripture than he did." (16)

It comes as little surprise then that it was for their deferral to their private interpretation of Scriptures that Ridley and Latimer were finally executed under the reign of Queen Mary. Before his execution Ridley refuses to recant on the grounds that God's Law, and therefore his interpretation of God's Law, exists above and beyond church and civil law:

> "The bishop of Gloucester and likewise the bishop of Lincoln, with many words, desired Master Ridley to turn. But he made an absolute answer, that he was fully persuaded the religion which he defended was to be grounded upon God's Word; and, therefore, without great offence towards God, great peril and damage of his soul, he could not forsake his Master and Lord God, but desired the bishop to perform his grant, in that his lordship said the day before, that he should have licence to show his cause why he could not with a safe conscience admit the authority of the Pope." (17)

It was not only Queen Mary who saw the inherent threat in Calvinism to the throne. Queen Elizabeth, albeit she was the head of the English church, also realised that Calvinist doctrine was best moderated if she was to maintain her authority. Pinciss and Lockyer argue that:

> "The Queen believed that any move towards the Calvinist system, in which the clergy elected by the congregation and administration was placed in the hands of "presbyteries" of ministers and laymen, would undermine her own authority as monarch and tend towards republicanism." (18)

The puritans, who derived their theology directly from Calvin, generally felt that the English church at the time of Elizabeth's reign had not carried its reforms far enough. It was thus in opposition to the threat to authority posed by puritans that

Hooker wrote the "Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity" where he defends the English Church and Elizabeth as the head of that Church. (19) Richard Helgerson cites a particularly interesting study carried out recently by Conrad Russell on active members of parliament in both the 1620s and 1640s, to see if positions they took in the earlier decade would enable one to predict the side they would choose later.(20) The findings show that in the 1620s, future royalists thought reform had gone far enough, while future parliamentarians thought it hadn't. From this study it becomes apparent that future parliamentarians were essentially puritans, or radical Calvinists who wished the English Church to follow Calvinist doctrine more closely, and who were dissatisfied with the moderating doctrine of the Elizabethan Church. From this information Helgerson argues that "since this was also the single most divisive issue of Elizabeth's reign, one can surmise (though Russell chose not to) that religious differences dating back eighty years and more gave ideological form to a conflict that eventually erupted in war." (21)

It is worth looking back here to Luther, from whose teachings the Reformation originally took root. R.H. Tawney in his discussion of Religion and the Rise of Capitalism, argues that "Luther's revolt against authority was an attack, not on its rigour, but on its laxity and corruption. His individualism was not the greed of the plutocrat, eager to snatch from the weakness of public authority an opportunity for personal gain. It was the ingenious enthusiasm of the anarchist, who hungers for a society in which order and fraternity will reign without "the tedious, stale, forbidding ways of custom, law and statute," because they well up in all their native purity from the heart". (22) Tawney argues

that while Luther was somewhat nostalgic and naive in his hankering back to Eden, Calvin was a radical realist who endeavored to put Luther's attacks on the established authorities of both church and state, into an opportunity to usher in an age where the Law of God, and the Word of God were given final authority. (23)

It is interesting to note here the words of Marx as he is cited in Sinfield:

> "Luther shattered the faith in authority by restoring the authority of faith. He transformed the priests into laymen by turning laymen into priests. He liberated man from external religiosity by making religiosity the innermost essence of man. He liberated the body from its chains because he fettered the heart with chains." (24)

Marx's reference to the heart fettered with chains is an apt description of the believer's conscience overwhelmed by the enormity of her or his own depravity. It was this awareness of depravity which turned the protestant's eyes inwards, and then in desperation upwards to God. For if the believer is as sinful as both Luther and Calvin argued, then her or his only hope is that God will be merciful and bestow a value which she or he does not deserve. The devout are therefore not bound by earthly laws and rewards, but are instead bound to a higher authority, God himself. Because God reveals himself in Scriptures, the Scriptures become authoritative. And because the letter is dead and human beings are fallible, they cannot rely on the church to interpret Scriptures, but must wait instead for the words of Scriptures to be illuminated by the Holy Spirit, who is the breath of God. It is therefore the individual, lead by the Spirit

of God, who in the end becomes authoritative. Sinfield argues that it was the puritans' view of themselves as God's elect inspired by the Spirit of God and existing outside of social structures, which made it possible for them to organise themselves across class barriers, into a viable political party:

> "The puritans' sense of party derived perhaps from the exile some had experienced, but it depended also upon the novel idea that there might be a basis for alliance and commitment outside the traditional ties of family, guild, locality, and hierarchy. It was the beginning of modern politics." (25)

Sinfield's discussion of Gerrard Winstanley, a sectarian who derived his ideas from protestant writings, is an example of anarchical extremes to which the protestant doctrines could be taken:

> "Gerrard Winstanley, like other sectarians, demystified orthodoxy from the opposite direction. He took the idea of the individual's inner light of conscience as license to reject unjust political structures; for as Hobbes pointed out, if every person can claim to derive an individual faith from his or her own insight, there is no reason why "any man should take the law of his country, rather than his own inspiration, for the rule of his action."" (26)

(v)

The authority of the self.

The doctrines which reevaluated the human subject, taking her or him out of the hands of the church, and placing her or him entirely in the hands of God, meant that what began as dissidence from Rome, could also mean dissidence from the English throne.

The primacy given by protestants to the private relationship between the believer and God, and the mysterious value derived from this relationship, meant that the believer's actions were no longer subject primarily to the state, but were instead ascribed to God who was the final authority in all things. The crisis which such ideas could cause for the state and any institutionalised form of authority, was recognised by Thomas More at the beginnings of the Reformation:

> "The people would neither be ruled by laws nor obey rulers, nor listen to doctors, but would be so free and unbridled, ... that no one would be forced, nor would anyone venerate the saints... not only will the papacy not endure but also royal power, and supreme magistracy, and the consulate and every administrative office whatever will fall into ruin and the people will be without a ruler, without law and order." (27)

The question of who bestows value and from where it derives is a highly political one. The one who bestows value on the individual, gains power over that individual as value is given or withheld according to the subject's obedience and the worthiness of her or his actions. It was partly the protestant's privatisation of human value which lead to a crisis of authority and power experienced in sixteenth and seventeenth century England. What is ironic is that from a profound sense of internal lack and failure comes a doctrine of individual authority great enough to threaten the power of the English throne.

Notes:

1. Bond, Ronald B. (ed), 1978, Certain Sermons or Homilies, University of Toronto Press, page 79.

2. Sinfield, Alan, 1992, Faultlines, University of California Press, Page 154.
3. Bunyan, John, 1678, Pilgrims Progress, ed, Rhona Pipe, 1988, Hodder and Stoughton, page 26 - 27, In view of the argument in this chapter it is interesting that Bunyan wrote Pilgrim's Progress while imprisonned along with 2000 other puritans for breaking the 1662 Act of Uniformity, which decreed that all churches had to use the Prayer Book. Bunyan was arrested for holding open air "non-conformist" worship services.
4. Dollimore, Jonathan, 1989, Radical Tragedy, Harvester Wheatsheaf, page 70.
5. Greenblatt, Stephen, 1984, Renaissance Self Fashioning, University of Chicago Press, Page 97.
6. Foxe, John, 1570, Foxes Book of Martyrs, Whitaker House, 1981, page 141. It is worth noting that Foxe and his family were exiled under the reign of queen Mary, and his book was censored much later in 1670 (Evans page 42).
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22. Tawney, R.H. 1922, Religion and the Rise of Capitalism, Penguin Books, page 93.
23. Tawney, R.H. 1922, Religion and the Rise of Capitalism, page 103.
24. Sinfield, Alan, Faultlines, page 164.
25. Sinfield, Alan, Faultlines, Page 175.
26. Sinfield, Alan, Faultlines, Page 177.
27. Greenblatt, Stephen, cites more in Renaissance Self Fashioning Page 64.

CHAPTER 4

THE PROBLEMATIC CONSTRUCTION OF WOMEN IN RENAISSANCE RELIGIOUS DISCOURSES

The increased anxiety surrounding human action and value which arose out of emergent struggles both among and between protestants and humanists, was greatly emphasised when women's value and action were considered. Prior to the advance of protestantism and Christian humanism, the misogyny of medieval Christianity and the courtly love tradition both worked in different ways to enforce and stabilise patriarchy. However, both protestants and humanists in the early sixteenth century, while arguing from different bases, sought new ways to evaluate women, which questioned the foundations of misogyny and, particularly in the case of protestantism, undermined the value of the courtly love narrative mode. Through their reevaluation of the nature of women in relation to that of men, protestants and humanists threatened some of the earlier foundations of patriarchy, and thus created an anxiety around the status of women in Renaissance society.

(i)

Biological misogyny and courtly love as patriarchal discursive practices:

Medieval misogyny relied on natural and crude biological arguments to construct women as the source of evil and as inferior to men. While Erasmus forms part of the humanist tradition, he interestingly draws on earlier discursive practices when discussing Adam and Eve in their prelapsarian state, and in so doing gives some insight into the value assigned to women before protestants and humanists reevaluated these earlier constructions of the feminine. Thus Erasmus suggests that Eve's nature, unlike Adam's, was originally corrupt and inferior:

> "In the case of Eve, however, not only does the will seem to have been corrupt, but the reason also or intellect, the source of all good and evil, for the serpent seems to have persuaded her that the threats were vain with which the Lord had forbidden them to touch the tree of life. In Adam, the will seems rather to have been corrupted by immoderate love toward his spouse, whose desire he preferred to satisfy rather than the commandment of God." (1)

This representation of women as an evil Other, which suggests a profound masculine fear concerning the female, and which reflects all evils away from himself and projects them onto the woman, is internalised in the sixteenth century by Christine de Pisan:

> "And I finally decided that God had made a vile creature when He made woman... a great unhappiness and sadness welled up in my heart, but I detested myself and the entire feminine sex, as though we were monstrosities in nature ... Alas God, why did you not let me be born into the world as a man ... and in my folly I considered myself most unfortunate because God had made me inhabit a female body in this world." (2)

The disgust and fear that this kind of misogyny directed towards women, and which was also internalised by women, might at first appear to exist in tension with notions of courtly love which seemingly elevated women as objects of worship. However, the tradition of courtly love also functioned to stabilise patriarchy in the middle ages, by sanctioning the use of the woman as sexual object and by positioning the woman as the immobile (3) and passive centre around which male action revolves. C.S Lewis, charting the rise of courtly love with its suggestion that the lover reaches the divine through the worship of the beloved, denies that this concept is found in Plato, arguing instead that it was first put forward by Ovid (4). Lewis notes that instead dealing with notions of mutual affection in love, Ovid's poem is ironically a didactic poem on the art of seducti[illegible] (5). Ginfield goes further in unmasking the patriarchal function of courtly love by pointing out that Ovid's poem is essentially a celebration of seduction which legitimises the rape of the beloved by the lover (6). That courtly love finds its origins in the works of Ovid (as Lewis convincingly argues it does), suggests that while the woman is seen as a channel to the divine, rather than this investing her with value, it in fact positions her as the object, willing or unwilling, through which the male reaches perfection and the satisfaction of his desires.

Lewis goes on to suggest that the emergence of courtly love coincided with the social phenomenon of the landless knight, the knight who literally went from castle to castle falling in love and wooing the wives of other men (7). While Lewis does not see why this should be the case, he suggests that there was a close link between the courtly love narrative mode, and the reality of

either adulterous love, or love which was unable to be consummated. It would seem therefore, that the idealisation of the sexual act, and thus the woman who remains the fantasised object of this act, is increased while both the act and the woman are yet unattained. This idealisation of the woman also rests to a certain extent on a longing for a perfection which is not the experienced reality of the lover, and which casts the woman as a kind of mythical Other whose constructed coherence and immobility reassures the male lover of the possibility of his own coherence and action. The actual practise of courtly love, out of which this literature derives, is arguably dependent on the literal stasis of the woman and the continual mobility and action of the male lover. The immobility of the woman is further emphasised by the fact that in reality she was little more than the property of her husband (8).

The prevalence of courtly love in pre-Reformation thinking, functioned to stabilise patriarchal structures. As Loomba argues "the stasis of the oppressed is crucial to any system of power: in pre Copernican thought the stillness of the earth guarantees the movement of the sun... and the stillness of the woman is posited as crucial for social, familial, cosmic harmony."(9) Therefore, instead of the courtly love idealisation of women investing the female with power, it in fact divests her of power, constructing her as the immobile centre, which guarantees the activity of the male and the unproblematic existence of patriarchy.

The immobility of the woman incorporated also a dichotomous view of woman, the spiritual woman, and the sensual woman. This dichotomy can be seen for example, in Dante's contrasting treatments of Beatrice and his wife (10). Beatrice, whom Dante saw only a couple of times in his life, became the centre around which his romantic and spiritual love moved, while his wife, never mentioned in his poetry, performed the "lower" sensual functions of bearing and rearing his children. Loomba points out that the notion of female immobility, as it is found in courtly love, functioned also to incorporate the deviant woman, thus making both the virgin and the whore crucial to patriarchal discourse:

> "The notion of female duplicity and changeability is premised upon such a dichotomy. It reflects the attempt to contain the possibility of female change within a patriarchal stasis - by offering a notion of external changeability of woman, a theory of female instability is employed in support of universal and unchanging female nature and a uniform but not unified identity is conferred on all women." (11)

Thus within courtly love, the woman who is the object of the lover's illicit worship always holds within herself the possibility of surrender and adultery, resulting in the ideal construction of her as virgin on the one hand, and the possible construction of her as whore on the other. In both cases however, the woman remains the passive conduit through which the male might ascend to the divine.

(ii)

The relationship of protestantism to misogyny and courtly love:

Some critics (12) have argued that the advent of protestantism, and to a lesser extent humanism, worked to destabilise patriarchal discourses which were partly reliant on a crude misogyny and courtly love for their unproblematic existence prior to the Renaissance. Dollimore puts forward the suggestion that "in the sixteenth century both humanists and reformers were in different ways challenging this (a medieval misogynist) estimate of women, especially the basic assumption of their "natural" inferiority." (13)

The undermining of misogyny by emergent protestant discourses, took the form of a new found elevation of the status of marriage based on mutual love and affection and a belief in the inherent equality of the partners before God. Sinfield suggests that while the Roman Church "held that the three reasons for matrimony are first to get children, second to avoid carnal sin, third for mutual help and comfort" , the reformers promoted the third function to first place, emphasising the importance of mutual affection in marriage. (14) In the Homilies we find this argument borne out as they preach against adultery by asserting the importance of love within the institution of marriage:

> "For the maryed are bounde by the lawe of God so purely to love one an other that neyther of them seke any straunge love. The man muste onley cleve to hys wyfe, and the wyfe agayne onely to her husband: they muste so delighte one in an others companye that none of them covit any other." (15)

The use of the word "delighte" arguably implies both an emotional as well as a sexual fulfillment, which would dissuade both partners from seeking fulfillment outside the marriage. There is also an emphasis on the mutuality of the relationship with each man cleaving to his wife, as much as each woman must cleave to her husband. There is no suggestion here of the woman being the source of adulterous sin, or of the woman being more easily tempted than the man and therefore inferior to him. Speaking about marriage in his Institutes Calvin endorses the spirit of the argument found here in the Homilies. Interestingly Calvin at no point in his discussion makes reference to gender roles in marriage, and instead emphasises the need for mutual submission and respect, in a marriage free from immodest passion and violence:

> "Now if married couples recognise that their association is blessed by the Lord, they are thereby admonished not to pollute it with uncontrolled and dissolute lust... but let each man have his own wife soberly, and each wife her own husband."(16)

Calvin further denies that virginity or celibacy is a higher calling than marriage. By doing this he elevates the status of marriage, and the sexual component of marriage, beyond the status assigned to it by the Roman Church:

> "But having graced marriage with the title of sacrament, to call it afterward uncleanness and pollution and carnal filth - what giddy levity is this? How absurd it is to bar priests from this sacrament! For they teach that copulation itself is a part of the sacrament, and that it alone is the figure of the union which we have with Christ, in conformity to nature: for man and woman are made one flesh only by carnal copulation." (17)

Also of interest is the implicit suggestion in the Homelies and in Calvin of, and warning against, the possibility of sin both within and outside of the marriage relationship. That both partners are equally counselled and warned, gives some indication of the basis for protestant views on the essential equality of women and men, which seems here to be located in their equal propensity for sin.

It is this belief in the sinfulness of women and men which made the notion of courtly love, and its suggestion that the male reaches the divine through the worship of the female, so distasteful to protestants. Sinfield draws attention to this as he points out that for the protestants, "Divine grace may raise sinners from the devil's realm to the kingdom of God, but they cannot work their way up. The spiritual realm is absolutely distinct from the human and there are no mediators - neither blessed virgins nor priests nor Beatrices" (18) Sinfield goes on to argue that it is partly due to this distinction between the human and the spiritual that protestants placed a new emphasis on the relationship between love and marriage.

(iii)

The relationship of humanism to misogyny and courtly love:

While protestants discarded courtly love as a means by which the male might ascend to the divine, it was not entirely done away with as a narrative mode. Humanists, with their increased optimism in human potential, and their return to classical learning, believed that the natural waywardness of women might

somehow be redeemed by learning and careful instruction by father and husband. Thus More, while arguing for an equal education for women, did so not because of a belief that their minds were equal to men's, but rather in the hope that education might rectify the defects of nature. (19) Courtly love became an acceptable way of wooing the female into the marriage relationship which would ultimately redeem her. Erasmus employs courtly love for these purposes, while at the same time investing the female voice with an increased value which would not have been possible in previous eras.

The exchange in the Colloquies between Pamphilus and Maria essentially follows the courtly love narrative mode, with Pamphilus as the suffering lover seeking to win Maria's affection, and ultimately her hand in marriage. However there are some fundamental shifts in Erasmus' use of this mode. Firstly, that marriage rather than an adulterous union is the desired outcome of the exchange, marks a shift from earlier uses of the courtly love mode. Secondly, the use of the female voice contrasts with other uses of this mode, where there is usually a single male voice preoccupied with his self conscious suffering (20). Maria's particular voice also employs intelligence and logic to parody Pamphilus' extravagant courting of her, much in the same vein as Rosalind's voice in AYLI. This dialogical construction suggests a greater value being assigned to women, which Pamphilus seems to draw on as he argues the suitability of the match:

> "But the integrity of your parents has been known to me for years now. In the first place, good birth is far from a bad sign. Nor am I unaware of the wholesome instruction and godly examples by which you've been reared; and good education is better

> than good birth. That's another sign. In addition, between my family and yours there has long been intimate friendship. In fact, you and I have known each other to our fingertips, as they say, since childhood, and our temperaments are pretty much the same. We're nearly equal in age; our parents in wealth, reputation and rank. Finally your tastes seem to fit my temperament not at all badly."(21)

However, this attempted egalitarianism based on a new optimism about human potential, is made problematic by the fact that the Collo[illegible]ies was essentially a textbook employed in the education of boys. Also, although Maria parodies Pamphilus' wooing of her, she recognises at the same time that her role is essentially a passive one. Thus in response to Pamphilus' claim that it is she who has killed him through her refusal to return his love, she replies:

> "Then how is it that although the lover is active and the beloved passive, the beloved is said to kill - when the lover, rather kills himself?"(22)

The dichotomy which exists between "lover" and "beloved", and "active" and "passive" reveals some of the uneasiness with which the notions of female and male equality, and the maintenance of a structural patriarchy were yoked together.

Another tension emerges as Pamphilus redefines the function of courtly love, recognising the temporary nature of its function, signifying instead that it is marriage which was now its ultimate goal:

> "But I'd want this love to be lasting and to be mine alone. I'm courting a wife, not a mistress."(23)

Maria is quick to realise the difficulties which exist in the transition into marriage where the value of equality is contradicted by the action of patriarchy. Arguing the desirability of virginity as opposed to marriage, Maria recognises the problematic demands of a wife's submission to her husband in the social institution of marriage:

> Maria. But liberty is sweet.
> Pamph. Virginity, on the other hand, is a heavy burden. I'll be your king, you'll be my queen: we'll rule a family at our pleasure. Or does this seem servitude to you?
> Maria. The public calls marriage a halter.
> Pamph. But those who call it that really deserve a halter themselves. Tell me, I beg you, isn't your soul imprisoned in your body?
> Maria. Evidently.
> Pamph. Like a little bird in a cage. And yet ask him if he desires to be free. He'll say no, I think. Why? Because He's willingly confined."(24)

The image of the bird in the cage to signify the woman's status in marriage is similarly used in Spenser's Sonnet 65:

> "Sweet be the bands the which true love doth tie,
> Without the constraint or dread of any ill:
> The gentle bird feels no captivity
> Within her cage, but sings and feeds her fill.

It is interesting that in both cases the male voice recognises that woman's position in marriage is akin to captivity, and that both voices attempt to construct this position as desirable.

(iv)

The problematic relationship between woman's value and woman's action in protestant and humanist discourses:

The representation of female captivity in marriage, both by Erasmus, a humanist, and by Spenser, a protestant, is problematic considering that both protestants and humanists were asserting a new found and increased value in women. It is here that one begins to notice some of the tensions surrounding the positioning of women in the Renaissance era. While women were seen as equal in value to men, or to be more precise, they were considered more equal than they had been before, particularly by protestants, both protestants and humanists still insisted on the submission of the wife to the authority of the husband in the marriage relationship (25). Thus we see in Erasmus' colloquy on marriage, Eulalia councils Xanthippe:

> "But Paul teaches that wives should be obedient to their husbands in all subjection. And Peter sets before us the example of Sarah, who would call her husband Abraham "Lord." (26)

Eulalia takes her advice even further as she argues through the use of three illustrative stories, that even in the face of a husband's infidelity or violence towards his wife, the wife's role is still to be one of submissive obedience, through which she must win back her husband's love. Erasmus, who clearly endorses Eulalia's voice, is arguing here for a mutual affection in marriage which is built primarily on the wife's submission to her husband. In the "colloquy on school" he similarly argues that if a wife is not submissive it might be due to the fact that her husband has not trained her properly, thus signifying that

the husband's authority in marriage is equally important to the happiness of the marriage:

> "Often it's our own fault that our wives are bad, either because we choose bad ones or make them such, or don't train and control them as we should."(27)

This opinion is endorsed again in Erasmus' letter to Ulrich von Hutton, in which he describes Thomas More's relationship with his wife, and thereby shows some of the similarities which existed between Erasmus and More in their views concerning the role of the wife:

> "He married a young girl of good family, who had been brought up with her sisters in their parents' home in the country; choosing her, yet undeveloped, that he might more readily mould her to his tastes. He had taught her literature, and trained her in every kind of music; and she was just growing into a charming life's companion for him when she died young... Within a few months he married a widow. Yet his life with her is as blithe and sweet as if she had all the attractiveness of youth, and with his buoyant gaiety he wins her to more compliance than severity could command. Surely a striking conquest, to persuade a woman, middle - aged to learn to sing to the lyre or the lute, the monochord or the flute, and to do a daily task fixed by her husband."(28)

Indeed, More's preference for a patriarchal household is borne out in Utopia where the society operates according to a rigidly defined system of hierarchy. In the household it is the eldest male who is the head of the home, where "wives wait on their husbands, children on their parents, and generally the younger on their elders."(29) In matters of social deviance where there is no fixed penalty, it is husbands who are to correct their wives, and parents their children (30).

The difficulty with which an increased female value was combined with female passivity, can be seen as Calvin discusses the value of women in his Institutes. Confronting the problem of the male centredness of Scriptures and therefore feeling the need to assert the equal value of women, and thus their inclusion in the sovereign plan of God, Calvin writes:

> "But it is sufficiently well known that descent is reckoned by the male line as far as the political order is concerned; yet this preferential position of the male sex does not gainsay the fact that the woman's seed must share in the act of generation.
>
> This solution also extends to all genealogies. Often when Scripture sets out a list of human beings, it names only the males. Must we then say that women are nothing? Why even children know that women are included under the term "man"!"(31)

Calvin's view, while arguing for the inherent equal value of women, by embracing the female in the male, also robs her of the means by which she might signify herself as the subject of her own speech and action. This tension and difficulty is seen more clearly as Calvin goes on to say:

> "But while I admit that a passive force is ascribed to women, I reply that the same thing is indiscriminately said of women, as of men."(32)

What is particularly interesting is that Calvin's language echoes Erasmus', with Maria's earlier reference to herself as the passive beloved. Here, while women are arguably equal to men, and the use of the word "force" would seem to imply that they are active agents, in fact they are assigned passive roles in relation to men.

Another area in which female passivity and silence was maintained in all Christian discourses, was that of church and church government. Calvin accordingly argues against women's authority in the church:

> "The practice before Augustine was born is first of all inferred from Tertullian, who held that a woman was not allowed to speak in the church, and also not to teach, to baptise or to offer. This was that she might not claim for herself the function of any man, much less that of a priest."(33)

That women were barred from speaking in church, essentially meant that they were denied the right to question or criticise the preacher's exposition of Scripture, an activity considered to be crucial to the protestants who held that each "man" was responsible for "his" own interpretation of Scripture, ie it was no longer the church which interpreted Scripture, but the individual, through the aid of the Holy Spirit.

It can be argued therefore, that both protestants and humanists sought to assert an increase in the value of the female, with humanism drawing on the new optimisms regarding the human subject, resulting in a new individualism and self consciousness, and protestantism stressing the importance of mutual affection in marriage. However, both protestants and humanists still sought to maintain a kind of structural patriarchy where the passivity of the woman remained crucial to the stability and coherence of the society. This resulted in a widening gap between woman's value and woman's action, as her role in society continued to be sharply defined by patriarchal discourse. There was thus a profound anxiety surrounding the feminine in the Renaissance era, as women who were considered intrinsically equal, or more equal

than they had previously been, were nonetheless assigned a passive role both in the family and in church.

(v)

Sinfield and Loomba; the gap between women's value and action in the Renaissance era:

Some critics have drawn particular attention to anxieties and difficulties directed at women as the result of contradictions and conflicts within protestant and humanist discourses. Sinfield argues that the idea of mutual affection in marriage and the belief in the inherent equality of men and women, was at odds with the presence of a structural patriarchy which sought to secure the woman's submission to husband, father and church (34). Sinfield draws particular attention to the additional problems caused by the continued belief in parental control (35). Sinfield argues that this too must cause a tension when compounded with the rising views of mutual affection in marriage:

> The other disjunction in the Reformation doctrine of marriage occured because theorists wanted to maintain, as well as the husband's authority, the father's. The ideal of affectionate marriage was held alongside a continuing belief in parental control, mainly in the interests of social standing and financial security."(36)

Loomba also recognises the tensions caused by emergent discourses with regard to gender constructions. Here she includes humanism which also promoted a kind of "quasi egalitarianism" which seemed to emphasise a new individualism and the possibility of female education, but which attempted sharply to define gender

roles (37). Loomba goes on to argue that this apparent contradiction in the emergent discourses was even more problematic than the previous misogynist and courtly love discursive practices, where female value and action were in clear agreement:

> "My point is that Protestant and humanist doctrines were more inconsistent than traditional misogyny because on the one hand they invoked logic and rationalism to question many existing orthodoxies, and on the other hand sought to legitimise women's subordinate position without the full authority of the crude but powerful "natural" arguments of medieval misogynists. By stressing that women are equal to men and still not the same, by advocating mutual affection in marriage and frowning on passion, by advancing "holy matrimony" as an ideal and yet tightening parental control, by excluding women from the new emphasis on self fulfillment, the dominant ideologies tried to redefine women's status in the changing circumstances, but actually they opened up irreconcilable contradictions that could only be uneasily yoked together." (38)

(vi)

The dislocation of the Renaissance woman in the face of contradictory demands.

Patriarchal discourse in the Renaissance era has been identified here as highly heterogeneous, characterised by dialogue between emergent protestant and humanist discourses (and their internal contradictions) and the earlier misogynist and courtly constructions of women. While protestants and humanists on the one hand threatened the basis of patriarchy by assigning women greater value, on the other hand they sought to maintain a kind of structural patriarchy where women were still allotted passive roles in the home and at church. This resulted in an anxiety

concerning the nature and function of the Renaissance woman. Protestants and humanists who claimed an equality in the internal value of women and men, and yet prescribed a submissive or passive role to women in familial and religious functions, created a gap between women's value and women's action. The position which women occupied in this context was consequently characterised by contradiction and dislocation, resulting in the frequent presentation of women as unstable and disorderly. Unhappily this instability did not rid women of their prescribed immobility, and as a result women remained on the fringes of the emergent discourses in which they were repositioned. Loomba suggests that the problematic, and often contradictory construction of women in this era, is indicative of the wider discursive struggles being carried out in the society at large (39). If this is the case, then the complexity and difficulties surrounding the understanding of the anxieties directed towards women in the Renaissance, are only further intensified.

Notes

1. Erasmus, D; 1520; On the Freedom of the Will; ed Rupp, E.G; Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation; SCM Press; London; Page 48.
2. de Pisan Christine, The Book of the City of Ladies, trans Richards; 1983; London; Pan; Page 5.
3. My use of the term "immobility" derives from Loomba A; 1989; Gender; Race;Renaissance Drama; Manchester University Press.
4. Lewis, C.S; 1936; The Allegory of Love; Oxford University Press; Pages 5 - 6.
5. Lewis, C.S; 1936; The Allegory of Love; Pages 5 - 6.
6. Sinfield, A; 1983; Literature in Protestant England 1560 - 1660; Billing & Sons, Worcester; Page 51.
7. Lewis, C.S; 1936; The Allegory of Love; Page 12.
8. Lewis, C.S; 1936; The Allegory of Love; Page 13.
9. Loomba, A; 1989; Gender, Race,Renaissance Drama; Manchester University Press; Page 74.
10. Schaeffer, F; 1976; How Should We then Live? Crossway Books; Illinois; Page 58.

11. Loomba, A; 1989; Gender, Race Renaissance drama; Page 74.
12. Dollimore, Jonathan; 1989; Radical Tragedy; Harvester Wheatsheaf; Page 239. Dollimore argues that while protestantism and humanism questioned the bases for patriarchy, they did not dismantle its structures, and instead sought new ways to maintain women's subordination to men.
13. I have drawn primarily on the arguments of Loomba (Page 65), Sinfield, and Dollimore who each suggest that protestant discourses in partcular were responsible for the undermining of the older patriarchal discourses.
14. Sinfield, A; 1983; Literature in Protestant England 1560 - 1660; Page 61.
15. Bond, Ronald B. (trans); 1987; Certain Sermons or Homilies (1547); University of Toronto Press; Page 185.
16. Calvin, J; 1559; Institutes of Christian Religion; ed McNeill, J.T; The Westminster Press; Philadelphia; Page 407.
17. Calvin, J; 1559; Institutes of Christian Religion; Page 1483.
18. Sinfield, A; 1983; Literature in Protestant England 1560 - 1660; Page 50.
19. Loomba, A; 1989; Gender, Race Renaissance drama; Page 71.
20. Sinfield, A; 1983; Literature in Protestant England 1560 - 1660; Page 54.
21. Erasmus,D; 1536 - 1584; The Colloquies of Erasmus; ed Thomson, C; 1965; University of Chicago Press; Page 94.
22. Erasmus,D; 1536 - 1584; The Colloquies of Erasmus; Page 90.
23. Erasmus,D; 1536 - 1584; The Colloquies of Erasmus; Page 94.
24. Erasmus,D; 1536 - 1584; The Colloquies of Erasmus; Page 95.
25. Both protestant and humanist discourses would have endorsed Ephesians 5: 22-25. "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church, his body, of which he is the Saviour. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.
Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless." (New International Version)
26. Erasmus,D; 1536 - 1584; The Colloquies of Erasmus; Page 117.
27. Erasmus,D; 1536 - 1584; The Colloquies of Erasmus; Page 60.
28. Allen, P.S. & H.M. (eds); 1924; Sir Thomas More, Selections from his English Works, and from the Lives By Erasmus & Roper; Clarendon Press; Oxford; Page 6.
29. More, T; 1516; Utopia; ed Surtz, E; 1964; Yale University Press; New Haven and New York; Page 72.
30. More, T; 1516; Utopia; Page112.
31. Calvin, J; 1559; Institutes of Christian Religion; Page 479.
32. Calvin, J; 1559; Institutes of Christian Religion; Page 480.
33. Calvin, J; 1559; Institutes of Christian Religion; Page 1321.
34. Sinfield, A; 1983; Literature in Protestant England 1560 - 1660; Pages 66 & 70.
35. Calvin interestingly makes no reference to children's, and particularly daughter's, obedience in his Institutes, and discusses children specifically only in the context of baptism, arguing the right of children to be baptised as part of God's covenant, and therefore giving them equal status to adults in the church. However it would seem unlikely that Calvin was not in favour of the obedience of children to their parents given that it is a teaching found throughout Scriptures.

Erasmus' colloquy on courtship does however, recognise the tension which must exist between the new discourses advocating mutual affection in marriage, and the traditional views of children's obedience to their parents. Consequently Maria refuses to pledge herself to Pamphilus without the blessing of their parents:

> "I don't know whether I could. I'm not a free agent. In former times marriages were arranged only by the authority of elders. But however that may be, I think our marriage will have more chance of success if it's arranged by our parent's authority. And it's your job to woo; that isn't appropriate to our sex. We girls like to be swept off our feet, even if sometimes we're deeply in love."(Page 98)

Despite the fact that Maria might be in love, as the current discourses might encourage her to be, she is unable to act in accordance with her feelings, first because of the convention of courtly love which renders her immobile, and secondly because of the authority of her parents which she is bound to obey. According to Sinfield, the new expectation of fulfillment in love which was promised to women, must at some point come into conflict with the rigidly defined parental authority. Consequently no such tension exists in More's Utopia where marriage is for the benefit of the society, rather than the mutual happiness of the individuals entering into this arrangement.

36. Sinfield, A; 1983; Literature in Protestant England 1560 - 1660; Page 70.
37. Loomba,A; 1989; Gender, Race Renaissance drama; Page 71.
38. Loomba,A; 1989; Gender, Race Renaissance drama; Page 72.
39. Loomba,A; 1989; Gender, Race Renaissance drama; Page 65.

CHAPTER 5

A SURVEY OF CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES AND SOURCE MATERIAL FOR SHAKESPEARE'S "TROILUS AND CRESSIDA"

My examination of critical and source material for Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida focusses primarily on the available material which is of particular relevance to this thesis. I therefore use work which draws attention to the struggles and anxieties present in the dialogues around action and value in the play. I pay particular attention to that work which is concerned with the dialogue present in the play, between the desire for action and value which fulfills expectations, and the reality of disillusionment and failure. Although none of the critics I have as yet encountered and discuss relates the struggles around action and value in the play, to the religious struggles present in Elizabethan England, it is interesting that a large proportion of the work available on the play is concerned with the presence of struggles which can also be found in Renaissance religious dialogues. The vast majority of critics also make some mention of the fact that the struggles and anxieties which are present in Shakespeare's play, are notably absent in the source material.

(i)

Sources:

Both Bullough and Muir agree that the primary sources for Shakespeare's play were Chapman's translation of the Iliad, which appeared as the Seven Bookes of the Iliades (1598); Lydgate's Troy-Book (1513 & 1555); Caxton's Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye (1474?); and Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde. Most of the incidents and characters found in the play can be traced back to one of these sources, with the chivalric material coming primarily from Homer and Caxton, while Chaucer provided the primary source for the romantic theme in the play. However, Bullough makes the observation that while Shakespeare owed something to Homer, Chaucer, Lydgate and Caxton, his handling of the material differed greatly from them in tone. (1)

Of Chapman's translation, Bullough makes a number of interesting observations. While he notices a variety of similarities between Shakespeare's and Chapman's work, he also points out some important deviations. Once more it is primarily a departure in tone which Bullough draws attention to:

> "I have no doubt that Shakespeare read the Seven Bookes, and suspect that his satiric treatment of the Greeks and his use of high-sounding language was partly to mock at the hero-worship shown by Chapman in the prefatory material to his versions." (2)

Bullough makes particular mention of Shakespeare's treatment of Achilles, arguing that in Shakespeare's version Achilles is deliberately debased:

> "For Shakespeare the Achilles who sulks petulantly through most of the Iliad could not be the glorious hero Homer yet makes him out to be. So his whole personality is interpreted in terms of his failings in the epic, and supported with material from Lydgate and Caxton, so that he kills Hector in a doubly villainous manner." (3)

Bullough points out that none of the sources provide Shakespeare with the justification for the way in which he deals with both the heroic and chivalric strains in his play. In fact, Bullough suggests that given the treatment of these themes by the sources, Shakespeare had every reason to handle both sides of his plot "with the high seriousness proper to epic and romance." (4) Instead, according to Bullough, Shakespeare, "sets out to shock lovers of Homeric heroism and medieval chivalry by the deliberate distortion of character and motive and by the expansive treatment of personages capable of base interpretation." (5)

It is of particular interest that Bullough draws attention to Shakespeare's character's failure to realise their desires, even in their most aspirant actions. Bullough makes the suggestion that one of the most significant changes which Shakespeare makes in his treatment of the Troy story is his reassessment of human nature, where things go wrong not because of the gods or Fortune, as in the classic and medieval accounts, but because of human error. (6) In the light of this observation by Bullough, it is worth recalling the increased concern among protestants at the time, with human frailty and weakness, where disorder in the universe was rooted in human failure and disobedience, rather that in the unpredictable gods.

Bullough's view that the play shows an increased anxiety about the efficacy of human action, is particularly evident when comparing the play to Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde. Troilus and Criseyde, is considered by Bullough and Muir to be the primary source for the discussion of love in Shakespeare's play. Reading Chaucer's poem with Shakespeare's play in mind, it becomes apparent that Chaucer's Troilus has a very different view of his ability to perform successfully as a lover, than does Shakespeare's Troilus (7). The anxieties present in Chaucer's poem are located in an entirely different place to those found in Shakespeare's play.

What is so interesting about Chaucer's poem is that it constructs the rituals of love in such a way that they closely parallel the rituals of religion, and more specifically, the Christian religion. The poem opens with the presentation of Troilus as the proud and arrogant sinner, who scorns both love and lovers indulgently. The moment he falls in love however, Troilus repents of his past pride (I, 318-321). Troilus' repentance is not a mild regret. Its depth and intensity matches that of a religious experience, so much so that Pandarus is urged to ask Troilus whether he has been moved to mourn some terrible sin which he has committed (I, 553-556). Converted to the religion of love, Troilus sets out to execute the rituals of love, much in the same way that a converted person would observe the rituals of her or his new religion (II, 1345-46), and by the end of the first book Troilus has undergone a transformation from a proud and arrogant knight, to a heroic knight (I, 1079-80). As Troilus is converted to a good and obedient lover, so too is Criseyde transformed from a beautiful widow to a divine creature worthy of the worship of

her new lover (I, 102-5). Consequently the worship of Criseyde becomes also the worship of the divine through the rituals of the love service (I, 428-31).

This reading of Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde shows how the poem in some important respects is a typical example of the courtly love genre, whereby the lover ascends to the divine through the worship of the beloved. What is particularly interesting is Troilus' attitude to his ability to observe the requirements of these rituals and so attain a kind of salvation in the temporal sense. At no time does Troilus really consider the possibility that he might not be able to observe the requirements of these rituals. His concerns and anxieties are not directed at himself and his actions, but rather at the ever present fate which might either bless or thwart these actions. Likewise, when approaching the possibility of consummating his love with Criseyde, Troilus at no time worries about his forthcoming performance as a lover, but rather whether the sexual union will in fact take place or not. Thus his invocation to the gods in the third book, lines 720 - 735, is essentially a prayer that he will indeed be united with Criseyde, rather than that he will prove to be a successful lover.

Criseyde's final betrayal in Chaucer's poem does little to detract from the courtly love theme, and is ultimately constructed as the working of Fortune rather than any failure of right action on Troilus' part. The poem's ending, with Troilus ascending into heaven after his death, and looking down on those who are mourning him, arranges things in their "true"

perspective, where earthly love and desire is merely the preparation for divine love and eternal life:

> "And in hymself he lough right at the wo
> Of hem that wepten for his deth so faste,
> And dampned al oure werk that foloweth so
> The blynde lust, the which that may nat laste,
> And sholden al oure herte on heaven caste,
> And forth he wint, shortly for to telle,
> Ther as Mercurye sorted hym to dwelle. (*N*, 1821ff)

Chaucer's poem works to confirm courtly love as a form of resolution and Neoplatonic thinking which claims that one might ascend "step by step, first to the body of the loved one, then to his soul, then to the Angelic Mind, and finally to God, the first origin of this glow." (8) In a similar vein Sinfield points out that courtly love works to justify human love, even though it is a temporary stage prior to the individual's final union with the divine (9). It is primarily because of its underlying neoplatonism that Lewis is able to argue that; "the odd thing is that Troilus and Criseyde despite this terrible conclusion, is not a depressing poem" (10). It is partly because of its movement towards resolution, that the steps or rituals required by the actor in this religion of love are to some extent in and of themselves exalted, leading also to a certain eroticism. It is this eroticism, so present in Chaucer's poem, which makes it possible for Lewis to conclude that "Troilus is what Chaucer meant it to be - a great poem in praise of love". (11) Likewise, commenting on the ending of the poem, C. David Benson claims that "if the one best answer for Chaucer and his contemporaries was the unfeigned and uncircumscribed love of God so powerfully urged at the end of the poem, even that transcendent truth did not remove the attractions and interest of earthly love from the mind

of the fourteenth century, as works of Dante and Petrarch also testify." (12)

It could be argued then, that because the religion and rituals of courtly love worked so effectively to raise the human subject, or more specifically the male subject, to the realm of the transcendent, courtly love was in a sense a religion which was rooted in confidence rather than anxiety. Given the anxiety which some critics have noted in Shakespeare's treatment of the possibility of love as successful action, it is interesting that Chaucer's poem, by contrast, works towards resolution. Thus we find in Chaucer's poem, that Troilus is successfully united with the transcendent, where his actions as a lover in the earthly realm redeem him from his earlier pride, and despite Criseyde's betrayal, Troilus is in the end satisfied.

Unlike Chaucer's Troilus who in no way directs his anxiety about the outcome of his love affair towards himself, Shakespeare's Troilus relates the possible success or failure of his encounter with Cressida almost entirely to his own actions. It is Shakespeare's vastly different treatment of action, and more specifically the successful outcome of desire, both heroic and romantic, which is of particular interest to my study.

(ii)

Critical perspectives on Heroic action in Troilus and Cressida:

Earlier critics of the play fall largely into two categories. On the one hand there are those who see the play as a comical satire, where Shakespeare sets out uniformly to destroy all notions of heroism and romanticism which were present in the earlier versions of the Troy story. According to these critics, Shakespeare displays a wholly cynical view of humankind in Troilus and Cressida, which they see as being the work of a bitter and disillusioned spirit. On the other hand there are also some earlier critics who attempt to make sense of the play by seeking for its metaphysical unity in its structure and narrative. For these critics good and evil are easily located in the play which works towards an identifiable resolution, where evil gets its just reward.

Bullough's (1966) analysis of the play falls into the first group of critics. Accordingly, he cites a variety of critics who share his largely cynical view of the play. Thus Dowden (1939) asks in his edition of the play, "Did Shakespeare write Troilus and Cressida to unburden his heart of some bitterness by an indictment of the illusions of romance which had misled him?" (13) Likewise Middleton Murry (1922) thought the play to be the product of "a wounded and bewildered spirit." (14) O.J. Campbell (1938) regarded the play as a "comical satire against individualism and sensuality" (15), and Alexander (1928) thought "the play might be treated as a fashionable exercise in social

criticism." (16) Bullough endorses the views put forward by Campbell and Alexander by commenting that "Troilus, with its Latinisms, its mingling of noble ideals with cynicism about human conduct, its mockery of the heroic and the romantic was probably written for a cultured audience which prided itself on its unshockable "realism"". (17)

In contrast to these readings which see the play primarily as a display of cynicism, there are ~~earlier~~ other readings which assert a certain unity and coherence of ideas in the play. Wilson Knight (1930) for example, claims that once we "see clearly the central idea from which the the play's thought and actions derive significance, most difficulties vanish." (18) Wilson Knight, is anxious to identify that central idea, thus unproblematising the play as he emphatically states "The theme is this. Human values are strongly contrasted with human feelings ... the Trojan party stands for Human beauty and worth, the Greek party for the bestial, and stupid elements of man, the barren stagnancy of intellect divorced from action, and the criticism which espouses these things to jeers." (19) While Wilson Knight has identified conflicting voices in the play, in his desire for a kind of metaphysical unity, he has reduced these voices to binary oppositions of good and evil, the negative and the positive impulses in the subject which are eternally fixed. The problem with this is that it denies the diachronic shift of the signifier, thus preventing an understanding of conflicts and struggles as being socially and historically located and constructed.

Alice Walker (1957) attempts a similar project to Wilson Knight in her edition of the play, as she seeks for the play's "integrity". She, like Wilson Knight, divides the Greek and Trojan camps according to the negative and positive impulses in the subject. However, she interestingly reverses the classification, claiming that "the decorum of the Greek council acts as a foil to the erratic course of the Trojan Council." (20) Similarly Walker traces continuity of pattern in repetition of themes and imagery. However, her switching of the qualities attributed to each camp should alert us to the possibility that it may be difficult to locate binary oppositions and simplify good and evil in the play. That Walker and Wilson Knight locate heroism in different places, is also suggestive of a struggle going on in the heroic code in the play, as it becomes evident that both the representation and the reading of heroism are problematic in Troilus and Cressida.

More recent critics of the play have shown an increased interest in Troilus and Cressida as a site for various struggles which take place between the desire for nobility and greatness in human action, and the repeated reality of failure as action falls short of human expectations.

Winifred Nowottny, although she could be called an earlier critic, writes in the vein of more recent critics as she draws attention to the anxiety which Shakespeare directs toward the possibility of successful human action in her discussion of Shakespeare's tragedies, in which she includes Troilus and Cressida. Nowottny draws particular attention in her discussion on Troilus and Cressida to the gap which she sees as existing

between the greatness which human beings aspire to, and the futility of their actions:

> "I suggest that Shakespeare thought of the conditions in which, as moral agents, we have to operate, as being baffling in the extreme. It is as though man, as a moral agent, were living in the wrong kind of universe; as though the incentives which drive men were intensely difficult to relate to their ideas of nobility and their expectations of others ... Man cannot understand himself or control his own future; there are fearful gulfs between what men think they are and what they find themselves doing; the deeds to which these tragic heroes address themselves become the focus of these mysteries and terrors." (21)

This awareness in Shakespeare's play of human responsibility for failed action, stands in contrast to classic accounts of heroic action in the Troy story. It is with this in mind that Douglas Cole (1980) argues that Shakespeare's play works to undermine the heroism and romanticism which are crucial to the classical accounts of the Troy story. Cole, although a more recent critic of the play, follows in the tradition of Bullough, as he goes so far as to say that "Figures and events from myth and legend are set forth in a context which distorts whatever values they may have traditionally embodied, revealing a far more cynical network of base and deluded behaviour." (22)

While Cole's reading constructs Troilus and Cressida as a rigorous critique of myth making, and the heroic ideal inherent in this phenomenon, other readings note a more complex struggle between the classical heroic code and the anxiety and disillusionment Shakespeare directs towards this code. Brower (1971) points out that much of the language used by the various

characters is that of the super epic hero. He maintains that Ulysses particularly "speaks within the heroic tone, using proper forms of address and high sounding epithets ... His true voice can be heard in his eloquent diagnostic vein - the quick pace, the sharply balanced phrases, the persuasive repetitions." (23) At the same time however, Brower points out the irony of Ulysses' speech "in the context of Ulysses' analysis of the "sickness" in the Greek camp." (24) While Brower traces various strains of the chivalric and heroic codes in the play, he maintains that "A good deal of defining and explaining seems to be going on, but nothing emerges that could be called a diagnosis of the Greek troubles, or a plan for action." (25) He notices a similar problem in the Trojan camp; while Hector maintains the same heroic grandeur shown in the Greek camp, Brower points out that he also has the capacity to speak with a "homeliness and bluntness known to other heroes on either side." (26) Brower thus notes a certain struggle taking place in the play as the heroic and antiheroic voices strive to articulate the possibility or difficulty of successful action.

Linda LaBranche (1986) notices a similar difficulty with the heroic assertion in the play as she identifies various visual patterns concerning power relations in the play, where one person frequently becomes the victim of group assault. According to LaBranche, the figure of the unsoldierly soldier also undermines the heroic code by continually frustating the audience's expectations of a heroic battle. LaBranche again notes the complexity of the struggling voices at the army's attention to the friendly meeting of enemies; "This free and civil congress between enemy forces derives of course from the chivalric code

which formed part of the play's background of values." (27) However, she goes on to problematise this as she claims that the code as Shakespeare employs it perverts good sense and leaves us unprepared for the brutal murder of Hector. LaBranche's reading of the play makes a very similar point to the one Nowottny makes, as she draws attention to the struggle which takes place in the play between the heroic ideal, which is articulated as desire, and the reality of unheroic action.

(iii)

Critical perspectives on the action of love in Troilus and Cressida:

The anxiety which critics have noticed in Shakespeare's treatment of the possibility of heroic action in the play, is similarly found in some of the discussions surrounding the action of love in Troilus and Cressida. Foakes, writing in the early seventies, sees the play as essentially satiric. However, he also points out the anxiety which surrounds the discussion of the possibility of acting out perfect love in the play, as he shows an awareness of the struggle which is present between desire and action; "The romantic ardours of Troilus and his pose as lover bear little relation to what he really intends to do, namely to seduce Cressida. Both the passion and the intention are real and convincing, but we are aware, as Troilus is not, of the disconnection between them, which satirically places him, and makes him at times a comic figure." (28)

Elizabeth Freund (1985), writing more recently, in her discussion on the derivative nature of Shakespeare's play, notices the difficulty with which the lovers must represent their love as true, and their actions as sincere. Her discussion of Cressida's attempts to find a place where her actions might match the depth of her desires is particularly poignant; "This giving away of herself, with its double gestures of bestowing and retracting, creates a powerful sense of her sincere scruples and hesitations, but at the same time it only ensares Cressida more surely in the impossibility of ever representing herself truly. Unlike Troilus, she has little confidence in the stable identity of selfhood or in the ability of discourse to represent it." (29) According to Freund, the instability of Cressida's identity is rooted in her realisation that her desire for the perfect action of love is doomed to failure at the outset, thus making the articulation of her desires uncertain and fraught with anxiety.

Linda Charnes (1989) in a similar discussion to Freund's, draws attention to the impossibility of Cressida loving Troilus truly as she has no control on the outcome of her story, which has already been written. Charnes comments that Cressida's abandonment of any control over her fate at the culmination of the love scene is "deeply self defeating, for it constitutes the present moment of love as the certain experience of loss." (30)

It is of interest that Foakes, Freund, and Charnes all make similar observations to those critics who foreground the anxieties around heroic action in the play. Much of the critical material on the play is concerned with Shakespeare's presentation of the limitations and frailty of human action, both in war and

in love. Most critics, and more specifically the more recent critics, draw some attention to the way in which Shakespeare sets the reality of human limitations and frailty, against the nobility of human desires and the poignant longing for perfection. There is thus a repeated awareness among critics of the play of the disparity that exists between Shakespeare's representation of the real and the ideal or imaginary in his version of the Troy story. It is the attention which critics give to the vast gap which exists in the play between lofty desires and ineffective action, which is of particular interest to me. For a very similar struggle was present in Renaissance religious discourses, and particularly in protestant discourses, where the desire for righteous action was believed to be constantly thwarted by a depraved nature which made the success of such action impossible.

(iv)

Critical perspectives on the treatment of value in Troilus and Cressida:

Discussion around Shakespeare's treatment of value in the play, shows a similar awareness of the struggles and anxieties directed towards the location of human value, as was found in the discussions involving Shakespeare's representation of heroic action and the action of love. Of particular interest, is the political and social dimension which some critics have drawn attention to in the dialogue which takes place in the play concerning the location of human value. Critics who draw attention to this particular dimension of the struggle around

value, notice the dialogue which takes place between those in the play who argue for the private location of value, and those who maintain that value derives from public approval and authoritative sanction. Implicit in the awareness of this struggle, is a view which sees value in the play as highly unstable, and thus like action, a source of anxiety, rather than the product of confidence.

In her reading of the problem of value in the play, Nowottny (1954) argues that a struggle exists between those who uphold the law of society or state, and those who assert a right to privacy and opinion which is not subject to the established authorities, and which she terms the "man of creative imagination" (31). She argues therefore, that Hector's argument against Troilus is "merely a denial of the right of the individual to his private values against the collective values embodied in the law of society." (32) Nowottny further argues that "the antithesis thus brought out in the debate in Troy, between private criteria of value and "the law in each well order'd nation", is in essentials the same antithesis as that between the view of Troilus and the view of Ulysses. To Ulysses' mind, what prevents a collapse into a savage state where "force should be right" is precisely the observance of the fixed values asserted by society and upheld by the assent of the individuals who compose and submit to it" (33). Nowottny's reading provides a discussion of "value and opinion" as it relates to those who have power and are seeking to maintain it, and those who assert the right to "opinion" which falls outside the status quo. Again, what is particularly interesting for the present study is that Nowottny's identification of the tension between a privately determined value, and value which

comes from public approval, is remarkably similar to the struggle which was going on between Calvinist and Christian humanist discourses at the time. Thus More's view of value as the product of social consensus was in conflict with the protestant view that value is to be found in the private relationship between the subject and God, which remains inaccessible to both church and state. The presence of this struggle around value both within the play, and in the larger context from which the play derives, relates directly to the anxieties about action which some critics draw attention to in the play, and which also existed in the wider religious debate. Thus as successful action is shown to be problematic, so value which derives from successful action is rendered unstable, therefore making the opposing assertion of a privately determined value necessary.

Rossiter (1961) draws attention to the way in which Ulysses shifts the location of value in order to suit his own political ends. In so doing Rossiter implicitly suggests that the location of value in the play is unstable and a source of anxiety. When Ulysses is talking to Achilles, Rossiter points out that in order to goad Achilles into action, Ulysses asserts that "The measure of worth is recognized effectiveness in the world of action." (34) Rossiter suggests that Ulysses is "telling Achilles in effect that there are no absolute values: that "honour" is the dividend in a ceaseless business of self-advertisement." (35) However, as Rossiter points out, this representation of value as shifting, acts in tension with Ulysses' earlier assertions in his speech on "degree". "In practice, Ulysses shows nothing but a glib and oily art, and denies the "estimate and dignity" of

intrinsic merit. The "degree" thinking asserts universal, eternal values; this practical realist argument denies them." (36)

Brower also draws attention to the presence of a struggle in the play around the private and public location of value, as he argues that it is Achilles' and Troilus' assertion of the private self which most threatens the established authorities represented in the arguments of Ulysses and Hector. In contrast to Rossiter who is critical of Ulysses' claim that value is a public commodity, Brower argues that Ulysses is "the best dramatic symbol in the play of the hero as reasoner. His speech is the classic example in Shakespeare of poetical reasoning, a style marked by much defining and logical ordering of ideas..." (37) In contrast to Ulysses, Achilles and Troilus are "victims of the same sickness, each locked in a private world of self regard."

Palmer (1982) also argues in his edition of the play, that it is Troilus' assertion of the right to privately determine value which works to threaten the stability of the state. Thus Palmer, in his analysis of Hector's arguments against Troilus' private and passionate valuation of Helen, comments that "each civilised country has laws to control those passionate men who resist such justice." (38) By contrast Ulysses is said to be ironical throughout the play: "his judgements are sensible; and if he sometimes lapses from wisdom to mere policy and shrewd plotting, that is because no other Greek has the wit to be as adaptable to circumstance as he is."

Juliet Dusinberre (1983), in the vein of more recent critics who show particular interest in the struggle which exists in the play between desire and reality, relates this struggle to the location of value in Troilus and Cressida. In her discussion of the definition of beauty in Troilus and Cressida, Dusinberre pays particular attention to the difficulty of locating a value which is privately defined. She thus draws attention to some of the difficulty with which various characters attempt to locate their identity and their value in a context in which beauty and truth are inaccessible to the deluded senses. Thus she points out that when Achilles, struggling to know his value, "gazes into the mirror of the self-regard, he sees in his soul confusion rather than clarity." (39) This observation by Dusinberre is particularly interesting in view of the emergent protestant concern with human depravity and the frailty of human value outside of the imputed value of Christ through the grace of God. The fact that most critics of the play show some awareness of the struggle present in the play around the problem of locating value, whether it is derived publicly or privately, or is located somewhere else mysteriously beyond the grasp of the individual, is again particularly fascinating for me. For the anxieties which these critics have drawn attention to here, can once more be traced in the discussions held by theologians during the Renaissance era.

(v)

This thesis in the context of existing criticism.

Most analyses of Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida pay some attention to the play's treatment of heroic action, the action of love, and the problem of human value and from whence it derives. However, I have not encountered to date, any critics of the play who attempt to read these issues in the context of the religious dialogues which were taking place at the time of the play's writing. There is however, a more general interest among critics in the struggles which take place in the play around action and value, and in the anxieties which Shakespeare directs towards these struggles.

There is a strong awareness among those familiar with the play, that Shakespeare's treatment of action and value, differs markedly from earlier renderings of the Troy story, and is profoundly anxious about the possibilities of human potential in a way that earlier versions of the story are not. It is the awareness which critics show for the increased anxiety around human action and value in Shakespeare's play, which is particulary interesting for my own study, given the presence of these anxieties in the larger religious context.

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CHAPTER 6

"TROILUS AND CRESSIDA" AND THE PROBLEM OF AN "HEROIC" BATTLE IN A PROTESTANT AGE

Located within a tradition of the classical heroic code, Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida becomes a site for the enactment of various struggles around this code, as the context of tradition interfaces with a religious context in which human heroism was highly contentious. I would like to suggest that the anxieties which Shakespeare directs towards the heroic code in the play, take on an increased significance when read with some understanding of the protestant distrust of the heroic potential of the human being. The protestant view of human depravity, accompanied by a striving after righteous action, set up an interesting dialogue with views of classical heroism, as heroic action, while thought to be ever elusive, was nonetheless intensely desired in so far as it was action which was considered morally honorable. This tension between distrust and desire which was found in Calvinist doctrine provides a helpful context for reading the transformation of the heroic code in Shakespeare's play.

(i)

Pandarus and the servant: A confrontation of heroic and "protestant" discourses.

The distrust which protestants had for notions of heroism did not exist in isolation. In addition to their own struggles with heroic aspirations, protestants had to acknowledge those whose ideas about heroism were much less anxious than their own. Thus christian humanists would have had a largely heroic view of the individual, which would have differed markedly with protestant views of human depravity. With this in mind, it is interesting that the exchange which takes place between Pandarus and the servant in Act II, scene i, offers a particularly noteworthy example in the play of two very different ways of constructing meaning around ideas of human potential and human merit. Pandarus and the servant speak past each other in a conversation which slips between the heroic presumptions made by Pandarus, and a deconstruction of those presumptions by the servant's religious allusions, which in their reference could be deemed protestant:

> Pand. Friend, you, pray you, a word: do you not follow the young Lord Paris?
> Serv. Ay sir, when he goes before me.
> Pand. You depend upon him, I mean.
> Serv. Sir, I do depend upon the Lord.
> Pand. You depend upon a notable gentleman, I must needs praise him.
> Serv. The Lord be praised! (III,i,1ff)

The quibbling over the word "Lord" which Palmer draws attention to in his notes, where Pandarus assigns the word to Paris, and the servant assigns it to God, is suggestive of a struggle over what constitutes authority and meaning. For Pandarus, meaning derives from the social order. The servant on the other hand refuses to bow to such an order, and instead suggests through his language, a meta-order. What is particularly interesting here, is that Pandarus and the servant locate dependence and lordship in different places. For Pandarus, these concepts draw their meaning from social relationships, thus suggesting a certain confidence in the transparency and rightness of these relationships. The servant on the other hand, undermines the stability of this confidence, suggesting instead that confidence can only be found outside of the frailty of human relationships, and as such must be derived from a dependence on God alone. The servant consequently diverts praise away from a human subject, and assigns it to God, thus suggesting that God is the only subject worthy of praise.

As the conversation develops, the servant continues to assert what is implicitly a protestant view of reality, while Pandarus assumes what is largely a heroic view of humanity.

> Pand. You know me do you not?
> Serv. Faith, Sir, superficially.
> Pand. Friend, know me better: I am the Lord Pandarus.
> Serv. I hope I shall know your honour better.
> Pand. I do desire it.
> Serv. You are in a state of grace?

> Pand. Grace? Not so, friend: honour and lordship are my titles. (III,i,9ff)

For Pandarus, the word is again invested with social significance, where the human subject is the sole author of that meaning, which is thought to be transparent and logical. It is worth noting that this particular practice was one which was defended by the Catholic church at that time, and echoes Thomas More's argument that truth is reflected unproblematically through social consensus. Thus, according to Pandarus, for the servant to know his name and title "Lord", is for the servant to know him for what he is. Pandarus, employing heroic discursive practices, assumes here a concurrence between appearance and reality, which, it seems, is rooted in a certain optimism regarding human potential. This optimism is seen clearly as Pandarus unproblematically appropriates "honour" and "lordship" as true representations of himself. The servant however, undermines the logic of this discourse, suggesting that there might be a gap between the sign and the thing it represents, and that reality might be more unstable and precarious than Pandarus assumes. The servant therefore questions Pandarus' claim to honour, which is essentially an heroic claim, by asking Pandarus if he is in a state of grace. Once more, the servant's use of the term is religious, where Pandarus' is social. The reference to grace on the part of the servant is highly significant here, because if grace is read in the way protestants would have read it, what the servant is suggesting is that no human being can claim honour for herself or himself, apart from honour which is bestowed by the grace of God. If this is the implication, then the servant is directly questioning the heroic estimation of human potential.

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That the concept of "grace" was highly significant to protestants, and particularly to Calvinists, is seen in the Oxford English Dictionary's definition of grace in terms of its use in scriptural and theological language: "The free and unmerited favour of God as manifested in the salvation of sinners and the bestowing of blessings. Doctrines of grace: by Calvinists applied esp. to the doctrines of election, predestination etc." The word "grace" was also used in this particular context in protestant sermons of the time. In "An Homelie of the Salvacion of Mankynd, by Onely Christ Our Savior, from Synne and Death Everlastyng" grace is used nine times in order to refer to the the salvation of sinners by the action of God:

> " al have offended and have nede of the glory of God, but are justified frely by his grace, by redempcion whiche is in Jesu Christ, whom God hath set furth to us for a reconciler and peace maker, through faith in his bloud, to shewe his righteousnesse." (1)

The very reason grace is needed, is because the human subject is so lost in the ignorance of sin, that she or he is unable to gain salvation unless God himself intervenes:

> " Because all men be synners and offendors against God, and breakers of his law and commaundementes, therfore can no manne of his awne actes, woorkes and deedes - seme thei never so good - be justified and made righteousnesse, before God; but every man of necessitie is constrayned to seke for another righteousnesse, or justificacion, to be received at Gods awne handes..."(2).

The servant's question implicitly suggests that grace is not a status or title to be unproblematically claimed by the human subject, but is something mysteriously bestowed, transforming mere human experience into something other worldly. The servant therefore alludes to "grace" as a state of experience which defies human logic and presumption. Pandarus on the other hand sees grace as a function of human merit and therefore takes grace to mean "duke". Seeking to correct the servant, he claims that "honour and lordship" are his titles, titles which the servant has already implied belong to no human being. The fact that the servant and Pandarus signify grace in entirely different ways, would have had particular significance for protestant members of the audience for whom grace was the agent which removed them from the worldly realm, and placed them in God's realm. It is particularly interesting that the two different meanings which Pandarus and the servant apply to grace are indicative of the difference between a humanist and a protestant view of the world, where the one relates grace to human merit, while the other alludes to a status which is bestowed rather than achieved.

As the servant refuses Pandarus' attempts to unproblematically link heroic signs with human subjects, Pandarus finally realises a certain failure in his heroic discourse to accommodate a meta signification which defies human logic: "Friend, we understand not one another: I am too courtly, and thou art too cunning". The implication here is that the servant possesses a knowledge which lies outside that of courtly discourse, and the Oxford English Dictionary cites three instances where "cunning" is used to denote a spiritual knowledge which comes from God, rather than from

"man". Thomas More, a Christian humanist, lists one of the great virtues and gifts of God as cunning, while Tindale, a protestant, uses two Biblical quotations (Matt. 13:52; Cor 2:13), in order to imply a knowledge which is not of this world (OED).

The confrontation which occurs between the servant and Pandarus is interesting when it is considered in relation to the religious context in which it was written, because it draws attention to two very different ways of understanding human potential. The ideas implicit in this scene, seem to form the very basis for the struggle which surrounds notions of heroic action in the play. For at its heart lies the one view, that human beings are heroic and worthy of honour, and the opposite and conflicting view, that human beings are depraved and in need of God's grace.

(ii)

The Greek council scene: An heroic fantasy vs. an unheroic reality.

> "When man has been taught that no good thing remains in his power, and that he is hedged about on all sides by most miserable necessity, in spite of this he should nevertheless be instructed to aspire to a good of which he is empty, to a freedom of which he has been deprived." Calvin (Institutes 255)

The broken and fallen reality in which protestants believed they lived, and which the servant alludes to in his undermining of heroic assumptions, by no means prevented protestants from striving after a righteousness which they firmly believed they could never achieve. The struggles found in the Greek council scene would have been intensified for devout Calvinists in the

audience, who lived with the tension of despair at human sin accompanied by a profound longing for perfection. In the Greek council scene, the reality of failure is accompanied by the hope that, in the future, failure will be transformed into success. Thus while human action is presented as feeble and decidedly unheroic, the soldiers are nonetheless urged to aspire to something which is far greater than their immediate experience.

It is in this spirit that Agamemnon begins by attempting to make some kind of heroic sense out of the reality of failure. He thus presents the problem in terms of the gap which exists between human desire and human action, where the action seems unable to match the greatness of the desire:

> Princes, what grief hath sut the jaundice on your cheeks?
> The ample proposition that hope makes
> In all designs begun on earth below
> Fails in the promis'd largeness..(I,iii,1 -5)

The magnitude and heroic proportions of the desire is implied in the words "ample, "all" and "largeness", but the elusiveness of these desires is apparent in so far as they exist only as hopes, designs and promises, and have failed to become a reality. The heroism thus far is present only in what men wish for, rather than in what they do. The tragedy conveyed in the "grief" and "jaundice" that are reflected in the men's cheeks exists precisely because of the greatness of their desires, and their inability to match them with their frail human actions.

Agamemnon does not stop here however, but tries to construct some universal meaning from their failure in order to revive the flagging hopes and promises once more, and thereby elicit the appropriate response of heroic action from his army.

> "Why then, you princes,
> Do you with cheeks abash'd behold our works,
> And call them shames which are indeed naught else
> But the protractive trials of great Jove
> To find persistive constancy in men,
> The fineness of which metal is not found
> In fortune's love? For then the bold and coward,
> The wise and fool, the artist and unread,
> The hard and soft, seem all affin'd and kin;"
> (I,iii.16ff)

In order to do this Agamemnon attempts to add weight to his argument by adopting a discourse which tries to mix notions of providentialism with the possibility of heroic action. The idea of a providential God was central to protestant Christianity, and rested on the idea of an all powerful God, who wills and moves all things according to his divine purpose:

> "With what clear manifestations his might draws us to contemplate him! Unless perchance it be unknown to us in whose power it lies to sustain this infinite mass of heaven and earth by his Word: by his nod alone sometimes to shake heaven with thunderbolts, to burn everything with lightnings, to kindle the air with flashes; sometimes to disturb it with various sorts of storms, and then at his pleasure to clear them away in a moment;..." (3)

In this view of providence, God determines everything, leaving little room for human intervention. When Agamemnon argues that the disasters experienced in the Greek camp thus far are in fact the workings of "great Jove", it is important to remember that he was speaking into a context where such ideas were the orthodox doctrine of the Elizabethan church. A struggle develops however, when Agamemnon tries at the same time to assert the possibility of heroic action in the face of these mighty workings of Jove.

The combination of religious and heroic discourses here interface in such a way as to make the possibility of action highly problematic. On the one hand there is the assertion made by Agamemnon that everything, including human failure, can be attributed to God, while on the other hand there is also the attempt to find some room for heroic and victorious action, in the face of a God who is sovereign.

The complexity of the problem of human action as perceived from a protestant context becomes even more apparent if we consider Palmer's notes to the Arden edition of the play (4). Here he points out that the reference to "metal" has two biblical citations, both of which refer to the refining work of God. The second citation found in Zechariah 13: 9 refers to the way in which God deals with his chosen, or in Calvin's language, God's elect:

> "In the whole land,"
> declares the Lord,
> "two-thirds will be struck down

and perish;
Yet one-third will be left in it.
This third I will bring into the fire;
I will refine them like silver
and test them like gold.
They will call on my name
and I will answer them;
I will say, "They are my people,"
And they will say,
"The Lord is our God."" (New International Version.)

The notion here is one where it is God who tests, refines and finally brings his people to righteousness. God in all instances is the subject and author of the action, while his people are the objects of that action. Thus Calvin says of those good works performed by the elect:

> "The first part of a good work is will; the other, a strong effort to accomplish it; the author of both is God. Therefore we are robbing the Lord if we claim for ourselves anything either in will or accomplishment." (5)

> ""God does not crown our merits but his own gifts: we call "rewards" not what are due our merits, but what are rendered for graces already bestowed". (6)

We are brought once more to the context into which Agamemnon speaks, and from which he draws his images, and it becomes increasingly apparent how complex the problem of human action is, and particularly heroic action, especially among those who are God's so called chosen; those who are supposedly set apart to do his work. For if we are to understand the biblical context from which the image is drawn, it is from God that all good action originates.

Also working itself into this struggle is the likelihood that the audience would have already known the outcome of the play before it even began, thereby contributing to the anxiety regarding the possibility of heroic action in a deterministic universe. Linda Charnes draws particular attention to this dilemma as it would have faced an Elizabethan audience, and describes in secular terms the tensions which existed between those who believed that the subject was without the power to perform sufficiently, and those who suggested the possibility of heroic action:

> "It is, I believe, this curious coupling of the great "authority" that surrounded the legend of Troy with its unstable classificatory status, its strange existence as both legend and history, that led Shakespeare to use the story as a way to investigate the deeply conflicted relationship between absolutist authority and its coercive forms, and a contrary fantasy (and I wish to stress fantasy), represented explicitly during this time, of the possibility of a "self-authored" subjectivity." (7)

The God described by Agamemnon is however also a God who is ever unpredictable, and the fragility of the human condition is emphasised in the images of natural disasters used by both Agamemnon and Nestor. The images of the diseased pine diverted from its natural growth (6-7), and later of the enraged sea (37-51), instead of generating the optimism which they are supposed to, act as vivid images of the post lapsarian world. The images which are used in this scene thus present a picture of a world out of human control, where heroic action seems if not impossible, highly improbable. In comparison to the greater workings of Jove, all human action pales into insignificance, and heroism seems but a fantasy for frail and disappointed subjects, or to be more accurate in this context, objects.

It is within the context of such ideas that an Elizabethan audience would have heard Agamemnon urging his army toward heroic action, especially as Agamemnon himself implies some of these notions in his speech. The possibility suggested in the movement from the images of mental and physical illness in the men, to an image of purified and unmingled metal becomes a problematic one, as we remember that, within the context of protestant theology, such a movement is taken out of the hands of the human subject, and put entirely in the hands of an almighty God. Within this context, heroic assertion remains what it began as, a hope and a promise, as the gap between desire and reality reemerges in the gap between a present failure and a hoped for future.

Ulysses participates in this discussion with his famous speech on degree (I,iii,74ff), in which he argues that heroic action is the product of the observance of degree. This speech has been much discussed by various scholars, of which there seem to have emerged two sides to the surrounding debate . The first is well summarised by the view put forward by E.M.W. Tillyard (1943); namely that the conception of order (as is argued in Ulysses' speech) "is so taken for granted, so much part of the collective mind of the people, that it is hardly mentioned except in explicitly didactic passages" (8). More recent critics argue however, as does Roland Mushat Frye (1984), that "Ulysses' eloquent words summarize an older view, that of the earlier sixteenth century, rather than that of the late Elizabethan and Jacobean periods". (9) Frye goes on to argue that notions of resistance to, and acceptance of authority were much more complex among Shakespeare's contemporaries, than Tillyard's reading of Ulysses' speech might suggest.(10)

If we consider some of the complexity with which ideas about order were circulating within the religious discourses of the time, it becomes increasingly apparent that an Elizabethan audience would have responded with much of the anxiety that Frye suggests. Indeed this complexity is reflected in some of the tensions surrounding the conflict between the greatness of Ulysses' speech and the triviality of his actions, causing Foakes (1971) to comment: "Ulysses and his assertion of authority as a wise man is undermined by the expediency of his actions"(11).

This tension between Ulysses' ideals and his actions would have been unlikely to surprise a seventeenth century audience, given the widespread protestant view of human depravity. However, tensions existed also in the way in which protestants tried to resolve the equally held assertions that a postlapsarian world is characterised by chaos and disorder, and that the human subject must nonetheless be obedient to what order God has subsequently set in place. In the protestant "Homelie against Disobedience and Wylfull Rebellion" we find a description of the prelapsarian world in which the observance of degree was the order of the day:

> "So here appeareth the originall kyngdome of God over angels and man, and universallie over all thinges, and of man over earthly creatures which God had made subject unto him, and withall the felicitie and blessed state which angels, man, and all creatures had remayned if they had continued in due obedience unto God the king." (12)

This however is not the reality of the postlapsarian state, the state in which protestants firmly believed they lived:

> "But as all felicitie and blessednesse shoulde have continued with the continuance of obedience: so with the breache of obedeince, and breaking in of rebellion, al vices and miseries dyd withall breake in, and overwhelme the worlde." (13)

For the Elizabethan protestant, a world of civil harmony was a possibility only in an unfallen world. It is into this context that Ulysses speaks, and the problematic relationship that develops in his speech between the ideal, and the experienced reality both of the Greek soldiers, and ultimately of himself, relates closely to the tensions with which these beliefs were held in Protestant England. For although the perfect observance of degree was held to be a fantasy by the orthodox church, they nonetheless asserted the necessity of seeking such an observance:

> "After this breache of obedience to God and rebellion agaynst his majestie, al mischiefes and miseries breaking in therwith and overflowyng the world, lest all thinges should come unto confusion and utter ruine, God foorthwith, by lawes geven unto mankynd, repayred agayne the rule and order of obedience thus by rebellion overthrown, and besides the obedience due unto his majestie, he not onlye ordayned that in families and housholdes the wyfe shoulde be obedient unto her husbande, the children unto their parentes, the servantes unto their maisters: but also when mankinde increased and spread it selfe more largelie over the worlde, he by his Holy Worde dyd constitute and ordayne in cities and countreyes severall and speciall governours and rulers, unto whom the residue of his people shoulde be obedient." (14)

The disparity that exists between Ulysses' argument and his actions, and indeed the actions of the entire Greek army could well arise because Ulysses is essentially narrating what was believed to be a fiction about degree, which is absent in political life except as a fantasy, a fantasy which people must nonetheless strive to make a reality. Ulysses' task consequently seems to be to convince the Greek army that they can indeed

achieve civil harmony where degree is observed. In his complaint that "degree being vizarded, \ Th'unworthiest shows as fairly in the mask" (82), Ulysses reinterprets the Greek's present experience as he masquerades degree as the reality which is masked, thus presenting the reality of disorder which is experienced in the Greek camp, as a kind of pantomime.

Being first and foremost a politician seeking political gain, Ulysses endeavors to present the fantasy as reality. He does this by appealing to a metaphysical ontology where each thing contains a distinctive essence which distinguishes it from other things, and determines its place within the universal hierarchy. Ulysses therefore supposes that reality is transparent and unmasked by language or socialisation. The problem which emerges here however, is that the reality which Ulysses is seeking to describe, is chaotic. Ulysses denies that this is the essential reality, and argues that the essential reality, which is being masked, is in fact ordered and heroic. Ulysses argues for a coherence between action and essence, and expresses a fear for that which acts or appears contrary to its nature. Thus the Grecian tents "do stand\ Hollow upon this plain, so many hollow factions," (78-79) (i.e. they fail to reflect what Ulysses argues they contain in reality, which according to Ulysses, must be heroic Grecian soldiers.) What is essential to Ulysses' argument is his view of the nature of things. According to Ulysses, nature and essence is unfallen, and therefore heroic. His voice therefore speaks in opposition to the protestant view of the nature of things. Ulysses primarily attempts to represent the reality of human failure as imaginary, and at the same time represents order, degree and heroism as real.

The appeal to a fixity of meaning reflects what is essentially a fear of deferral, a fear that once degree is no longer observed, things will lose their names and become indistinguishable, and order which is dependent on difference which is stable, will disintegrate into anarchy. This refusal to observe degree is therefore expressed in terms of movement. Thus disorder is said to wander, the sea rages, the earth shakes and;

> "Commotion in the winds, frights, changes, horrors,
> Divert and crack, rend and deracinate
> The unity and married calm of states
> Quite from their fixture." (I,iii,97ff)

There emerges however a tension between unity and degree, which as the speech progresses reflects the difficulty with which this fantasy must become a reality. The fact that unity is dependent on diversity and hierarchy, must mean that unity will always be fragile and vulnerable to disruption.

> "The bounded waters
> Should lift their bosoms higher than the shores,
> And make a sop of all this solid globe;
> Strength should be lord of imbecility,
> And the rude son should strike his father dead.
> Force would be right; or rather, right and wrong,
> Between whose endless jar justice recides,
> Should lose their names, and so should justice too.
> Then everything includes itself in power,
> Power into will, will into appetite;

> And appetite, an universal wolf,
> So doubly seconded with will and power,
> Must make perforce an universal prey,
> And last eat up himself." (I,iii,110ff)

It is interesting that calm and order are implicitly suggested to be the outcome of an observance of degree, which contrasts to the violent action of disunity, therefore creating some difficulty over the possibility of action once degree is observed, for action implies movement, which implies change. The idea of unity also becomes problematic as it shifts to incorporate the chaos which Ulysses proceeds to describe. Thus we are told that "each thing melts" as the shores and seas become one and the entire globe is made a sop resulting finally in the image of cannibalism, where the wolf appetite becomes its own prey.

According to Ulysses' diagnosis, heroic action or right action is only possible once degree is observed. However, both the chaotic reality into which Ulysses speaks, as well the Elizabethan context out of which the play emerges, work to undermine such a possibility. The problems which emerge from Ulysses' speech, both in relation to what happens in the play, and the religious context of Elizabethan England, bring into question once more the view put forward by E.M.W. Tillyard, who sets Ulysses' speech up as an example of the accepted ideas of the age. The argument that ideas of degree, order, unity and hierarchy were problematic, rather than accepted as received truths by English society, suggests also the ~~fragility~~ complexity with which the social political status quo was maintained in Elizabethan England (15).

Ulysses cites Achilles' refusal to respect the authority of Agamemnon and the age of Nestor as an example of the failure to observe degree in the Greek camp.

> "the great Achilles, whom opinion crowns
> The sinew and the forehand of our host,
> Having his ear full of his airy fame,
> Grows dainty of his worth, and in his tent
> Lies mocking our designs. With him Patroclus,
> Upon a lazy bed, the livelong day
> Breaks scurril jests,
> And with ridiculous and awkward action,
> Which, slanderer, he "imitation" calls,
> He pageants us." (I,iii,141ff)

However, instead of this example working to uphold the degree Ulysses is urging all to adhere to, it works to remove it even further from reality as Ulysses recalls the mimicry of Achilles and Patroclus, and so unwittingly mimics both Agamemnon and Nestor for the audience and Greek camp. This slip into mimicry also works to intensify the tensions which have been argued to exist in the relationship between what is represented as ideal in the play, and what is presented as real, thus increasing the anxiety surrounding notions of human potential and heroic action. This relationship is made even more complex as the audience sees before them, the great Trojan legend being acted out in terms they can on the one hand recognise, but on the other, in terms which mock that recognition. The anxiety over the possibility of heroic action is heightened, and the audience might say of the play they are watching, exactly what Ulysses complains of

Achilles and Patroclus:

> And in this fashion
> All our abilities, gifts, natures, shapes,
> Severals and generals of grace exact,
> Achievements, plots, orders, prevention,
> Excitements to the field, or speech for truce
> Success or loss, what is or is not, serves
> As stuff for these two to make paradoxes. (i,iii,178ff)

The anxiety in the Greek council scene is not so much that all is made to seem absurd and meaningless, but rather that the "abilities, gifts, natures, shapes...Achievements, plots, orders and preventions" that do exist and form part of the dialogue of the play, and some of which Pandarus' ascribed to himself earlier, never materialise or reach their desired potential. That these desires are so lofty points to a certain heroism in the human subject, but that the desires remain only in the hopes and designs of the human subjects, and not in their actions, suggests the failure of heroism to ever become a reality.

(iii)

The Trojan Council scene. Heroic action signified as loss.

> "For what do we accomplish when, relying upon every assurance, we consider, plan, try, and undertake what we think is fitting; then - while in our very first efforts we are actually forsaken by and destitute of sane understanding as well as true virtue - we nonetheless rashly press on until we hurtle to destruction?" Calvin (Institutes, 243)

The striving after effective action to which the protestant is urged, is given no guarantee of final success. Instead there is every indication in protestant writings that human striving will

only end in disaster. The longing after heroic action which is evident in the Greek council scene, fades in the Trojan council scene, where the future becomes increasingly uncertain, and images of future destruction replace images of victory and possible glory. The action of war, classically equated with heroic action, is at the opening of the Trojan council scene constructed as the subject of loss.

> "After so many hours, lives, speeches, spent,
> Thus once again says Nestor from the Greeks:
> "Deliver Helen, and all damage else-
> As honour, loss of time, travail, expense,
> Wounds, friends, and what else dear that is consumed
> In hot digestion of this cormorant war-
> Shall be struck off." Hector, what say you to't."
> (II,ii,1ff).

The weariness present in Priam's speech stands in contrast to Agamemnon's attempts to revive his soldiers towards heroic action. Priam suggests instead that the Trojans give up, that the losses incurred in the war are not worth the honour to be gained in the keeping of Helen. Hector continues this theme set forth by Priam by drawing attention to the disparity between heroic values and reality.

> "Though no man lesser fears the Greeks than I,
> As far as toucheth my particular, yet, dread Priam,
> There is no lady of more softer bowels,
> More spongy to suck in the sense of fear,
> More ready to cry out "Who knows what follows?"

> Than Hector is. The wound of peace is surety,
> Surety secure; but modest doubt is called
> The beacon of the wise, the tent that searches
> To th'bottom of the worst. Let Helen go.
> Every tithe soul 'mongst many thousand dismes
> Hath been as dear as Helen - I mean, of ours.
> If we have lost so many tenths of ours
> To gaurd a thing not ours, nor worth to us,
> Had it our name, the value of one ten,
> What merit's in that reason which denies
> The yielding of her up?" (II,ii,8ff)

In the reality of future uncertainty, "who knows what follows?" Hector argues for a "modest doubt", as the only reasonable response to a universe where disintegration is everywhere apparent. Rather than succumbing to heroic fantasies of future glory and death with a foolish bravado, Hector urges that life or peace should be sought after, which must entail an awareness of their limitations.

It is interesting that Hector's language reflects a certain religiosity, where the notion of a tithe is a biblical one, being the tenth portion belonging to God. The reference to "tithe souls" suggests the value of the lives which have been lost as a result of the war. Hector therefore sets the worth of human life against the heroic notion of war, which is able to expend these lives so easily. Once more an image from religious discourse is used as that strain of the argument which distrusts notions of heroism. The Trojan council scene goes further than the Greek council in articulating an anxiety regarding the heroic code, in

that it suggests that it is an adherence to this code which leads ultimately to destruction. The danger of placing any hope in human potential was well documented in protestant works, which repeatedly stress that it is only when we view ourselves as utterly worthless, that we are able to be saved. Thus we find in the "Homelie Of the Misery of All Mankynde", the argument that there is nothing in the human subject, but that which leads to destruction:

> "Again we have heard how that of oure selfes, and by oure selfes, wee are not able either to thynke a good thought or worke a good deede, so that we can fynd in our selfes no hope of salvacion, but rather whatsoever maketh unto our destruccion." (16)

Hector's argument that the Trojans should abandon the war, rests in his fear that they are indeed heading for destruction, and that heroic action does not end in the desired glory, but in death and loss. Troilus however takes the opposing view:

> "Fie, fie, my brother!
> Weigh you the worth and honour of a king,
> So great as our dread father's, in a scale
> Of common ounces? Will you with counters sum
> The past-proportion of his infinite,
> And buckle in a waist most fathomless
> With spans and inches so diminutive
> As fears and reasons? Fie for godly shame!" (II,ii,25ff)

Although arguing in favour of heroic action, Troilus also highlights this tension as he argues that the heroic ideal of honour, especially the honour of the king, must outweigh all

other considerations. Troilus attempts to set up a discourse of binary oppositions, with the words that relate to the king (worth, honour, great, dread, past proportion, infinite and fathomless) on one side of the scale, and the "common ounces" of the tithe souls, along with diminutive fears and reasons on the other. The notion of heroic action, especially when it relates to war becomes a highly problematic one which is fraught with internal conflict, as honour and optimism about human potential become synonymous with the destruction of that potential as human lives are lost.

Up until this point in the play, the heroic code has relied heavily on the promises of the future, where human designs and endeavors might finally be realised. Hector's insinuation that the future is not so certain suggests that human action might indeed fail, with the loss incurred in the present, failing to result in honour in the future. Cassandra's prophesy further introduces the possibility of future failure.

> "Cry, Trojans, cry! Lend me ten thousand eyes,
> And I will fill them with prophetic tears.
> ---
> Virgins and boys, mid-age and wrinkled eld,
> Soft infancy, that nothing canst but cry,
> Add to my clamours! Let us pay betimes
> A moiety of that mass of moan to come.
> Cry, Trojans, cry! Practise your eyes with tears.
> Troy must not be, nor goodly Ilium stand;
> Our firebrand brother, Paris, burns us all.
> Cry, Trojans, cry! A Helen and a woe!

Cry, cry! Troy burns, or else let Helen go."
(II,ii,100ff)

The language of her prophetic interruption stands in stark contrast to the language used in the debate thus far. The act of prophesying suggests a predetermined universe outside of human control, and the prophesying of disaster further disrupts the heroic construction of reality. After her injunction to all to weep, Cassandra addresses "Virgins and boys, mid-age and wrinkled eld," thereby drawing attention to the decay and mutability that characterises human life, where the future holds little hope. She then turns to "soft infancy, that nothing canst but cry", which suggests the vulnerability and dependency with which human life begins. The link between the Trojans who must weep and the crying infants, also works to dispel heroic idealism with its suggestion that human desires and needs are not satisfied in the future. The fact that Cassandra's prophesy is the truth, and that her raving has more meaning than the reasoned rhetoric of Hector and Troilus, once more sets the heroic mode in doubt, as the present reality of death and loss is prophesied to be the future reality as well.

(iv)

Distrust and desire: the "heroic" meeting of enemies.

> "Show me a man, if you can, who, unless he has according to the commandment of the Lord renounced himself, would freely exercise goodness among men." Calvin (Institutes 691)

The profound fear, expressed in the Trojan council scene, that the heroic code is unable to fulfill the expectations inherent in its discursive practises, becomes increasingly apparent as the play progresses. Calvin's view, that no good to others can come of the quest for self glory, is played out in the scenes which La Branche calls the chivalric meeting of enemies (17). Here a conflict emerges between the apparently courteous and virtuous manner in which these enemies address each other, and the underlying intentions which mark the occasion, namely the winning of the war, and the final glorification of the hero at the bloody expense of the opponent. As the play progresses, victory and glory, the desired ends of heroic action, become increasingly associated with violence. For those who were protestants in the audience, and for those familiar with this discourse, the disintegration of even the loftiest ideals into suggestions of bloodlust, and finally into cruel actions, would have confirmed ideas of human depravity, not present to the same extent in twentieth century discourses.

The meeting between Aeneas and Diomedes in the first scene of act four sees the exchange of Cressida and Antenor between the two sides taking place, only because of the value of each in providing some advantage in the war action. A discursive

struggle emerges in the language used by the opposing sides, where the apparent graciousness of the greeting is at odds with the allusions to the brutality of the war:

> "Health to you, valiant sir,
> During all question of the gentle truce;
> But when I meet you armed, as black defiance
> As heart can think or courage execute" (IV,i,12ff)

The struggle between graciousness and brutality is intensified as it becomes obvious that they are also crucial to each other. In other words, the very courteousness of the welcome given to the enemy, is directly proportional to the valiance of that enemy, which is a product of how well that enemy has fought in battle. Consequently Aeneas' earlier embassy to the Greek camp is marked by his courteous reception as a worthy enemy: "Yourself shall feast with us before you go, \ And find the welcome of a noble foe." (I,iii,308) The prowess of the opponent in battle, rather than causing increased hatred, instead causes increased love and applause, where the recognition of the enemy's ability, assures the opposite side of the possibility of matching, or even surpassing that ability. The war therefore becomes marked, not so much by the desire to crush the opponent, but rather by the desire to assert heroic action. However, as pointed out, the efficacy of one side's action ultimately depends on the inefficacy of the other side's action, and its ultimate destruction. This in itself becomes problematic, as the only one, (The Other side), who is able to recognise and applaud the heroic action, ultimately is unable to do so, due to the very violence of the action that is required in order to make that action

effective.

The heroic notion of war differs markedly from Calvinist discourse concerning war in that while war was seen as a legitimate means of maintaining justice, it was not seen as a way to heroic assertion. Instead, war was considered a last resort to be entered into with restraint. Thus addressing the magistrates whose duty it was to wage war in the defence of the people, Calvin writes:

> "Let them also have pity on the common nature in the one whose special fault they are punishing. Or, if they must arm themselves against the enemy, let them not lightly seek occasion to do so; indeed, let them not accept the occasion when offered, unless they are driven to it by extreme necessity. For if we must perform much more than the heathen philosopher required when he wanted war to seem a seeking of peace, surely everything else ought to be tried before recourse is had to arms. Lastly, in both situations let them not allow themselves to be swayed by any private affection, but be led by concern for the people alone. Otherwise, they very wickedly abuse their power, which has been given to them not for their own advantage, but for the benefit and service of others." (18)

Such a view of war is in fact the opposite of the one put forward by a heroic view of reality, for Calvin argues war is not the means by which the individual gains recognition and applause, but is rather to be used in the interests of those entrusted to the care of the magistrate. In this context it becomes obvious that heroic notions of war might be problematic for protestant members of an audience watching the play at the time of its writing, and the possibility for heroic assertion in the war dialogue becomes increasingly difficult.

The situation in the play is made even more complex by the fact that the desired outcome has yet to be achieved, for the war has not yet been won. Thus in the first scene of act four, while Diomedes is represented as valiant, he has succeeded only in haunting Aeneas on the field:

> Paris. A valiant Greek, Aeneas: take his hand;
> Witness the process of your speech, wherein
> You told how Diomed a whole week by days
> Did haunt you in the field. (ln 8ff).

The use of "haunt" to represent Diomedes' as yet unsuccessful action, suggests that the state of unfulfilled desire is a kind of living death where experience is disembodied. Thus it is only by inflicting real death or destruction on the body of another, that the one who "haunts" becomes centred and is assured of his existence.

Heroic action, and the applause given to such action therefore reassures the actor of his presence. However, for such action to be recognised, it must make a physical mark, which in the action of love and war, is borne out on the body of the one who becomes the object of another's action. The language which both constructs and longs for this action is therefore marked by the struggle between the desire for the perfect action and the brutal and disastrous effects that the action in reality brings about:

> Aeneas. ...Health to you valiant sir,
> During all question of the gentle truce,
> But when I meet you arm'd, as black defiance
> As heart can think or courage execute.

Diomed. The one and other Diomed embraces.
Our bloods are now calm, and, so long health!
But when contention and occasion meet,
By Jove, I'll play the hunter for thy life
With all my force, pursuit, and policy. (ln 12ff)

The gentleness and good wishes which go between the enemies during the truce stand in contrast to the violence of the action which is to be executed in the time of war. That Diomedes constructs himself as two people, "The one and other Diomed" emphasises the struggle between the Diomed who longs for the courteousness which the heroic code embodies, but also the Diomed who realises the violence and uncertainty surrounding the action which underlies this code. Both these speeches suggest an uncertainty as each is reluctant to match the outcome to the claim. Even as Diomedes does consider the outcome, the marks of his action on the body of Aeneas, he is unable to escape from constructing the consideration in relation to Jove and fate, which points to the uncertainty concerning the ultimate effectiveness of his action:

...Jove, let Aeneas live -
If to my sword his fate be not the glory -
A thousand complete courses of the sun!
But in mine emulous honour let him die
With every joint a wound, and that tomorrow! (ln 26ff)

The use of parenthesis here, underlines not only the anxiety that the outcome of the action may be contrary to the desire of the actor, but also the tension between on the one hand the desire

that action be heroic, and on the other the realisation that death is the final reality of such action.

The tournament set up between Hector and Ajax provides the setting for heroic action without the problematic shedding of blood. The action however, is over almost before it has begun, and it becomes increasingly evident that, without the death of the opponent, heroic action is absent. Thus, as Ajax and Hector put down their arms, Ajax comments; "I came to kill thee, cousin and bear hence \ A great addition earned in thy death." Hector also makes reference to the gory bloodletting which is so much part of the heroic action of war, and which would be part of this encounter if it were not for the familial ties between the opponents:

> "That thou could'st say "This hand is Grecian all,
> And this Trojan: the sinews of this leg
> All Greek, and this, all Troy: my mother's blood
> Runs on the dexter cheek, and this sinister
> Bounds in my father's - by Jove multipotent,
> Thou should'st not bear from me a Greekish member
> Wherein my sword had not impressure made
> Of our rank feud;" (IV,v,124ff)

Once more the connection is made between heroic action and the terrible marks of that action on the body of the opponent. Achilles also recognises this relationship as he refers to the tournament as a "maiden battle", a battle without bloodshed, and thereby also links male action to the true action of war where death is the final reality. Without the possibility of death in

this scene, heroic action quickly becomes a farce and ends with Ajax and Hector embracing, and Hector being dined throughout the Greek camp.

(v)

Pride as depravity: the disastrous end of heroic aspirations.

> "Wherever denial of ourselves does not reign, there either the foulest vices rage without shame or if there is any semblance of virtue, it is vitiated by depraved lusting after glory." Calvin (Institutes 691)

The destruction which protestants believed was the result of self glorification and pride, provides a helpful context in which to read the final act of the play. The desires and designs that lie behind the notions of heroic action in the early part of the play quickly dissipate as the action becomes a reality, and is marked not by the lofty ideals of honour and valour, but by the horror of blood and finally death.

Act five is marked by the presence of both the heroic and the antiheroic voice, and scene three sees the dialogue taken up by Hector, Andromache and Cassandra. The assertion of the antiheroic voice becomes increasingly urgent in this scene as in Cassandra and Andromache predict future disaster, should Hector honour his vows and go to battle. In contrast to the earlier heroic designs which were to give shape to victory and resolution, Andromache sees only "bloody turbulence" and "shapes and forms of slaughter". For Hector however, speaking in the chivalric code, and in direct opposition to his earlier argument in the Trojan council scene, honour takes precedence over life:

"Mine honour keeps weather of my fate
Life every man holds dear, but the dear man
Holds honour far more precious - dear than life"
(V, iii,26ff)

The heroic code, with its adherence to honour, becomes devastatingly problematic in the context of war, which is also the only context in which it can truly exist as action. The tension which is present in the scenes which see the chivalric meeting of enemies, is present once more as Hector seeks above all to honour his vows to the Greeks, his reputation being entirely dependent on the enemy's evaluation of him.

It is helpful here to view Hector's desire for honour in the context of Protestant theology, as such an understanding might go some way to explaining the subsequent treatment of Hector in the play. It is partly the pursuit of honour which made the heroic code so distasteful to protestant thinking, which argued instead for a life of self denial. Speaking to the converted, Calvin maintains:

> "For when Scripture bids us leave off self concern, it not only erases from our minds the yearning to possess the desire for power and the favour of men, but it also uproots ambition and all craving for human glory.' (19)

To those in the audience who were sympathetic to protestant doctrine, Hector's desire for honour, especially at the expense of the lives of others, would have seemed arrogant in the extreme. It is interesting then, that Sinfield, when considering

the protestant reaction to the tragic hero, argues that "protestants were quite ready to condemn the presumptuous hero" (20). It is in this context that Hector, instead of heeding his wife's and father's wishes, binds himself to those whom he ultimately seeks to destroy, and who in turn seek his destruction:

> "Aeneas is afield,
> And I do stand engag'd to many Greeks,
> Even in the faith of valour, to appear
> This morning to them." (V,iii.68ff)

That one's reputation as a hero is dependent both on the marks one makes on the body of the opponent, as well as the courteous handling of that opponent, leads finally to confusion and chaos where both sides are unable to meet the contradictory demands made on them by the "heroic" battle. It is Hector's attempt to meet both these demands, at one time showing mercy and courtesy, and at another brutality, which finally leads to his cruel destruction.

It is at the sight of the marks of Hector's actions on the bodies of his friends that Achilles is roused to the battle field:

> "Patroclus' wounds have rous'd his drowsy blood
> Together with his mangled Myrmidons
> That noseless, handless, hack'd and chop'd
> Come to him,
> Crying on Hector." (V,iv,32ff)

The image of dismembered bodies acts as a gory representation of Hector's heroic actions, and as the impetus for Achilles' intended action. That the actions of both these heroes end and begin in the broken bodies of others, suggests the fragility with which their own heroism is held intact; for while these "mangled" bodies on the one hand show the efficacy of another's actions, they also reflect the vulnerability and mutability that characterises the human body, and the horror that underpins the body's most effective actions.

While it is the brutality of Hector's actions which lead him into combat with Achilles, it is the courtesy of his actions which result in his horrible murder by Achilles. The notion of a heroic war becomes increasingly problematic as it becomes evident that the codes of heroism exist in tension with their ultimate goals, namely winning of the war. Thus, on the one hand, while Hector murders and dismembers his opponents, he at the same time attempts to behave in an honourable and courteous manner toward them. It is this courtesy which prompts him to allow Achilles a reprieve when Achilles' actions become marred by exhaustion. Hector's fatal mistake lies in the fact that he expects the same courtesy from Achilles when he himself has disarmed, not recognising that Achilles has sacrificed honour in favour of victory. It becomes devastatingly apparent as the unarmed Hector is brutally murdered by Achilles, that the ideal of honour, which is at the heart of heroic action, is in fact a fantasy. The reality, on the other hand, is that victory in the end is far from honourable, and is only possible when action is bloody and cruel. Contrary to the hopes and designs expressed in both the council scenes, effective action which is victorious, is shown to

be action which has death at its centre.

(vi)

> "Here, then, is what God's truth requires us to seek in examining ourselves: it requires the kind of knowledge that will strip us of all confidence in our own ability, deprive us of all occasion for boasting, and lead us to submission." Calvin. (Institutes 242)

In this chapter I have examined various scenes in which a struggle exists around the possibility of heroism. I have tried to show that heroic action is problematic in the play, where heroic aspirations exist in a context which seems to thwart their realisation. A tension thus emerges in the play between that voice which urges the subject towards heroic action, and that voice which suggests that human endeavour, despite its longings, is in reality decidedly unheroic. I have also tried to show that as the play progresses, notions of heroism become increasingly fraught with anxiety and difficulty. This is primarily because heroism's association with war becomes more and more evident through the play. Thus while heroic assumptions are shown to be problematic in the encounter between Pandarus and the servant, heroic action with its crucial association with war, is finally shown to be action which is devoid of honour, and instead is violent and brutal.

In the scene where Pandarus and the servant meet, it is possible to examine two different views of humanity and the world, without the problematic allusions to war. Pandarus, whose view of things comes primarily from an heroic vision, must relate to one whose assumptions about humanity are quite the opposite of his own.

Thus the servant, who suggests that human beings are not worthy of heroic titles, undermines Pandarus' largely heroic claims about himself. In this scene I have tried to show that there is a struggle present between heroic assumptions regarding human merit, and what might be termed a "protestant" denial of those assumptions, based on the view that the human subject is unworthy and thus unable to make great claims about herself or himself.

The allusions made by the servant regarding an unheroic humanity, are more present in the Greek council scene. Here, the heroic voice is the voice of desire and longing. Thus as the Greeks are made to confront the disastrous reality around them, they are urged to hope for, and strive after a more honourable and heroic future. The heroic voice here is primarily articulated as fantasy, which asserts itself against a reality of failure and disappointment.

In contrast to the Greek council scene where the fantasy of heroism is present, I have tried to show that in the Trojan coucil scene the heroic voice becomes even more problematic as death instead of victory is asserted as a possible outcome of heroic action. Thus as the reality of the war intrudes, it becomes increasingly difficult to locate the possibility of heroism, even in the realm of fantasy.

In the scene between Aeneas and Diomedes where I have examined the courteous meeting of enemies, I have attempted to show some of the contradictions which underlie the heroic assertion as it exists in Shakespeare's play. Thus the heroic requirements of courtesy and victory are shown to be at odds with each other, as

the enemies greet each other with love and applause, but also with allusions to the other one's brutal death.

The death alluded to in the Trojan council, as well as in the greeting which goes between Aeneas and Diomedes, becomes an ugly reality in the final scene of the play. I have tried to draw attention here to the way in which Shakespeare draws the earlier heroic aspirations in the play to a bloody and decidedly unheroic end, which, I argue, can be better understood with reference to the protestant scepticism regarding the heroic individual, which existed at the time of Shakespeare's writing.

The expectations of an audience familiar with the Troy story are thwarted as Shakespeare ends his play with a horrific murder rather than a heroic death, and with a speech full of allusions to disease, rather than design and hope for the future. The tragedy is not only that human action results finally in its own death, but also that the lofty desires which underpin heroic action are unable to be fulfilled, and in fact end in the opposite of these desires. It is the gaping distance between the fantasy and the reality which makes for the profound struggle around heroism in the play. For it is not as if heroism is entirely absent, instead it is its very presence which contributes to the play's full tragedy, as heroic optimism and hope struggle against human failure and death.

The notion of a broken humanity, maimed by the fall and unable to attain its original greatness is very much at the heart of protestant doctrine. An Elizabethan audience watching this play, would have undoubtedly made some connection between the

disintegration of the heroic code to a diseased and bloody ending, and the Calvinist doctrine of the depravity of humanity. In his Institutes, Calvin asks "what power for good will you attribute to human nature, if in the loftiest appearance of integrity, it is always found to be impelled toward corruption?" (21) According to Calvin, even the best human intention is marred by the corruption of action as the human subject is unable to fulfill her or his desires, and human action does indeed lead finally to death. Similarly "An Homelie of the Miserie of Al Mankynd" asserts:

> " The Holy Spirit in writing the Holy Scripture is in nothing more diligent then to pulle doune mannes vainglory and pride, whiche, of all vices, is most universally grafted in al mankynd, even from the first infection of our first father Adam."(22)

In the scenes which I have examined I have tried to show how an understanding of the Elizabethan religious context, contributes to an understanding, and increased awareness of the struggles which exist around heroic action in the play. The heroic aspirations which draw their inspiration from classical and christian humanism, are rendered problematic by a decidedly more pessimistic view of human potential, which is found largely in the protestant doctrines of Elizabethan England. The combination of these profoundly different views of humanity in Shakespeare's play, reproduces some of the tragedy which was the outcome of these warring ideas in the larger context from which they derived.

Notes

1. Bond Ronald B. 1987, Certain Sermons or Homilies (1547) and A Homily against Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion (1570), University of Toronto Press, page 80.
2. Bond Ronald B. 1987, Certain Sermons or Homilies (1547) and A Homily against Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion (1570), Page79.
3. Calvin, J. Institutes of Christian Religion, page 59.
4. Palmer, Kenneth (ed), The Arden Shakespeare - Troilus and Cressida, Methuen, Page 121.
5. Calvin, J. Institutes of Christian Religion, page 302.
6. Calvin, J. Institutes of Christian Religion, page
7. Charnes, Linda, 1989, So Secret to Ourselves": Notorious Identity and the material Subject in Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida", Shakespeare Quarterly, Vol 31, No 1, Page 417.
8. Tillyard, E.M,W. 1943, The Elizabethan World Picture, Penguin Books, page 18.
9. Frye, Roland Mushat, 1984, The Renaissance Hamlet, Princeton University Press, Page 45.
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11. Foakes, R. A. 1971, Shakespeare: The Dark Comedies to the Last Plays, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, Page 44.
12. Bond Ronald B. 1987, Certain Sermons or Homilies (1547) and A Homily against Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion (1570), Page 209.
13. Bond Ronald B. 1987, Certain Sermons or Homilies (1547) and A Homily against Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion (1570), Page 209.
14. Bond Ronald B. 1987, Certain Sermons or Homilies (1547) and A Homily against Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion (1570), Page 210.
15. In Radical Tragedy Dollimore questions critics such as Bradley, Eliot and Tillyard who uphold the Elizabethan world as one characterised by unproblematic ideas of degree and order. He further questions such critics who seek to judge Jacobean and Elizabethan drama on the extent to which it reflects the supposed ethical and metaphysical coherence of its age through dramatic structure - page 59.
16. Bond Ronald B. 1987, Certain Sermons or Homilies (1547) and A Homily against Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion (1570), Page 75.
17. La Branche, Linda, 1986, "Visual Patterns in the Linking Analogues in Troilus and Cressida", Shakespeare Quarterly, Vol 37, No4, Page 443.
18. Calvin, J. Institutes of Christian Religion, Page 1501.
19. Calvin, J. Institutes of Christian Religion, Page 691.
20. Sinfield, Alan, 1983, Literature in Protestant England, Page 81.
21. Calvin, J. Institutes of Christian Religion, Page 293.
22. Bond Ronald B. 1987, Certain Sermons or Homilies (1547) and A Homily against Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion (1570), Page 70.

CHAPTER 7

DESIRE AND DESPAIR: "TROILUS AND CRESSIDA" AND PROTESTANT ANXIETIES AROUND LOVE.

The tension between desire and despair, between hope and fear, which haunts the love discourse in Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida, might have come as a surprise to some members of an Elizabethan audience whose familiarity with the love story would have derived primarily from Chaucer's version of the tale. However, this initial surprise would have been tempered, most certainly for protestants, in a context in which the possibilities of successful action in love, were the source of a profound religious anxiety. The centrality of the law of love to all Christian action, and the requirements which this law makes on the body of he believer, made the discourse of love particularly significant to protestants who were deeply concerned about their capacity to fulfill the demands of this law. Their belief in their depravity and propensity for failure, accompanied by a striving to be obedient to God, caused a dislocation of experience which was greatly emphasised in the area of love.

The protestant desire for the perfect love action, which would be the surest mark of God's grace in their lives, was repeatedly confounded by their belief in human depravity. It would therefore have interested protestants in the audience that, unlike Chaucer's Troilus, who shows little anxiety about his ability to successfully perform the ultimate action of love, Shakespeare's Troilus is excessively preoccupied with the possibility that he might fail as a lover. A tension is set up in the play between

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Troilus' fear that he might fail, and his hope that his final action of love will match his lofty desires. Cressida also expresses a deep longing that her love will be proven true, but she, even more than Troilus, reveals an awareness of human frailty and the inability to achieve that which is most desired.

(i)

The demands of love in the face of self doubt

"God wills that our whole soul be possessed with a disposition to love... He requires a marvelously tempered heart, and does not permit the tiniest pinprick to urge it against the law of love." Calvin. (Institutes 413-414)

The requirement of the law of God is that the subject love perfectly. However, such perfection is ever elusive within an experienced reality of human weakness and loss. For the protestant, the desire to love perfectly was crippled by the belief that such perfection lies outside the possibility of human experience. Protestants in the audience would therefore have had a particular interest in Troilus' admission in the first scene of Act one, that the depth of his desire is unable to be matched by his actions both as a soldier and as a lover, leaving him paralysed as he fails to prove himself worthy.

This scene opens with Troilus disarming as he retreats from the battle which is raging outside the Trojan walls. He calls attention to a conflict between his desires for fulfillment in love, and the actions which are expected of him as a heroic soldier:

"Call here my varlet, I'll unarm again.
Why should I war without the walls of Troy,
That find such cruel battle here within?
Each Trojan that is master of his heart
Let him to field: Troilus, alas, hath none. (I,i,1-5)

It is evident here, that Troilus is unable to act properly because of the great passions which are overwhelming his heart. Unlike Chaucer's Troilus, he does not follow the usual course of courtly love, whereby the lover wins the beloved through his heroic actions. Troilus' inability to act heroically in this instance, is closely related to his fear that he might fail as a lover as well. What is so terrifying for Troilus here, is that the demands of love far outweigh the demands of war, and his failure in war makes him doubly afraid of the possibility of failure in love.

It is interesting that Kenneth Palmer in the Arden edition of the play, in his notes, when referring to Troilus' "cruel battle here within" cites the text from Romans vii:23; "but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members." The context here is one where Paul, whose particular significance for protestants has been discussed in an earlier chapter, is describing his desire to do good and obey the law of God, which is the law of love. However, Paul experiences his failure to obey in his body, which is at odds with his mind and his knowledge of what is good. A struggle therefore emerges between obedience and the body's actions, as Paul realises that his sensual activities are in fact obeying the law of sin; "So I

find this law at work: when I want to do good, evil is right there with me." This is essentially the tension in which protestants believed they lived; that the human being is unable to effect perfect action and thus obey the law of love, because the frailty of the body constantly thwarts the desire of the mind. For the protestant, obedience to the law of love is closely connected with the body. The relationship between the body's actions and the expression of love therefore becomes one which is of the utmost concern to believers. Troilus' apprehension about the relationship between his desires and the ineffectiveness of his body, would have undoubtedly prompted a certain recognition from protestants in an Elizabethan audience.

The way in which protestants differed from other religions, as well as other representations of Christianity, was not so much in their realisation of human lack, but in their insistence that the subject is able to do nothing in order to fill that lack. In other words there are no rituals or sacraments which will prepare the subject for communion with God, hence their insistence on the doctrine that it is God alone who saves. It is interesting therefore that while Chaucer's Troilus follows a series of heroic and love rituals in order to win Criseyde's affection, and thus his ultimate salvation, Shakespeare's Troilus is bereft of any such rituals which might reduce his misgivings about his ability to achieve that which he most desires. In view of this it is helpful to consider Sinfield's argument that it was the protestant's dismissal of rituals as a means to God's favour, which made the courtly love genre so distasteful to them.

> "Protestants found this accommodation unhelpful because it (courtly love) proposes a continuity between human and divine - a series of steps - where they insisted upon disjunction. Th whole argument of the Reformation was that one is either in the devil's kingdom or in God's: there is no compromise. Divine grace may raise sinners from one to the other, but they cannot work their way up. The spiritual realm is absolutely distinct from the human and there are no mediators - neither blessed virgins nor priests nor Beatrices. Elizabethan and Jacobean literature alludes frequently to neoplatonic notions, but rarely with any respect for the theory of love as a whole." (1)

In contrast to protestant versions of human potential, Christian humanists maintained a relatively more optimistic view of what the human being could achieve through perseverance and the observance of various rituals. Such views of confidence and optimism further intensified the tensions experienced by the Renaissance subject, with regard to the possibilities in the relationship between desire and action. With this in mind it is possible to identify an emerging contest between these different views of human potential in the first scene of the play. Thus a dialogue is set up between Troilus who is lacking because of his inexperience, (which itself is in discussion with the possibility of his future experience), and some external "other" which is unified and potent.

> The Greeks are strong, and skilful to their strength,
> Fierce to their skill, and to their fierceness valiant;
> But I am weaker than a woman's tear,
> Tamer than sleep, fonder than ignorance,
> Less valiant than a virgin in the night,
> And skilless as unpractis'd infancy" (I,i.7ff).

The interdependence here of skill, strength, ferocity and valiance, suggests the dependence of action, and especially valiant and skillful action, on passion or fierceness (2). Effective action on the part of the Greeks relies heavily on passion, yet we see that the converse is also true here, where the violence of the passion leads quickly to the dissolution of purposes on the part of Troilus (3). This apparent truth of opposites disrupts resolution and further displaces Troilus in a world which is fundamentally paradoxical.

Troilus' anxiety is directed primarily at his own sexuality and masculinity, which are the bodily manifestations of the law of love, hence his representation of himself as less than "a woman's tear" and a "virgin in the night". Troilus asserts that the construction of the female as weak and unable to act, is in fact his experienced reality. His desire for sexual and emotional fulfillment, is undermined by his fear that he might not be equal to the action which is required, in order for that fulfillment to take place. This anxiety is directed then, at the positioning of the male as prime actor in the sexual union, and Troilus' realisation that he might be unable to fulfill that role as actor. However, in opposition to this fear, is Troilus' implicit hope that his inexperience, which is giving rise to his present utterance, might indeed turn to experience and so fulfillment. Thus the possibility of two separate future experiences emerges: one in which there is failure to match desire with action, and the "other" where the success of the action fulfills the expectations of desire. The possibility that experience and fulfillment might indeed lie within the range of human capacity

is also present in Troilus' representation of the Greeks as strong and effective.

A tension develops between the real and the "other", where the real is weak and frail, and the "other", (which exists primarily in Troilus' fantasy, and is therefore Imaginary) is strong and potent. This tension continues as the scene progresses, and Troilus represents himself as two kinds of selves. Thus there is an outward self which is coherent and temperate when in royal company, and an inner self which is continually disrupted as Cressida haunts his thoughts:

> I was about to tell thee: when my heart,
> As wedged with a sigh, would rive in twain,
> Lest Hector or my father should perceive me,
> I have, as when the sun doth light a storm,
> Buried this sigh in wrinkle of a smile;
> But sorrow that is couch'd in seeming gladness
> Is like that mirth fate turns to sudden sadness"
> (I,i,34ff)

This outwardly coherent self which Troilus now describes is, like the strong and skilful Greeks, set up as a kind of "other". That the "other", which is coherent, is also Imaginary, is suggested by the fact that this coherent Troilus, is not really himself and exists externally to his true self. The suggestion of successful action as Troilus is able to conform his actions to external demands, is undermined by the fact that these actions occur in opposition to the truth. This recalls once more Paul's description of the disjunction between the body and his mind,

where the body's actions are unable to truly represent and fulfill desire.

The "other" self or self which is confident, is therefore separate from the tormented self in such a way as to suggest a certain schizophrenia on the part of the subject. This fragmentation emerges out of conflicting pressures between the demands of the state, and private requirements of love. It is interesting to note that this struggle was present in the era which forms the backdrop for the writing of this play, and is evident in Greenblatt's discussion of Thomas More:

> In More, appearances have a problematical relationship to reality. His is a world in which everyone is profoundly committed to upholding conventions in which no one believes; somehow belief has ceased to be necessary... The actual texture of his long public life is thick with the ceremonies of power. And yet when he tries to explain why the great bother with these ceremonies, why they stage elaborate theatrical rituals, he concludes ultimately not in a sense of rational calculation but in the sense of the absurd; because they are mad, possessed by "fond fantasies," incapable of distinguishing between truth and fiction." (4)

However in contrast to the social realm of obedience and action, More, although a humanist, interestingly recognised the existence of an entirely different and even contradictory, sphere of human desire and action which is fundamentally religious:

> "More, of course, could claim with greater confidence to know the "real truth", but his was a truth of an entirely different order, capable of cancelling, but not clarifying human politics". (5)

The complexity of More's life as Greenblatt describes it lies to some extent in his belief that the human subject can to some degree uphold what are frequently contradictory demands. Present here is the idea that the human subject is able to partially shape her or his identity, and relates to the phenomenon which Greenblatt terms "self fashioning", and which implies the ability to fashion oneself according to one's will and independently of one's weaknesses. This notion falls largely within the Christian humanist tradition put forward, among others, by More and Erasmus as described in the first chapter, whereby the human subject is able to will and execute (if even to a limited extent) right action. However, as has been shown, right action is not always an easily definable term. Thus like More, we see Troilus performing the ceremonies of the state effectively, while internally he is an ineffective victim of his unfulfilled desires. The degree to which this tension causes extreme distress, is seen as Troilus represents the effect of his suppression of the demands of one realm, in favour of the demands of another as being similar to death. Therefore the words which Troilus uses to refer to his "self fashioning"; "buried", "sigh", "wrinkle", "sorrow", "fate", and "sadness" ironically suggest a self cancelling.

(ii)

The desire for love and the body of death and disease.

"If we search in the remotest past, I say that none of the saints, clad in the body of death, has attained to that goal of love..." (Calvin. Institutes 353)

In his discussion of love, Calvin interestingly makes use of a very similar language to that of Troilus. Love, which is the goal, and thus the desire of the saints, remains unattainable because of the body, which has death at its centre and as its ultimate destiny. The cancelling of self, or death which Troilus experiences as a result of his fragmentation in the first Act of the play, becomes more acute as Troilus anticipates his sexual union with Cressida, and the actual participation of his body in the discourse of love:

> "No, Pandarus; I stalk about her door,
> Like a strange soul upon the Stygian banks
> Staying for waftage. O, be thou my Charon,
> And give me swift transportance to those fields
> Where I may wallow in the lily beds
> Proposed for the deserver! O gentle Pandarus,
> From Cupid's shoulder pluck his painted wings,
> And fly with me to Cressid!
> .....
> I am giddy. Expectation whirls me round.
> Th'imaginary relish is so sweet
> That it enchants my sense. What will it be
> When that the wat'ry palate tastes indeed

> Love's thrice repured nectar? - death, I fear me,
> Swooning destruction, 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, when they charge on heaps
> The enemy flying." (III,ii,7-27)

Here Troilus' body, "a strange soul", is without content or form, an alienated and ghostlike substance which has not yet experienced the reality of what it yearns for, in order that it might be made whole and alive. Without the rituals of love, and faced with his overwhelming fear of failure, Troilus is reliant on another to bring about the consummation which he desires. Pandarus therefore becomes the go-between. Troilus, who lacks a physical reality of being, is thus problematically absent when he should be present, allowing instead, one who has little faith in love, to do his wooing for him. Troilus' absence is primarily because he lacks confidence as a lover. However, his absence only increases his anxiety, and contributes to his representation of himself as contentless and ghostlike.

It is therefore a matter of fantasy when Troilus casts himself as the "deserver" (ln. 12), when in fact he has essentially relied on the actions of another, to bring about the situation he so desires. Troilus' presentation of himself as one who deserves the love which he now anticipates, flies in the face of his earlier failure to act successfully as a soldier, his failure to woo Cressida himself, and his representation of his body as

conter. a "strange soul", which does not act, but waits "upon the Stygian banks\ Staying for waftage". His action, which is implied in his casting of himself as "the deserver" is imaginary. Thus as the absent Troilus waits for another to make him present, it becomes obvious that without the rituals of courtly love, Troilus is bereft of the means by which he might indeed become the one who deserves.

Protestants articulated a similar experience of absence as the death they located in their bodies, made it impossible for them to reach their aspirations of love. Without the religious rites and sacraments by which the body might participate in the readying of the subject for the working of God's grace, the body remains inactive and ineffective, becoming a physical representation of human failure. Troilus' experience of a kind of living death would therefore have evoked some sympathy among protestants, as they recognised in Troilus, their own dilemma as subjects without any ritualised means to represent their love. Thus Calvin, when speaking of believers whose bodies have been baptised, and thus symbollically washed clean, argues that death is still the central experience of the body, which is unable to love as God commands:

> "For lust never actually dies and is extinguished in men until, freed by death from the body of death, they are completely divested of themselves." (6)

As Troilus' representation of himself as the deserver is essentially a fantasy, so the description of his reward takes on equally fantastical proportions. Palmer suggests that the sexual

symbolism in the lily beds is from the Song of Solomon. This is interesting in so far as the sexual union in this book has frequently been read as a metaphor for the union between God and his people. If there is this connection which Palmer suggests, then Troilus is not merely longing for a sexual union, but also for a union with the divine. This is not improbable considering the close relationship between love and spiritual experience which is found almost universally in literature. There is the sense then that Troilus not only wants sexual experience, but also an experience which is illimitable, lifting him from the earthly realm, to the realm of eternity. Thus, as his desire becomes infinite, the goal of his longing is removed even further from his grasp, for he is without the means to transcend the bounds of his mortal body.

As Troilus waits for Cressida, his language has the same yearning quality as appeared in Act I, scene i, where the beauty and purity of Cressida seem always to elude his grasp, and where he grapples with the representation of something not yet fully known. From lines 16 - 27 of Act III, scene ii, his language is full of both expectation and fear. The eroticism of the first few lines here, where the imaginary sexual experience is full of images of taste, suggests the intensity of the physical pleasure which Troilus now anticipates. The sense of "giddy", "whirls" and "enchants" at the same time lifts the very basic eroticism suggested in "wat'ry palate" to something which might be considered both magical and other-worldly, thereby contributing to the sense that Troilus' desire is both sexual and spiritual. However, the very acuteness of Troilus' longing holds within itself the seeds of self-doubt, as Troilus wonders whether he has

the capacity to grasp fully what he both imagines and desires. The allusions to death which have been present from the beginning of the scene intrude once more, and the not uncommon association of the sexual union with death, here relates to Troilus' fear that he will somehow lose himself at the moment of fulfillment. This notion of loss at the very moment of satisfaction is also contained in the repeated references to taste, where there always exists a gap between the tasting of a thing and the satisfaction gained from the consumption of that thing. In other words, for consumption to take place, the pleasure of taste must be forgone, leaving the subject always in desire for the pleasure lost or the pleasure to come. A tension emerges once more between the imagined perfection of the act, and the "ruder powers" which confine the body and prevent the lover from experiencing the sublime pleasure he anticipates.

The tension between desire and the limitations of the body, continues throughout the encounter between Troilus and Cressida (III,ii,50ff), as each expresses their longing for the perfect love, and at the same time their fear that their bodies will betray them. Troilus thus addresses Cressida with an expression of yearning and desire, "O Cressid, how often have I wished me thus." Troilus' joy at his present presence, is clouded by his admission that his fear has previously rendered him absent, and thus impotent. Cressida increases the yearning by emphasising the desire, without suggesting any hope of closure, and thus satisfaction: "Wished, my lord? The gods grant - O my lord -". The repetition of "wished", along with the appeal to the gods, which is itself interrupted before any attempt at closure, by an exclamation of great feeling - also which is left unfinished -

emphasises the limitations of language and literary conventions when it comes to the expression of the intense longing of the body for fulfillment. Troilus is deeply distressed by the uncertainty present in Cressida's reply;

> "What should they grant? what makes this pretty abruption? What too curious dreg espies my sweet lady in the fountain of our love?" 60ff

Here Troilus desperately wants to understand the source of the anxiety which haunts the lovers, in the hope that a remedy might be found and their fears put aside. Troilus' questioning of Cressida, which is essentially an attempt to prompt her to put her uncertainty away, sets up a dialectic out of which a synthesis seems highly unlikely. Thus his first question, "What should they grant?", which requires as answer the articulation of the desire, is deconstructed by the second question, "what makes this pretty abruption?' which requires the opposite, the articulation of the fear that the desire is insatiable. The attempted dismissal of the pervasive sense of foreboding, has instead led to its heightening. The apprehension present in Troilus' repeated questioning is futher increased by Cressida's answer. Thus, instead of enlarging on the hopeful possibilities present in the fountain as an image for eternal and constantly replenished love, Cressida fills the fountain with "More dregs than water, if my fears have eyes."

As the scene progresses from line 64, Cressida confronts Troilus with the limitations of his narrative, as she continues to rework the images Troilus seeks to confine, in his attempt to reassure

them both with regard to the outcome of their anticipated union. Thus as Troilus suggests that fears distort the truth, resulting in a kind of blindness, and so implying that the truth is discernible in the absence of fear, "Fears make devils of cherubins; they never see truly", Cressida borrows this idea of blindness, reworking it to show Troilus that the opposite might also be true:

> "Blind fear, that seeing reason leads finds safer
> Footing than blind reason stumbling without fear.."

The relationship between fear and reason is particularly interesting because it alludes to two very different ways of understanding. Reason which is tempered by fear, presumably because reason and human understanding cannot be trusted, suggests a scepticism about human capacity which is found in protestant discourses. On the other hand, reason which remains unchecked by fear, and which Cressida cautions against, draws on a far more optimistic view of human understanding, which makes fear an unnecessary hinderance to successful action. Cressida's emphasis on the image of blindness in both cases, would have aroused agreement from protestants in the audience, as it strips away human pride, leaving the subject frail and dependent. The use of the image of blindness to denote a spiritual incapacity to see things as they really are, locates human weakness in the body, thereby suggesting again that it is the body which prevents the subject from experiencing the fulfillment of desire, and ultimate union with the divine.

Sister Miriam Joseph has pointed out that the rhetorical use of repetition, seen here in "blind", "reason" and "fear" in such a way as to turn the sentence around in a kind of "logical conversion", is known as antebole (7). Here its usage functions to heighten the sense of the inability of language to be contained and thereby lay hold of the object of its signification. The use of antebole increases the anxiety about the actual experience of love, which has, up until this point in the play, relied wholly on language for its representation. Cressida's transformation of her own utterance, as well as her challenging of Troilus' text, renders the meaning difficult rather than transparent, as a defining parameter for successful love remains elusive.

This recourse to language rather than action as the representation of love, shows a desire to frame the anticipated consummating action in such a way as to somehow protect the lovers from disappointment. That words are preferred to deeds, gives an indication of the debilitating anxiety surrounding the sexual experience of love, especially considering the unsatisfactory nature of the language of love. The struggle involved in this rewriting of the text, has a deliberately delaying effect, and reflects a deep fear on Cressida's part about the perfect outcome of their union.

Another term which Joseph uses is "polyptoton" which is the "repetitive use of words derived from the same root", and as Joseph suggests, it is "related to the logical argument from conjugates" (8):

> Troil. O let my lady apprehend no fear: in all Cupid's pageant there is presented no monster.
>
> Cress. Nor nothing monstrous neither?
>
> Troil. Nothing but our undertakings, when we vow to weep 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 monstruosity in love, lady: that the will is infinite, and the execution confined: that the desire is boundless, and the act a slave to limit.

The use of polyptoton here, which is seen in "monster", "monstrous" and "monstruousity", does not seem to work in the way in which Joseph suggests, and instead renders meaning difficult, especially as it is also contorted by Cressida's use of a triple negative. The distortions of the language here, combine with the perversity which the monster imagery suggests, to create a sense of derangement which is both physical and spiritual. The limits experienced by the body of death, which Troilus has frequently alluded to, become more terrifying as the image of monstrosity, which is fundamentally physical, suggests a body which is deformed and hideous. It is helpful once more to recall the protestant concern with the body as the inhibitor of the desired perfection after which they struggled:

> "And what else is it for us to remain in life but to be immersed in death? If to be freed from the body is to be released into perfect freedom, what else is the body but a prison?" (9)

As Troilus realises, it is not so much that narrative is limited, but rather it is the confining physicality of the body which corrupts the desire. It is this which causes Troilus to conclude with profound sadness, "This is the monstrousity in love lady: that the will is infinite, and the execution confined: that the desire is boundless, and the act a slave to limit." Here the monstrosity of love is located in human action and thus in the body, where will and desire are unable to be matched by the act and execution. It is this incapacity to act perfectly and thus obey the law of love, which is at the heart of the human being's deformation. It is interesting therefore, that both Calvin and Troilus use images of imprisonment to describe the limitations of the body, and the body's actions. The relationship between Calvin's and Troilus' view of the confinement of the body is further emphasised by both their allusions to the relationship of the broken body to the failure of love, and thus separation from the divine. It is also interesting that the resolution of desire by the rituals of courtly love or religious sacraments, are starkly absent in both Troilus' and Calvin's representations of the human dilemma.

Cressida increases the anxiety as she suggests that even what action is possible to the human subject, is ultimately left undone, thus inferring a kind of baseness of nature in the subject, which would have found much agreement among protestants in the audience:

> "They say all lovers swear more performance than
> they are able, and yet reserve an ability that the

> never perform vowing more than perfection
> of ten, and discharging less that the tenth part of
> one. They that have the voice of lions and the act
> of hares, are they not monsters?" (III,ii,79ff)

The refusal of the subject to perform even that which lies within her or his grasp, suggests a perversity which is both physical and spiritual. Thus as Cressida applies the monster imagery more fully than Troilus would want, she implicitly suggests that it is the subject's spiritual bankruptcy which prevents the lover from delivering even that portion which might lie within the grasp of the ruder powers. The subject which promises much, delivers less than a little, thereby debasing herself or himself from the first moment of utterence, as a gap emerges between the present promise and the unfulfilled future.

There is also the suggestion here that it is the very extravagance of the word with its infinite possibilities, which renders the body impotent. Thus in the face of such hope and promise, the subject, realising the gap she or he must transcend in order to realise this promise, becomes paralysed by fear, and thus fails to perform even that small part which lies within her or his capacity.

Seeming to realise this, Troilus attempts to escape from the paralysing and distorting effects of the word, as he shows a profound longing for his body to be known apart from the word (which operates almost interchangeably here with desire). Troilus therefore endeavours to escape the literary world, in favour of

the world of action. Troilus thus urges Cressida to name him as he proves:

> "Are there such? Such are not we. Praise us as we are tasted, allow us as we prove. Our head shall go bare till merit crown it; no perfection in reversion shall have a praise in present. We will not name desert before his birth; and, being born, his addition shall be humble. few words to fair faith - Troilus shall be such to Cressid as what envy can say shall be a mock for his truth; and what truth speak truest, not truer than Troilus." (85ff)

In contrast to his previous anxiety about his actions and his body, Troilus now asserts a peculiar confidence in the possibility that he will be able to prove himself as a worthy lover. As his anxiety previously centred on the incapacity of his body to fully experience his desire, he now suggests a sexual confidence founded in the body which has been relieved of the limitations of language. Thus where Troilus previously anticipated death at the tasting of the delights of love, he now expects praise and the affirmation of his own desirability. In a sense Troilus locates ultimate satisfaction and fulfillment in the possibilities of his own body. Thus his earlier fear that he would be unable to fully "taste" the delights to be found in Cressida's body, gives way to his confidence that the pleasures to be found in his own body are far more accessible. Troilus therefore suggests that once the lovers are done with talking and with the unsatisfactory limitations of words, he will be proven to be equal to the desire which has so far haunted the discourse

of love. As such he will be the very embodiment of truth, as words give way to actions, and those actions are proven satisfactory.

However, Troilus is unable to fully put fear and anxiety aside. He therefore displaces the anxiety previously located in his own body, onto Cressida's body as he anticipates her possible unfaithfulness.

> "O that I thought it could be in a woman -
> As, if it can, I will presume in you -
> To feed for aye her lamp and flame of love;
> To keep her constancy in plight and youth,
> Outliving beauties outward, with a mind
> That doth renew swifter than blood decays!
> Or that persuasion could but thus convince me
> That my integrity and truth to you
> Might be affronted with the match and weight
> Of such a winnowed purity in love,
> How were I then uplifted! But, alas,
> I am as true as truth's simplicity,
> And simpler than the infancy of truth!"
> (III,ii,148ff)

Troilus has been unable to overcome the reality of human weakness and incapacity. In order to make the human propensity for failure more manageable however, he has rearranged and simplified it. He therefore sets up a discourse of binary oppositions where truth and coherence are located in his body, and where possible sin and deviance are located in the bodies of women. He however, also

struggles against the location of failure in the female body, as he endeavours to set Cressida apart from the rest in his use of parenthesis. In doing this he recognises that this is far from a satisfactory solution, as it also threatens his future satisfaction.

Thus, later in Act V, when confronted with the reality of Cressida's betrayal and consequently his broken love affair, Troilus is unable to accept the outcome which he previously posed as a possibility in women. He therefore sets out to construct it in terms of both a division of experience and subjectivity, instead of accepting it as a final reality. The events which he has observed between Cressida and Diomedes are thus concluded to be a lie, and the Cressida he is now confronted with, not the true Cressida:

> "But if I tell how these two did co-act,
> Shall I not lie in publishing a truth
> Sith yet there is a credence in my heart,
> An esperance so obstinately strong,
> That doth invert th'attest of eyes and ears,
> As if those organs had deceptious functions,
> Created only to calumniate.
> Was Cressid here?" (V,ii,117ff)

Troilus' inability to fully face these disastrous events is essentially the result of his secret hope that his actions would ultimately match his desires, and that his doubts would in the end prove to be groundless. The fragmentation which Troilus expresses here is the division between the subject which sees the

world and himself as broken and fallen, and the subject who hopes that his actions will somehow rise above this fallenness and raise him to the realm of the gods. We have here a subject who must inhabit a world where the reality is at odds with the desire. Troilus' experience of failure even in the face of his immense desire and ceaseless striving, would have been recognisable to Elizabethan protestants, who lived constantly with a seeking after the perfect love which God required, only to be perpetually thwarted by what they believed was a fundamentally perverse nature, represented in the body of death. Both Troilus and the protestants are without the rituals and sacraments so readily available to catholics and humanists, which might hold failure at bay, as the body participates in the securing of God's grace, and thus the final elevation to the realm of the divine.

(iv)

The demystification of love.

In opposition to Troilus' and Cressida's inexperience, and the hopes and fears which that inexperience generates, is the voice of Pandarus which represents the voice of experience, and so an entirely different way of constructing love. Pandarus, as the middle aged man, has presumably already experienced what Troilus and Cressida long to experience. However, in contrast to Troilus' use of the language of courtly love in order to describe what he longs for his experience to be, Pandarus employs a very different language, full of domestic images and bawdy allusions, to describe his view of what the experience ultimately proves to be. This use of a very basic and domestic idiom, exists in tension

with the notions suggested in courtly love whereby the lover ascends to the divine through his worship of the beloved, and so denies the eternal resolution which courtly love ultimately seeks. It is in this vein that Pandarus likens the sexual pursuit and union to the making of a cake (I, i, 13-25). The actions described here are full of explicit sexual connotation, where the "grinding", "bolting", "leavening", "kneading", and the allusions to the final eating reduces the sexual activity to its very physical components, denying any notions of spiritual sublimity often alluded to in Troilus' speech.

The contrast between Troilus' inexperience and Pandarus' experience continues in the second scene of Act three, in which the struggle over the action of love reaches its climax, and begins ironically with the absence of the two prime actors, Troilus and Cressida, and instead with a brief exchange between Pandarus and Troilus' servant. The language of the exchange serves to construct Pandarus as the subject of the action which is about to take place. Thus Pandarus enters this scene searching for Troilus, and is told by the servant that Troilus "stays for (Pandarus) to conduct him thither." The interaction of "stays" and "conduct" which suggests a suspension of action on Troilus' part, and an initiation of action on the part of Pandarus', hints at the immobilising anxiety from which Troilus is suffering as he considers the prospect of a sexual union with Cressida. This anxiety is expressed not only in Troilus' language, but also in his need for privacy as he bids his servant depart. Troilus feels no such embarrassment with Pandarus however, and seems instead to gain some comfort from Pandarus' unidealised dealings with the matter of love. This might be due to the fact that the very lack

of decorum present in Pandarus' language, serves to allay some of Troilus' fears concerning the gap he must transcend. This lessening of fear is possibly because Pandarus' language essentially works to diminish the size of the gap, by bringing the ultimate goal from the realm of the divine down to the matter of earth.

However, even Pandarus' voice is not a unified voice which represents love in a transparent and unambiguous manner, as he is not without his own hopes and expectations. Thus, as he has brought the lovers together, he anticipates the possible success of his own actions. His pleasure is however, ultimately a voyeuristic one, as he seeks his final satisfaction through the actions and experiences of others, where his own actions and experiences have up until now, in all probability, lacked. This notion of voyeurism is not an entirely negative one as it suggests that Pandarus hopes to witness something other than, and even better than, what he has experienced himself. These hidden hopes emerge when Pandarus becomes aware that Cressida is to be returned to her father. Thus, as disaster threatens, he becomes unable to adopt his earlier cynical construction of reality, lending instead his own cries of despair to those of Troilus and Cressida:

> "Is't possible? No sooner got but lost? The
> devil take Antenor, I would they had broke's
> neck!...
> Ah, ah!...
> Would I were as deep under the earth as I am
> above. (IV,iii,76ff)

Pandarus' inability to maintain his cynicism in the face of a calamity, reveals the inadequacy of such cynicism to fully represent reality, and the tragedy of the human condition. It would seem therefore, that cynicism is only bearable while disaster is held at bay; however in the face of the full consequences of disaster, both cynicism and idealism become insufficient. Pandarus' grief at the failure of love to triumph, reveals a secret hope on his part, that some "other" might achieve the sublimity which he has failed to experience in his own life. This failure of love confirms to Pandarus that his worst fears are in fact true, and that human desires ultimately remain unfulfilled in a reality of falleness and death. Thus, as Pandarus' cynicism crumbles into despair, he too becomes subject to protestant sympathy, as he has to face the fact that his hidden hopes have been sorely dissappointed, and where human failure, even in the face of immense effort, seems to be the final reality.

(v)

The disparity that exists in Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida, between the requirements and desires which surround the action of love, and a reality in which love is ultimately unfulfilling, might seem confusing in the light of the eroticism and resolution which characterises Chaucer's telling of the same story. From the perspective of Troilus' and Cressida's inexperience, the love action required for fulfillment, far surpasses what each feels they are capable of performing. Love as an action fails to transcend the earthly realm, and does not carry the lovers to an

experience of the divine. By contrast, death and disease, as with heroic action in the play, prove to be the final outcome.

This chapter does not hope to provide an answer for Shakespeare's devastating treatment of love in this play. However, an understanding of the tensions which existed in the religious dialogues of the era around the action of love, provides a useful context for reading Shakespeare's version of Troilus' and Cressida's love story. The central significance of love to successful Christian action, meant that it was the source of acute anxiety for protestants who believed so strongly in their own depravity. While aspiring to love beyond any other experience, protestants were nonetheless taught that perfect love would always remain beyond their grasp. Their greatest attempts could only end in dismal failure, unless God in his grace intervenes. According to Calvin, the life of the believer is marked by desire and unfulfillment:

> "What are they to do here, where they feel that there is nothing they are less able to do than to fulfill the law? They will, they aspire, they try, but they do nothing with the required perfection. (10)

For the protestant, life is spent in the pursuit of perfect love, which is the requirement of God's law, with the knowledge that it will remain always beyond the believer's grasp. The failure of the love action to reach its desired goals in Shakespeare's play, would have come as little surprise to an audience well versed in such ideas and doctrines. This is not to say that the play reaches a kind of closure which confirms Thersites' view of a world where all is lechery. The very nature of such a concept of

love, being underwritten as it is by desire, resists all notions of closure. For even in the face of failure, desire still urges a striving after perfection that is yet to be experienced.

Notes

1. Sinfield, Alan, 1983, Literature in Protestant England, Croom Helm, London & Canberra, Barnes & Noble Books, Totowa, New Jersey, page 49.
2. The Universal Oxford Dictionary, 1933: Fierce: L. Ferus wild, untamed. 1. Violent and intractable in temper; vehement and merciless in anger or hostility. 2. High spirited, valiant-1533. 3. Proud, haughty-1593. 4.. Ardent; furiously zealous or active ME.
3. Winifred Nowottny makes a similar point in her discussion on Hamlet, in Shakespeare's Tragedies, page 59.
4. Greenblatt, Stephen, 1980, Renaissance Self - Fashioning, University of Chicago Press, page 14.
5. Greenblatt, Stephen, 1980, Renaissance Self - Fashioning, page 15
6. Calvin, J, Institutes of Christian Religion, ed John T McNeill; The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, pages 1313.
7. Joseph, Sister Miriam 1966, Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language, Hafner, New York, page 81.
8. Joseph, Sister Miriam 1966, Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language, page 83.
9. Calvin, J, Institutes of Christian Religion, page 716.
10. Calvin, J, Institutes of Christian Religion, page 836.

CHAPTER 8

LOCATING HUMAN VALUE IN "TROILUS AND CRESSIDA"

When in II,ii,533, Troilus asks the question, "What's aught but as 'tis valued?", he raises one of the significant issues which the play addresses. The anxiety directed at successful heroic action and the action of love in the play, impacts directly on the problem of where to locate human value. If human action is frail and subject to repeated failure, as Troilus and Cressida implies it is, then value which is dependent on successful performance becomes highly problematic.

It is this problematic relationship between value and accomplishment, which greatly concerned protestants, given their dismal view of human achievement in the face of insurmountable demands. Thus in response to their belief in human depravity, it became vitally important to locate human value in some external absolute, rather than in the fragile place of human action. Instead of value deriving from successful performance of required actions or rituals, which was considered doubtful in the best of circumstances, the protestant derived value from her or his private relationship with God. This privatisation of value led to a crisis of authority and power in protestant England, as the power to bestow value was taken out of the hands of the church and the state.

Troilus and Cressida interestingly shows a similar crisis concerning the location of human value, which also arises out of the pervading anxiety as to whether the human subject is able to act effectively, and so earn praise and reward, and thus a place as a valuable subject in society. Once more a struggle emerges in the play which has its basis in two very different views of human potential. Thus, as Hector and Ulysses reveal a certain confidence in the human subject to discern and then obey the "natural order", they assert that the subject's value must derive from successful active obedience to this order. On the other hand, Troilus and Achilles undermine such a confidence as they seek for a value which is privately defined, and so independent of the demands of a "natural order" or the state.

(i)

Troilus and Hector: The location of value in the Trojan council scene.

The struggle between value which is authoritatively defined, and value which is derived through private experience, emerges to some extent in the Trojan council scene where the value of Helen is being discussed. Hector's classic argument draws largely from the "Renaissance moral heroic style": (1)

> "Nature craves
> All dues be rend'red to their owners. Now
> What nearer debt in all humanity
> Than wife is to the husband? If this law
> Of nature be corrupted through affection,

> And that great minds, of partial indulgence
> To their benumbed wills, resist the same,
> There is a law in each well-ord'red nation
> To curb those raging appetites that are
> Most disobedient and refractory.
> If Helen then be wife to Sparta's king,
> As it is known she is, these moral laws
> Of nature and of nations speak aloud
> To have her back return'd.." (II,ii,173ff)

Drawing on humanist discursive practices, Hector implies that "great minds", if uncorrupted, will obey nature's law by curbing "affection", and a "partial indulgence to their benumbed wills". However, if these aberrations are unable to be overcome, then the law of the nation has its own means of coercing the required response from the deviant subject. The implicit suggestion here, is that a will which does not operate in conformity with the universal law as it is represented in nature and in the state, is in fact a highly unnatural phenomenon. This ideal view of nature and humanity as the representations of truth, is the very antithesis to protestantism, and its location of value in social consensus, which is synonymous with the natural law, arises out of an optimism about humanity unheard of in protestant doctrine.

Hector's valuation of Helen primarily rests in his attempt to mysteriously link the intrinsic value of a thing to the existence of natural laws, and the upholding of those laws by the state. This view suggests that the laws of the state have their foundations in the laws of nature, which are ordered, logical and transparent. As Dollimore points out, this suggests that "human

kind discovers rather than makes social law (2). The state legitimises itself here, by asserting itself as the true social representation of natural law. If this is the case then "particular will" or private assertion becomes associated with that which is false and chaotic, as it threatens to overthrow the law which nature has set in place. It is worth noting here, Thomas More's very similar claim about relationship of the church to truth, where the Christian faith dwells in the "light of public knowledge" as is reflected by the Catholic church:

> "The church is as Saint Paul saith, the pillar and the foot or ground, that is to say the sure strength or fastening of the truth. And this church must be that known Catholic Church of which from age to age the scripture hath been received, and the people taught and not a church unknown of to good men or elects only, in which is neither preacher nor people assembled to preach unto, nor sacraments ministered by any man as a minister of that unknown church, to minister them unto among whom can be no such assembly for no man can know where to call another, nor how to know another if they came to gather by hap." (3)

Hector's view disregards however the disorder which is apparent both in the nature and in the politics which make up the world of the play. He therefore argues that:

> "...value dwells not in particular will:
> It holds his estimate and dignity
> As well wherein 'tis precious of itself
> As in the prizer. 'Tis mad idolatry
> To make the service greater than the god," (II,ii,54ff)

Troilus on the other hand, asserts the right to private opinion, and a valuation of something which is not bound to recognition granted by the state. Similarly using the example of marriage, he

emphasises the importance of individual choice, which must be followed through in the interests of personal honour:

> "I take today a wife, and my election
> Is led on in the conduct of my will:
> ...- how may I avoid,
> Although my will distaste what it elected,
> The wife I choose"(II,ii,62)

Here Troilus is both the subject and the beneficiary of his choice and action, with the benefits deriving from the personal and moral integrity, which are the direct result of him adhering to his own original choice. This discourse functions in direct opposition to the interests of the state, where the importance of asserting value which is socially derived, is to ensure that the benefits of the subject's actions accrue to the state. Troilus' repeated use of the subjective "I" and the possessive "my" functions to position him in a private sphere beyond the public requirements of the state. The anarchy inherent in Troilus' argument, which is founded primarily in a desire for personal honour and manhood at the expense of the interests of the state, is recognised by Hector who accuses Troilus of being too hot with passion to make reasonable judgments as to how Helen is to be valued (II,ii,170). Rossiter makes a similar point as he suggests that ""Particular will" gives the valuation of the impassioned, wilful and egoistic man who is deaf to reason - and therefore blind to Natural Law." (4)

It is worth pointing out that the "Natural Law" as both Hector and Rossiter define it, is really just the product of social consensus, rather than natural revelation. Troilus' assertion of value which does not derive from social consensus, suggests an egoism which threatens the basis for social organisation which is upheld by Hector, and later by Ulysses. What is interesting is that this egoism does not arise out of a selfconfidence in the subject's potential to align his will and actions with the natural and national law, but rather out of a passionate zeal and independence which finds its companion in religious fanaticism. It is helpful to recall More's very legitimate fears concerning the privatisation of value by protestants, which was based not on selfconfidence, but on the belief that the Holy Spirit had placed his private and invisible seal of approval on the individual.

(ii)

Achilles' privacy vs. Ulysses' authoritative order.

Achilles and his refusal to fight has generally been read in terms of his egoism and pride, his emasculating love for Polyxena, and even his homoerotic relationship with Patroclus. Thus Rossiter refers to Achilles' lack of "moral insight" and "egoism" as the source of his failure to act appropriately.(5) Foakes, who alludes to Achilles' "surely pride", also makes reference to the fact that it is only at the death of Patroclus, his "masculine whore" that Achilles is finally prompted to action, thereby implicitly suggesting that it is his relationship with Patroclus which has previously kept him in his tent (6)

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Such references firmly place Achilles outside any protestant tradition, which might otherwise be inferred from his anti-heroism, his assertion of privacy, and his refusal to recognise the demands made on him by the state. However, some more recent criticism has shown far more sympathy towards Achilles. Linda LaBranche suggests that the audience sees Achilles as the victim of group assault, first during the brief parade, and second as Ulysses brings the full weight and authority of the state against him. LaBranche also points out that LII,iii "directs our attention "inside" the tent, we might say, where we will see things from the point of view of Achilles the private man" (7). LaBranche further suggests that as Ulysses reveals that Achilles' vow to Polyxena might also be the source of his refusal to fight, "Achilles suddenly becomes an ambiguous character whose newly revealed love commands some sympathy and casts doubts upon our easy judgment of his previous behavior."(8) Charnes makes the point that Achilles deliberately eludes his casting as hero; "In a perversion of the "theme of honor," Achilles feels loathing for those who have cast him as "hero" in this play." (9) She goes on to suggest that "Achilles' tent becomes the site of subversive theatre - a space in which legendary texts are transgressed by performance and mime. In this space mimesis takes precisely those most underlined aspects of authorized "identity" and destabilizes them."(10)

LaBranche and Charnes both suggest that Achilles might be read in a way which escapes the traditional view of him as a type of Thersites, whose cynicism deliberately perverts heroism, and where the only difference between him and Thersites is his pride and strength. These readings lend something to the possibility

that Achilles might be read much more in terms of his assertion of his private value, his deliberate defiance of the state based on this assertion, and his refusal to participate unproblemmatically in any type of heroic action. Although there are a variety of ways of reading Achilles, it is helpful to consider some of his actions, or inactions, in the light of protestant notions of privacy which undermined the authority of the state, and the state's appeal to natural law, and thus legitimised power.

While there are many ways of understanding human value, it would seem that one of the problems of where human value finally lies, and who bestows that value, is essentially a problem of who or what constitutes ultimate authority and power for a society, as well as for the individual. The problem facing the Greek army is in fact a crisis of authority, as Achilles refuses to perform the actions required of him by the state. An elaborate game is therefore set up, in Act III, scene iii, in order to show Achilles that he is no longer valued. The irony of the game is however, that Achilles is indeed highly valued as a prospective soldier, for such lengths to be taken in order to secure his obedience. The theatricality with which each of the Greek officers pass over Achilles is indicative of the illusions by which their authority is held intact, for as they each pretend to have forgotten Achilles, the opposite is in fact true, that he is well remembered.

It would seem however, that there is some truth in Ulysses' diagnosis that Achilles' problem is one of pride and an overvaluation of himself. This might account for the anxiety with

which Achilles responds to the apparent rebuff he receives.

> "What, am I poor of late?
> 'Tis certain, greatness, once fall'n out with fortune,
> Must fall out with men too. What the declined is
> He shall as soon read in the eyes of others
> As feel in his own fall; for men, like butterflies,
> Show not their mealy wings but to the summer.
> And not a man, for being simply man,
> Hath any honour but for those honours
> That are without him - as place, riches, and favour,
> Prizes of accident as oft as merit;
> Which, when they fall, as being slippery standers,
> The love that leaned on them as slippery too,
> Doth one pluck down another, and together
> Die in the fall." (III,iii,75ff)

What is interesting here, is that the language Achilles uses to describe the series of alienations he experiences as he realises that his value is external to himself, could be argued to be religious, and more specifically Christian, in its associations. The repeated use of the word "fall" is loaded with Christian significance, as it recalls the original fall of Adam and Eve, and subsequently of all humanity into sin and damnation. This connection becomes even more probable as one notices that the series of alienations or "falls" which Achilles describes, follow a similar pattern to the fall experienced by Adam and Eve. The Bible describes first an alienation from God (Gen 3:10), then an alienation of Adam from Eve, (Gen 3:12), and finally an alienation from self as they are condemned to die (Gen 3:21-24).

Achilles similarly suggests that a "fall" from the transcendent, Fortune, results also in a "fall out with men too", or an experience of intersubjective alienation, which in itself leads to intrasubjective alienation as the subject experiences the fall internally in line 78. A parallel can similarly be traced in the fact that Adam and Eve's fall can be attributed to their failure of obedience, ("disobedience was the beginning of the Fall")(11), as can Achilles' experience be traced back to his refusal to obey the state.

The connection of Achilles' language, to Christian discursive practices is important because it functions to remove Achilles, to some extent, beyond the authority of the state, and the power which the state is seeking to exert over him by ritualising his devaluation. The language of the fall was particularly prevalent in reformation discourses, being linked to the need for Christ's imputed value to the fallen and valueless subject, "Life lost in Adam, is recovered in Christ"(12), and thus works to take the subject out of the hands of the state, and place her or him in the hands of God.

Achilles' movement away from a view of the self which is coherent and valuable, (his question, "Know they not Achilles"? is rooted in his perception of himself as an heroic figure worthy of recognition), to a realisation that in and of himself there is little of value, (And not a man, for being simply man,\ Hath any honour, but honour for those honours \ that are without him) shows an awareness that value which is related to social recognition is highly unstable, given the transitory nature of human honour. This movement away from self confidence, to an

awareness of human lack in the face of excessive demands, interestingly forms the basis of protestant consciousness.

> "Here, then, is what God's truth requires us to seek in examining ourselves; it requires the kind of knowledge that will strip us of all confidence in our own ability, deprive us of all occasion for boasting, and lead us to submission." (13)
>
> "Whoever is utterly cast down and overwhelmed by the awareness of his calamity, poverty, nakedness, and disgrace has thus advanced farthest in knowledge of himself. For there is no danger of man's depriving himself of too much so long as he learns that in God must be recouped what he himself lacks."(14)
>
> For as muche as the true knowlege of our selves is very necessarye to come to the right knowlege of God, ye have heard in the last readyng howe humblie all godlie men alwaies have thought of them selves,... for of our selfes, we be crabbe trees that can bryng furth no apples." (15)

The juxtaposition of "fall" and "honour" as Achilles arrives at this awareness, where the fall is experienced within, and honour exists without, frequently beyond human reach, correlates with the protestant view of the subject who is by nature sinful, and without value, and in need of God's salvation, and the imputed value of Christ. Achilles thus takes up the theme begun in the Trojan council scene as he suggests that honour exists only as a prize which is exterior to the nature of the subject:

> "And not a man, for being simply man,
> Hath any honour, but honour of those honours
> That are without him - as place, riches and favour,
> Prizes of accident as oft as merit-" (III,iii,80ff)

awareness of human lack in the face of excessive demands, interestingly forms the basis of protestant consciousness.

> "Here, then, is what God's truth requires us to seek in examining ourselves: it requires the kind of knowledge that will strip us of all confidence in our own ability, deprive us of all occasion for boasting, and lead us to submission." (13)
>
> "Whoever is utterly cast down and overwhelmed by the awareness of his calamity, poverty, nakedness, and disgrace has thus advanced farthest in knowledge of himself. For there is no danger of man's depriving himself of too much so long as he learns that in God must be recouped what he himself lacks."(14)
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> That are without him - as place, riches and favour.
> Prizes of accident as oft as merit-" (III,iii,80ff)

A man then is not honoured for what he is, but for what he possesses. Honour is moved even further from the subject's grasp as Achilles suggests that even these prizes come by "accident as oft as merit" thereby increasing the anxiety about whether honour is earned or bestowed. In the mystery of accident, which implies honour or value bestowed, lies the possibility of election, and the providential choice of the transcendent. This functions once more to remove Achilles from the grasp of the state, which bestows honour only in response to the obedience and submission of the subject, or to suit its own ends, as in the case of Ajax.

Achilles further denies his participation in the rituals of the state as he puts the rebuff aside and asserts:

> "...But 'tis not so with me:
> Fortune and I are friends; I do enjoy
> At ample point all that I possess,
> Save these men's looks; who do, methinks, find out
> Something not worth in me such rich beholding
> As they have oft given." (III,iii,87ff)

In extricating himself from the officer's looks, claiming they are of little importance, and thus do not have the power to impact on his actions, Achilles aligns himself with the transcendent, Fortune. For the first time there is also the assertion of the self, or the "I" which suggests Achilles' independence. This is further increased by the structural symmetry of the "I" positioned between the alliterative "Fortune" and "friends". Achilles' separation from the demands of the state, does not however mean that he enjoys a subjective

coherence. This is signified in the split between the "I" and the "me", and the present "I do" and the past "I did", and suggests Achilles' awareness that a unified selfhood remains beyond his grasp. This awareness of internal fragmentation contributes to Achilles' view that his value is highly unstable, so long as it derives from his own actions. However, if it resides in his private, and as implied, privileged relationship with fortune, his value becomes disassociated from both his intrinsic and extrinsic worth as a successful subject, and is thus stabilised.

Ulysses however, attempts to exploit Achilles' sense of fragmentation for the purposes of the state. His greeting to Achilles as "great Thetis' son" therefore works to undermine Achilles as a worthy and separate identity. This theme is developed as Ulysses suggests that it is impossible to know oneself but by reflection:

> "A strange fellow here
> Writes me, that man, how dearly ever parted,
> How much in having, or without or in,
> Cannot make boast to have that which he hath,
> Nor feels not what he owes, but by reflection,
> As, when his virtues shining upon others
> Heat them, and they retort that heat again
> To the first giver." (III,iii,95ff)

Achilles responds in agreement:

> " nor doth the eye itself,
> That most pure spirit of sense, behold itself,

Not going from itself; but eye to eye opposed."
(III,iii,105ff)

It is interesting that Orkin notes that this is an allusion to the proverb The eye sees not itself but by reflection, (Tilley, E231a) which is used almost unchanged in Julius Caesar. (16) Orkin further points out that Tilley lists as its first citation a Latin quotation from Erasmus, thereby placing the proverb in the Christian humanist tradition, which was concerned with a self knowledge which both acknowledges human limitations, while at the same time urging the subject to a morally orientated life (17). Orkin also suggests that inherent in this particular context of the proverb is the suggestion that the "warring elements within man would be reconciled", thereby suggesting an optimistic view of human potential. However, Orkin notices that other formulations of the proverb "stress man's fallibility in acquiring self knowledge". Thus he cites It is not all true that (ap)pears in glass c1500 Whiting, G119), and A false mirror oft deceives a man's look a1475 (Whiting M577).

It would seem from this discussion that two different emphases can be drawn from the context surrounding the use of this proverb. On the one hand in the Christian humanist tradition, there is the suggestion that once self knowledge is gained, the subject might attain new heights of moral action, and even perfection. On the other hand is the sense that the subject is so limited, that even knowledge of these limitations is hard to come by. What is so interesting about these observations in the context of this argument, is that Ulysses and Achilles each draw on these different senses to suit their own ends. Thus Ulysses

aligns himself to the first sense in order to urge Achilles into action for the state, while Achilles draws primarily on the second sense in order to escape into the world of private self regard.

This mirror imagery, which suggests that the self is known only through reflection, ie the self which is, and is not the self, abounds throughout the discussion. It is helpful here to consider Lacan's discussion of the mirror phase as it gives some insight into the illusions manufactured by the self in order to gain an experience of coherence and power:

> "The mirror stage is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation - and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality.."(18)

Achilles' lack of honour and heroic action reflects back to the Greek army their own lack, and thus generates a certain interest on the part of the state or the powerful to transform their subjects into the likeness of their desires. Practically this makes sense as the sum value of a state's subjects equals the power of the state. The suggestion here is that privacy and private ownership become impossible, for whatever a man "owes" he experiences and enjoys only by reflection. Thus what a man owns, the state also owns thereby increasing the importance of the subject's value to the state and its interests.

It is this power of the state to either withhold or bestow value on the subject, with which protestants had such difficulty, and which when they questioned it, resulted in a threat to the stability and power of the those who claimed such authority. Christopher Hill in Intellectual Origins to the English Revolution, while recognising the tension between the individual anarchy of Luther's "priesthood of believers", and the Calvinist fear of popular revolt (19), cites one of the underlying causes of the Revolution as the protestant challenge of authority, and a view of the equal value of all human beings in the sight of God.(20) Achilles' constant refusal to forego his privacy in the face of the state's demands, as well as his ironic reverence of his superiors, (" and most illustrious, six or seven times honoured captain-general of the Grecian army, Agamemnon, et cetera."III,iii,276) would have had particular significance in a society undergoing similar crises of authority.

The repeated use of the image of reflection in order to suggest the possibility of coherence, and thus lure the subject into service of the state, becomes problematic as there must always be a distance between the self reflected and the self which gazes. This distance undermines both the state's complete control of the subject, as well as the subject's knowledge of self. Achilles himself is not immune to the desire for coherence as his prolific use of repetition, particularly of the word "itself", structurally mimics the mirror image and suggests a longing to uncover the self which is constantly elusive:

> "The beauty that is borne here in the face
> The bearer knows not, but commends itself

To others' eyes; nor doth the eye itself,
That most pure spirit of sense, behold itself,
Not going from itself; but eye to eye oppos'd
Salutes each other with each other's form;
For speculation turns not to itself
Till it hath travell'd and is mirror'd there
Where it may see itself." (III,iii,103ff)

Having secured Achilles' agreement on the problems of self knowledge, Ulysses introduces the problem of action and connects the applause given for successful action to the value of the actor.

"..no man is the lord of anything
Though in and of him there be much consisting,
Till he communicate his parts to others;
Nor doth he of himself know them for aught,
Till he behold them form'd in the applause
Where th'are extended;" (III,iii,115ff)

Ulysses here suggests that it is only through publicity that the subject gains value. The public possession of the subject is indicated in the idea that it is applause which literally gives life and form to the otherwise disjointed parts of the subject.

The importance of public action, and the association of that action with the value of the subject, is made more exacting as it becomes obvious that for the applause to be maintained, action must also be continuous. This becomes apparent in Ulysses' use of the images of Time, first as one collecting "alms for oblivion",

and then as a fashionable host always welcoming the newcomer, while forgetting the departing guest. Both images suggest a perpetual devaluation of the subject, as Time relegates present action to the past. As the value of the subject is so closely connected, in Ulysses' view, to constant public action, the subject is either doomed to a life of perpetual self advertisement, or is forgotten, existing always in the past tense, and as such becomes literally nonexistent or part of the living dead:

> "The cry went once on thee,
> And still it might, and yet it may again
> If thou wouldst not entomb thyself alive"
> (III,iii,184ff)

The use of "alms" in the first image,

> "Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back,
> Wherein he puts alms for oblivion,
> A great-sized monster of ingratitude." (III,iii,145ff)

introduces a religious dimension, as it is most often associated in the OED with the performance of religious duty or the service of God. There is an allusion therefore, to a kind of public religion which exists eternally in the present, making demands for the continual performance of public good works. The image of Time collecting these alms only to give them to oblivion, might well recall a greedy church continually demanding such alms of its parishioners with promises of absolution and renewed value in the eyes of the church. While Time constantly devalues the human

subject, forgetting the works of the past, there is also the promise of public approval if the subject manages through action in the present, (and it would seem that religious action could well be implied), to keep abreast with Time. The possible religious associations here also function to sanction the demands made on the subject by established authority, thus masking the intentions of the state, which are primarily in the interests of winning the war and thereby increasing its power.

The comflict between Ulysses' assertion that life is to be made public, and Achilles' withdrawal into privacy (line 190) can be traced in dialogues present in reformation England. Thus while the Roman church frequently demanded public penance and the public enactment of good works, the protestants urged private repentance and a reconciliation with God through Christ alone. The withdrawal of shame and devotion from the public sphere, removed a powerful means of coercion from the church and the state. Discussing this phenomenon in relation to Thomas More and his particular responses to the private withdrawal of the protestants, Greenblatt theorises:

> "Not only order and security, but truth itself for More is to be found only in the visible community of believers, truth apart from community, truth that resides solely in the secret conviction of the heart, is a dangerous illusion that must be destroyed." (21)

In the light of this it is interesting that Achilles' refusal to act as Ulysses is urging him to, is not because he fails to see the strength to Ulysses' arguments. Although he responds with suitable anxiety concerning the value of his actions, "What,

are my deeds forgot?", he maintains his privacy in the face of Ulysses' demands. It is important to note here that, while Achilles' assertion of privacy and value which is privately determined, functions at one level to align him with emergent protestant discourses, it also functions at another level to work against this alignment in so far as it incorporates Achilles' relationship with Patroclus. While homosexuality held less anxiety for the Elizabethans than, for example, their anxiety about the feminine, it was seen by protestant doctrine as a deviant form of sexual behaviour. (22) However, while there are numerous dimensions operative in Achilles' relationship with the Greeks and Patroclus, it is interesting to understand some of the play's anxieties relating to value and authority in the context of protestant thinking, which was itself redefining the location of value, and so challenging the naturalised authority of the English throne.

In view of the protestant displacement of value to the private consciousness, and the way in which this worked to undermine institutional authority, Ulysses' response is particularly interesting.

> "The providence that's in a watchful state
> Knows almost every grain of Pluto's gold,
> Finds bottom in th'uncomprehensive deep,
> Keeps place with thought, and (almost like the gods)
> Do thoughts unveil in their dumb cradles.
> There is a mystery, with whom relation
> Durst never meddle, and the soul of state,
> Which hath an operation more divine

Than breath or pen can give expressure to."

(III,iii,195)

No longer does he employ general philosophical arguments about the problems of time and decay as they destroy both action and subjectivity, but with the neurosis of the state which fears an undermining of its power, he constructs an image of the state which is all seeing, all knowing and all powerful. What is interesting is that Ulysses' description of the state could well be a description of the transcendent, with the words "providence", "divine" and "soul" being specifically religious in reference. In an historical context where particularly radical notions of the divine existed in such tension with institutionalised forms of authority, the representation of the state in overtly religious language, would have been cause for some concern among those members of the audience who so fiercely guarded the privacy and autonomy of certain protestant doctrines. On the other hand, one can not fail to recognise in Ulysses' speech the horrifying power and political sanction which the state derives from an identification with the divine. This identification becomes increasingly sinister in view of Palmer's note that the "soul of state" could in fact be a reference to the Greek (and perhaps Elizabethan) secret service (23). It is worth noting here that Wickham writes, "The most topical of all subject matter, the relationship between Church, state and individual human being ... was the very subject matter which the whole machinery of censorship and control had been devised to license and suppress."(24) With this in mind Ulysses' speech operates on a number of levels, as it functions also to demystify the relationship of church and state by exposing the machinations of

the different power relationships. The complex relationship between the state and church and individual is well documented in English history where religion was more frequently an instrument of state power than not. Henry VIII's separation from the the Roman church and his appointing of himself as the head of the Church of England was arguably a political move in the establishment of his own power. However, while the power of the English throne drew extensively on its alignment with the Reformed Church, and thereby gained independence from Rome, the protestant deferral to God and scripture alone, may have contributed to the throne's eventual collapse with the advent of the Commonwealth (25). The revolutionary doctrines inherent in protestantism meant that what began as dissidence from Rome, could also end in dissidence within England.

Ulysses' identification of the state with the divine, is an attempt to set the state up as a universal authority, and thus render it invulnerable. The continual surveillance implied in the "watchful state", and the veiled threat found in "with whom relation \Durst never meddle," seeks to strike terror in the heart of the subject, and therefore secure obedience and submission. The suggestion that the state is mysterious, removes the workings of the state beyond the reaches of the subject, and ensures the preservation of its power and authority. In his assertion, Ulysses denies any room for privacy in the life of the state's subjects, and the implication is that if Achilles is to remain socially viable, he must be valuable to the state. In other words Achilles' value lies in the approval of the state and the state's applause of his heroic action.

However, while Achilles recognises that his "fame is shrewdly gor'd", the recognition fails to move him to heroic action. Instead he voices his longing for the Trojan lords to see him unarmed, and to see them in their "weeds of peace". In his desire for such a meeting, Achilles removes himself from the political reality of war, and himself as a participant in that war, as he considers what is almost a transcendent moment where enemies are able to meet beyond the power and rituals of the state.

When Achilles does finally act, his actions are motivated by private grief and the need for revenge, rather than the desire for public approval. His actions are also far from heroic, bringing dishonour rather than honour to the Greek army. Achilles asserts himself through the play as a private individual beyond the authority of the state, and while he recognises that his value is located elsewhere, he refuses to locate that value in the received recognition of the state. This construction of Achilles as private and separate, (he spends the majority of the play in his own tent), might have some grounding in the similar assertions made by protestants concerning their faith. The horrifying manner in which Achilles finally does act, without any reference to his superiors, could also be rooted in a deep fear that once the power of the state to bestow value is taken out of the hands of the state, and placed elsewhere, thus freeing the individual to act without reference to the state, anarchy, such as that described earlier by More, would be the final result.

NOTES:

1. Brower, R.A. 1971, Hero and Saint: Shakespeare and the Graeco-Roman Historic Tradition, Oxford University Press, Page 249.
2. Dollimore, Jonathan, 1989, Radical Tragedy, Harvester Wheatsheaf, page 43.
3. This extract is cited by Greenblatt, Page 61, and is to be found in The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer, ed. L. Schuster, R. Marius, J. Lusardi, and R. J. Schoek, in Complete Works 8, (1973), Page 176.
4. Rossiter, A.P. 1961, Angel with Horns and Other Shakespearean Lectures, ed Graham Storey, Longmans: London, Page 142.
5. Rossiter, A.P. 1961, Angel with Horns and Other Shakespearean Lectures, Page 134.
6. Foakes, R.A. 1971, Shakespeare: The Dark Comedies to the Last Plays, Routledge and Kegan Paul: London, Page 49.
7. LaBranche, Linda, 1986, "Visual Patterns in the Linking Analogues in Troilus and Cressida", Shakespeare Quarterly, Vol 37, No 4, Page 444.
8. LaBranche, Linda, 1986, "Visual Patterns in the Linking Analogues in Troilus and Cressida", Page 444.
9. Charnes, Linda, 1989, ""So Unsecret to Ourselves": Notorious Identity and the material Subject in Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida", Shakespeare Quarterly, Vol 40, No 4, Page 430.
10. Charnes, Linda, 1989, ""So Unsecret to Ourselves": Notorious Identity and the material Subject in Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida", Page 430.
11. Calvin, J; Institutes of Christian Religion; ed John T McNeill; The Westminster Press; Philadelphia; Page 245
12. Calvin, J; Institutes of Christian Religion; ed John T McNeill; The Westminster Press; Philadelphia; Page 248.
13. Calvin, J; Institutes of Christian Religion; ed John T McNeill; The Westminster Press; Philadelphia; Page 242.
14. Calvin, J; Institutes of Christian Religion; ed John T McNeill; The Westminster Press; Philadelphia; Page 262.
15. Bond; Ronald B. (ed); (1987); Certain Sermons or Homilies (1547); University of Toronto Press; Toronto Buffalo London; Page 73.
16. Orkin, M. R. (1980) Ph. D. An Examinatation of Shakespeare's use of Proverb Idiom in Four Plays: Henry IV, PartI, As You Like It, Julius Caesar, Macbeth; Page 361.
17. Orkin, M. R. (1980) Ph. D. Page 363. For this particular idea Orkin quotes from R. Soellner, (1972), Shakespeare Patterns of Self Knowledge; Page 5.
18. Lacan, J; (1982); Ecrits; trans. Alan Sheridan, Tavistock Publications, Page 4.
19. Hill, Christopher, (1965), Intellectual Origins of the English Revolution; Clarendon Press, Oxford; Page 289.
20. Hill, Christopher, (1965), Intellectual Origins of the English Revolution; Clarendon Press, Oxford; Page 22, and Page 267.
21. Greenblatt, Stephen; (1980); Renaissance Self Fashioning; The University of Chicago Press; Page 62.
22. This particular observation comes out of discussions with my supervisor Martin Orkin. The importance of its inclusion rests on my need to express an awareness that while this reading draws on protestant discourses in order to understand some of what is happening in terms of value in the play, it would be wrong to assert that Achilles' position is simply a protestant position.

24. Palmer, Kenneth, (ed); (1982); The Arden Shakespeare: Troilus and Cressida; Methuen, Page 217.
25. Wickham, Glynne, (1963); Early English Stages; Vol. II, part I, London: Routledge; Page 94, cited by Dollimore, Radical Tragedy; Page 23.
26. The introduction to the thesis as well as chapter 3, deal more extensively with the complex relationship between the Elizabethan state and the church.

CHAPTER 9

REEVALUATING CRESSIDA'S AND HELEN'S ACTIONS IN RELATION TO ELIZABETHAN RELIGIOUS CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE FEMININE.

> "This is, and is not, Cressid.
> Within my soul there doth conduce a fight
> Of this strange nature, that a thing inseparate
> Divides more wider than the sky and earth;" (V,ii,145ff)

Troilus' anguish as he denies the reality of Cressida's betrayal, asserting that there must be two Cressidas, the Cressida whom he thinks he knows, and the Cressida who has confounded that assumption, suggests aspects of the dilemma created by the contradictory demands made on women in Reformation England. The presentation of Cressida as duplicitous is transformed when read in relation to both protestant and Christian humanist discourses which set up a tension between woman's value and woman's action. The expectations, particularly among women, which must have resulted from the idea found in emergent Christian discourses, that women were equal in value to men, was rendered impotent by the equal assertion that women were to remain passive and obedient, particularly in the marriage context. The battle which Troilus describes in his own soul mirrors a similar struggle undergone by Cressida, and to a lesser extent by Helen, as they attempt to assert themselves as valuable subjects of knowledge and action. This assertion is however constantly undermined by that voice in the play which demands their silence and passivity. The gap which Renaissance Christian discourses created between woman's increased value and inhibited action, set up a discourse

which attempted to be "inseparate" but which in reality "Divide(d) more wider than sky and earth".

The anxiety over female action in the play can be understood more fully in the context of a society where the stability of patriarchy had been threatened by emergent Christian discourses, and the way in which these discourses reevaluated women. An understanding of these discourses also becomes relevant as Cressida and Helen seem to draw on some of the ideas inherent in these discourses, as they attempt to signify their own value as independent of masculine construction. Difficulty emerges however when they both try to assert their value through what becomes increasingly perceived as deviant action.

(i)

Cressida and Helen in Literary Criticism.

Through literary and critical history both Cressida and Helen have been written as types for female falsity and duplicity. Cited by Woodbridge, we thus find that Candidus, writing in the sixteenth century and arguing in favour of the virtuous women, uses Helen as an example of the type of bad woman that others are fortunately not (1). In the twentieth century critics seem to have largely accepted such writings of Helen in literary history. This is evident, for example, in the view held by Cole (1980), in what is for the most part a non-traditionalist reading of Troilus and Cressida. However in his investigation of the play as an interrogation of mythmaking, he writes with regard to Helen that "she is tarnished and tawdry, a plaything for Paris, and her

single direct act in the drama is to coax a bawdy song from Pandarus, just before she leaves to disarm great Hector."(2) This reading and rewriting of Helen is not unique to Cole. Rossiter's (1961) reading of the play, in which he examines the failure of characters to achieve what they originally hope for when considering Helen, claims that "she is silly and empty, with some of Cressida's tricks of playing the men up prettily."(3) This reading of the play, while willing to recognise the text as a site of struggle at some levels, refuses to admit such a struggle when reading Helen and Cressida.

In opposition to these kinds of readings, (which form the majority of the readings of Helen) is Linda Charne's (1989) version in which she makes an attempt to read Helen in the light of the entire context of the play. Charnes draws attention to Helen's positioning at the centre of the play in such a way as to show how she functions as the impetus for male action. Thus instead of writing Helen as the archetype of the fallen woman, Charnes claims that "Helen (and Cressida) are the conduit through which these men form crucial political and psychological connections with each other" (4). By refusing to see Helen's language, or the language used to construct her as transparent, Charnes is able to investigate the struggle over Helen's value in the play (5).

The cricicism of Helen and Cressida has tended to focus almost entirely on what is happening in the play, with little consideration given to Elizabethan anxieties about the feminine. While it is important to read Helen and Cressida in the context of the entire play, it is also helpful to read their language and

actions with an understanding of struggles which were going on as a result of emergent Christian discourses which were redefining the value of women in Renaissance England. In view of the tensions which were arising out of protestant and Christian humanist evaluations of women, Helen's and Cressida's own struggles in the play take on a new significance. The space which Helen and Cressida make for themselves in the play can be better understood if one considers that such space was being given to women during this era, as they were freed from a wholly masculine evaluation of female value. The anxiety which this caused can be seen by the way in which Helen's and Cressida's actions, which emerge out of their attempts to signify themselves as independent, are shown to be at best problematic, and at worst, deviant and destructive.

(ii)

Helen: Vacuous object or valuable subject?

The struggle which is apparent in these critical works around the construction of Cressida and Helen in the play, is also evident in the struggle which takes place in the play between masculine expectations of feminine silence and passivity, and Cressida's and Helen's aspirations as the valuable subjects of knowledge and action.

The action of the play, particularly the action of war, hinges on the value that is imputed to Helen by the men in the play, and the Trojan council debate is concerned specifically with this issue. The debate is an attempt to establish whether Helen's

value is intrinsic or extrinsic, in other words, whether it is independent of male evaluation, and so disconnected to male honour and action, or not. The tensions in the debate can be traced in the struggles which were present at the time around the value of women. Thus as emergent discourses which assigned women an equal and independent value in relation to men, interfaced with earlier discourses where women's value was determined by male evaluation, a tension evolved which rendered the patriarchal foundation of the society unstable. For while woman's value remains extrinsic, reliant on the evaluation of men or the church, rather than intrinsic, guaranteed only by the imputed value of God, male action is free from excessive anxiety, dependent as it is on the construction of women as the immobile centres around which men are able to act (6).

Hector begins the debate by arguing in favour of Helen's release:

> "Let Helen go.
> Since the first sword was drawn about this question
> Every tithe soul 'mongst many thousand dismes
> Hath been as dear as Helen - I mean, of ours."
> (II,ii,17ff)

Hector attempts here to divest Helen of the masculine evaluation of her as a worthy prize for male action. Helen's value is weighed in the scale against those lives which have been lost, and Hector argues that she is found wanting. Hector's attempt to free Helen of male evaluation is literally an attempt to free her from Trojan possession, which would consequently result in her independence of action.

Realising the danger of this kind of reasoning to masculine honour, Troilus reminds Hector of his original valuation of Helen as a worthy prize for male chivalric endeavour:

> "Is she worth keeping? - Why, she is a pearl
> Whose price hath launch'd above a thousand ships,
> And turn'd crown'd kings to merchants.
> If you'll avouch twas wisdom Paris went-
> As you must needs, for you all cried "Go, go":
> If you'll confess he brought home worthy prize -
> As you must needs, for you all clapp'd your hands
> And cried "Inestimable!" (II,ii,82ff)

The alliterative connection between "pearl", "price" and "prize" constructs Helen's value in both commercial and military terms, both of which render her immobile by making her the object of effective male action. The prevalence of commercial terms works to construct Helen as a commodity to be bought and sold, her price determined by her value on the male market, which is directly related to the impetus she provides for male action and honour.

Despite the apparent resolution of conflict over what constitutes Helen's value, with the council eventually agreeing on Helen as a worthy prize for honorable male action, the play works to undermine any such resolution, leaving the issue of Helen's value an open and problematic one. Prior to the Trojan council the audience is allowed a brief glimpse of Helen. But instead of this being the grand entrance we would expect, it is a moment of mild

irony which increases when viewed in the context of the Trojan council. The second scene of the first act opens with Cressida asking her servant the identity of the two women passing by, only to be told by Alexander that these are Helen and Queen Hecuba. The presentation of Helen, the pearl whose face has launched a thousand ships, as not immediately recognisable, works to question the council's later construction of her as a worthy prize for male action.

The one scene in which Helen appears and speaks (III,i,41ff) is characterised by a struggle between Pandarus' and Paris' attempts to position, and thus evaluate Helen as passive and silent, and Helen's own attempts to reposition and reevaluate herself active and knowing. Although these endeavours might be easily passed over, they provide some interest if they are seen in the light of the new, if small, independence which was being given to women in protestant discourses. As Paris and Helen enter, the tone of the scene develops into one of lightness and frivolity, which might tempt the reader to dismiss it as a kind of comic interlude. A closer reading reveals however, that the apparent comedy in the scene functions deliberately to undermine Helen's attempts to make herself seen and heard. Helen however deflates Pandarus' and Paris' attempts to cast her as a petulant child, as she appropriates the comedy for herself in order to mock Pandarus' heroic pretensions.

In this scene the presence of two dialogues can be traced, that between Paris and Pandarus, and that between Pandarus and Helen, and it is interesting to note the marked difference between them. Pandarus has come specifically to engineer Troilus' excused

absence, so that he might manipulate the liaison between Troilus and Cressida. As he addresses Paris he observes a certain heroic decorum:

> "But marry, thus, my lord: my dear lord and most esteemed friend, your brother Troilus....commends himself to you....And my lord, he desires you that if the king call for him at supper, you will make his excuse."(III,i,62ff)

This discourse is however interspersed with comments to the queen, who is addressed as if she were an ignorant child who must be constantly placated:

> "Well, sweet queen, you are pleasant with me...Go to sweet queen, go to...Sweet queen, Sweet queen, that's a sweet queen, i' faith."(III,i,61ff)

The effect of this, much more than demythologising Helen, as Cole argues, works to position her deliberately on the outside of patriarchal discourse and action. This is emphasised by the fact that not only is she addressed in an entirely different manner to Paris, but she is not privy to the exchange which carries on between Paris and Pandarus, despite the fact that it is carrying on right in front of her. It would be limiting therefore, to read Helen's language without also being aware of this very deliberate positioning of her on the periphery of patriarchal discourse, which here is the discourse of knowledge and power, in such a way as to deny her meaningful access to the world of language and action. Her language in fact reflects this positioning, and takes

the form of mere snatches of phrases borrowed from the male speakers. Thus in reply to Pandarus' deliberately pacifying use of "sweet queen" which begs Helen's silence, Helen replies "And to make a sweet lady sad is a sour offence." Here Helen insists that Pandarus comply with her earlier demands that he should sing. She therefore transforms the passivity encouraged by Pandarus' "sweet queen" into the flirtatious demands of a "sweet lady" where she struggles for some control over the outcome of the present discourse. In fact she consistantly interrupts Pandarus' message as she insists that her needs be met, and therefore her presence acknowledged. The phrases which Helen borrows deliberately work to undermine Pandarus' positioning of her as sweet child, and thus frequently have sexual connotation. Her language is not merely bawdy, but it is also faintly mocking of the heroic discourse adopted by Pandarus. Thus, just after the exchange between the servant and Pandarus, Pandarus addresses the company:

> "Fair be to you, my lord, and to all this fair company; fair desire in all fair measure fairly guide them - especially to you, fair queen: fair thoughts be your fair pillow".(III,i,42ff)

To which Helen replies; "Dear lord, you are full of fair words", with a deliberate deferral on her use of the word "fair" which works to undermine the "fairness" of Pandarus' speech by suggesting that it is empty of any real content.

The Positioning of Helen, the mythological figurehead of the Trojan War, on the periphery of the one scene in which she appears in the play, suggests a profound anxiety concerning women's relationships to the world of male action and politics. A struggle emerges between the attempt to deliberately limit Helen's access to the world of action, and the manner in which Helen escapes and thwarts the male evaluation of her. The attempt to keep Helen inactive, and thus a reliable conduit for male action, is disrupted by Helen's assertion, however limited, as an independent subject. Helen's possible independence also suggests the possibility of her becoming an active agent, and it is this possibility which is most threatening, as the entire action of the war, and of the play, is dependent on her inactivity. Helen's small bid for independence as she mocks and derides the heroism inherent in Pandarus' speech, is interesting given the increased value women were enjoying in emergent Christian discourses. However, the anxiety directed at Helen's possible action may reflect some of the difficulty with which women's increased value was regarded in these emergent discourses, as it remained necessary for social stability that women remained passive and even submissive in their relationships with men.

(iii)

Cressida's retreat from the male gaze and the privatisation of her value.

The struggle over woman's value, and the assertion of independent female value hinted at in the tensions surrounding Helen, become more evident when examining Cressida, where Cressida struggles to

assert her own value as independent of Troilus' evaluation of her.

Both Helen and Cressida are constructed by the masculine voice in comparative terms, and Cressida's value particularly is based on how she compares with Helen. Indeed, the first time there is a direct reference to Cressida, Pandarus tries to enhance her attractiveness to Troilus by comparing her hair to Helen's and her wit to Cassandra's (I,i,41-46). Cressida is therefore narrated by Pandarus as the object of both his and Troilus' gaze, as he seeks to fan Troilus' passion by positioning him as the subject of that gaze. This split between the male as subject and female as object is seen in the language used by Troilus, where his thrice repeated "I tell" (I,i,48 - 51), shows both the need to narrate his experience, as well as position himself as author of that experience. However, the breaks between the respective exclamations implies also that there is a struggle going on, and that Troilus is not entirely sure of how to make sense of his situation:

> "O Pandarus - I tell thee Pandarus-
> When I do tell thee where my hopes lie drown'd
> Reply not in how many fathoms deep
> They lie indrench'd. I tell thee I am mad
> In Cressid's love: thou answer'st, "she is fair",
> Pour'st in the open ulcer of my heart
> Her eyes, her hair, her cheek, her gait, her voice;
> Handlest in thy discourse - O - 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 palm of ploughman." (I,i,47ff)

This struggle is emphasised by the use of drowning imagery where there is the sense that it is Cressida who is inflicting pain and exerting power, while Troilus is rendered inactive. However, this notion is further transformed by the split between the "I" and "she", there the masculine "I" is located in the private emotions, while the feminine "she" is located in the public view of her as an object.

The construction of Cressida as an object of the male gaze, and hence her devaluation as a subject of intrinsic value, is however made problematic by Troilus' own inexperience and realisation that somehow the construction fails to grasp the reality, as he endeavours to write Cressida's beauty. Troilus' inability to fully lay hold of the Cressida of his desire, works to imply Cressida's independent value, free from Troilus' evaluation of her. At the very point that Troilus tries to immortalise and immobilise Cressida in his narration of her through his use of metaphor, she in fact becomes subject to metaphoric deferral(7) and so slips beyond his grasp.

In the first scene in which Cressida appears, first with Alexander and then with Pandarus (I,ii,1-267), she refuses the transparency of the signifier, playing with both men as they attempt to fix meaning for her. Thus as Alexander seeks to distinguish Troilus as a man above men, "They say he is a very man per se,\ And stands alone", Cressida mocks Alexander's

eloquence, and in so doing, Troilus' heroism, "So do all men unless they are drunk, sick, or have no legs." Reacting strongly against Cressida's refusal to receive the language of Pandarus and Alexander at face value, and thus recognise their authoritative voices as transparent, Rossiter comments:

> "The second scene introduces her - mainly with Pandarus and it is immediately plain that Troilus' idealized queen of courtly romance is not there. She is a chatty, vulgar little piece, and in the rhyming soliloquy at the end (where she speaks what she takes for her mind), the principles of the lofty chaste heroines of amour courteous are brought down exactly to the level of Mrs Peachum's advice in The Beggar's Opera." (8)

This violent critical response to Cressida's refusal to conform her language to the earlier courtly idealisation of her, and the reconstruction of Cressida as vulgar, faithless and stupid, employs a language in which the woman is either virgin or whore, and refuses to recognise Cressida's language as independent of male evaluation.

In the scene Pandarus adopts a similar technique to the one he employed with Troilus, by attempting to define Troilus by comparing him to Hector and Paris:

> Pand. ...Troilus is the better man of the two.
>
> Cress. O Jupiter! There's no comparison.
>
> Pand. What, not between Troilus and Hector? Do you know a man if you see him?
>
> Cress. Ay, if I ever saw him before and knew him.
>
> Pand. Well, I say Troilus is Troilus.

Cress. Then you say as I say; for I am sure he is not Hector.

Pand. No, nor Hector is not Troilus in some degrees.

Cress. 'Tis just to each of them: he is himself.

Pand. Himself? Alas, poor Troilus! I would he were-

Cress. So he is.

Pand. Condition I had gone barefoot to India.

Cress. He is not Hector.

Pand. Himself? No, he's not himself. Would a were himself! Well, the gods are above: time must friend or end. Well, Troilus, well, I would my heart were in her body! No Hector is not a better man than Troulus.

(I,ii,59ff)

However, unlike his earlier comparison of Cressida and Helen as objects, he now attempts to compare Troilus and Hector as subjects of heroic action, with Troilus appearing the more heroic of the two. Interestingly, while Troilus tried previously to lay hold of Cressida through his language, Cressida does quite the opposite, deliberately misunderstanding both the identity of the subject being referred to, and the sense of what Pandarus is saying. The unusually frequent repetition of Troilus' and Hector's names, heightens the confusion. The inability to fix or define Troilus unproblematically in terms of his action, is seen in both Pandarus' remark "Troilus is Troilus" and Cressida's observation "He is not Hector". However, a certain tension is set up between what is happening verbally and what is happening visually in this scene. Thus, while Cressida's subversion of Pandarus' language and her refusal to fix Troilus' subjectivity in the world of heroic action signifies a certain denial of that

world; visually she remains immobile while the soldiers pass her by, each decked out in their heroic armour and battle wounds, which are strong, if brutal, signifiers of male action.

As Pandarus exits, Cressida abandons prose and the jocular tone with which she has mocked Pandarus' heroic references. Instead she uses rhyming couplets, which suggests a desire on Cressida's part for control and pattern in the face of the tensions confronting her as a direct result of her love for Troilus:

> "Words, vows, gifts, tears, and love's full sacrifice,
> He offers in another's enterprise;
> But more in Troilus thousandfold I see
> Than in the glass of Pandar's praise may be.
> 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 by heart's content firm love doth bear,
> Nothing of that shall from mine eyes appear."
> (I,ii.26dff)

With great poignance, Cressida declares her love for Troilus and it is significant that Cressida admits her love only when she is in private, unlike Troilus' much more public proclamations. Cressida's reasons for privacy rest in a deep fear of the

consequences that any declaration of love on her part might eventually have for her as a subject who seems to value a degree of independence. When facing the possibility of a relationship with Troilus, Cressida recognises that her value rests solely in her being a worthy prize for male action, particularly Troilus' action. There is a real sense of pathos as Cressida acknowledges her deep love, and then withdraws from the consequences as she cautions herself; "Yet I hold off." As this cautionary comment breaks the declaration of love so abruptly, only to be followed by the reasons for Cressida's public silence regarding this love, the audience is made aware of a tension which exists in the valuation of a woman before and then after the consummation of love. Prior to consummation, a woman's value is closely related to her virtue, hence the representation of her as angel or virgin. The virtuous woman is essentially a coherent woman, and thus reflects back to the man wooing her, the reassurance of his own coherence. Once attained, female value lies in her obedience and continued submission which also functions to reflect male authority back to the man who commands her. Cressida's fear that once she has been won, she is done, is both a fear of the consequences this will have on her body as she becomes the possession of another, and also a fear that for women, a declaration of love is surrender to a life of active submission. Thus, instead of a woman's declaration of love serving to position her as subject of that declaration and the love which is being declared, it in fact positions her as an object whose function in love is submission and obedience. It is at the very moment of speaking therefore, that she renders herself silent, and while she remains silent, she maintains the possibility of speech, and therefore an independently articulated value.

In the opening of the scene, Cressida reveals a startling reluctance to accept the male authoritative voice as transparent, and instead unleashes a subtext which works to disrupt masculine claims of heroism and presence which derive from successful action. Cressida therefore sets herself up as an independent voice whereby her own value, and her judgment of the world around her, are not subject to male authority. The way in which Cressida plays with Pandarus, suggests that she is his equal, and perhaps even his superior in wit. However, Cressida recognises how unstable her value is as her independence derives from the extent to which she is able to resist a patriarchal and heroic view of the world. It is this recognition which cautions her against admitting her love for Troilus openly, as a declaration of love in the context into which she is speaking, is an accession to a life of obedience.

It is interesting that Cressida's fear of the marriage relationship (which would seem implicit in the relationship between Troilus and Cressida, given their concern over fidelity in the relationship) as the greater evil, "Achievement is command, ungain'd beseech!" is paralleled by the protestant insistence on obedience in marriage at the time when the play was written. Cressida's fear of capitulation suggests that these demands were not as transparent and unproblematic as protestants wished to maintain, especially when coupled with the suggestion that woman's value is intrinsically equal to that of a man's, and independent of male evaluation outside of the marriage relationship. A declaration of love, and then an agreement to fidelity in the relationship on the part of the woman, was essentially an agreement to her everlasting obedience and submission to male command and authority. Cressida's reluctance first to enter

into this kind of relationship, and later to remain faithful to it, could well indicate the difficulties of acting in a context where the positioning of women, especially in relation to marriage was contradictory.

Cressida's attempts to become a subject and maintain some degree of independence, can be seen in the light of the new possibilities for women which were currently being suggested by protestants and some humanists with regard to woman's independent and equal value to men. Cressida's fear of submission to a relationship of "love" reflects to some extent, the difficulty with which these possibilities coexisted with the insistence on a woman's obedience in marriage. Cressida's resistance to a male centered evaluation of the world, and her fear of her positioning as a woman in the love relationship, would have aroused profound anxieties for those in the audience familiar with protestant discourses which related to women. Cressida's appropriation of an independent value, manifests itself in a way which would have been seen to threaten the very foundations of a society which derived much of its stabiliy from female passivity. That Cressida marks out her independence in what is essentially a disruptive way, would therefore have aroused much of the fear which was latent in the protestant admission that female value is independent of male evaluation. Protestants watching the play would have been forced to admit that at some levels their assertion of an increased female value, was obstructive to the familial and social order which they still sought to maintain.

(iv)

Cressida: Private value vs. public action.

The scene in which Cressida and Troilus do finally meet (Act3,sc2), shows an increase in Cressida's fears as she tries to find some resolution for her expectations of love, and the positioning of herself as a woman within this discourse. The struggle which she undergoes can also be read as the attempt on Cressida's part to close the gap between her value as an independent subject, and the inhibited action which is designated to her as a woman. The scene shows a vast difference in the language used by Troilus and Cressida. Thus, while both of them have great expectations of love, Cressida's are tempered by a far deeper anxiety that the action will not meet the expectation (9). This could be understood more fully in the context of, among other things, not only the protestant denial of effective action on a spiritual level, but also the structural denial of female action with regard to church and family. In the exchange which follows, Cressida reveals a deep anxiety regarding both the limitation of action in love, and also the positioning of herself as a woman in love. A conflict emerges as she struggles to make herself the subject of her speech, and thus a subject in the love action, while at the same time she tries to meet the requirements made on her as a woman within this discourse.

As Pandarus enters (III,ii,94), Cressida's language is filled with increased anxiety over her subject position in relation both to Pandarus and to Troilus, where she submits to her assigned role as the object of male pursuit and action, and also struggles against

that role. Cressida's battle with her assigned role is seen predominantly in her desire to find her own voice, and her own position from which to speak. More than previously, Cressida positions herself as "I" in the exchange, as she no longer speaks of the love action as something theoretical and distant from herself.

Pandarus, addressing Cressida as she brings Troilus inside, constructs her as a shy virgin, reluctant to participate in the sexual union that is about to take place, thereby suggesting that women submit to male sexual action; "What, blushing still? Have you not done talking yet."(94) Cressida responds in a problematic way; "Well, uncle, what folly I commit, I dedicate to You."(95) On the one hand she seems to accept her uncle's construction of her as an object of male sexual action by dedicating her actions to Pandarus, thereby seeming to deny her culpability in the action. However, Cressida's self mocking tone, and her use of the word "folly" which suggests lechery, and thus deviant female behaviour, works to undermine this construction, and present her as the possessor of sexual knowledge.

In the exchange which follows, in which Troilus and Pandarus exclusively participate, the language becomes preoccupied with ideas of truth and faithfulness. Pandarus, as the middle-aged go between swears the truth both of Troilus and Cressida. However, his swearing of Cressida's constancy is preceded by his command to her that she "Be true to my lord",(97) which sets her constancy in doubt. If Troilus proves false however, it is not he who will be held responsible, but Pandarus: "if he flinch, chide me for it."(97) Pandarus notably takes no responsibility should Cressida prove false. The language which Pandarus uses to swear Cressida's faithfulness is also problematic, as it constructs women as the

objects of male sexual pursuit, and then the subjects of female constancy: "our kindred, though they be long ere they be wooed, they are constant being won."(103) The assigned subject position of the woman in love action is thus made both confusing and contradictory. That she is assigned a shifting subject position by patriarchal discourse makes it questionable whether such constancy is possible to her. The possibility of Cressida as subject carries with it the suggestion of Cressida's intrinsic value, thus suggesting also the possibility of her action in conformity with that value or nature. However, the possibility is rendered meaningless by the fact that Cressida's action in conformity with her value as faithful subject is really the same as her positioning as obedient object. This paradox is intimately connected with the protestant dilemma over the positioning of women. For while female value became disassociated from masculine evaluation, it was still subject to God who required female submission in the marriage context, as is revealed in the scriptures. Thus within protestantism the signification of the woman as faithful subject, was essentially nothing more than a rewriting of her as obedient object. The protestant requirement of female submission in marriage, rendered their assertion of female equality disfunctional, and in the end, meaningless. Here too is much of Cressida's dilemma. As faithfulness and independence are shown to be mutually exclusive, Cressida must in the end sacrifice one for the other.

Cressida's response to Pandarus' swearing of her faithfulness is both poignant and profound. Her desire to become the subject of her action, and even more particularly the subject of right action, can be seen as she takes hold of this small possibility which Pandarus has provided in his swearing of her faithfulness. With new

confidence Cressida claims "Boldness comes to me now, and brings me heart\ Prince Troilus, I have loved you night and day\ For many weary months." (106-108) As she swears her love for Troilus, thereby adding her own swearing to Pandarus', Cressida is both attempting to construct herself as a subject in the love action, as well as attempting to escape the suggestion inherent in patriarchal discourse, that for a woman to be faithful she must also be an object. This position is denied her however, where Troilus' response insists once more on constructing her as a prize to be won, as he asks "why was my Cressida so hard to win?" (109). Cressida both submits to this male construction of her, and seeks to escape it, rendering her discourse full of tensions and problems. This can be seen immediately in her almost neurotic use of the subject "I", her repeated use of parentheses as she seeks to explain and justify herself to her exclusively male audience, her repeated hesitation and her final pursuit of silence as she begins to realise the futility of the original hope that made it possible for her to speak:

> Troil. Why was my Cressid then so hard to win?
> Cress. Hard to seem won; but I was won, my lord
> With the first glance that ever - Pardon me:
> If I confess much you will play the tyrant.
> I love you now, but till now not so much
> But I might master it. In faith I lie-
> My thoughts were like unbridled children, grown
> Too headstrong for their mother.-See, we fools!
> Why have I blabb'd? Who shall be true to us
> When we are so unsecret to ourselves?-
> But though I lov'd you well, I woo'd you not;
> And yet, good faith, I wish'd myself a man,

> Or that we women had men's privilege
> Of speaking first. Sweet, bid me hold my tongue,
> For in this rapture I shall surely speak
> The thing I shall repent. See, see, your silence,
> Cunning in dumbness, from my weakness draws
> My very soul of counsel. Stop my mouth. (III,ii,115ff)

The language of her first major speech in the company of others reflects Cressida's struggle between submission and her desire for self authorship. As Cressida answers Troilus, she draws attention to a split between her private self and her public acting self, where publicly she submits to the male construction of her as object and prize, while privately asserting her value as a lover. Her use of "Pardon me" seeks male permission for her declaration and shows an awareness that she is deviating from her prescribed role. This is accompanied by a fear of male domination and retribution, causing the utter subjection of herself as she couches her language in the religious discourse of confession: "Pardon me: If I confess much you will play the tyrant." We see here Cressida's earlier fear that a declaration of love on her part is essentially a surrender to male authority, "achievement is command", and that whereas previously her silence held within it the possibility of speech, here her speech results finally in her silence.

Cressida's use of the religious language of confession, repentance, and the desire for pardon, is particularly interesting here when viewed in the context of seventeenth century religious discourses concerning women. The context into which Cressida is speaking, where both the authority of the father and the authority of the husband are represented symbolically in the figures of Pandarus and Troilus, is a

context in which female silence and passivity was prescribed by the very discourses from which Cressida seems to be drawing. The tensions present in Renaissance religious discourses surrounding women, are profoundly present here as Cressida on the one hand finds room to speak, and on the other hand couches that speech in the religious language of confession, as she also recognises her possible deviance from her prescribed role in the context within which she is speaking.

The rapture which contributes to Cressida's speech, is also the female fantasy that she is male. Her language becomes characterised both by this fantasy, and the fear of male retribution. Cressida therefore uses words of mastery, emphasising the earlier "boldness", which both work to deconstruct the patriarchal notion of female weakness. The representation of her thoughts "like unbridled children, grown too headstrong for their mother", and then her merging of her own subjectivity with these thoughts "See, we fools", suggests rebellion, and the dissolution of hierarchy as it is constructed by both patriarchal and religious discourse. Yet no sooner is the fantasy articulated, than fear reemerges. Cressida represents this as the fear of faithlessness in love, and that if she does not conform to the requirements of her as obedient woman, her expectations in love will indeed not be met; "Why have I blabb'd? Who shall be true to us/ when we are so unsecret to ourselves?"

The competing discourses of female submission and the contrary yearning to be a subject in love are worked out in Cressida's presentation of herself as plural and multiple, a subject in conflict and contradiction. The internalisation of this conflict results in the desire to be a man, whose position in love is not so contradictory.

"But though I have lov'd you well, I woo'd you not,
And yet, good faith, I wished myself a man,
Or that we women had men's privilege
Of speaking first." (125 ff)

The desire to be a man is essentially a desire to have direct access to language and thus self authorship. This desire to speak first, as Cressida sees it, would enable her both to escape from her role as sexual object, while still enjoying the fulfillment of love. Cressida's desire to be an equal participant in love would have been received with some sympathy by protestants in the audience, who would have recognised their own relatively new assertions of mutual affection in marriage. However, Cressida's desired usurpation of what was still considered to be a male role, would have made protestants anxious about the dangerous possibilities which might emerge out of an accession to mutuality in love.

Here Cressida's deep love for Troilus is expressed, a love which must therefore long to not betray itself, and which must consequently find some resolution of the contradictory demands made on that love. Unfortunately such resolution lies somewhere beyond the discursive practices available to Cressida, and her language holds within it the suggestion that such resolution is indeed an illusion. Hence, her speech instead of issuing from reason, finds its source in a moment of "rapture" or sublime emotion. Cressida's extreme agitation at this point is the result of her awareness that she has been unable to find resolution and has in fact succumbed to the very thing she has most feared. There is extreme poignance in the inevitability of this moment as Cressida not only submits to her limitations as a figure

whose story has been written before, but also as she acquiesces to the structural limitations of her assigned role as a woman.

Cressida becomes increasingly distressed as matters progress and she is forced to face the implications of her earlier longing as illusion. Thus as Troilus stops Cressida's "babbling" with a kiss, Cressida is struck with mortification:

> "My lord, I do beseech you pardon me
> 'Twas not my purpose thus to beg a kiss.
> I am asham'd. O heavens, what have I done?" (135ff)

To beg a kiss would be to initiate and participate in the love action as a subject, which lies outside her prescribed role as a female, and more specifically as Cressida. Cressida's inability to find a place from which she is able to act in agreement with her desires, suggests itself in her physical need to flee. Troilus, questioning her as to what offends her, draws from her the response that she is offended by herself. Questioned further, the admission is drawn:

> "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." (145 ff)

It is with deep regret that Cressida realises and admits to Troilus that she has two kinds of self, the self she longs to be, and the self she must fulfill, which is literally to be another's fool. Her desire to flee is also a desire to hold off the inevitable. Thus having recognised her prescribed roles with startling clarity,

Cressida's only hope must lie in delay. Cressida's desire to be a subject exists in constant opposition to her desire for fulfilment in a love which requires submission and obedience. The tension between the two selves reflects a similar tension found in Renaissance religious discourses regarding the role of women in marriage, where faithfulness sacrifices independence to obedience. Cressida's fear regarding her constancy in love could also be expressed as her fear that she will be unable to adequately occupy the contradictory subject position required of her in the love relationship.

(v)

Male fixity and truth vs. female deferral and duplicity.

Linda Charnes argues that:

> "The figures in Shakespeare's play have complied with the demands of "civilization" insofar as they have been "constituted" by those demands. But we expect Troilus to be "true" and Cressida to be "false" because their story is part of what in turn constitutes "civilization". No other of Shakespeare's characters are as "convicted" as those in "Troilus and Cressida".(10)

This conviction of Troilus and Cressida both by "civilisation" and within "civilisation" where their roles have become legendary, takes on an increased significance when it becomes apparent that these roles are also encoded in Elizabethan protestant discourses. Cressida's attempts to signify herself as independent within the religious and cultural context of Elizabethan England where female submission was required, would have been the same as her signification as false. However, this "civilisation" also "demanded" such assertions of independence, and thus falsity, insofar as it asserted intrinsic female value.

Like Cressida, Troilus takes his turn in expressing his anxiety regarding constancy in love. Notably his anxiety is directed at Cressida rather than himself. Troilus expresses this anxiety in terms of general female deviancy, positing that all women are corruptible by nature:

> "O that I thought that it could be in a woman -
> ---
> To keep her constancy in plight and youth,
> ---
> How were I then uplifted?" (III,ii,148ff)

Troilus' fear of female corruption expresses the deep seated male fear of women as the source of evil and darkness, and seems to draw particularly on medieval misogynist views of women which were still present in Elizabethan England. It is interesting also that Troilus constructs the female as totally other than himself. Where they are dark and corruptible by nature, he is by nature true and uncomplicated. "But alas, I am as true as truth's simplicity, ? And simpler than the infancy of truth."(158ff) Troilus hereby suggests that his truth is both fixed and preordained from the beginnings of time, as indeed Charnes argues it is. Unlike female action, which becomes submissive and obedient with the onset of love, male action remains authoritative and uncontradictory. As the subject of the love action, and with all possible contradiction transferred onto Cressida, Troilus sets himself up as the transparent signifier with its possibility of reflecting truth:

> "Yet, after all comparisons of truth,

> As truth's authentic author to be cited,
> As true as Troilus' shall crown up the verse,
> And sanctify the numbers." (III, ii 170 ff)

Cressida, unlike Troilus, is signified in terms of possibility rather than fixity. She is the shifting signifier, subject to constant deferral. Thus, while Troilus is convinced of his citation "As true as Troilus", Cressida begins her citation with the uncertain "If":

> If I be false, or swerve a hair from truth,
> ---
> "Yea, let them say, to stick the heart of falsehood,
> As false as Cressida." (175ff)

Cressida's representation of herself as a possible type for female falsity has its source in Troilus' contrasting representations of male and female subject positions in the action of love. Troilus is able to signify himself as true and stable, primarily because the position he occupies as a male in the discourse of love is unproblematic and uncontradictory, where the value and action assigned to him are in agreement with each other. The contradictory position assigned to women also goes a long way in deflecting any anxieties relating to action in love, away from the male and onto the female. If we relate this back to the contradictory position women were assigned in Elizabethan religious discourses, the possibility emerges that the problematic construction of the feminine in these discourses served the interests of patriarchy as much as it threatened them. Thus one could say that the gap which these discourses created between women's value and the action assigned to them, increased the possibility of representing women as unstable and

duplicitous. This in turn further enabled men to deflect their own anxieties about their incoherence and incapacity away from themselves and onto women.

(vi)

Female prizes for successful male action.

While Elizabethan religious discourses were able to concede women's equal value to men, the submissive role assigned to female action, especially in marriage, remained vital to male confidence and perceived coherence, and therefore male action. If women are assigned roles as active subjects, which indeed their equal value implies they should be, then the incentive for male action becomes problematic. The necessity of submissive female action is revealed in Troilus and Cressida as women are positioned as prizes for successful male action, and therefore function to dispel male anxiety regarding their incoherence and loss as subjects.

In the play Cressida functions not only as a prize for Troilus successful action, but also as a prize for her father's successful action, leading to a conflict of claim on Cressida's body. Thus, the third scene of act three opens with Calchas drawing attention to his action which demands some reward:

> "Now, princes, for the service I have done,
> Th' advantage of the time prompts me aloud
> To call for recompense." (III,iii,1-3)

Although the idea of "recompense" on the one hand was used to denote "compensation in return for trouble, exertion or services (1500)"; it was used also to signify loss and was thus a "compensation (received or desired) for some loss or injury sustained (1508)" (OED). Indeed, Calchas signifies his position as being one of loss, even though he seems to be asking for a reward for his services. However, even the desire to be rewarded, which is a form of recognition, signifies lack and an anxiety about self. The services which Calchas has rendered to the Greeks are presented in terms of Calchas' denial of self in order to serve, for which he now requires a reaffirmation of self. The verbs used to signify his action are verbs of loss: "I have abandon'd Troy, left my possession" (5). This sense of loss and anxiety is increased by Calchas' presentation of himself as naked or "expos'd", vulnerable to "doubtful fortunes" where he has been thrust "as new into the world, strange, undernoted" (12). This dislocation results in a desire for recompense, which it is suggested, is a desire for the "other", for the unified and uncomplicated self.

Calchas' "other" is his daughter Cressida, and indeed he signifies her in terms of possession, "my Cressida", and "my daughter". Calchas at no time considers Cressida as a subject who acts, feels and desires, and instead he is driven by his own lack and his desire for fulfillment. It is not just that Cressida is part of that world he is familiar with, but rather his possession of her as a reward, as she was previously a reward for Troilus, is the only thing which will reaffirm his coherent selfhood. As Calchas is united with Cressida, who is constructed as object, so does the dislocation between subject and object disappear. The idea of a reward also works to reassure Calchas of the existence of a teleological universe where cause and

effect operate without complication, as just action is met with just reward:

> "Let him be sent, great princes,
> And he shall buy my daughter; and her presence
> Shall quite strike off all service I have done
> In most acceptable pain." (27 ff)

This idea of women as prizes for successful male action is continued in the following act where Diomedes comes to extract Cressida from the Trojans and return her to her father. Thus Cressida must be "rendered" (IV, i, 38), which is to be given in return for something. Here Cressida is a prize for Calchas' actions, and her value is made equivalent to the value of Antenor, whose value is proportional to his action.

The relationship of male confidence to the possession of the woman as prize can be seen as Paris asks Diomedes: "Who in your thoughts deserves fair Helen best -/ Myself, or Menelaus?" (IV,i,54) Diomedes confirms the idea that Helen is indeed a prize for well executed action: "Both alike: He merits well to have her, that doth seek her, ... And you as well to keep her that defend her".(56) However, Diomedes recognising the high cost of the reward, the "hell of pain", and the "costly loss of wealth and friends", rather than accusing the action which seeks the reward, instead blames the prize, namely Helen. His representation of Helen is as violent as the action which seeks to win her, and there is a sense in which the guilt which must follow the brutal and often failed consequences of male action is transferred onto the woman. Helen is therefore represented as a false woman, not just in the sense that she has been morally

corrupted, but where her body bears the marks of that corruption. Thus she is soiled, with "whorish loins", "bawdy veins" and her flesh a "contaminated carion weight". There is however, nothing in the play, or in Helen's actions to support this construction of her. As Diomedes rightly recognises however, the soiling of the prize is unable to fully assuage the guilt of the winner, and both Paris and Meneleus fail to escape the lash of Diomedes' anger.

When Troilus is confronted with the imminent loss of Cressida, his despair is articulated in terms of the inefficacy of his actions:

> Troil. Is it so concluded?
> Aeneas. By Priam and the general state of Troy
> They are at hand, and ready to effect it.
> Troilus. How my achievements mock me!
> I will go and meet them.(IV,ii,68ff)

If, as much of the language thus far has suggested, Cressida is a prize or reward for effective male action, her loss signifies more than the loss of a lover, and acts as a sign of Troilus' failure.

Cressida's response is not as resigning as Troilus' as she seeks to assert her will to act against the wider powers: "O you immortal gods! I will not go." (IV,ii,97)Her rejection of her father in favour of her lover can be viewed in the context of Elizabethan England where religious discourses gave rise to a similar conflict between required female obedience to the father and submission to the prospective husband. That her anger and rebellion is directed against her father and the transcendent, suggests anger at the Law

which naturalises female submission and acceptance of the Symbolic Order.

There is also a sense in which Cressida attempts to reject her construction as a prize for male action, as she desires the mutilation of her body which is the prized object:

> "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,110ff)

Cressida's desire for the destruction of those qualities which work to construct her as the feminine "other", which is essentially passive or immobile, suggests a longing on her part to assert a value which is separate from male evaluation. There is thus a recognition on Cressida's part that her construction as a prize, devalues her, as well as rendering her inactive. This devaluation is represented visually as Cressida is delivered from the hand of one male, to the hand of another, in such a way as to echo Pandarus' earlier construction of maidenhead as a marketable commodity. The assertion of an independent female value becomes increasingly problematic in the face of the demand for a female passivity, which is prized as the signification of male coherence.

Troilus, rather than railing against the powers which work to undermine the effectiveness of his action, chooses to submit. Interestingly, he uses religious discursive practices in order to make sense of a situation over which he has lost control, drawing particularly on the notions of sacrifice :

"And to his hand when I deliver her,
Think it an alter, and thay brother Troilus
A priest, there off'ring to it his own heart." (IV,iii,7)

The idea of sacrifice in religious terms is closely related to the notion of sin, and it seems that Troilus, confronted with the inadequacy of his own actions, and realising how far short they fall of his expectations, attempts to redeem himself to a certain extent by the religious notions of submission, repentance and sacrifice. However, the sacrifice, instead of being Troilus' heart which he intends, is Cressida's body, which becomes the substitute for his own failure.

The displacement of sin or male inadequacy onto Cressida is seen in Troilus' increasingly anxious reactions to the separation. Unlike Cressida, Troilus seems to more readily submit himself to the necessity of their separation. His submission to a reality in which action fails, brings with it the realisation of the possibility of unfaithfulness. However, rather than relating the possibility of failure to himself, he relates it instead to Cressida. A struggle can be seen in Troilus' discourse, where he on the one hand accepts the reality of disintegration and yet on the other is still able to construct himself as "true". His "truth" therefore depends on the displacement of all possible deviance onto Cressida's body. It is worth remembering here that protestants refused earlier representations of women as the source of evil by denying that women were any more susceptible to failure than men. Their assertion of mutuality in marriage, stands in contrast to Troilus' refusal to take responsibility for his possible failure, by displacing it onto

Cressida's body. Protestants who held women and men equally accountable for sin, would have viewed Troilus' attempts to displace his brokeness with some contempt. Indeed, it is possible to suggest that protestants would not have been entirely unsympathetic to Cressida, who shows a deep sensitivity to her own failings.

Attempting to explain his reference to Cressida's possible falsity, Troilus tries to mask that this is what he was in fact doing,

> "I speak not "Be thou true" as fearing thee -
> For I will throw my glove to Death himself
> that there's no maculation in thy heart -
> But "Be thou true" say I to fashion in
> My sequant protestation: be thou true,
> And I will see thee." (IV,iM,61ff)

This masking is however not entirely achieved, firstly by the reference to "maculation" which holds suggestions of soiling, and which although he claims he does not fear it of Cressida, its very reference suggests the possibility in the bodies of other women. Secondly, Troilus rewrites his earlier relating of woman's falsity to failed male action, by here relating successful male action to woman's virtue. The possible failure or success of male action is therefore located in the body of the woman, increasing the sense of the woman as a kind of mythical "other" who reflects back to the male the incoherence or coherence of his own image.

Troilus continues to mask his fear of Cressida's possible falsity by claiming that it is not her failure which he anticipates, but rather his own inability to merit her faithfulness:

"In this I do not call your faith in question
So mainly as my merit." (IV,iv,83)

He therefore likens his own fear to that of Cressida's. However, he is quick to transfer his own possible failure again onto Cressida as he recalls the temptation of Eve in his repeated allusions to the devil and temptation:

Troilus: There lurks a still and dumb-discoursive devil
That tempts most cunningly. But be not tempted.

Cressida: Do you think I will?

Troilus: No.
But something may be done that we will not;
And sometimes we are devils ourselves,
When we will tempt the frailty of our powers,
Presuming on their changeful potency. (IV.iv,89ff)

Troilus calls attention to the inability of human action to bring about the desired perfection, as well as the even greater folly of misrecognising human frailty for human potency. Strangely, Troilus makes the same mistake he cautions Cressida against. Thus she asks him "My lord, will you be true?", and he replies "Who I? - alas, it is my vice, my fault". In his reply one may recall an earlier struggle where Troilus on the one hand recognises the frailty of human action, and where on the other he hesitates to apply this recognition to himself, preferring to transfer it onto Cressida. This same struggle is seen in Troilus' subsequent actions, for no

sooner has he pledged his truth to Cressida, than he turns to hand her unhesitatingly over to Diomedes, thereby betraying her with the proverbial kiss:

> "Fear not my truth : the moral of my wit
> I "Plain and true", there's all the reach of it.
> Welcome, Sir Diomed : here is the lady
> Which for Antenor we deliver you." (lns 105ff)

The verbal sparring which follows between Troilus and Diomedes once more constructs Cressida as a prize for effective male action, as each of them try to outdo the other in their praise of Cressida's beauty and value. Troilus first uses the threat of his military action to plead Cressida's protection:

> "If e'er thou stand at mercy of my sword,
> Name Cressid, and thy life shall be as safe
> As Priam is in Ilion." (IV,iv,112)

Diomedes ironically undermines the threat of Troilus' action by insisting that it is Cressida's worthiness as a prize, which will ultimately ensure her fair treatment.

> "Fair Lady Cressida,
> So please you, save the thanks this prince expects.
> The lustre of your eye, heaven in your cheek,
> Pleads your fair usage; and to Diomed
> You shall be mistress and command him wholly." (114ff)

The signification of Cressida and Helen as prizes for successful male action works to deny them the independent value which they each seek. While the female body is prized, its intrinsic worth is devalued. It becomes increasingly obvious that where female action is assigned a passive role, and where female inaction remains crucial to male action, a value which is separate from male evaluation becomes impossible. Protestants watching the play, and seeing the devaluing of Cressida and Helen as a result of their construction as passive objects, would have had to face that their own discourse which tried to assign an equal value to women, while still seeking to maintain female submission and obedience, was highly problematic. The effect of this recognition, along with some sympathy for Cressida, on whom Troilus displaces the fear of his own failure and sin, could only have contributed to the deep anxiety already present around protestant evaluations of women.

(vii)

Cressida: betrayer or betrayed?

The "betrayal" scene in which Cressida "betrays" her love for Troilus marks the climax of the play, not in the sense that Cressida finally acts out the audience's and the play's expectations of her as false, but rather in the profound tragedy it signifies, wherein the contradictory demands which are made on Cressida in the play, result ultimately in disaster. Troilus' much commented on exclamation "This is, and is not Cressida", is merely a repetition of Cressida's earlier observation that she has two kinds of selves. It is important to remember however, the profound anguish with which Cressida makes this observation, which is the summation of both her

desire that her love for Troilus be fulfilled, as well as a great fear of the consequences such fulfillment would have on her body, and her value as a woman.

Freund, commenting on this earlier scene, remarks that:

> "This giving away of herself, with its double gestures of bestowing and retracting, creates a powerful sense of her sincere scruples and hesitations, but at the same time, it only ensnares Cressida more surely in the impossibility of ever representing herself truly." (11)

The scene in which she appears with Diomedes shows a very similar advancing and backtracking, where she struggles with her vow of love to Troilus, and her changed circumstances. Cressida's inability to represent herself truly goes beyond her citational limitations in which she is bound to play out her role of falsity, to the problem Cressida faces in the conflict between her own expectations of mutual affection in her relationship with Troilus, and the demands which inhibit her action once she enters into a faithful relationship as a woman. Cressida is unable to resolve her desire of fulfillment in love, and the demands of obedience and submission which such fulfillment requires. She is likewise unable to match her view of herself as a subject with intrinsic value, which she attempts to assert throughout the play, and the role of passive object which she is repeatedly required to accept. Although Cressida is unable to escape her rhetorical self which must play the false Cressida, there is a very real sense in which she struggles to become an active agent in the shaping of her subjectivity. Her tragedy is not only that her outcome is predetermined, in that her part has been written in previous texts, but also that as a woman she faces impossible and

unresolved demands. Indeed, her disgust at her own falsity is written in terms of her disgust with her sex:

> "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," (V, ii, 108 ff)

Falsity for Cressida, is concurrent with being a woman, and as such is the natural consequence of having to occupy contradictory subject positions. Cressida is unable to truly represent herself, mainly because her true self is positioned as shifting and contradictory. Cressida's capitulation to Diomedes could well be an attempt on her part to escape the consequences of her love for Troilus, and as such it is a bid to assert herself as an actor. The outcome is however, quite the opposite as Cressida fulfills everyone else's expectations except her own. Rossiter's claim that :

> "Cressida is not simply a little harlot; and, though admittedly "designing", is too frail to stick to her design. Her passion is quite genuine; so is her grief at her separation from Troilus. Only nothing is deep rooted in her." (12)

refuses to acknowledge the stark contradictions Cressida is faced with, and the profound struggle she undergoes to resolve them. The problem is not that "nothing is deep rooted in her", but rather that things are rooted too deep, leading to a tragic attempt on her part to resolve what cannot be resolved. Cressida might well lament with Troilus:

"O madness of discourse,

That sets up with and against itself!"

For it is indeed a mad discourse which sets up such a gap between different valuations of women and the actions which are prescribed to them. It is a very similar "madness" which is found in Elizabethan protestant discourses surrounding women, where women were signified as equally valuable to men, and yet were assigned passive and obedient roles as wives and daughters.

NOTES:

1. Woodbridge, L; (1984); Women and the English Renaissance; The Harvester Press; page 19.
2. Cole, Douglas; (1980); "Myth and Anti Myth: the Case of Troilus and Cressida"; Shakespeare Quarterly; Vol31;No 1; page 76.
3. Rossiter, A.P.; (1961); Angel with Horns and Other Shakespearean Lectures, ed Graham Storey; Longmans: London; page 143.
4. Charnes, Linda; (1989); "So Secret to Ourselves"; Notorious Identity and the material Subject in Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida"; Shakespeare Quarterly; Vol 31; No 1; page 424.
5. Ibid; page 425.
6. Loomba, A; (1989); Gender, Race, Renaissance drama; Manchester University Press; Loomba makes a strong case for the notion that women are rendered static by patriarchal construction of them. page 74.
7. Lacan, J; (1982); Ecrits; London; "So, it is between the signifier in the form of the proper name of a man and the signifier that metaphorically abolishes him that the poetic spark is produced...We see, then that, metaphor occurs at the precise point at which sense emerges from nonsense." page 158.
8. Rossiter, A.P. Angel with Horns and Other Shakespearean Lectures; page 132.
9. Human limitations and expectations with regard to the action of love have been dealt with at greater length in an earlier chapter, while different gender constructions of the problem will be dealt with more specifically here.
10. Charnes, Linda; (1989); "So Secret to Ourselves"; Notorious Identity and the material Subject in Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida"; Shakespeare Quarterly; Vol 31; No 1; page 416
11. Freund, Elizabeth; (1985) "Ariachne's broken woof: the rhetoric of citation in Troilus and Cressida"; Parker and Hartman (eds); Shakespeare and the question of Theory; Routlidge, New York and London.
12. Rossiter, A.P. Angel with Horns and Other Shakespearean Lectures; page 133.Lectures; page 133.

CONCLUSION

A study of Troilus and Cressida in relation to the classical and medieval accounts of the story, gives evidence that the play is deeply anxious about the possibilities of effective human action in war and love and the problematic location of human value, particularly female value, in a way in which the play's sources are not. There is also evidence to suggest that many of the anxieties which are found in the play relating to human action and value were also present in the religious discourses which were circulating in Elizabethan England.

The debate which was going on between protestants and christian humanists (1) in Seventeenth Century England was primarily concerned with human potential. While christian humanists held high hopes for human achievement, even going so far as to suggest that the subject might contribute to her or his salvation through effective action, protestants were profoundly pessimistic about what the human being could accomplish. Indeed, protestants would have gone so far as to assert that human endeavour ends in the very opposite of what it originally sets out to complete, and that disaster is in reality the outcome of all aspirant human action. This same struggle can arguably be found in some of the dialogues which are present in Troilus and Cressida. Thus we find in the play that while there is a great yearning after action which is heroic, and an articulation of these hopes in such a way as to suggest a certain greatness on the part of the subject, in the end the desire for heroism remains unfulfilled.

The disintegration of such lofty ideals, into an ending where heroic action is action which is essentially brutal and violent, takes on an increased significance when read with an understanding of the protestant distrust of heroic assertion in Elizabethan England. If read with the equally held assertions made by christian humanists regarding the possibilities of human heroism, the text becomes the site of a struggle about human action and potential which adds to the play's final tragedy.

This same struggle is arguably also present in the play's concern with love. Here too, it is possible to identify great aspirations with regard to the possibilities of love. However, as in the heroic strain of the play, desire remains unfulfilled, and perfect love is thwarted by bodies which are unable to match the longings of the senses. Once again, the anxiety expressed by the would be lovers, that their actions will in the end remain ineffective, can be found in Elizabethan protestant discourses. Love was of particular significance to protestants, marking as it does the culmination and fulfillment of christian law. The desire on the part of protestants, that they love perfectly as God has commanded, was perpetually confounded by their overwhelming belief in human depravity. Thus when Troilus lamments "This is the monstruosity in love lady: that the will is infinite, and the execution confined: that the desire is boundless, and the act a slave to limit", he expresses a longing and a resignation which is found in protestant discourses. It is therefore possible to suggest that these discourses in turn offer some insight into the struggles around love which are found in the play. Thus in a very similar spirit to Troilus, Calvin writes of the converted: "What are they to do here, while

they feel that there is nothing they are less able to do than to fulfill the law? They will, they aspire, they try, but they do nothing with the required perfection." (2)

The suggestion found in the Troilus and Cressida, that human action is marked by failure, impacts directly on the struggle also found in the play, regarding the location of human value. When action is ineffective, value which derives from applause or reward becomes problematic. The play thus shows a struggle between Ulysses and Hector who insist that value is to be found only in public approval, and Troilus and Achilles who, realising that this renders human value highly unstable, seek to assert a value which is privately determined. Once again, this same struggle may be found in Elizabethan religious discourses. Protestants, with their belief in human incapacity, sought to locate their value in some external absolute. Thus they argued for a value which derived solely from the believer's private relationship with God, through faith in Christ's substitutionary death. Realising the anarchical possibilities inherent in this assertion as the bestowing of value was removed out of the hands of church and state, and placed in the hands of God, christian humanists, such as Thomas More, insisted that value derived from conforming one's actions to the laws defined by social consensus, which was embodied in the Catholic Church.

The debate surrounding the location of value, which was found in Elizabethan religious discourses, and which is found also in Troilus and Cressida, becomes increasingly complex when the value of women is considered. Both protestants and christian humanists, sought to reevaluate women by claiming that women are

inherently equal in value to men. This assertion was rendered problematic, however, by the fact that while women were assigned an increased status in terms of their value, they were still instructed to remain passive and submissive within the marriage context. Thus a tension emerged between women's value, and the action which was accessible, or more correctly, inaccessible, to them. It is interesting therefore that a similar tension exists in the play around Cressida and Helen. A struggle can be identified between Cressida's and Helen's attempts to assert their independent value, and those voices in the play, which significantly are male voices, who strive to render both Cressida and Helen silent and passive.

While it would be difficult to claim any direct relationship between the play and Elizabethan religious texts and discourses, a study of the play in relation to these discourses gives evidence of some profound similarities between anxieties and struggles present in Elizabethan religious dialogues and tensions which can be identified in the play. This is not surprising given that the Trojan story is historically associated with the ideals of courtly love and heroism, and that both these ideals were highly contentious in the context in which Shakespeare was writing. Thus while the play is essentially a pagan story, having its sources in classical legend, it is impossible to ignore that Shakespeare's play was written in a fundamentally Christian context, which itself was fraught with contradictions and tensions. Added to this is the fact that the play is concerned with many of the ideas which were also being debated by Elizabethan theologians. It is therefore possible to suggest that a study of Troilus and

Cressida, with regard to some of the religious discourses which were present at the time of the play's writing, provides a helpful context for reading some of the anxieties and struggles which are found in the play. An understanding of Renaissance religious discourses also provides a twentieth century reader with some insight into how an Elizabethan audience would have received a play which addresses many of the anxieties which were present for them in current religious debates.

In view of some of the context out of which the play emerges, and from which it arguably draws some of its themes, I would argue that the play is a tragedy of profound proportions. For it seems to me that there is nothing more tragic than when the dreams, aspirations and desires of human beings end in violence, betrayal and death. The play is not a protestant or a humanist view of the world, so much as it is the site for the enactment of a struggle between two very different ways of making sense of the human condition. On the one hand there is such a longing for, and understanding of greatness, that it becomes apparent that such ideas do not emerge out of a vacuum, but must have some grounding in reality. On the other hand the reality of failure is unable to be kept at bay, and the nobility which is most assuredly present, finally gives way to brutality and death. Kenneth Muir concludes in the Oxford edition to the play that "It is not a cynical play, but a sombre examination of a fallen world, which any contemporary preacher could have applauded." (3) In agreement with Muir I would suggest that the play tragically offers us a view of reality as both magnificent and treacherous, which would have found some agreement ~~with~~among religious thinkers on both sides of the Elizabethan religious

controversy. Sadly, any such agreement would have issued from such opposing bases, that Erasmus' horrifying prophesy indeed came true, as the religious debates in Renaissance England erupted in violence, and ended in many deaths:

"It is from the conflict of such exaggerated views that have been born the thunders and lightnings which now shake the world. And if each side continues to defend bitterly its own exaggerations, I can see such a fight coming as was that between Achilles and Hector whom, since they were both equally ruthless, only death could divide." Erasmus 1524

Notes.

1. Please see page 11 of the thesis for my discussion on my use of the terms "protestantism" and "christian humanism".
2. Calvin, J. Institutes of Christian Religion, ed John T. McNeill, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, page 836.
3. Muir, Kenneth, 1994, ed. The Oxford Shakespeare: Troilus and Cressida, Oxford University Press, London & New York.

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Author: Brand Beth Anne.
Name of thesis: An investigation of certain sixteenth and seventeenth century religious anxieties as a context for reading Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida.

PUBLISHER:
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
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