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Mythology in Shakespeare's Classical Plays

Isabel Isabel Storch
Loyola University Chicago

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MYTHOLOGY IN SHAKESPEARE'S CLASSICAL PLAYS

By

Sister Isabel (Storch), S.P.

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the Requirements for the Degree of Master
of Arts in Loyola University

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MYTHOLOGY IN SHAKESPEARE'S CLASSICAL PLAYS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

THE PURPOSE OF THE THESIS

The purpose of this thesis is to make an analysis of Shakespeare's use of allusions to mythology in his classical dramas. An intensive study of such allusions in each one of these plays has been made in order to propose answers to the following questions. First: are such allusions of intrinsic importance or merely incidental in these plays? Second: what are the characteristics of the mythological allusions for each individual play? Third: what points of comparison or of contrast are found among the characteristics when all five of the classical dramas are considered? Fourth: is the use of the allusions here characteristic of his dramas in general? A detailed answer to this last question is not given; instead simply an indication is suggested of what seems to have been Shakespeare's practice and intention in regard to his use of mythological allusions throughout his long dramatic career.

JUSTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM

At the very outset of this thesis, several admissions will be granted to forestall their being proferred sooner or later by others. They are these: namely, that mythology is relatively a very unimportant aspect of Shakespeare's genius; that with one possible exception the dramas considered
in detail in this study are certainly not among Shakespeare's greatest works; and that personal interpretation has formed the basis for many of the deductions herein given and that, therefore, others may not agree with them.

Meeting these objections in reverse order, one may begin by asking a question. Who ever has been or ever will be able to sound the depths of Shakespeare? His creative genius is an enigma fascinating because baffling. Countless authentic scholars, as well as many of those still among the ranks of students, have tried to pierce the veil, yet his secret remains his own. Writing copiously, he chose not to reveal himself, at least not so that one may say definitively, "There, that is Shakespeare himself speaking. That is Shakespeare, the man." Admittedly, therefore, practically all conclusions drawn from his writings remain at best only theory; moreover, because of different viewpoints, men may, from the same material, draw conclusions almost diametrically opposed to one another. Since this is true, is it not perfectly good logic to state that in matters on which no definitive statements can be made, one has a perfect right to his personal opinion, if it be made in good faith after sufficient examination?

As for the second admission, that with one possible exception the dramas considered in detail in this study are certainly not among Shakespeare's greatest works, it may be stated that none of the classical dramas would be listed among those plays of Shakespeare which are personal favorites of the writer. Considering the subject, however, their selection may be justified if need be. Troilus and Cressida and Antony and Cleopatra are the plays which contain the greatest number of mythological allusions. What is more natural, when one is trying to limit the subject sufficiently,
than to choose these two plays together with the other classical dramas to complete the study? This is the reason for their selection.

As for the relative unimportance of mythology as an aspect of Shakespeare's genius, this subject is admittedly only a starting point. However, to find an untouched, acceptable problem for a thesis on Shakespeare is no easy task; yet the writer wished to select Shakespeare for further study because of his unparalleled merit of being a focal point for all dramatic art in both English and World Literature. Mythology, too, is decidedly a subject with which the student of English Literature must have a wide acquaintance if he is to appreciate fully many of the major and minor poets. Combination of these two subjects, each important in itself even though only of relative importance one to the other, therefore suggested itself as feasible. Moreover, it is apparent that no one can study any phase of Shakespeare wholly in isolation. Inevitably, detailed study of a group of Shakespeare's plays must lead to a more intimate knowledge and appreciation of the dramatist's qualities as a whole. Who would not concede that such knowledge and appreciation is very worth while? Shakespeare's greatness is founded on truth and on a fundamental sympathy with and understanding of human nature. True, as a result of the time spent in this particular examination, one may not be able to go beyond theory as to what Shakespeare himself definitely intended in certain instances; but one does have a deepened personal appreciation for that same quality of truth, and the human heart is ennobled by an influx of greater sympathy for the joys, sorrows, and struggles of one's fellow men.

On this same subject of mythology and Shakespeare, Root has written a very scholarly dissertation which in scope and treatment differs greatly,
however, from this present thesis.¹

COMPREHENSION OF TERMS

The term "mythology" is regarded here not in any restricted sense but rather freely. It includes not only allusions to the myths about the ancient Greek and Roman divinities, but also allusions to tales such as those found in Ovid's Metamorphoses, to stories dealing with the heroes in the Trojan War, and to accounts of the personages of the Aeneid. In truth, no reference which could find plausible listing under the term "classical allusion" has been excluded.

The term "classical drama" as herein understood refers to plays whose subject matter has been drawn from classical sources and whose scenes are laid in ancient times, not to plays which imitate the Greek and Roman playwrights. The dramas considered in detail are five: Troilus and Cressida; Julius Caesar; Antony and Cleopatra; Coriolanus; and Timon of Athens. Not all will agree with the selection on this basis. Some would add to the list; others detract, and with plausible reasons. On the veritable sea of Shakespearian criticism and comment, however, one has to try to maintain a balance of personal judgment and to steer a middle course.

METHOD OF PROCEDURE

In this study Troilus and Cressida stands apart from the other

classical dramas in that it is simply replete with mythology used both intrinsically and incidentally. Root rightly calls the play, "a detailed mythological allusion in five acts."² Because of the unwonted prominence of the mythological references, the play is discussed twice, once from the point of view of the intrinsic use of the mythology, and a second time in its incidental allusions. Understandingly, the first discussion necessitates a treatment entirely different from that accorded the incidental allusions whether in this play or in any other of the classical dramas.

About Troilus and Cressida has seethed a controversy of unending questions. Why in this one instance alone should Shakespeare have turned to mythology for the very substance of the play itself? Why is he so bitter in his attitude? How and why does his version of the tale of Ilium differ from Homer's, from Boccaccio's, and from Chaucer's? In order to suggest possible answers, one has to determine first how Shakespeare does characterize the Greek and Trojan heroes, to review the literary sources of the tradition which account for his bias and portrayal, and after that to offer possible deductions. This material forms the subject matter for chapter two.

The incidental allusions to mythology in Troilus and Cressida and in the other classical dramas are considered in chapters three and four. In each play the individual mythological allusions are examined in detail with remarks subjoined from critical works and from commentaries. The characteristics of these allusions as a whole are also indicated for each play.

In the final chapter the characteristics of the mythological allusions

² Root, ibid., p. 19.
for all the classical plays are compared and contrasted. Then the deductions to be made from these findings are suggested together with comments on the effect produced by the use of the allusions.

Finally there is a very brief discussion of whether or not the use of the mythological allusions in the classical plays seems to be characteristic of Shakespeare's use of them in his plays in general. A critic has stated his opinion that there was a definite change of purpose in Shakespeare's use of these allusions as his dramatic powers matured. It is his statements which are used as basis for this very brief comparison which forms the final portion of the thesis.
CHAPTER II
INTRINSIC ALLUSIONS TO MYTHOLOGY
TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

This is probably the most baffling of all Shakespeare's dramas and undoubtedly one of the most unpleasant. It is unique among Shakespeare's creations in that the entire drama itself may be considered as an extended allusion to classical mythology.

There are two interwoven plots—the love tale of Troilus and Cressida, and the quarrel of the chieftains of the Trojan War. The former story is generally conceded as the more important as may be surmised from the title, yet for many readers the chief interest of the play lies in the latter; and it is the latter which arrests attention here. Under Shakespeare's power, mythological figures of antiquity are reincarnate upon the stage. The Grecian general, Agamemnon, his brother, Menelaus, the Greek commanders—Achilles, Ajax, Ulysses, Nestor, Diomedes, and Patroclus—oppose Priam, king of Troy, his sons—Hector, Troilus, Paris, Deiphobus, Helenus—and his commanders, Aeneas and Antenor. The wanton Helen, the chaste Andromache, and the ill-fated Cassandra are also present; as is Calchas, pictured as the Trojan traitor whose claim to his daughter, Cressida, forms a link between the two plots. It is the use of the mythological figures as the actual "dramatis personae" which sets this drama apart from all others of Shakespeare in its relations to mythology; and it is this aspect which will be examined in this chapter.
Even such casual reference to the content of the drama makes evident immediately that here the mythology is of intrinsic importance. Without it there would simply be no play. It would seem that Shakespeare is paralleling the love intrigue of the main plot, which is of medieval origin, with that of the secondary plot, which dates back to antiquity—though Shakespeare drew it also through the medium of medieval sources. Troilus is a counterpart of Menelaus; Cressida, a second Helen; and Diomedes, another Paris. Thus the mythological historical background furnishes the dramatic motif for the principal action. Emphasis is so placed in the retelling of each story by Shakespeare that this parallelism is readily apparent.

CHARACTERIZATION

In the introduction it was stated that in order to try to answer some of the questions raised by this play one should first determine how Shakespeare characterizes the Greek and Trojan heroes. Almost paradoxically he seems to have made romanticism realistic. It is not merely romanticism tinged with realism; but hard, cold, unlovely cynical realism practically unrelieved by any of the finer and tenderer touches of noble human nature.

As the account opens, it is the eighth year of the siege of Troy by the Greeks. The Prologue says:

Leaps o'er the vaunt and firstlings of those broils,
Beginning in the middle.

(Prologue, 26-28)³

³The Complete Works of Shakespeare (George Lyman Kittredge, editor; Boston: Ginn and Company, 1936). Since all quotations from Shakespeare used in this thesis are taken from this edition, no further acknowledgment will be made in the footnotes.
A truce has been declared. The Greeks in council discuss with lengthy and quasi-philosophic speech the inefficacy of their protracted efforts. Great Agamemnon and wise Nestor lay all at the feet of Jove. These unsuccessful efforts

\[ \text{But the protractive trials of great Jove} \]
\[ \text{To find persistive constancy in men;} \]
\[ \text{The fineness of which metal is not found} \]
\[ \text{In Fortune's love.} \]

\[(I,iii, 19-23)\]

But the practical wisdom of a Ulysses, while not denying their claim, probes for the natural source of the evil and attributes it to insubordination, beginning with the great Achilles who,

\[ \text{Having his ear full of his airy fame,} \]
\[ \text{Grows dainty of his worth and in his tent} \]
\[ \text{Lies mocking our designs.} \]

\[(I,iii, 144-46)\]

Moreover:

\[ \text{With him Patroclus} \]
\[ \text{Upon a lazy bed the livelong day} \]
\[ \text{Breaks scurrile jests,} \]
\[ \text{And with ridiculous and awkward action} \]
\[ \text{(Which, slanderer, he imitation calls)} \]
\[ \text{He pageants us.} \]

\[(I,iii, 146-51)\]

Nestor, perhaps with a nod of acquiescence, adds:

\[ \text{And in imitation of these twain—} \]
\[ \text{Who, as Ulysses says, opinion crowns} \]
\[ \text{With an imperial voice—many are infect.} \]

\[(I,iii, 185-87)\]

This is the introduction to the Grecian heroes in this drama, but such a mere rehearsal of events fails to depict them as Shakespeare does. He seems to wish to strip them of all greatness; and he begins to achieve that end by
Ulysses' recital of Patroclus' mimicry. True, it is mockery which is retold, yet it is effective for it strikes close to truth, to partial truth, at any rate, not easily refuted. The implication Shakespeare seems to make between the lines by this mockery is this. See these fabled noble warriors? Are they not like all the great, glitter and false show on top but underneath mere men—puny, wretched, miserable, little—vainly trying to hide their weakness?

The impression generally given of Agamemnon is that he is the haughty and imperious leader of the Greeks. Here an impelling suggestion of his pomposity, as it appears to others, tends to destroy this illusion. Ulysses tells to that same Grecian leader himself the sport Patroclus furnishes for Achilles.

Sometimes, great Agamemnon,
Thy topless deputation he puts on;
And, like a strutting player—

He acts thy greatness in; and when he speaks,
'Tis like a chime a-mending, with terms unsquar'd,
Which, from the tongue of roaring Typhon dropp'd
Would seem hyperboles.

(I, iii, 151-53; 158-61)

The destruction of illusion by realistic suggestion continues as Ulysses relates the remainder of the scene giving Achilles' reaction. Achilles is pictured usually with emphasis on his manly qualities, but here effeminancy and swollen pride are emphasized.

At this dusty stuff
The large Achilles, on his press'd bed lolling,
From his deep chest laughs out a loud applause;
Cries, 'Excellent! 'Tis Agamemnon just.'

(I, iii, 161-64)

Poor old Nestor, frequently called the wisdom of the Greeks, appears to incline toward senility or dotage according to Patroclus' portrayal of
him in response to the great Myridon's request:

    'Now play me Nestor. Hem, and stroke thy beard,
      As he being dress'd to some oration.
    . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
    'Tis Nestor right. Now play him me, Patroclus,
      Arming to answer in a night alarm.'
And then, forsooth, the faint defects of age
      Must be the scene of mirth; to cough and spit,
    And, with a palsy fumbling on his gorget
      Shake in and out the rivet.

(I,iii, 165-66; 170-75)

What of that Patroclus who could lend himself so readily and with such
evident enjoyment to these mocking debasements of authority? Does he seem in
the least admirable?

Ajax, although often pictured as of greater brawn than mental gifts,
sinks even lower in the scale, for his pride will not be outdone by Achilles',
so in his tents with factious feasts he

    . . . sets Thersites,
      A slave whose gall coins slanders like a mint,
    To match us the Grecian leaders in comparison with dirt.

(I,iii, 192-94)

Ulysses' intention of forcing action upon these same leaders since
their own persons are being besmirched, though it does not fail of its
effect, does not seem to be the point impressed upon the reader. Rather one
is left with a strong feeling that these Grecian leaders are all false show;
it seems to be the pettiness of their simulated greatness which is emphasized.

This is true again in the puerile method of rebuking Achilles' pride.
Imagine really great men baiting Ajax's already over-inflated ego with such
shameless flattery, even though it be to curb Achilles' haughtiness; or again
imagine the line of Grecian heroes trailing past Achilles' tent in order
either to greet him not at all or disdainfully at most, to let him know that
he is not all that he thinks he is. It may achieve its end, but it does
not ennable the actors.

Shakespeare is not yet satisfied, however; Thersites, the foul clown,
mouths all the Greeks, not once only but repeatedly. Agamemnon is a "botchy
core"; Nestor, a "stale old mouse-eaten cheese"; Ulysses, "a dog-fox"; Ajax,
a "mongrel cur"; and Achilles, a "dog of as bad a kind." These are among
his less objectionable pronouncements. When he finishes, their debasement
is complete. And as Thersites pours forth his vilifying vituperations, tear-
ing away the covering and letting the victims stand naked to the view, it
seems to be not just past or present greatness being attacked, but almost
man as man—man, base and ignoble. Modern realism at its worst could scarcely
speak with greater disillusion and bitterness nor with more disbelief or, at
least, disregard of the inherent spiritual dignity of man.

These are the Greek heroes in the play. What of the Trojan contest-
ants? They fare somewhat more favorably. Hector's courage and manliness are
even held up to honor; his death is accomplished only through the treachery
of Achilles.

When the Trojans discuss the reiterated Greek demand for the return
of Helen, Hector thus addresses his brothers, Paris and Troilus:

The reasons you allege do more conduce
To the hot passion of distemp'red blood
Than to make up a free determination
'Twixt right and wrong; for pleasure and revenge
Have ears more deaf than adders to the voice
Of any true decision.

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

(II, ii, 168-73; 183-89)

Being of a pagan mind and standards in actual fact, however, Hector can adjudge thus rightly and still immediately add:

Yet ne'ertheless,
My sprightly brethern, I propend to you
In resolution to keep Helen still;
For 'tis a cause that hath no mean dependence
Upon our joint and several dignities.  

(II, ii, 189-93)

Troilus quickly adds a fervent "Amen" to this, saying of Helen:

She is a theme of honour and renown,
A spur to valiant and magnanimous deeds,
Whose present courage may beat down our foes,
And fame in time to come canonize us.  

(II, ii, 199-202)

This acceptance of the end justifying a wrong means is not a surprising philosophy for a pagan. Modern pagans still live and act by it, unheeding of a future retribution. Hector, understandably, therefore, is nowhere in words condemned for it, although the dishonor shown him after his death may be his just punishment.

Paris receives his due in condemnation, however. The Greek Diomedes, in response to Paris' query:

Who in your thoughts deserves fair Helen best,
Myself or Menelaus?  

(IV, i, 53-54)

answers with unsavory bitter frankness which justly estimates all members of the triangle. His words are too unpleasant for quotation, but his final judgment is:

Both alike.

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
Both merits pois'd, each weighs nor less nor more.

(IV, i, 54; 65)

He does not mince terms in naming what these so-called merits are.

Similarly Thersites evaluates Troilus when Troilus and this same Diodorus himself fight over the prize, not worth the winning, Cressida. This passage, also, is too unpleasant to insert, but suffice it to say that the reader is left without any illusions about the beastliness to which man can sink. In fact, the depressing implication seems to be made throughout the play that not only can man sink to this low level, but that in general the majority of men do. Was that really Shakespeare's dismal conviction at the time of the writing of this play? That question cannot be answered with certainty for the purpose of composition is unknown. It can be stated, however, that the present reader failed to find anywhere in the play, even after careful scrutiny, alleviation of the despairing gloom. Evil seems to triumph, and with a finality that strangles hope. Never, however, does Shakespeare justify or condone the evil; rather he makes it, be it said to his credit, thoroughly unlovely and repulsive.

This whole monstrous picture is given by bringing antiquity into the present, by using romantic mythological characters which the average reader has been accustomed to associate with such qualities as valour, courage, bravery, wisdom, beauty, and so on. They connote such qualities, of course, because they are usually considered uncritically through a sort of rosy unquestioning haze of unreality. Here in Shakespeare the rosy haze has faded, and the terms that would have to be used for description of the characters would be in strong contrast to the above mentioned qualities.
Such then is a brief indication of Shakespeare's characterization of the Greek and Trojan heroes. His bitterness and irony in general are evident; still even a cursory reading of the play will also reveal that Shakespeare favors the Trojans at the expense of the Greeks. Was this an innovation on his part? The next section will offer answer to this query.

TROJAN PARTISANSHIP

"Shakespeare was no innovator when he wrote the Greeks down to mere unconscionable filibusters," says Charlton. 4

Lee states:

. . . the authorities whom Shakespeare followed invariably condemn Homer's glorification of the Greeks and depreciate their character and exploits. . . . His presentation of Achilles as a brutal coward is entirely loyal to the spirit of Guido delle Colonne, whose veracity was unquestioned by Shakespeare or his tutors. . . . Medieval romance adumbrated at all points, Shakespeare's unheroic treatment of the Homeric heroes. 5

Attwater's comment is:

Medieval romance was always on the side of Troy, and both Caxton, whose book Shakespeare certainly used, and Lydgate portray Achilles as cruel and unscrupulous, killing both Hector and Troilus by unknighthly treachery. Lydgate even blames Homer for setting such high store by Achilles. Against the prevailing view Chapman's translation of seven books of the Iliad could have prevailed but little at the time


when Shakespeare was writing his Troilus...

Those who criticise Shakespeare for 'brutalising' the character of the great Achilles, whom they know from Homer, are forgetting the material on which Shakespeare had to work.

This rejoinder then naturally follows, however: why had medieval romance, which Shakespeare accepts, swung the balance of preferment in favor of the Trojans contrary to Homer's practice in the original version of the story?

Again the authorities have the answer. Lawrence says concisely in speaking of the medieval version of the Troy story: "... they exalted the Trojans at the expense of the Greeks in deference to the old notion that the sovereigns of Western Europe were descended from Aeneas, the Trojan, through Brutus." 7

Stapfer, in a work crowned by the French Academy, points out at much greater length that antiquity transmitted to the Middle Ages, not Homer or Greek tradition, but Vergil and the Latin tradition. The hero of the Aeneid, as everyone knows, is a Trojan, the mythical founder of the Roman race and power. This belief of the Romans in their Trojan descent outlived the days of the Republic and cropped up again under the Empire. In the barbarian


invasions, Rome, even when conquered, still exercised a spell over men's imaginations, and the victorious people adopted the language, customs, and religion of the vanquished nation. By degrees the barbarians even considered themselves related to the great Roman people. Gradually the idea arose that they descended from the same stock. Thus the tradition of Trojan descent passed from antiquity down to the Middle Ages. The Franks and nearly all Christian people and kingly or princely families of the West claimed this Trojan ancestry. Britain celebrated Brut or Brutus, a great-grandson of Aeneas as her royal progenitor. According to Robert Wace, a Norman trouvère of the twelfth century, Brut changed the name of Albion to that of Britain after his own.

Root, likewise tracing the evolution of the Troy myth, asserts the same idea. He speaks of the great popularity of the story in the Middle Ages chiefly because of a "strange belief held as literal truth of history by various peoples of Western Europe"—namely, the notion referred to above of descent from these mythological figures. Heroic ancestry was important and "a little ingenious etymologizing plausible enough to an age quite innocent of linguistic science, supplied the missing link."⁹

Stapfer reaffirms that this idea was not considered a poetic fiction, but rather a popular belief and an article of patriotic faith which even made its way into the most serious transactions in diplomacy, in politics, and in war. "In the time of the Renaissance men never dreamed of submitting this mediaeval tradition to a critical

examination, but on the contrary adopted it enthusiastically and the Trojan legends were never held in higher honour than at the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries. They continued to live and even to thrive, until the next century. In England they were introduced upon the stage, and it may have been in the theater that Shakespeare learned the traditional origin of his country.\textsuperscript{10}

Having shown that Shakespeare was merely following accepted tradition in his Trojan partisanship, one may point out the literary sources through which this tradition reached his era.

\textbf{LITERARY SOURCES OF THE TRADITION}

What were the literary sources for the translation of this tradition from classical antiquity down through the Middle Ages to the Renaissance?

As noted above, Homer was the father of the original story, for without the \textit{Iliad} the Trojan legend would never have existed; but the lineage did not descend in a straight line. As also noted, while Homer was left unread, Vergil and the \textit{Aeneid} stepped into first place as teacher and sacred oracle of the Middle Ages. In fact, at that time, the \textit{Iliad} was known to the vast majority of those who read at all only through an abridged version of eleven hundred Latin lines, the \textit{Epitome Iliados Homericae} of Pindarus Thebanus, apparently composed in the first century of the Christian era. Homer was not then looked upon as a poet but as an historian, and probably not a very satisfactory one either, for men thought then that he had lived about a hundred years after the events he was historically describing. Fortunately, however,

\textsuperscript{10}Stapfer, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 201.
according to their way of thinking, there were the accounts of two eyewitnesses—that of a Greek, Dictys the Cretan; and better still, that of a Trojan, Dares the Phrygian. Today the impossibility of their claims of being eyewitnesses is evident but then their claims were accepted wholeheartedly. The traditional date of the Trojan War is 1200 B.C. The extant Latin versions of the accounts of Dictys and Dares date respectively from the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. The Greek original of the former belongs to the Hellenistic period (776-323 B.C.) as possibly does that of the latter also, if a Greek original actually existed. Certainly, neither one of the original accounts can claim a date earlier than 776 B.C.

Dares, augmented by Dictys and Ovid, supplied to Benoît de Sainte-Maure, writing in 1184, the material for a detailed account of the whole history of Troy traced back to its remotest origins.

A startling bit of plagiarism not detected until the middle of the nineteenth century—startling, that is according to modern standards—largely supplanted this work, however. About a century later, in 1287, the Italian Guido delle Colonne foisted upon the public a presumably original version of the story entitled, Historia Trojana. In reality it was merely a Latin paraphrase of Benoît's French poem. But plagiarism or no, it was Guido delle Colonne's version which gained great popularity, being translated into many languages and furnishing the basis for several English Troy Books, Lydgate's among others.11

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For centuries Guido's veracity was absolutely undoubted. It is interesting to note the attitude, a characteristic one, assumed toward Homer's and Guido's accounts by a certain Jean Samson, a French translator during the Renaissance. He was the first to turn into French "the Iliad of Homer, a Greek poet and a great historiographer, with the preliminary accounts given by Guido, sovereign historiographer." Note the shades of distinction accorded to these "historiographers"—"great" and "sovereign." Samson even interrupts his translation on occasion, again characteristically, to administer well merited rebuke to this same Homer when he evidently falsifies events by exalting Achilles, a Greek, over Hector, a Trojan!

Shakespeare knew and consulted Lydgate's Sege of Troy as also Caxton's Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye, likewise originally based on Guido delle Colonne through the French of Raoul de Fèvre.

Chapman's translation of seven books of the Iliad, namely of the first and second books and of the seventh to the eleventh, appeared in 1598. Opinion is somewhat divided as to the use Shakespeare may have made of this. Some think undoubtedly that the two poets were on friendly terms as frequenters of the Mermaid Tavern and that Shakespeare would have read and used not only this section of the translation, but very likely in manuscript the remainder also although not to be published until 1611. Stapfer holds this idea. Others suggest the very play Troilus and Cressida as a possible attack upon Chapman and his translation, but this theory is now largely

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13 Ibid., p.223.
discredited. The character Thersites did come from Homer and possibly through Chapman. This is not a necessity, however, for Rollins suggests it may have been through the medium of a play by Heywood, The Iron Age, or through an older play used by both Heywood and Shakespeare.¹⁴ Similar possible sources could be suggested for other incidents probably taken from Homer. But whatever Shakespeare's absolute sources, his adherence in general to Guido and popular tradition, as would be expected, is evident.

The next point to consider is in what other respects Shakespeare's version of the tale of Ilium differs from Homer's, from Boccaccio's, and from Chaucer's.

HOMER AND SHAKESPEARE

Indication has already been made of decided variation between Homer's and Shakespeare's characterizations of the leading characters in the immortal tale of Troy. Because of the preeminence of each name in the history of world literature, however, it is interesting to point out more at length some of the differences in the treatment of a common theme.

Homer, of course, is an epic poet purporting chiefly to tell a story. He gives no detailed study of character, but with a few broad strokes draws Greek warriors, radiant and almost godlike. There is a simplicity, a serenity, a classic elevation about his tale wholly lacking in Shakespeare's

Troilus and Cressida. Homer sings of primal emotions—of Achilles' great love of honor, his hatred of oppression, his affection for his comrade in arms, of Hector's love for his wife and child and still stronger sense of duty to his country. These are qualities of enduring human interest and of universal appeal with which any normal and healthy person, whatever be his land or age, can sympathize.

"The real theme of the Iliad is the triumph of love over hatred," states Clark, who adds that the turning point of the poem comes when Patroclus is slain by Hector. Achilles, in a dilemma, obeys what men of his time would have considered the finer instincts of his nature and performs what they likewise would have termed his sacred duty. He revenges his friend by slaying Hector. Thus his love for Patroclus proves stronger than his hatred of Agamemnon.

All the Homeric heroes are drawn with a poetic ideality. Homer intimates moral weaknesses at times but in the spirit of a Greek characterizes them rather as virtues than as defects.

The whole action of the Iliad takes place in the tenth and final year of the siege of Troy and deals only with an episode which has an important influence upon the outcome of the war. It is the wrath of Achilles rising out of a quarrel with Agamemnon and its direful consequences for the Greeks. The outcome of the war is not traced to its very end.

One critic says that it is modern scholarship which has thrown the

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heroic glamour about Homer and that the actions of his warriors when viewed in the light of cold common sense appear in many respects the reverse of heroic. Bush makes the ironic comment, pertinent both to former and modern times, that Homer was praised then as now without being read. Comparatively few today can read him in the original, but it seems little likely that even those who read him in translation and only partially can fail to sense the utter difference of tone and attitude between Homer and Shakespeare. It seems scarcely possible to deny that Homer offers a constructive and optimistic story, Shakespeare a destructive and pessimistic one.

The Troilus-Cressida plot of Shakespeare's drama is not found at all in Homer. Troilus received but passing mention, once only, in the twenty-fourth Book when Priam laments the death of his sons.

I have lost Mestor, surnamed the fair, Troilus, that ready knight at arms, that made his field repair Ever so promptly and joyfully, and Hector. (Book XXIV)

Cressida as such does not even exist in the Iliad. There is a character Pandarus, but he has nothing in common with the Pandarus of Shakespeare.

The Greek Thersites is a reviler as is the Elizabethan one, but Homer has no sympathy with him. Homer has those in authority rebuke Thersites' venomous outburst, and the populace, whom Thersites apparently champions,


18 Homer, Iliad (George Chapman, translator; third edition; London: George Routledge and Sons, 1887), p. 311.
revile him with scorn and laughter.

Before turning again to Shakespeare, it should be stated in all justice that there is no absolute indication that he knew the Iliad itself in any form before Chapman's translation. Baldwin, speaking directly of his knowledge of Homer, says: "No boy is likely to have had more than the merest smattering of Homer in grammar school. There is no conclusive evidence that Shakespeare had even that. And it must be added that the search has been sufficient to uncover any considerable knowledge if it had existed." Rather, as mentioned earlier, his knowledge of the material of both the main and secondary plots came primarily through medieval sources whose attitudes he simply and naturally echoes.

Since Shakespeare is a dramatist, a contrast of more clearly delineated characters is to be expected in his version. For the godlike figures of Homer, he substitutes those more akin to real life with accent placed on faults and failings common to debased human nature. As an example of this, Achilles' inaction is no longer chiefly due to a breach of honor on the part of Agamemnon. No, Achilles is in love with Polyxena, a daughter of Priam. He holds secret communication with the enemy. Though this idea is not original with Shakespeare, he chooses to use it, likely because it heightens dramatic interest, while defaming Achilles himself by suggesting that he is a traitor. The cowardliness of his vengeance upon Hector, as told by Shakespeare, would flow naturally from such a character.

Another device—no cause for surprise either—is that Shakespeare turns all the heroes into semi-medieval knights. They ride on horseback, not in chariots. They speak and act in the medieval tradition. When Aeneas delivers the challenge, he expresses himself in no other way than as a gallant or somewhat swaggering knight. Such anachronisms as this and others found in the play could hardly have been other than intentional on the part of Shakespeare, however.

What is difficult to account for is Shakespeare's bitterness and lack of sympathy with his actors since these are not common characteristics of this Elizabethan dramatist. He makes many of the figures so repulsive that they lose all appeal. In his day licentious things were often said upon the stage. Brandes claims that ladies attending the theater then wore "masks of silk or velvet, partly for protection against sun and air, partly in order to blush (or not to blush) unseen." But even for such a day, many of Ther-site's speeches, for instance, are extreme; and Lawrence refers to some of the words put into the mouths of characters as "comments which no decent girl, even in Elizabethan days of unbridled speech, could hear without a protest."

Ulrici would try to explain away the difficulty by crediting Shakespeare with a moral purpose—that of throwing into clear contrast, and hence


disapproval, the immoral element. It must be stated again to Shakespeare's credit that he does make sin wholly unlovely at all times in this play, and that in that respect his version does seem more truly moral than Homer's, Boccaccio's, or Chaucer's. But to claim that he wrote with such a purpose? It would be very difficult to substantiate such a contention, the present writer believes.

Few probably could read both Homer and Shakespeare on this common theme and fail to tip the scales in favor of the former. Clearly, Shakespeare is not at all attractive in this particular drama, whatever be some of the literary merits of the work.

BOCCACCIO, CHAUCER, AND SHAKESPEARE

In Homer, it has been noted, there was no indication at all of the love story between Troilus and Cressida. Benoît de Sainte-Maure seems to have been the first to invent such a tale in his Roman de Troie. He treats the whole event as little more than an episode, however, starting at the point where Briseida is restored to her father without any account of the beginning and progress of their love. Benoît makes Troilus himself, nevertheless, a most prominent figure whose exploits furnish a large part of the interest of the poem.

22 Hermann Ulrici, Shakespeare's Dramatic Art (L. Dora Schmitz, translator from the third edition of the German, with additions and corrections by the author; London: G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., 1914), II, 147.

When Giovanni Baccaccio wrote his *Il Filostrato* about 1338, his genius seized upon this single episode of Benoît and interest became centered wholly upon the love story. The events of the siege of Troy were entirely relegated to the background. Boccaccio gave the name of "Criseida" to the heroine who meanwhile by a kind of legerdemain had become identified as the daughter of Calchas, the soothsayer. Boccaccio also introduced the character of Pandaro as a go-between for the love suit.

Chaucer writing his *Troilus and Criseyde* about 1385-86 made full use of the *Filostrato* and likewise centered interest entirely upon the love story. He states definitely that he has no intention of telling how Troy came to destruction. If the reader wants that, let him go to Homer, Dares, or Dites.

But how this toun com to destruction,
Ne falleth noght to purpos me to telle;
For-why, it were a longe digressioun
Fro my materie, and yow to longe to dwelle;
But the Troyanes gestes, as they falle,
In Omer, or in Dares, or in Dite,
Why-so that kan may rede hem as they write.

(Troilus and Criseyde, Book I, 141-47) 24

Shakespeare, taking up the theme in the early part of the seventeenth century, uses Chaucer as a source, but again rebalances the point of interest. He lets the love story occupy only about one-third of his drama and makes it practically subordinate to the intrigues of the Grecian camp. 25

Since concern here is with the mythological figures, comparison must


be limited to the person of Troilus, for, of the characters common to all three versions, only he may be considered to come under such a heading. Cressida as indicated above is not really a mythological figure at all but a creation of a later date.

What therefore of Boccaccio's Troilo? Boccaccio is a sentimentalist still in his early twenties at the time of the composition of his Filostrato. His Troilo therefore is a portrait of himself—generous, high-spirited, enthusiastic, sentimental. Naturally sympathetic with Troilo's love longings and sorrows, Boccaccio tries to arouse like feelings for him in the hearts of his readers. He himself lives in the character to such an extent that Troilo becomes an undeniably real human being possessing Italian emotionalism and a shaken susceptible heart. It need scarcely be added that this hero is definitely the central figure of the story.

Chaucer approaches the story in an entirely different spirit from Boccaccio. Chaucer is middle aged, not young; he is of English temperament, not Italian; he is a spectator, not an actor in the tale; he is detached in his rendition, not passionate and sympathetic. This might indicate that Boccaccio's version would be the superior one; yet Chaucer has a quality entirely lacking in Boccaccio—that is his amazing psychological insight into the workings of the human heart and mind. Chaucer's Criseyde seems to the present writer to be the character who benefits most by this power. Troilus remains the nucleating center of the story and his fortunes are followed to the very end; yet he seems, again according to the opinion of the present writer, to be pictured as little more than a love-sick youth whose well-merited misfortunes arouse little sympathy. In fact, his lack of
manliness makes him almost an object of dislike, for some readers at least.

In Shakespeare, Troilus remains in character much what he is in Chaucer. He stands out more prominently in the drama, however, and his woes have a bit more appeal because in the Elizabethan version Cressida is an out-and-out wanton. Yet the tone is so bitter and taunting throughout that no character really arouses a great deal of sympathy. About the most that can be said for Shakespeare's Troilus is that the epithets applied to him by Brandes and Dowden respectively are exceedingly mild. The former calls him an "honorable fool" and the latter a "noble green goose." 27

THE MYTHOLOGICAL SUBJECT AND BITTERNESS OF ATTITUDE

There remain yet to be considered the questions as to why in this instance alone Shakespeare should have turned to mythology for the very substance of his play and why he should have treated the subject with such harshness. Only suppositions can be offered in response, but that the questions have aroused the curiosity of many can be seen from the diversity of answers to be found in critical works.

In this connection, two facts stand out in regard to Shakespeare himself. First, he was a very practical business man as well as a genius. He wrote not solely to please an inner urge, but rather probably with a finger on the pulse of his audience. Neilson and Thorndike state definitely in

26 Brandes, op. cit., p. 503.

regard to Shakespeare that, "If it was rarely a question with him what the ancients had written, it was always a question what was being acted and what was successful at the moment." Study of the relation of Shakespeare's plays to contemporary Elizabethan drama seems to affirm the truth of that statement. Stapfer also points out that this less ideal side of Shakespeare's nature must not be lost sight of. "He invariably looked to the result, to the substantial benefit as well as to the poetical use to be made of the materials he employed."

Yet how can this fact be reconciled with the evidence that Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* was not a popular play even in his own day? Did Shakespeare simply make a mistake in judging the temper of his public in this instance? Or, contrary to custom, did he select the theme in order to indulge a purely personal bitterness of mood, to relieve his own feelings, as it were, by satirizing the foibles of human nature? Both suggestions are possible; neither seems probable.

The second fact in regard to Shakespeare himself in this connection is that he had no interest whatsoever in mythology purely for its own sake. Mythology was very much "in the air" in the Elizabethan period, as Cruickshank says. Therefore, because Shakespeare was a dramatist of his own age


29 Stapfer, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

as well as for all ages, he used it, but always in his own way and only as suited his purposes. Stapfer claims correctly "that Shakespeare's feelings toward classical antiquity were those of complete indifference, that he considered it only as a rich mine of wealth, in which light it stood on exactly the same footing in his regard as the legends of the Middle Ages, and the traditions of English history."\(^3\) This seems to have been Shakespeare's attitude toward all materials. Later Stapfer adds that if Shakespeare had known any Arabian legends concerning the Trojan war he would have used them had they pleased him and suited his purpose.\(^2\) Genius is never subservient to its sources.

In view therefore of his usual practicality and his indifference to the subject for its own sake, it must be assumed that Shakespeare's sole reason for the use of the mythology was that here it suited his purpose. But could he then have been writing the play for the popular stage? The answer would seem to be in the negative. Doubtless, the coarseness and the vulgar and suggestive jestings of Pandarus and Thersites would have pleased the groundlings, as would also the sensuality of the relations existing among Troilus, Cressida, and Diomedes. Achilles and Patroclus as pictured here might also have made an appeal; but for the groundlings as well as for the higher class of theater-goers the long philosophical discussions would have been boring and the indecisive outcome would not have been countenanced.

\(^3\) Stapfer, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

\(^2\) Ibid., p. 227
For whom then could Shakespeare have written? Lawrence advances a suggestion, not original with him, however, which seems to the writer the most plausible of all those offered to explain the composition of *Troilus and Cressida*. He thinks that Shakespeare may have written the play for a special sophisticated audience, that it may have been designed originally as part of an entertainment for one of the Inns of Court. Had Shakespeare been asked to compose for such an occasion and group, according to his custom he would have tried to suit their taste. The members of the Inns of Court were intellectuals for the most part keenly interested in social and philosophical discussions and in poetry and drama; but their revels had a reputation for indecorum and were characterized by elaborate literary fooling mingled with obscenity. The commission to write for such an audience—cynical and skeptical because intellectual and sophisticated—might well account for everything found in *Troilus and Cressida*. It could account for the selection of the mythological theme, the disillusioned treatment of romantic love, the ribald jesting, the direct allusions to the sexual looseness of the times, the long philosophical speeches, even the indecisive ending, for realists, such as they, would have expected a realistic ending. Added weight is given to the suggestion by the fact that on several other occasions Shakespeare's company did perform plays for the revels. This could account also for the bitterness of tone, one suited to the play and to the audience. It seems a very plausible suggestion, though, of course, no more than a suggestion.

The theories that the play was part of the War of the Theaters or that it was an attack upon Chapman and a satire upon Homer are largely discredited.
today. Many critics do still hold that the play resulted from personal suffering or loss which led to disillusionment. Some such event may well have aided the pessimistic tone which certainly and definitely prevades the play. There was also the influence of the prevailing literary and dramatic fashions.

As the old century was going out and the new coming in . . . comedy was extremely popular, but it became less carelessly and trustingly 'romantic'; it turned more and more to realism, often of a gross and drastic sort, to study of character, based upon observation of actual contemporary types, and to a serious questioning, and sometimes satirical view of life. While these tendencies are not wholly absent in the decade before 1600, they are strikingly marked in the years following that date. 33

It is rather generally agreed now that Troilus and Cressida was probably first written about 1601 or 1602.

Such then are the comments about this play as a whole, unique among Shakespeare's creations in that the entire drama itself may be considered as an extended allusion to classical mythology. No wonder that idealists wish vainly that Shakespeare had left it unwritten.

33 Lawrence, Problem Comedies, p. 213.
CHAPTER III

INCIDENTAL ALLUSIONS TO MYTHOLOGY

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

It is immediately evident that the other classical dramas—Julius Caesar, Antony and Cleopatra, Coriolanus, and Timon of Athens—have several points in common as contrasted with Troilus and Cressida. While only the first of these is of direct and immediate concern in the present investigation, the others are of general interest and value.

First, in these other plays, the allusions to mythology are all incidental, while as discussed in the preceding chapter, mythology forms an intrinsic part of Troilus and Cressida. Reminder must be given, however, of the fact already mentioned, that in this latter play there is also a plentiful use of the incidental allusions. These will be discussed in their proper place in this chapter.

Second, the other classical dramas are all tragedies. How Troilus and Cressida should be classified has always been a question. Some think that Shakespeare intended it as a comedy. However, in the Folio of 1623, the play bears the running title of The Tragedie of Troylus and Cressida and it is placed between the histories and tragedies, immediately preceding Coriolanus; yet there is direct evidence that it was inserted in that place after the volume was made up. The pagination of the tragedies proper begins with Coriolanus. Troilus and Cressida is termed a history on the Quarto title-page, while the preface to the second Quarto calls it a comedy, the
classification given it by most modern editors. If it is listed as such, however, it seems necessary to add a prefix to the term and call it, as did Lawrence, a problem comedy.

Third, the other classical dramas have a common source, Plutarch's Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans, Compared Together as translated into English by Sir Thomas North (1579) from the French version of Jacques Amyot (1559). For Julius Caesar, Shakespeare used Plutarch's Lives of Julius Caesar, of Marcus Brutus, and of Marcus Antonius; for Antony and Cleopatra, the Life of Marcus Antonius; for Coriolanus, the Life of Coriolanus; and for Timon of Athens the Lives of Marcus Antonius and of Alcibiades as also Lucian's Misanthropos. Comment has already been offered upon the sources of Troilus and Cressida.

Before examining in detail the allusions in the individual dramas, it may be well to point out that Shakespeare exhibited an unusually reverent regard for Plutarch, often following him closely and studiously. Yet Shakespeare sought ideal or spiritual truth rather than historical, and when necessary he did not hesitate to combine heretofore unrelated details, to change episodes by re-emphasizing them or altering them completely, or to change the mood or tone as he deemed necessary. What he kept from Plutarch, he kept because it suited his purpose. This should be remembered if the objection would be brought forth that in some instances the mythological allusions were given in his source. Granted, but the very fact that he kept them gives proof that he found them apt and suited to his imagery or thought.

In dealing with the individual dramas in this chapter and the next,
chronological order will be followed in so far as that can be ascertained. Chambers gives these dates which refer to theatrical seasons, roughly from early autumn to the following summer, rather than to the calendar year: 

- **Julius Caesar**, 1599-1600;
- **Troilus and Cressida**, 1601-02;
- **Antony and Cleopatra**, 1606-07;
- **Coriolanus** and **Timon of Athens**, 1607-08. 

**JULIUS CAESAR**

The first thing noted in regard to the mythological allusions of **Julius Caesar** is their paucity. Here they are far less numerous than in any of the other classical dramas. Root says that this absence of mythology is in keeping with the studied severity of style in which the play was conceived and executed. Dowden speaks also of this severity of outline in characterization. Numerous mention of the gods in general or of the power of fate is found, but these references do no more than help to set the atmosphere of time, place, and character. Caesar and Brutus both speak of the power of fate in determining the hour of death; and Artemidorus, while trying unsuccessfully to warn Caesar against the conspirators, says:

> If thou read this, O Caesar, thou mayst live;  
> If not, the Fates with traitors do contrive.  
> (II, iii, 15-16)

Although Fate holds a place in classical mythology, Root thinks that

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Shakespeare's conception of it is not mythological at all but rather philosophical. He says that in all periods of his work, Shakespeare always conceives Fate merely as an irresistible power governing the lives of men, overruling their wishes and desires. It is not necessarily hostile but sharp and inexorable. There is no attempt to theologize about it for it is neither identified with nor opposed to divine omnipotence.\footnote{Root, \textit{Classical Mythology}, p. 58.}

With regard to the few definite mythological allusions, several points are evident. None of the references are very detailed; rather, they incline to be casual and simple. They, however, either are all put on the lips of the leading characters or are used in comment about these main characters.

Cassius uses the first allusion when he is trying to incite Brutus to the conspiracy against Caesar. Craftily, in a series of mocking comparisons, Cassius flaunts Caesar as having hoodwinked the world by sham heroism. He relates among other things how on a certain winter's day Caesar had challenged him to swim the troubled Tiber. Without delay they both leaped in fully accoutred.

\begin{verbatim}
But ere we could arrive the point propos'd
Caesar cried, 'Help me, Cassius, or I sink!
I, as Aeneas, our great ancestor,
Did from the flames of Troy upon his shoulder
The old Anchises bear, so from the waves of Tiber
Did I the tired Caesar.
\end{verbatim}

(I, ii, 110-15)

The figure is well chosen to reveal Cassius' character, his pride and jealousy of Caesar's present fame. The repetition of the "I" together with the
simile "as Aeneas" vividly expresses his eagerness to give prominence to his own part in the adventure. Caesar has good reason to say to Anthony a little later about Cassius:

Such men as he be never at heart's ease
While they behold a greater than themselves.

(I, ii, 208-09)

In the second act, the conspiracy being in the process of actual formation, Brutus can steel himself to the murder, not because he loves Caesar less, but only because he loves Rome more. Yet, remorsefully he soliloquizes:

O conspiracy
Sham'st thou to show thy dang'rous brow by night,
When evils are most free? O, then by day
Where wilt thou find a cavern dark enough
To mask thy monstrous visage? Seek none, conspiracy.
Hide it in smiles and affability!
For if thou path, thy native semblance on,
Not Erebus itself were dim enough
To hide thee from prevention.

(II, i, 77-85)

In commenting on "Erebus," the variorum edition quotes Hudson as saying that it was usually thought of as the third of five divisions of Hades, but that Shakespeare seems to identify it with Tartarus, the lowest deep of the infernal world, the horrible pit where Dante locates Brutus and Cassius along with Judas Iscariot.39

Caesar himself uses the next mythological allusion which tersely reveals his hateful arrogance. As planned, the conspirators one after another


39 Ibid., p. 86.
beg from him the repeal of banishment against Publius Cimber. Metellus, Brutus, Cassius plead in vain; then comes Cinna whom Caesar addresses thus scornfully:

Hence! Wilt thou lift up Olympus?

(III,i,74)

It is his last utterance but one, and possibly it is part of the irony of the play that Caesar speaks his haughtiest words just before he falls, stabbed to his death by supposed friends. It may be also that Shakespeare is trying to soften the enormity of his murder and to grind the daggers of the assassins to a sharper point. 40

In this same scene Antony, grieving in soliloquy over this "bleeding piece of earth," foretells civil war with all its horrors for all Italy. Graphically he prophesies:

And Caesar's spirit, raging for revenge,
With Ate by his side come hot from hell,
Shall in these confines with a monarch's voice
Cry 'Havoc!' and let slip the dogs of war,
That this foul deed shall smell above the earth
With carrion men, groaning for burial.

(III,i, 270-75)

This Ate is an Homeric goddess originally personifying infatuation—infatuation which in its turn implied guilt as its cause and evil as its consequences. In the Iliad when Achilles renounces his wrath, Agamemnon replies placing all the blame upon the gods for the day when he arbitrarily took away Achilles' prize. Largely to blame was that daughter of Zeus, Ate.

Ate, that hurts all, perfects all, her feet are soft and move

40 Ibid., p. 142.
Not on the earth, they bear her still aloft men's heads and there
The harmful hurts them.

(Book XIX)\(^{41}\)

In later times this Ate was transformed into an avenger of unrighteousness,
and it seems to be in this latter sense that Shakespeare uses her.

Another simple reference to Olympus, home of the gods and conceived
as of very great height, is used by Brutus in the fourth act when he and
Cassius quarrel in camp. Brutus has roundly rebuked Cassius for refusing
him pecuniary aid, which charge the latter denies claiming that Brutus loves
him not for a kindly eye could not see fault in his friend. Brutus retorts:

A flatterer's would not, though they do appear
As huge as high Olympus.

(IV, iii, 91-92)

The last mythological allusion is used by Cassius in response to this
taunt by Brutus.

O, I could weep
My spirit from mine eyes! There is my dagger,
And here my naked breast; within, a heart
Dearer than Pluto's mine, richer than gold.
If that thou be'st a Roman, take it forth.
I, that denied thee gold, will give my heart.
Strike as thou didst at Caesar; for I know,
When thou didst hate him worst, thou lov'd'st him better
Than ever thou lov'd'st Cassius.

(IV, iii, 99-107)

Some texts read "Plutus" here rather than "Pluto"; and claim is made
that Shakespeare is confusing the former, god or riches, with the latter,
god of the nether world. Excuse is offered for this identification, however,
since it occurs also in classical writers and often in other Elizabethan

\(^{41}\) Ibid., p. 142.
writers. It seems more likely though that if Shakespeare wrote "Pluto," he was accurate in his term, for "Pluto" has the meaning of "wealth" and refers to the giver of treasures which lie underground. The god is sometimes pictured with a cornucopia, a symbol of inexhaustible riches. Plutus, on the other hand, is merely an allegorical figure, a mere personification of wealth and nothing more. 42

These then are the scanty mythological references of the play, all simple and easy of connotation, none of them to the greater deities; yet, as mentioned, they are all used by leading characters and they occur in important connections. None of them could be said to be of intrinsic necessity, yet neither are they used merely for ornamentation or purely for delight in imagery. In each instance they are apt and suited to the thought or action expressed.

The fewness of the mythological allusions is in accord with the sparsity of figurative language in general in this play. Wells records the number of figures for each of these classical dramas as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Drama</th>
<th>Figures</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Troilus and Cressida</td>
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<tr>
<td>Antony and Cleopatra</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coriolanus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Timon of Athens</td>
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<tr>
<td>Julius Caesar</td>
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He says: "Julius Caesar, it will be observed, contains an exceptionally

large proportion of literal language." 43 Spurgeon emphasises the same idea. "Julius Caesar is straightforward, slow-moving, restrained, almost bare in style; it has relatively few images (less than half those in Coriolanus, and less than one-third those in Antony and Cleopatra). " 44

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

If there is any relationship between this frequency of figurative language in general and the number of mythological allusions, one would, judging from the above table, expect such allusions to be very numerous in Troilus and Cressida. They are; there are many more incidental allusions to mythology here than in any other of the classical dramas. In fact, the ratio indicated above carries throughout for all these plays as will be seen.

In Troilus and Cressida, too, the range of references is very wide. There are numerous mentions of the divinities, both greater and lesser ones, such as Jupiter, Juno, Mars, Apollo, Venus, Mercury, Neptune, Pluto, Diana, Vulcan, Cupid, and Iris—and many allusions to nature myths and fables found in Vergil or Ovid. However, the tone used is not always serious as it was in Julius Caesar, nor do all the allusions center around the leading characters. There is the constant reference to the gods in general in accordance with the pagan setting, and innumerable brief exclamations such as "O Jupiter!," "by Jove," "Jupiter forbid," "Juno have mercy," "for Venus' sake," "by Pluto,"


Jove himself is invoked under various titles: by Thersites as "thou great thunder-darter of Olympus" and "the king of the gods"; by Hector as "Jove multipotent" or again as "him that thunders." Oaths are common with appeal made to various witnesses. Jove naturally is the one most frequently called upon, but some of the other witnesses are these: Aeneas swears by his parents, "by Anchises' life," and "by Venus' hand"; Troilus uses, "for by the dreadful Pluto"; and Hector, "by Mars, his gauntlet." Hector tells Menelaus:

Your quondam wife swears still by Venus' glove.

(IV, v, 179)

The old soldier Nestor speaks "by great Mars"; and Hector, angered by Achilles' insolent glance and comments, gnashes out:

By the forge that stitned Mars his helm,
I'll kill you everywhere.

(IV, v, 255-56)

Finally the oath of Cressida is by the stars and moon:

By all Diana's waiting women yond,
And by herself.

(V, ii, 91-92)

Since the entire play centers around the theme of love, unlawful love though it may be, Cupid is frequently upon the lips, sometimes of Helen who merely exclaims:

O Cupid, Cupid, Cupid!

(III, i, 120)

or of Troilus who appeals to Pandar:

From Cupid's shoulder pluck his painted wings
And fly with me to Cressid!

(III, ii, 15-16)

or of Patroclus who urges Achilles:
Sweet, rouse yourself, and the weak wanton Cupid
Shall from your neck unloose his amorous fold,
And, like a dewdrop from the lion’s mane,
Be shook to air.

(III, iii, 222-25)

or finally of Pandarus who speaks in his usual manner too bold and unpleasant for repetition in this instance.

Root says that the epithets and attributes given by Shakespeare to Cupid were common to all his contemporaries; but he adds that more significant than his conception of Cupid is the use Shakespeare makes of the myths. Two facts, Root claims, are immediately obvious: (1) that mentions of Cupid are numerous in Shakespeare's plays written before 1601, but very rare in those after that date; (2) that in all but a few instances the references are of a playful character, and that Cupid is not seriously regarded as a divinity of love. 45

In addition to these rather general allusions, there are many others yet to be considered. Troilus, totally blinded by his love sickness, soliloquizes thus at the very outset of the play:

O gods, how do you plague me!
I cannot come to Cressid but by Pandar,
And he's as tetchy to be woo'd to woo
As she is stubborn-chaste against all suit.
Tell me, Apollo, for thy Daphne's love,
What Cressid is, what Pandar, and what we.

(I, i, 97-102)

Ovid tells the story of Apollo and Daphne in his Metamorphoses (I, 452-567). The reference is apparently apt for Troilus thinks Cressida flees from his

45 Root, Classical Mythology, p. 49.
love as did Daphne from Apollo whose love-wound was inflicted by Cupid. When the sun god mocked Cupid's playing with weapons, Venus' child pierced Apollo with a sharp, golden arrow exciting love and at the same time the nymph Daphne with a blunt, leaden one repelling love. It was only by appeal to her father, a river god, that Daphne finally escaped Apollo by being changed into a laurel tree. Of course, had Troilus true sight, he would easily realize that in reality Daphne and Cressida have nothing in common at all; but blinded as he is, he sees them only as sisters in feelings and emotions.

When Cressida appears in person for the first time, she and her man, Alexander, speak among other things of Ajax whom Alexander characterizes for her amusement.

He hath the joints of everything, but everything so out of joint that he is gouty Briareus, many hands and no use, or purblind Argus, all eyes and no sight.

(I, ii, 28-31)

Briareus the strong, a fabulous monster with a hundred hands, and Argus, the dreaded giant with a hundred eyes no more than two of which ever slept at one time, would be, if afflicted in the very powers through which they might be expected to excel, very like to this Ajax as conceived by Shakespeare. Cressida finds him a man who makes her smile. Vergil mentions the "centum-geminus Briareus" in the descent into Hades (Aen. 6, 287), and Ovid tells of Argus guarding Io at the command of jealous Juno but finally lulled to sleep and killed by Mercury (Met. I, 621 seq.). Incidentally mythology recounts that Juno then took the eyes of Argus and scattered them as ornaments on the
tail of her peacock where they remain to this very day. 46

During the course of the conversation between Cressida and Alexander, Pandarus enters prepared to plead Troilus' cause. Cressida apparently is little impressed, but Pandarus finally vouches for the Trojan prince thus:

Had I a sister were a Grace or a daughter a goddess, he should take his choice. O admirable man!

(I, ii, 256-58)

The extravagance of the language makes one smile for it is incongruous to imagine Pandarus either brother to the Graces, familiar companions of Diana, or sire to a goddess.

As the scene shifts again, this time to the Grecian camp, the council of the leaders, already referred to in the preceding chapter, is presented together with Agamemnon's explanation of their failures, also quoted before. The failures are

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.

(I, iii, 20-23)

Jove is considered as the principal and supreme pagan deity, but this idea of his providential care in bringing good from apparent evil seems to be a Christian rather than a pagan concept. Root affirms: "Shakespeare like many authors of the Renaissance, identifies Jove with the Christian God." 47 It is difficult to conceive, however, that many such anachronisms were not

46 Gayley, op. cit., p. 67
47 Root, Classical Mythology, p. 80.
intentionally used in order the better to reach the common audience's sensibility and comprehension.

Nestor next enlarges upon this idea of Agamemnon's that it is adversity which proves the worth of men. In figurative speech he paints a storm at sea upon which ride the boats of life.

But let the ruffian Boreas once enrage
The gentle Thetis, and anon behold
The strong-ribb'd bark through liquid mountains cut,
Bounding between the two moist elements
Like Perseus' horse.

(I, iii, 38-42)

The shallow bauble boat meanwhile is

either to harbour fled
Or made a toast for Neptune.

(I, iii, 44-45)

There are a number of mythological allusions to be commented upon here. "Ruffian" well defines the traits generally assigned to Boreas, the north wind, who often blows upon and enrages the sea, personified here under the figure of Thetis. Thetis, in reality, is a sea-goddess or Nereid, mother of Achilles. The glossary of the Warwick edition quotes from Schmidt that she is here "confounded with Tethys, the wife of Oceanus, and used for the sea, the ocean."48

Root says in regard to the reference to "Perseus' horse" that Shakespeare like Spenser in the Ruins of Time thinks of Perseus as mounted on Pegasus in his struggle with the sea-monster at the rescue of Andromeda;

but in the Ovidian account, (Met. 4, 663, seq.) he is represented as flying out over the sea on winged sandals. Root adds, "It may be worth while to notice that in Rubens' painting of Perseus and Andromache in the Royal Museum at Berlin, a winged horse stands at the left of the picture." 49

Bush commenting in turn on Root's statements says that there is no need of limiting the comparison to Shakespeare and Spenser for association of Perseus and Pegasus was traditional. 50

Dales, who has still a third comment in this connection, says that Perseus' ship was named "Pegase." It was regarded as very swift by the ancients since by the aid of it he had pursued and destroyed the Gorgon Medusa and ancient writers therefore frequently referred to the ship as "Perseus' flying horse." Dales' own reference is The Reader's Handbook by Brewer. 51

Continuing with the original question, one finds that Neptune, as is usually true in Shakespeare, is thought of scarcely as a divinity but rather as a personification of the sea. The personal element is nearly absent, says Root in regard to this allusion. He continues that the wrecked ship is compared to a piece of toast soaked in wine and presented to the god. 52 To modern minds this may seem a strange connotation for "toast"; yet Webster

49 Root, Classical Mythology, p. 96.


51 James Stuart Dales, Shakespeare and the English Classic Drama (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska, 1934), p.9.

52 Root, Classical Mythology, p. 90.
gives this origin of the word meaning to drink the health or honor of:
"Toast, n. so called because toasts were formerly put into the liquor as a delicacy."

Reference was made, too, in the preceding chapter, to the lines containing the next incidental mythological allusion. It occurs in Ulysses' recital of Patroclus' mimicry of Agamemnon's speech in which his terms from the tongue of roaring Typhon dropp'd
Would seem hyperboles.

(I,iii, 160-61)

This is strong language if one considers that Typhon was supposed to be a monster from whose neck dispread a hundred dragon-heads. "From his black-tongued chaps proceeded the hissing of snakes, the bellowing of bulls, the roaring of lions, the barking of dogs, pipings and screams, and, at times, the voice and utterance of the gods themselves." Defeated in warring against Jupiter, Typhon was finally imprisoned under Mt. Etna whence according to legend even to this day he roars and hisses and thrusts upward a fiery tongue.

Ulysses next draws attention to Patroclus' imitation of Nestor. He diplomatically claims that it bears no true resemblance to the famed warrior; no, it is utterly unlike him—

as near as the extremest ends
Of parallels, as like as Vulcan and his wife.

(I,iii, 167-68)

The god of fire, lame and somewhat deformed, was credited with

53 Gayley, op. cit., pp. 6-7.
several different wives: Aglaia, the youngest of the Graces; Fauna, the "Bona Dea"; and lastly Venus, goddess of love and beauty. It is probably the latter whom Shakespeare has here in mind although all three were supposed to possess great physical beauty and charm and any one would stand in decided contrast to Vulcan's lack of handsomeness and social refinement.

In the midst of these recitals, Aeneas enters with the challenge of Hector. His message is for Agamemnon's ears and he asks how he may know the Grecian leader. With exaggerated courtesy he responds to Agamemnon's rather ironic "How?" with:

Ay.
I ask that I might waken reverence
And bid the cheek be ready with a blush
Modest as Morning when she coldly eyes
The youthful Phoebus.

(I, iii, 226-30)

This simple reference is to Apollo, god of the sun, in his morning rising. His title of "Phoebus" signifies the radiant nature of the sunlight.

Agamemnon is not quite sure how to take this response.

This Trojan scorns us, or the men of Troy
Are ceremonious courtiers.

(I, iii, 233-34)

Aeneas agrees that in peace they are, and yet in war as soldiers,

Jove's accord,
Nothing so full of heart.

(I, iii, 238-39)

The Warwick edition interprets this as, "and Jove granting or favoring."

Various emendations have been proposed, however, on the supposition that the passage is corrupt. 54

Ulysses and Nestor afterwards in private colloquy agree that the challenge is really directed to Achilles alone. Achilles will have to recognize the fact, they say, even

... were his brain as barren
As banks of Libya (though, Apollo knows, 'Tis dry enough).

(I, iii, 327-29)

No special attribute of the god is here referred to; it is but an exclamation joined to an uncomplimentary remark justly due to Achilles' pride.

Sly Ulysses then suggests the plan of substituting Ajax and of pretending that the Greeks find him the worthier man. Thus Achilles will be humbled which will

... make him fall
His crest, that prouder than blue Iris bends.

(I, iii, 379-80)

No particular suitability can be assigned to the use here of "blue" Iris. As goddess of the rainbow she was varicolored; neither is pride a quality associated with her in particular.

All of these allusions occur in the three scenes of the first act. As the second act opens, Thersites taunts Ajax with the latter's envy of Achilles

... thou art as full of envy at his
greatness as Cerberus is at Proserpina's beauty.

(II, i, 36-37)

This is an odd allusion for which mythological stories offer no explanation. It is difficult to conceive that the ugly three-headed, serpent-tailed dog with his neck bristling with snakes, the guardian to the entrance to the underworld, envied the beauty of the queen of that abode; yet one should not be surprised at anything coming from the lips of Thersites. The comparison of
Ajax to Cerberus and of Achilles to Proserpina would be the kind of an insult which Thersites would revel in giving.

In Ilium meanwhile discussion is held as to the advisibility of restoring Helen to the Greeks. Troilus is filled with disdain for Helenus, Priam’s priestly son and his own brother. Troilus is a warrior whose scoff is that adherence to reason, as suggested by Helenus, would be cowardly.

Who marvels, then when Helenus beholds
A Grecian and his sword, if he do set
The very wings of reason to his heels
And fly like chidden Mercury from Jove?

(II, ii, 42-45)

Swift Mercury, herald of Jupiter and of the other gods, is usually represented, of course, in plastic art with wings on his ankles; but mythology does not seem to have left record of when he had to fly chidden from Jove. To what Shakespeare therefore refers is not clear, yet his thought is evident and effectively given under the figure. Too, Troilus is very young and is speaking under the double stress of his own personal passion and of his attempt to dissimulate it from the eyes of others. Perhaps, one should not expect him under the circumstances to be too accurate in his comments. Carried on by the ardor of his own arguments, he becomes more and more vehement, speak- of Helen as

. . . a Grecian queen, whose youth and freshness
Wrinkles Apollo’s and makes stale the morning.

(II, ii, 78-79)

Again the allusion is not at all detailed, yet the comparison lays added tribute at the feet of Helen. Her beauty must, indeed, have been great when it could so charm both Greeks and Trojans.
In the third scene, Thersites is pictured as soliloquizing still in wrath at Ajax and Achilles.

Mercury, lose all the serpentine craft
of thy caduceus, if ye take not that little, little
less than little wit from them that they have!

(II, iii, 13-15)

The caduceus, a wand of wood or gold twined with snakes and surmounted by wings, possessed magical powers over health, wealth, happiness, and dreams. It had been presented to Mercury by Apollo and aided the former in exerting his cunning. Mercury was known for his powers of outwitting gods as well as men; therefore it is to him that Thersites makes appeal against the Grecian pride-mongers.

The plan suggested by Ulysses of substituting Ajax for Achilles in answer to the challenge of Hector has been adopted. Ajax, an unsuspecting victim, drinks in eagerly, as though it were owing, all the applause bestowed upon him. Agamemnon has urged that Ajax be sent to Achilles for surely the noble Ajax will have influence even if no one else can move Thetis' son. Ulysses, according to the plan, hastily objects, calling Achilles "Cancer the crab" of the zodiac, but Ajax "Hyperion," the sun god. Ajax shall not go to Achilles!

That were to enlard his fat-already pride
And add more coals to Cancer when he burns
With entertaining great Hyperion.

(II, iii, 205-07)

In an aside, Nestor urges Ulysses to go yet much farther. "Force him with praise! Pour in; pour in." Ulysses obliges. How can the heavens be thanked sufficiently for the mother and father who gave the world this Ajax!
As for his tutor, he is thrice famed!

But he that disciplin'd thine arms to fight—
Let Mars divide eternity in twain
And give him half.

(II,iii, 255-57)

How skillfully Shakespeare is revealing his conception of Ajax when he lets him grow broad-chested under such evident and outrageously false flattery.

An interlude, inserted at the beginning of the third act, is filled with word plays of which Shakespeare is fond. A servant of Paris speaks with Pandarus and refers to Helen as

... the mortal Venus, the heart-blood of beauty, love's invisible soul.

(III, i, 34-35)

Pandarus pretends to think that such a description can apply only to his cousin, but to emphasize it, he comments:

Who? my cousin Cressida?

(III, i, 36)

In the following scene, Troilus in answer to Pandarus' question as to whether or not he has seen Cressida, says dramatically in love-sick accents:

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
Propos'd for the deserver!

(III, ii, 9-14)

Mythology relates that Charon, the grim boatman, received the dead at the Styx, river of Woe, and ferried them across, if the money requisite for their passage had been placed in their mouths and their bodies had been duly buried in the world above; otherwise he left them wandering on the hither bank.
Troilus feels that he must be such an unfortunate soul for whom only Pandarus can be the Charon transporting him to Cressida, his Elysium delight.

Achilles meanwhile has been somewhat aroused at the disregard offered him and the attention paid to Ajax. Ulysses assures him:

The cry went once on thee,
And still it might, and yet it may again
If thou wouldest not entomb thyself alive
And case thy reputation in thy tent,
Whose glorious deeds, but in these fields of late,
Made emulous missions 'mongst the gods themselves,
And drove great Mars to faction. (III,iii, 184-90)

In "made emulous missions," Shakespeare, says the Warwick edition, refers to the descent of the gods to take part in the fight before Troy, although they were forbidden to do so. Mythology tells that Mars really fought against the Greeks, not because of anything Achilles had done, but because of his infatuation for Venus who favored the Trojans. Ulysses here makes it appear otherwise. In one of the battles, Diomed wounds Mars disguised as a Thracian captain. "Then," relates Gayley, giving the story of the Iliad, "brazen Mars bellows as loud as nine or ten thousand soldiers all at once." Returning to Olympus to complain to Jove, he receives only a reprimand for stirring men ever to strife. Amusingly, Jove denounces Mars with the words, "[Thou art] like thine own mother Juno after whom, not after me, thou takest." This disobedience is the "faction" to which

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56 Gayley, op. cit., p. 290.
allusion is made.

Achilles is not to be moved from his inaction, however, and he simply states that he has strong reasons for his privacy. When Ulysses accuses him of traitorous love with one of Priam's daughters, Achilles cannot understand how that can be known; but Ulysses says:

Is that a wonder?
The providence that's in a watchful state
Knows almost every grain of Pluto's gold.

(III,iii, 195-97) 57

Ulysses finally departs and Patroclus enters, then Thersites. Thersites with his ugly tongue mimics Ajax whose ego has been inflated almost to the bursting point through the flattery of the Grecian leaders. Achilles thinks the picture must be overdrawn and queries:

Why, but he is not in this tune, is he?

(III,iii, 301)

Thersites responds:

No, but he's out o' tune thus. What
music will be in him when Hector has knock'd out his brains I know not; but, I am sure, none, unless the fiddler Apollo get his sinews to make catlings on.

(III,iii, 302-06)

The intent of slight to Ajax seems to transfer itself to the god, Apollo, patron of music, who made sweet melodies with his lyre; but the Warwick edition makes this comment: "In the mythological art of the Shakespearian era, the 'lyre' is often replaced by the 'fiddle' in the hands of Apollo." 58

57 See p. 39 for comments on "Pluto."

One cannot expect anything of good to come from the evil-hearted Thersites no matter of whom he speaks, god or man.

The time of the combat between Hector and Ajax draws near and Agamemnon bids the latter sound his trumpet to Troy. Ajax swaggers forth:

Blow, villain, till thy spherred bias cheek
Outswell the colic of puff'd Aquilon.

(IV, v, 8-9)

"Aquilon" is the north winds to which reference was once before made under the title of "Boreas." These two instances are the only times when Shakespeare personifies the winds under classical names. The allusion is to the conventional pictorial representation of the winds as cherubs with puffed cheeks. Root suggests comparison should be made with the Venus of Botticelli (1447-1510), 59

Hector answers the summons but soon calls a truce to the duel as Ajax is his cousin-german. Ajax is apparently full of regret for he had intended no less than Hector's death. Hector assures him:

Not Neoptolemus so mirable
. . . could promise to himself
A thought of added honour torn from Hector.

(IV,v, 142; 144-45)

This Neoptolemus is really Achilles' son who had not yet engaged in the siege of Troy. Shakespeare very likely refers to Achilles, though he was not so named. "Finding that his son was Pyrrhus 'Neoptolemus,' the Poet probably considered 'Neoptolemus' as the 'nomen gentilitium' or gentilitial name, and thought the father was likewise Achilles 'Neoptolemus.' Or he may have

59 Root, Classical Mythology, p. 39.
been led into error by some book of the time." 60 Some editions suggest amendments such as "Neoptolemus' sire so mirable," or "Neoptolemus's sire irascible." 61

Hector is invited into the Grecian camp where all vie with one another in offering him due honor. Wise Nestor pays the compliment:

I have seen thee
As hot as Perseus, spur thy Phrygian steed.

(IV,v, 185-86)

He has been forced to exclaim in admiration as he has seen Hector's generosity to the fallen foes:

'Lo, Jupiter, is yonder, dealing life.'

(IV,v, 191)

Perseus, already referred to in connection with the allusion given in I,iii, 38-45, 62 was famed as a warrior since he had slain both the Gorgon Medusa and the sea monster to whom Andromeda was to be sacrificed. It is praise, indeed, for Hector to be likened unto him, but Nestor does not find even that sufficient; no, he is a very Jupiter himself, king of the gods. The Greeks were undoubtedly sincere in their admiration for their chief Ice.

Like sincerity cannot be credited to Thersites' comment, however, at the very opening of the fifth act, when he refers to Menelaus as

... the goodly transformation of Jupiter.

(V,i, 58)

60 Warwick edition, p. 181.
61 Ibid., p. 169.
62 See p. 46 for comments on Perseus.
Sarcasm is simply dripping from each word. Thersites can find nothing bad
enough to say for Menelaus as is evident when he crowns his raiillery with
a desire to be rather a "louse of a lazar" then Menelaus. Thersites is dis-
gusting in every way, shape, manner, and form.

By this time, Troilus has been sadly disillusioned at Cressida's un-
faithfulness. In broken-hearted, passionate outburst, he cries:

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;
And yet the spacious breadth of this division
Admits no orifex for a point as subtle
As Ariachne's broken woof to enter.
Instance, 0 instance! strong as Pluto's gates:
Cressid is mine, tied with the bonds of heaven.
Instance, 0 instance! strong as heaven itself:
The bonds of heaven are slipp'd, dissolv'd and loos'd.

(V, ii, 146-56)

Arachne, as related in Ovid (Met. 6, 1-145), became a spider after Minerva
in anger at the mortal's temerity in trying to surpass the goddess' skill in
weaving, had rent her web in pieces. So closely bound are he and Cressida,
says Troilus, that not even the thinness of the spider's thread could find
entrance between them. Strong, even as the gates of Pluto, against which no
strength can avail, is their union; yet she is false. He would doubt almost
the very evidence of his own eyes.

Ulysses, who as guide has been listening to Troilus' lament, by his
attempt at sympathy, draws forth yet more. Troilus is now beyond trying to
hide anything. In blood, his passion for Cressida

... shall be divulged well
In characters as red as Mars his heart
Inflam'd with Venus.  

Diomed shall die for the sleeve he'll bear upon his helm tomorrow. Were he to wear

... a casque composed by Vulcan's skill,
My sword should bite it.

Frenzied anger makes Troilus capable of any rashness of statement, for he would find it difficult, to say the least, to cleave a helmet fashioned by the blacksmith of the gods. But hate rushes on.

Not the dreadful spout
Which shipmen do the hurricano call,
Constring'd in mass by the almighty sun,
Shall dizzy with more clamour Neptune's ear
In his descent than shall my prompted sword
Falling on Diomed.

When next day Hector tells Troilus that he would not have him fight, the young Trojan answers:

Who should withhold me?
Not fate, obedience, nor the hand of Mars
Beck'ning with his fiery truncheon my retire.

Since not even command of the god of wars with flaming sword could halt Troilus' determination, he does go to battle. As he and Diomed meet, Troilus calls out:

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

Not even the dead attempted the passage of this river except through the aid of Charon and his boat. Troilus' impossible threats are indicative of the
point of abandon to which he has been driven.

Agamemnon fears the Greeks will be defeated and he calls for reenforcements lest they all perish. He relates those who have already fallen and says:

The dreadful Sagittary
Appals our numbers.

(V, v, 14-15)

The "Sagittary" was a centaur, half man and half horse, Lydgate's account of the Troy story makes these remarks about him:

A wonder archer of sight mervaylous,
Of form and shape in manner monstrous:
For like mine auctour as I rehearse can,
Fro the navel upward he was man,
And lower down like a horse yshaped;
And thilke part that after man was maked
Of skin was black and rough as any beare,
Covered with hair fro cold him for to weare.
Passing foul and horrible of sight.
Whose eyes twain were sparkling as bright
As is a furnace with his red leven,
Or the lightning that falleth fro the heven;
Dredeful of looke, and red as fire of cheer,
And, as I rede, he was a good archer;
And with his bow both at even and morow
Upon the Grekes he wrought much sorrow. 63

Yet since the fates have decreed that the Trojans, not the Greeks, are destined to destruction, Troilus is finally forced to announce, "Hector's dead!" Who will tell Priam, who Hecuba?

There is a word will Priam turn to stone;
Make well and Niobes of the maids and wives.

(V, x, 18-19)

Niobe, boasting of her superiority to the goddess Latona, lost at a single

63 Warwick edition, p. 185.
time her seven sons and seven daughters through the arrows of Apollo and Diana, children of Latona. Niobe herself turned to stone within and without, yet the myth claims that her tears have never ceased to flow. (Ovid, Met. 6, 165-312). The figure is well chosen for only a grief such as this could compare with that which falls upon the king and queen and all Troy in the loss of Hector.

But even now Troilus refuses to call a truce. He still shouts forth:

You vile abominable tents,
Thus proudly pight upon our Phrygian plains,
Let Titan rise as early as he dare,
I'll through and through you!

(V, vi, 23-26)

Titan is no more than a personification for the sun. This simple reference is the final mythological allusion of the play, yet it occurs within the last twenty-five lines. This helps to explain even more clearly why this play has been termed "a mythological allusion in five acts," for every single portion of the play is replete with either intrinsic or incidental allusions or both.
CHAPTER IV
FURTHER INCIDENTAL ALLUSIONS TO MYTHOLOGY

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

Antony and Cleopatra comes second only to Troilus and Cressida in regard to the number of its incidental allusions to mythology found throughout all acts of the play. As in both Julius Caesar and Troilus and Cressida, the atmosphere of time, place, and setting is constantly colored by reference to the gods in general. Practically everything is done either with a plea to the gods, in the name of the gods, with the aid of the gods, or in thanksgiving to the gods. For instance, when Antony announces Fulvia's death to Enobarbus, blunt realism fashions the latter's reply:

Why, sir, give the gods a thankful sacrifice. When it pleaseth their deities to take the wife of a man from him, it shows to man the tailors of the earth.

(I, ii, 167-70)

Or again, Cleopatra, not yet knowing of Fulvia's death, but fearing Antony's departure, exerts her wily influence by asserting his treason and her betrayal. She tries to draw forth Antony's protestations of love and fidelity by claiming that she would not believe him even under oath to the gods:

Why should I think you can be mine, and true,
Though you in swearing shake the throned gods,
Who has been false to Fulvia?

(I, iii, 27-29)

In this play, as in Julius Caesar but not as in Troilus and Cressida, practically all the mythological allusions center around the leading characters. With but very, very few exceptions, Shakespeare has put these allusions
on the lips of Antony or Cleopatra or has them spoken to these characters or about them. The exceptions concern in several instances Caesar and Pompey; or else they are simply exclamations such as "by Jove," "by Hercules," or "sweer Isis." This fact is rather notable when one considers that the allusions number close to a hundred if both the general and detailed be included in the count, while the exceptions number not more than ten. Despite lack of interest in mythology for its own sake, Shakespeare evidently considered it, though perhaps unconsciously so, as a worthy appurtenance of his leading figures.

Another characteristic, held in common this time with Troilus and Cressida, is that the range of references is considerable. There are numerous mentions of the divinities, especially of the greater ones, such as Jupiter, Juno, Mars, Phoebus, Venus, Mercury, and Neptune—as well as of the lesser ones such as Cupid, Bacchus, and Atlas. There are also frequent allusions to nature myths and to fables found in Vergil or Ovid. In tone, however, the majority of the allusions of this play more nearly approximate those of Julius Caesar than those of Troilus and Cressida. In Troilus and Cressida the tone of the allusions was often light and bantering. The fact, too, that Pandarus and in particular Thersites were permitted frequent appeal to mythological figures seemed in a certain sense to debase all such references in that play; yet here in Antony and Cleopatra, there is frequently much more seriousness. Often the allusions occur at the very height of emotion in a critical scene, and the references serve definitely both to convey and to increase empathy.
A last general characteristic, common to this play alone, is the frequent invocation of Isis by Cleopatra and her attendants since they are all Egyptians. Cleopatra even assumes the goddess' guise on occasion. Caesar, in anger, relates to Maecenas how Antony in Alexandria has been contemning Rome and has had himself and Cleopatra publicly enthroned, giving her and her children the rule of many lands.

She
In th' habiliments of the goddess Isis
That day appear'd; and oft before gave audience
As 'tis reported, so.

(III, vi, 16-19)

This Isis was one of the chief Egyptian divinities. In process of time she had come to be regarded as the most universal of all the Egyptian goddesses ruling in heaven and on earth, on the sea and in the world below, deciding the fate of men and dispensing rewards and punishments. She was represented as a woman crowned with the sun's disk or with cow's horns, bearing also upon her head her emblem, the throne. History corroborates the substance of Caesar's words above and adds that in her pride, Cleopatra could find no title magnificent enough for the children, fruit of her lust with Antony, except those of "the Sun" and "the Moon." The frequent reference to Isis, often merely by way of exclamation, however, simply lends atmosphere to the setting and naturalness to the characters.

Turning now to the individual allusions, given more or less in detail, one finds at the very opening of the play, friends of Antony making sorrowing reference to the change that has come over their former illustrious leader. The allusion is simple and readily understood. Philo says to Demetrius:
Nay, but this dotage of our general's
O'erflows the measure. Those his goodly eyes
That o'er the files and musters of the way
Have glowed like plated Mars, now bend, now turn
The office and devotion of their view
Upon a tawny front.

(I, i, 1-6)

The second scene shifts to Cleopatra's palace at Alexandria and in
a playful but not too nice scene between attendants of the Queen and a
soothsayer, frequent allusion is made to Isis. Later, after the exit of this
group, as Antony and Enobarbus discuss the necessity of the former's imme-
diate return to Rome, Enobarbus says that Cleopatra catching but the least
noise of this, dies instantly. Antony exclaims:

She is cunning past men's thought.

(I, ii, 150)

But Enobarbus responds:

Alack, sir, no! Her passions are made
of nothing but the finest part of pure love. We
cannot call her winds and waters sighs and
tears. They are greater storms and tempests
than almanacs can report. This cannot be cun-
ing in her; if it be, she makes a show'r of rain
as well as Jove.

(I, ii, 151-57)

When Cleopatra has actually been informed of Fulvia's death and of
Antony's intended departure, according to practical feminine psychology she
whets his sensual appetite by playing the coquette even while she flatters
his vanity. Knowing that she must not go too far, however, she finally turns
to Charmian and boasts to her how well mighty Antony bears a bit of teasing:

Look, prithee, Charmian,
How this Herculean Roman does become
The carriage of his chafe.

(I, iii, 83-85)
Hercules, of course, is one of the oldest and most famous of heroes in Greek mythology and is famed for his strength. Plutarch writes:

Now it has bene a speech of old time, that the familie of the Antony were descended from one Anton, the sonne of Hercules, whereof the familie tooke name. This opinion did Antonius seeke to confirm in all his doings; not onely resembling him in the likenesse of his bodie, as we have saide before, but also in the wearing of his garments.64

This accounts for Cleopatra calling Antony "this Herculean Roman."

Antony's actual departure leaves Cleopatra almost disconsolate. Nothing pleases her any longer. In conversarion with her attendant, Mardian, another not too pleasant reference is made, this time to the amorous intrigues between Venus and Mars.65 Mardian uses the allusion, but it offers no distraction to Cleopatra. She immediately turns again to the thought of Antony,

The demi-Atlas of this earth.  
(I, v, 23)

He may well be called such for with Lepidus scarcely of account, Antony and Caesar hold the heavens between them. Cleopatra wonders about her Antony and speaks to him as though he were present, asking,

Think on me,  
That am with Phoebus' amorous pinches black  
And wrinkled deep in time?  
(I, v, 27-29)

Brandes says that Shakespeare has endowed both Antony and Cleopatra


65 See reference p. 55.
with extreme personal beauty, though neither of them is young. She is an enchantress. "What matters it that Shakespeare pictures her to himself as dark as an African (she was in reality of the purest Greek blood), or that she, with some exaggeration, calls herself old? She can afford to jest on the subject of her complexion as on that of her age." Brandes quotes from Pascal's Penseés "Si le nez de Cléopâtre eût été plus court, toute la face de la terre aurait changé," and then adds in his own name, "but her nose was, as the old coins show us, exactly what it ought to have been." 66

In the second act, Pompey at his home in Messina speaks of Caesar and Lepidus whom he falsely thinks are in Rome waiting in vain for the last third of the triumvirate, Antony. Pompey prays that witchcraft, beauty, lust, and feast may keep Antony ensnared in Alexandria:

Epicurean cooks
Sharpen with cloyless sauce his appetite,
That sleep and feeding may prorogue his honour
Even till a Lethe'd dulness!

(I, i, 24-27)

The reference is to the river of oblivion in Hades out of which the souls of the departed drank forgetfulness of their earthly existence. Such oblivion would Pompey have Antony drink in.

But Pompey is doomed to disappointment in this instance, for surprisingly Antony is already back in Rome. Upheaval between Caesar and Antony is imminent, however, and Lepidus tries to persuade Enobarbus to entreat Antony to soft and gentle speech. Enobarbus retorts indignantly:

I shall entreat him
To answer like himself. If Caesar move him,
Let Antony look over Caesar's head
And speak as loud as Mars. By Jupiter,
Were I the wearer of Antonius' beard,
I would not shave't today!

(II, ii, 3-8)

"As loud as Mars, is to be understood here in the sense of as "in high words" such as the god of war would use. Humility on the part of Mars cannot be imagined. In short, Enobarbus, were he Antony, would meet Caesar without even the respect of a clean shaven face. Let Caesar be the one to make amends.

The next reference to mythology comes in the famous descriptive passage of the first meeting of Antony and Cleopatra on the river Cyndus. All the incidents, including the mythological allusions, are taken directly from Plutarch, Shakespeare having thrown over them simply the magic of his poetic power. Though the accounts are long, because of the fame of the passage and the number of the mythological allusions in it, the quotation will be given both from Plutarch, the source, and from Shakespeare himself. The former writes:

... but to take her barge in the river Cyndus, the poope whereof was of gold, the sailes of purple, and the owers of silver, which kept stroke in rowing after the sound of the musick of flutes, howboyes, cytherns, vyolls, and such other instruments as they played upon in the barge. And now for the person of her selfe; she was laide under a pavillion of cloth of golde of tissue, apparell and attired like the goddess Venus, commonly drawn in picture; and hard by her, on either hand of her, pretie boyes apparell'd as painters doe set foorth god Cupide, with litlle fans in their hands, with which they fanned winde upon her. Her ladies and gentlewomen also, the fairest of them were apparell'd
like the nymphes Nereides (which are the myrmaides of the waters) and like the Graces, some steering the helme, others tending the tackle and ropes of the barge, out of which there came a wonderful passing sweete savor of perfumes, that perfumed the wharves side, pestered with innumerable multitudes of people. Some of them followed the barge all alongst the rivers side; others also ranne out of the citie to see her coming in. So that in the end, there ranne such multitudes of people one after another to see her, that Antonius was left post alone in the marker place, in his Imperiall seate to give audience; and there went a rumor in the peoples mouthes, that the goddesse Venus was come to play with the god Bacchus, for the generall good of all Asia. 67

Shakespeare gives it thus:

The barge she sat in like a burnish'd throne,
Burn'd on the water. The poop was beaten gold;
Purple the sails, and so perfumed that
The winds were lovesick with them; the oars were silver,
Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke, and made
The water which they beat to follow faster,
As amorous of their strokes. For her own person,
It beggar'd description. She did lie
In her pavilion, cloth-of-gold of tissue,
O'er picturing that Venus where we see
The fancy outwork nature. On each side her
Stood pretty dimpled boys, like smiling Cupids,
With divers-colour'd fans, whose wind did seem
To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool,
And what they undid did. . . . . . . . . . .
Her gentlewomen, like the Nereides,
So many mermaids, tended her i' th' eyes,
And made their bends adornings. At the helm
A seeming mermaid steers. The silken tackle
Swell with the touches of those flower-soft hands
That yarely frame the office. From the barge
A strange invisible perfume hits the sense
Of the adjacent wharfs. The city cast
Her people out upon her; and Antony,
Enthron'd i' th' market place, did sit alone,
Whistling to the air; which, but for vacancy,

Had gone to gaze on Cleopatra too,
And made a gap in nature.

(II, ii, 196-223)

There is no difficulty in understanding the mythological allusions, but without them the passage would be beggared. The goddess of beauty and her son Cupid need no explanation whatsoever. The Nereides were sea nymphs originally represented as having sea-grown hair and descending into fish-like form, like the mermaids of later times. The phrases, "tended her i' th' eyes, And made their bends adornings," have called forth very many attempts at explanation as shown by the Variorum edition. The editor seems best pleased with those critics who explain "bends" and "eyes" in the sense of nautical terms. Since that does not directly concern the mythological allusion itself, however, it need not be discussed here.

The next reference to mythology occurs when the messenger from Italy comes to bring news to Cleopatra of Antony's union with Octavia. Conflicting hopes and fears make the Egyptian unreasonable in her demands. If he brings good tidings she promises him gold; on the other hand,

If not well,
Thou shouldst come like a Fury crown'd with snakes,
Not like a formal man.

(II, v, 39-41)

These furies, as described by Aeschylus, were horrible creatures with bodies all black, with snakes entwined in their hair, and with blood dripping from their eyes. According to Cleopatra's present feelings, nothing short of this could seem a fit companion to bad tidings about her Antony, her sensation

of the moment. When the unfortunate messenger finally tells his tale and, though innocent, suffers dearly for the truth, Cleopatra with passion adds:

Go get thee hence!
Hadst thou Narcissus in thy face, to me
Thou wouldst appear most ugly.

(II, v, 95-97)

Ovid gives the story of Narcissus whose beauty was so great that he was inspired with passionate love for his own reflection seen in the waters of a fountain (Met. 3, 339-510).

Cleopatra is utterly uncontrolled in her outburst. One moment she hates Antony, the next she burns again with passion for him.

Let him for ever go! -- let him not! -- Charmian,
Though he be painted one way like a Gorgon,
The other way's a Mars.

(II, v, 115-17)

According to the Variorum edition the allusion is to the "double pictures" formerly in vogue. On one side might be seen a fair maid and on the other an ape; or on one side there might be a lamb and on the other a lion, and so on. Here figuratively in the representation of Antony, there is on one side a Gorgon and on the other a Mars. The Gorgon was a fearful being whose look was supposed to turn the beholder into stone; while Mars, god of war, was often represented as an ideal of manly beauty.

One of Pompey's friends uses the next allusion. Menas whispers to Pompey:

Thou art, if thou dar' st be, the earthly Jove.

(II, vii, 73)

At the same time he asks leave first to cut the cable of that boat whereon Pompey feasts Antony, Caesar, and Lepidus, and then to cut their throats.
Thus Pompey may become the "earthly Jove." A tempting offer indeed! Pompey deeply regrets the necessity of refusal; the stain to his honor would be too great. But since refuse he must, the revels continue. As the cup goes round and round again too freely, Enobarbus says to Antony:

Shall we dance now the Egyptian Bacchanals
And celebrate our drink?  

*(II, vii, 109-10)*

Antony agrees:

Come, let's all take hands
Till that the conquering wine hath steep'd our sense
In soft and delicate Lethe.  

*(II, vii, 111-13)*

The song begins:

Come, thou monarch of the vine,
Plumpy Bacchus with pink eyne!  

*(II, vii, 118-19)*

The Variorum edition says that Bacchus in an illustration from Boissard's *Theatrum Vitae Humanae* is undeniably plump, but whether the obesity be due to well-nourished youth or to convivial living is not easy to decide. As for the "pink eyne," it means "to wink" or "to blink" with the eyes. Holinshed shows that Bacchus was accused in the song of a tipsy blinking. It is truly a Bacchanalian song. Such revels themselves were often very lewd and immoral and the editor adds the telling comment that this stupendous piece of burlesque was inspired by the idea of world destruction. Shakespeare found the suggestion in Plutarch, and then allowed it to dilate

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69 See p. 68 for comments on "Lethe."

70 Variorum edition, p. 165.
and take colour in his own imagination. In the scene of revelry, Death is secretly and intimately present dominating Life, as witnessed by Menas and his suggestion to Pompey. "Though it passes by, it passes, as it were, with an ironical smile at the security of the possessors of this world and at the noisy and insubstantial triumph of life permitted for a while." The editor of the Warwick edition says "... the rich gusto and classical grape-crowned animation of the whole scene, combine to render this one of the most magnificent painted orgy-descriptions ever set down on paper. It glows before our eyes like a Rubens' canvas." True, if one delights in such scenes.

Menas, who alone has kept him from the cup, finally says ironically as the party breaks up:

Let Neptune hear we bid a loud farewell
To these great fellows.

(II, vii, 137-38)

Enobarbus and Agrippa are followers respectively of Antony and Caesar. In the third act, scene two, they—Enobarbus and Agrippa—vie with one another in trying to prove a point. Enobarbus claims that Lepidus shows greater devotion to Caesar than to Antony; Agrippa states that it is just the opposite—that Lepidus has greater devotion for Antony than for Caesar. Perhaps their comments but foreshadow the fate reserved for Lepidus, used by both Antony and Caesar, yet respected by neither.

71 Ibid., pp. 166-67.

Agr. 'Tis a noble Lepidus.
Eno. A very fine one. O, how he loves Caesar!
Agr. Nay, but how dearly he adores Mark Antony!
Eno. Spake you of Caesar? Hoo! the nonpareil!
Agr. O Antony! O thou Arabian bird!

(III, ii, 6-12)

This "Arabian bird" is the phoenix of fabled miraculous powers. In figurative language it signifies simply a unique or matchless person.

This same Antony shows not as an "Arabian bird," however, when a bit later he allows his infatuation for Cleopatra to rob him of all judgment. Because she urges it, he will fight by sea. Despite protests of Canidius, his lieutenant-general, Antony says:

. . . We'll to our ships
Away, my Thetis!

(III, vii, 60-61)

Thetis is a sea-goddess, sister to the Nereids, and mother of Achilles. 73 Probably Antony so addresses Cleopatra here because she, his goddess, has promised him assistance in the naval expedition.

That not all are equally captivated by Cleopatra's charms is evident when Octavius Caesar, after Antony's downfall, tells Thyreus to buy her at her own price.

From Antony win Cleopatra. Promise,
In our name, what she requires; add more,
From thine invention, offers. Women are not
In their best fortunes strong, but want will perjure
The ne'er-touched Vestal. Try thy cunning, Thyreus.

(III, xii, 27-31)

73 See p. 47.
In the fourth act, scene three, another reference is made to Antony's descent from Hercules. The soldiers have heard music underground and ask one another:

    Peace, I say!
    What should this mean?
    'Tis the god Hercules, whom Antony lov'd
    Now leaves him.

(IV, iii, 14-16)

Capell says that according to Plutarch it is really Bacchus who is leaving Antony, but that the Poet, perhaps by design, puts in the wrong god. He points out that in the source the music together with other signs which are omitted by Shakespeare, proceeded not from Hercules but from Bacchus; yet he adds that probably the Poet would think it a matter of indifference to which god the signs were ascribed. 74 Hercules, as stated before, was highly honored by Antony as well as Bacchus, and he fits in better with the idea, since Antony is losing his martial glory.

    Antony's ruin is imminent, but threatening disaster, momentarily, seems to revive some of his nobler qualities so that even a soldier of his enemies can say with great admiration to the traitor Enobarbus:

    Your emperor
    Continues still a Jove.

(IV, vi, 28-29)

    Antony's own hope has not yet deserted him and arousing his soldiers to greater valour, he praises their service of his cause. Each fought as though the cause were personal. Antony's words glow with admiration:

74 Variorum edition, p. 266.
You have shown all Hectors!  

(IV, viii, 7)

Scarus, in particular, he would commend; and when Cleopatra promises this hero a king's armour all of gold, Antony exclaims:

He has deserved it, were it carbuncled
Like holy Phoebus' car.

(IV, vii, 28-29)

A carbuncle is a precious red stone. Shakespeare may be erring a bit here in his description, for mythology describes the chariot of the sun, gift of Vulcan to Apollo, as of gold and silver with rows of chrysolites and diamonds along the seat to reflect the brightness of the sun. 75 Chrysolites are gems usually olive green in color. But Shakespeare would scarcely be interested really in whether the jewels were carbuncles or chrysolites; he implies simply that wealth could never rightly repay devotedness such as Scarus has shown.

Antony's benignity and generosity of spirit are shortly to be turned into bitterness. Lost by the betrayal of the "false soul of Egypt," he bids all flee, Scarus included. For himself:

The shirt of Nessus is upon me. Teach me,
Alcides, thou mine ancestor, thy rage.
Let me lodge Lichas on the horns o' th' moon
And with those hands that grasp'd the heaviest club
Subdue my worthiest self. The witch shall die.
To the young Roman boy she hath sold me, and I fall
Under this plot. She dies for't.

(IV, xii, 43-49)

Heath, quoted in the Variorum edition, gives this interesting though rather lengthy explanation of this passage.

While Antony is contemplating his present

75 Gayley, op. cit., p. 95.
inevitable ruin, brought upon him, as he thought, by the treachery of the woman who was dearest to him his imagination presents to him his supposed ancestor Hercules in circumstances exactly parallel, wrapped up, by the instrumentality of Deianira's deceived jealousy, in the poisoned shirt of Nessus, from which it was impossible he could ever extricate himself alive. Upon this point his imagination taking fire transports him almost to a delirium. He fancies himself to be a real Hercules, and the shirt of Nessus to be actually upon him; and, after invoking his ancestor to inspire him with the same rage with which he was actuated on the like occasion, he is instantly on the wing to exert it in the very same effects, in the lodging Lichas on the horns of the moon, and in subduing his worthiest self, with those very Herculean hands that grasped the heaviest club. All which, when stripped of those violent figures in which his heated imagination has clothed it, terminates in no more than this, the taking the severest vengeance on the instrument of his ruin, and putting an end to his life by his own hands. The most exceptionable expression perhaps is, the bestowing the epithet, 'worthiest,' on himself; but even this exaggeration will appear excusable, at least, if not justifiable, when it is considered that it is not seriously intended as a vain-glorious vaunt, but proceeds wholly from a transport of the fancy, which represents him to himself for that moment as the very Hercules in person. 

Furness himself, the Variorum editor, is not fully in accord with all this explanation. He subjoins, "By 'worthiest self' I think Antony means that part of his nature which is noblest and best,—this had been in subjection to Cleopatra; he now prays for strength to control it, 'subdue' it, and make it again subservient to his will." 

Capell points out in regard to the same passage: "Lichas was not

76 Variorum edition, p. 299.

77 Variorum edition, loc. cit.
lodg'd by Hercules quite upon 'the horns of the moon,' but was thrown from
the top of Mount Oeta into the sea."78

The violence of Antony's rage for once terrifies Cleopatra. She cries out:

Help me, my women! O, he is more mad
Than Telamon for his shield. The boar of Thessaly
Was never so embossed.

(IV, xiii, 1-3)

Thetis, mother of Achilles, directed the Greeks on the death of her son, to bestow his armor, the most valuable part of which was the shield, on that hero whom all should judge most deserving of it. Ulysses and Ajax, or Telamon as he is here called, were the only claimants. When by the will of Minerva the armor was awarded to Ulysses, wisdom thus being rated above valor, Ajax, enraged, vowed to have vengeance. To deflect his passion, the goddess robbed Telamon of reason so that he slaughtered flocks and herds counting these his rivals. When his wits were finally restored by the cruel goddess, he killed himself in shame.

As for the second part of the allusion, to be embossed means to foam at the mouth from exhaustion or from rage. Here likely it is from rage. The boar of Thessaly was that sent by the angered Diana when by chance honors due her were omitted. The ravenous monster caused much destruction of life and property before finally being killed by Meleager.

Cleopatra well realizes that Antony in his present state would be capable of almost anything even as the maddened Ajax or as the brute boar.

78 Loc. cit.
Antony himself makes reference to this same Ajax but a short while later. Mardian has reported to him, at Cleopatra's command, the false account of her death—of how she died calling our, "Antony! most noble Antony!"

Antony therefore is striken with remorse and exclaims:

Off, pluck off!
The sevenfold shield of Ajax cannot keep
The battery from my heart. O, cleave my sides!

(IV, xiv, 37-39)

Furness explains:

Antony is unarming, and, as Eros, 'plucks off' his breastplate, is reminded of the folly of supposing that such a mere sheet of metal could protect his heart from a battery against which Ajax's sevenfold shield would have proved vain. Then, as he breathes freer, and his chest expands, he prays his heart to cleave his sides, that for once it may find relief in breaking. 79

Antony calls out:

I come, my queen. . . . Stay for me.
Where souls do couch on flowers, we'll hand in hand
And with our sprightly part make the ghosts gaze.
Dido and her Aeneas shall want troops,
And all the haunts be ours.

(IV, xiv, 50-54)

Mythology does not link the names of Dido and Aeneas in the underworld, however. Vergil distinctly relates how, when Aeneas espied her and vowed to her that his departure had been reluctant and only at the command of Jupiter, she heeded not at all. No, "she stood for a moment with averted countenance and eyes fixed on the ground, and then silently passed on, as

insensible to his pleadings as a rock."  

Warburton has this same reminder, that Dido's fondness did not reach the other world; she then despised Aeneas and returned to her old affection for Sichaeus. He even thinks Shakespeare wrote, "Dido and her Sichaeus." Capell, on the contrary, asserts, "The Poet did not stay to consider whether Dido's love for Aeneas did or did not follow her into the other world; it was very sufficient for his purpose that the loves of her and Aeneas were of great fame which made them a fit couple to be rank'd with those he is talking of."

Cleopatra's false report causes Antony to fall upon his sword. Dying he is borne to the foot of her monument, and as she and her women try to draw him up, Cleopatra exclaims:

Had I great Juno's power,  
The strong wing'd Mercury should fetch thee up  
And set thee by Jove's side.  

(IV,xv, 34-36)

When Antony wishes to speak, Cleopatra silences him with:

No, let me speak; and let me rail so high  
That the false huswife Fortune break her wheel,  
Provok'd by my offence.  

(IV,xv, 43-45)

"Huswife" was considered an opprobrious epithet in Shakespeare's day, meaning "hussy" or "light woman," according to Root. He also says that Shakespeare's use of the term "Fortune" is a personification, half mythological and half

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80 Gayley, op. cit., p. 356.
philosophical, of the unstable, irresponsible power which seemed to govern
the happiness of men, furthering or defeating their plans. Shakespeare's
interpretation of "Fate" implies a preordained plan, but he looks upon
"Fortune" as purely capricious.

Flueller comments: "Fortune is painted . . . with a wheel to
signify . . . that she is turning, and inconstant, and mutability, and
variation." 83

Cleopatra now wishes fruitlessly for revenge upon this same Fortune
who has finally turned against her.

After Antony has breathed his last, and Cleopatra has realized that
in Octavius Caesar she has finally met one impregnable to her charms, she
says in bitterness to Charmian:

'Tis paltry to be Caesar
Not being Fortune, he's but Fortune's knave,
A minister to her will.

(V,ii, 2-4)

She will permit none of the glory of a triumph to this same Caesar. He is
but the servant, and Fortune alone has decreed all that has taken place.

A final allusion comes when Cleopatra sinks into the arms of death,
kissed by an asp. Charmian whispers:

Downy windows, close;
And golden Phoebus never be beheld
Of eyes again so royall.

(V,ii, 318-20)

82 Root, Classical Mythology, p. 61.
83 Variorum edition, p. 320.
One would have expected the constant reference to mythology in *Troilus* and *Cressida* because the very subject itself was mythological; but in this play, the frequency of its use is as striking a feature as was the paucity of allusions in *Julius Caesar*. Moreover, comments on the allusions in both *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra* would, of necessity, have to be almost identical. As already mentioned, in both plays practically all allusions center around the most important characters; and while none can be said to be of absolute intrinsic importance or necessity, it would be difficult to suggest a substitute as rich in imaginative or emotional power.

**CORIOLANUS**

Turning from *Antony and Cleopatra* to *Coriolanus*, one feels immediately a tremendous change in atmosphere. One writer says:

> The difference in poetic fire between *Coriolanus* and *Antony and Cleopatra* is as if, in the one case, the poet's imagination had caught alight three or four times only, and in burning had scattered sparks in the neighbourhood, while, in the other, it is a pure flame driving throughout, fanned by emotion, whose heat purifies, fuses and transmutes into gold all kinds of material, and it is this fierce atmospheric heat which creates the pictures, dominating and directing them. 84

The comment here made refers to the leading symbolism of the plays as discussed by Miss Spurgeon, yet it may also apply to the other imagery, including that taken from mythology.

In Coriolanus mythological allusions are frequent though not nearly as numerous as in Antony and Cleopatra; and the majority are again to the greater divinities. As characteristic of all the classical dramas, there is frequent reference to the gods in general. There is, too, the constant use of the gods by way of exclamation or emphasis, expressions such as "by Jove," "by Jupiter," "for the love of Juno," and the new one "Pluto and hell"; yet for all this, there is a marked difference between Coriolanus and Antony and Cleopatra. Coriolanus seems much nearer to Julius Caesar in its restraint than to Antony and Cleopatra. Very likely it is the effect of the play in general and of the plot which gives this impression rather than the imagery itself, for when one comes down to fact, so far as the mythological allusions are concerned, they are very similar in content, use, and even tone, to those found in particular in both Julius Caesar and Antony and Cleopatra. Again with but two exceptions, they center around the leading characters; and they are used to heighten emotion in all instances except one where the reference is, by intention undoubtedly, humorously ironical.

Immediately upon her first appearance, Volumnia establishes the keynote of her own virile character in contrast to the gentle nature of her daughter-in-law, Virgilia. The fearless mother has neither sympathy nor patience with the fears of her son's wife who dreading wounds for her husband exclaims in horror:

His bloody brow? O Jupiter, no blood! (I,iii, 41)

Volumnia, who has made Marcius the warrior he is, retorts in scorn:

Away you fool! It more becomes a man
Than gilt his trophy. The breasts of Hecuba
When she did suckle Hector, look'd not lovelier
Than Hector's forehead when it spit forth blood
At Grecian sword, contemning.

(I,iii, 42-46)

Valeria, too, friend of the family, mocks Virgilia and her persistent refusal to take part in joyful recreation while her husband is in danger. It is Valeria who uses the humorously ironical allusion when she speaks to the silent, faithful, little wife:

You would be another Penelope. Yet, they say, all the yarn she spun in Ulysses' absence did but fill Ithica full of moths.

(I, iii, 93-94)

Miss Porter, quoted in the Variorum edition, claims: "This humorous way of alluding to Penelope's devotion to Ulysses during his long wanderings while she kept off these troublesome suitors till the funeral vesture was spun which each night she ravelled out, is one of Shakespeare's deftest light touches." Here, too, it is pointed out that the effect is a touch of realistic characterization. Much concerning both Virgilia and Valeria can be deducted from these words. Furness himself adds, however, that one could, if he wished, as has been done in regard to some other instances in the play, find fault with Valeria's reference to Penelope and Ulysses. She could not have had any knowledge of the story for both the Iliad and the Odyssey were unknown to the Romans at the period of Coriolanus—480 B.C.


86 Variorum edition, p. 98.
A simple reference to Fortune is made by Martius when he praises Martius for determining to seek out Aufidius.

Now the fair goddess Fortune  
Fall deep in love with thee, and her great charms  
Misguide thy opposers' swords!  
(I, v, 21-23)

When the two actually meet, Marcius flings at Aufidius a challenge to screw up his revenge to its highest pitch, to which Aufidius boldly responds:

Wert thou the Hector  
That was the whip of your bragg'd progeny,  
Thou shouldst not scape me here.  
(I, viii, 11-13)

As mentioned in Troilus and Cressida,87 the Romans claimed descent from the Trojans who in turn considered Hector as the scourge or whip with which they punished their enemies. Despite previous defeats, Aufidius is proclaiming his willingness to fight with Coriolanus even had the latter the prowess of Hector himself.

The next two references are those mentioned above as not being connected with leading characters. Menenius rails at the tribunes and, after admitting that he himself is a patrician who loves a cup of hot wine with not a drop of Tiber in it, adds:

meeting two such wealsmen as you are (I cannot call you Lycurguses),  
if the drink you give me touch my palate adversely, I make a crooked face at it.  
(II, i, 59-62)

Clark writes:

This fleer of the old patrician has a doubly

87 See pp. 16-17 for comments.
humorous force of allusion, since it not only refers to the renowned Spartan lawgiver, Lycurgus, who was a man that banished luxury and possessed large wisdom with utmost severity of morals, but it also includes reference to a King of Thrace, named Lycurgus, who abolished the worship of Bacchus from his dominions, and ordered all vines therein to be cut down in order to preserve himself and subjects from the temptations and consequences of a too free use of wine.

It is the Lycurgus referred to in the second instance in the above quotation who is mentioned in connection with mythology.

As the gibes are continued, Menenius says to the Tribunes:

Yet you must be saying Marcius is proud; who, in a cheap estimation, is worth all your predecessors since Deucalion.

(II, i, 99-102)

As mythology relates the story of the Flood and the destruction of the human race, Deucalion together with his wife Pyrrha are credited as the couple who escaped and repopulated the earth in obedience to the command of Jupiter. Memenius therefore is quite all comprehensive in his reference to the Tribunes' ancestors. All of them taken together would not make one Marcius.

In truth, these Tribunes, Brutus and Sicinius, are almost beside themselves with envy of Marcius or Coriolanus as he is now entitled. They are determined to bring about his downfall, especially when they see rich and poor, high and low vying with one another in his honor. In contempt they speak of the popular throngs in which even

Commit the war of white and damask in
Their nicely gauded cheeks to th' wanton spoil
Of Phoebus' burning kisses.

(II, i, 231-34)

Furness says it should be borne in mind that Brutus is here speaking quite as contemnously of the Ladies as of the Kitchen Malkin. "The one he considers beneath him, the other he despises simply because they are aristocrats, he a representative of the common people. The words 'nicely gauded' are used as a covert sneer."89

It does not allay the Tribunes' hatred any when a messenger soon calls them to the Capitol telling that it is thought Marcius shall be consul. They report that as Marcius passed,

... the nobles bended
As to Jove's statue, and the commons made
A shower and thunder with their caps and shouts.
(II, i, 281-83)

In the Capitol, Cominius, the present consul, lauds Coriolanus, telling how from his youth he has performed prodigious feats of valour. Coriolanus fought against the Tarquin beyond the mark of others, slaying three opponents,

When with his Amazonian chin he drove
The bristled lips before him.
(II, ii, 95-96)

He was but sixteen at the time with chin yet as beardless as that of a female warrior.

Yet despite this physical renown, the Tribunes have sounded out the

weakness in his strength. As they goad him on to anger, Coriolanus cries out in rage:

Hear you this Triton of the minnows?

(III, i, 89)

Triton, son of Neptune and Amphitrite, was trumpeter of the Ocean. Coriolanus is trying to scorn the Tribunes ruling over the common people, as it were fish of the smallest kind. In reality he is falling neatly into the trap skillfully laid for him. Self-control is rapidly vanishing and Coriolanus spouts forth utterance unfortunate for himself. He rebukes the senators and patricians because thy have granted some rights to the many-headed, fickle crowd, a "Hydra," he calls it.

You grave but reckless senators, have you thus
Given Hydra here to choose an officer.

(III, i, 92-93)

He hurts himself more than anyone else by this uncontrolled anger. It is true that it is his hatred of flattery which is at basis the cause of his troubles and misunderstandings; but to all but those who know him intimately, he appears only unsufferably proud. As Coriolanus finally exits, Menenius offers a striking estimate of his true character---"the estimate," Verity claims, "of his best friend and a keen judge."90 Menenius speaks:

His nature is too noble for the world.
He would not flatter Neptune for his trident
Or Jove for's power to thunder.

(III, i, 255-57)

Brutus and Sicinius will never be satisfied until they have accomplished Coriolanus' death. In fact, they say it is decreed he shall die this

90 Variorum edition, p. 323.
night. Menenius interposes in horror:

Now the good gods forbid
That our renowned Rome, whose gratitude
Toward her deserved children is enroll'd
In Jove's own book, like an unnatural dam
Should now eat up her own!

(III, i, 290-94)

Gordon says in regard to this that it probably means the rolls and registers of the Capitol which was Jove's temple; but Schmidt has a more interesting interpretation, suggesting that it means:

In Jupiter's Journal where he (after the custom of Shakespeare's contemporaries) records his notes;
. . . How widespread in Shakespeare's time was this custom of entering notes on persons and events in a memorandum book is most plainly shown in Hamlet, where the prince, after the account of his father's murder, makes all haste to take out his 'tables' in order to register the event.91

Though the Tribunes do not at the time succeed in having Coriolanus killed, they do effect his banishment, considered by a Roman as worse than death. The proud patrician, now controlled, refuses to show any signs of emotion or grief and stolidly bids farewell to his mother and family. He yet refers to the populace as the Hydra, exclaiming:

A brief farewell. The beast
With many heads butts me away.

(IV, i, 1-2)

Volumnia is so distraught at the unbelievable event that has come to pass that she cries out against her beloved Rome. But Coriolanus speaks:

Nay, mother,
Resume that spirit when you were wont to say,
If you had been the wife of Hercules, 
Six of his labours you'd have done, and sav'd 
Your husband so much sweat. 

(IV,i, 15-19)

He is making telling comment directly about his mother's character and indirectly about his own. Volumnia's weakness does not last long, however, and once her son has actually departed, she can hotly remonstrate against the quiet weeping grief of her daughter-in-law.

Come, let's go. 
Leave this faint puling, and lament as I do, 
In anger, Juno-like. 

(IV,ii,51-53)

Mrs. Jameson, quoting this passage, says of Volumnia:

Her aristocratic haughtiness is a strong trait in Volumnia's manner and character, and her supreme contempt for the plebeians, whether they are to be defied or cajoled, is very like what I have heard expressed by some high-born and high-bred women of my own day. 92

Coriolanus in the meanwhile has betaken himself unto his enemy Aufidius who receives him with open arms.

If Jupiter
Should from yond cloud speak divine things 
And say, 'Tis true,' I'd not believe them more 
Than thee, all-noble Marcius. 

(IV,v, 108-111)

So over-joyed is Aufidius at this offer of service from his former arch-enemy that he addresses him as "Thou Mars." (IV,v, 123)

Even the servingmen in relating Coriolanus' triumphal reception in Antium, say of him:

Why he is so made one here within as
If he were son and heir to Mars.

(IV, v, 202-03)

Rome is now in fear and trembling at the avenging fate awaiting its ingratitude. Both Cominius and Menenius are not sparing in words as they accuse the Tribunes of the result of their hatred of Coriolanus. Cominius begins:

He will shake
Your Rome about your ears,

(IV, vi, 98-99)

and Menenius concludes:

... as Hercules

Did shake down mellow fruit.

(IV, vi, 99-100)

Theobald in a letter to Warburton dated February 2, 1729, suggested:

"... might we not rather read 'th' yellow fruit,' i.e. the golden fruit in the garden of the Hesperides."93 Undoubtedly this is the story to which an analogy is drawn, the eleventh of the labors of Hercules and one of the most difficult.

Though various ones try to awaken pity in Coriolanus' heart and to deflect him from his purpose of wreaking vengeance upon his countrymen, it appears a hopeless task. When his mother, wife, and son appear before him, however, he is deeply and visibly moved, especially as that cherished mother of his kneels before him. He acknowledges her worth so much above his own by proclaiming sorrowfully to himself:

My mother bows
As if Olympus to a molehill should
In supplication nod.

(V, iii, 29-31)

Hudson writes that in this passage "we have the sublimity of filial reverence, imagined in a form not more magnificent in itself than characteristic of the speaker."94

Mrs. Jameson makes a very similar observation. "Here the expression of reverence, and the magnificent image in which it is clothed, are equally characteristic both of the mother and the son."95

Accompanying Coriolanus' immediate family is Volumnia. She is bid a sincere welcome and Coriolanus compliments her thus:

The moon of Rome, chaste as the icicle
That's curdled by the frost from purest snow
And hangs on Dian's temple! Dear Valeria!

(V, iii, 65-67)

This striking figure appealed particularly to Dowden who says: "Observe the extraordinary vital beauty and illuminating quality of Shakespeare's metaphors and similes. A common-place poet would have written 'as chaste as snow,' but Shakespeare's imagination discovers degrees of chastity in ice and snow, and chooses the chastest of all frozen things."96

As Volumnia presents her young grandson to his father, Coriolanus from the depths of his heart wishes for him a blessing which begins:


95 Variorum edition, p. 689.

96 Dowden, op. cit., note on p. 294.
The god of soldiers
With the consent of supreme Jove, inform
Thy thoughts with nobleness.

(V,iii, 70-73)

Fate has measured out the hero's thread of destiny, and the cutting time is near. Coriolanus very likely realizes as he yields to the entreaties of his mother that to go back to Coriolis with Rome spared will in the end cost him his life. But death comes even sooner than he anticipates. Experience has yet failed to teach him control of anger, and for another and fatal time he falls into a trap prepared for his weakness. Aufidius, to regain his own favor with the people, charges Coriolanus with being a traitor and a weakling. Almost disbelieving his own ears, Coriolanus calls out:

Hear'st thou, Mars?

(V,vi, 99)

Aufidius shouts back:

Name not the god, thou boy of tears!

(V,vi, 100)

Within a moment or more Coriolanus lies dead at his feet, stabbed by Aufidius' accomplices.

So far as the mythological allusions are actually concerned, it can be seen that they are not dissimilar to those found in either Julius Caesar or in Antony and Cleopatra; yet since they form only a very minor part of the entire impression and spirit of the play in general, one is left with a feeling of dissatisfaction. The excellence of Coriolanus is ethical rather than artistic, says Dyboski. 97 It lacks appeal because the hero himself

TIMON OF ATHENS

There has been serious question as to whether all of this play is Shakespeare's; however, that need not be of concern in this subject for the few definite mythological allusions generally occur in the sections credited to Shakespeare. Some critics, it is true, but not all, do question the authorship of the scene in which occurs the masque introducing Cupid and the Amazons.

Of the mythological allusions in this play, Root writes that with but two exceptions they are to the divinities who personify either the powers of nature or the moral influences in the life of man.  

In the opening scene among the parasites feeding upon Timon's generosity, the Poet and Painter discuss how the former has pictured the goddess Fortune favoring Lord Timon above all other men. The Poet deceiving even himself, perhaps, through the greatness of his self-love, begins quoting what he considers his inspired thoughts:

One do I personate of Lord Timon's frame,
Whom Fortune with her ivory hand wafts to her.

(I,i, 69-70)

But a foreshadowing of the future appears as he adds a bit later:

When Fortune in her shift and change of mood
Spurns down her late beloved, all his dependants,
Which labour'd after him to the mountain's top
Even on their knees and hands, let him slip down,
Not one accompanying his declining foot.

(I,i, 84-88)

98 Root, Classical Mythology, p. 129.
That day, set by Fortune as unfortunate for themselves as well as for Timon, has not yet arrived; and one lord may still invite another to go in and taste of Timon's wealth for Timon is the very heart of kindness. Of his bounty, a lord makes comment:

He pours it out. Plutus, the god of gold,
Is but his steward.

(I,i, 286-87)\(^9\)

Spurgeon says this description of his bounty is the culmination of the scene in which "the richness and brilliance of Timon's surroundings are pictured to us with the flash of jewels and the beauty of art. . . . [It] leaves us with a vision of an endless stream of gold issuing from his hands in unmeasured abundance."

While Timon entertains all those who only too willingly do him the honor of attendance, there occurs the incident of the masque featuring Cupid and the Amazons. Since, as mentioned above, this is a scene questioned as to authorship, only this passing reference will be made to it.

Very shortly afterwards, disaster knocks, and all who have so freely drunk of Timon's bounty now begin to importune him for arrears. A senator, as he sends his servant, Caphis, to collect debts, tells the man to go in haste and to put on a visage of demand,

. . . for I do fear,
When every feather sticks in his own wing,
Lord Timon will be left a naked gull,
Which flashes now a phoenix.

(II,i, 29-32)\(^10\)

\(^9\) See pp. 40-41 for comments.

\(^10\) Spurgeon, op. cit., p. 345.

See p. 75 for comments.
Embittered to the point of extreme misanthropy by the unbelievable ingratitude of men, Timon retires to a cave and shuns the world. When gold, no longer an object of anything but hatred to him, comes once again into his possession, he gives it freely, but only because he sees in it a means of cursing his fellow men. To Alcibiades he gives and says:

Here's gold. Go on
Be as a planetary plague when Jove
Will o'er some high-vic'd city hang his poison
In the sick air.

(IV,iii, 107-110)

Timon will no longer touch the hated gold for his own use, not even for the necessities of life. Rather he calls upon earth to yield him one poor root—Mother Earth who engenders not only proud man but also the black toad and eyeless worm,

With all th' abhorred births below crisp heaven
Whereon Hyperion's quick'ning fire doth shine.

This Hyperion, passingly referred to, is the Titanic deity of light. In later mythology, Apollo is regarded as the god of the sun. 102

Timon now spurns even the company of Apemantus whose feelings are somewhat akin to his own. He tries to drive him off with the insult:

Thou art a slave whom Fortune's tender arm
With favour never clasp'd, but bred a dog.

(IV,iii, 250-51)

Finally Timon speaks to the gold itself and begs that it may set men at odds one with another until only beasts have the world in empire.

O thou sweet king-killer, and dear divorce
'Twixt natural son and sire! thou bright defiler

102 See pp. 51 and 74 for comments.
Of Hymen's pure bed! thou valiant Mars!
Thou ever young, fresh, lov'd, and delicate wooer,
whose blush doth thaw the consecrated snow
That lies on Dian's lap!

(IV,iii, 382-387)

Marriage and chastity personified by Hymen and Diana, both end in failure and unhappiness if the god gold can gain the sway; hence Timon addresses the gold as "thou valiant Mars,"—god of war and disaster.

A final passing mythological allusion is given at the very close of the play. Timon's grave with its bitter epitaph has been discovered on the very hem of the sea. Alcibiades exclaims that though hate had toward the close of his life caused Timon to scorn all advances of mankind, still

... rich conceit
Taught thee to make vast Neptune weep for aye
On thy low grave, on faults forgiven.

(V,iv, 77-79)

While again as in Julius Caesar the mythological allusions have been infrequent, there are present the characteristics found common to these allusions in all the other classical dramas, Troilus and Cressida alone excepted in some instances. There is the constant reference to the gods in general, the centering of the majority of these allusions around the principal character or characters, and the incidental though important use of the references to heighten the emotional value. There is the same use of the greater divinities, common this time to all the classical dramas except Julius Caesar which belongs to the earlier period, and finally a more or less serious tone accompanying the use of the allusions.
CHAPTER V
SUMMARIZATION AND CONCLUSIONS

During the discussions in the previous chapters, some comparisons and contrasts have been drawn among the characteristics of the incidental mythological allusions for the various classical dramas. It seems well, nevertheless, to give a summarization of the findings. No further comment will be made in regard to the intrinsic allusions since they are limited to Troilus and Cressida alone.

It is evident that characteristics common to all five of the classical dramas are few and negligible. All of these plays contain the incidental allusions; all contain frequent allusions to the gods in general helping to create the pagan atmosphere; and finally the great majority of the allusions are rather casual and not given with great detail. There is nothing unusual or of particular interest in these few facts. The first and third do not even apply exclusively to the classical dramas for there is not a single play by Shakespeare, be it history, comedy, or tragedy, which does not contain some incidental casual allusions to classical mythology.

As for the contrasts among the characteristics of these allusions, seven may be indicated.

First, variation in frequency of use is readily apparent. Troilus and Cressida has innumerable allusions; Antony and Cleopatra, very many; Coriolanus, a moderate number; Timon of Athens, few; and Julius Caesar, the
least of all. It will be recalled that in chapter three a ratio similar to
this was indicated for the figurative language in general for these plays.¹⁰³

Second, the range of the mythological references varies decidedly from
play to play. It is great in Troilus and Cressida and in Antony and Cleopatra,
but not in the other three plays because of the far lesser number of the
allusions themselves.

Third, frequent brief exclamations and oaths in which mythological
figures are mentioned by name are very common in Troilus and Cressida and in
Antony and Cleopatra, and to a lesser extent in Coriolanus. Again the very
infrequency of the allusions themselves excludes this characteristic from
the other two plays.

Fourth, all of the classical plays, except Julius Caesar alone, make
frequent allusions to the greater divinities among the pagan gods. This fea-
ture shows up more prominently in Troilus and Cressida and in Antony and
Cleopatra than in the other plays because of the far greater number of refer-
ences, but proportionally, it is true also for Coriolanus and Timon of Athens.

Fifth, mythological allusions center around the leading characters
with but few exceptions in all the classical dramas exclusive of Troilus and
Cressida. There practically every character uses such allusions, even
Pandarus and Thersites.

Sixth, the tone of the allusions is generally rather serious except
in Troilus and Cressida. In that play some of the allusions are used seri-
ously, but a number are in a light and mocking vein.

¹⁰³ See p. 41.
Seventh, especially in Troilus and Cressida and in Antony and Cleopatra the mythological allusions are multiplied at periods of high emotional strain. This is true in the former play, for instance, when Troilus discovers Cressida's unfaithfulness, and in the latter when Antony declares that the false Egyptian has sold him to the Roman boy! The same characteristic is found in Coriolanus, but to a lesser extent.

What conclusions can be drawn from these points in regard to Shakespeare's use of the mythological allusions in his classical dramas? It is rather difficult to say. They do emphasize the fact that Shakespeare is not at all interested in mythology as such, and that there is no particular connection in his mind between the material of the classical plays and classical mythology. It does not appear that in these plays he ever uses such allusions just for the sake of ornamentation; rather it would seem that they are part of the wealth he has stored in his mind from countless sources and that they are used according to inspiration without particular plan or order. As a poet, Shakespeare must have thought in images, and along with other images, these from classical mythology must have come spontaneously into his mind as he sought to express himself. Sometimes they came frequently, perhaps because of an association of ideas; sometimes they came less frequently. If they helped to express his feelings, his emotion, the desired effect, he used them; if not, he discarded them.

When he does use them, what effect do they produce? That depends very likely on the reader's or hearer's knowledge of mythology. Many students today know nothing or next to nothing of these myths and stories; hence
mythological terms connote nothing to them. Yet one would not have to be a very deep student of mythology in order to appreciate most of Shakespeare's allusions drawn from that subject. If one knew something of Vergil and of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in addition to the general amount of mythological knowledge which would inevitably be acquired in a two or three years' study of Latin as it is generally presented in secondary schools today, one could readily understand Shakespeare's mythological allusions. And for those fortunate enough to have such a background, these allusions offer to the imagination and senses pictorial and sensitive connotations for which it would be most difficult to suggest a substitute equally effective and stimulating.

Now while the writer is claiming that for these plays no exhaustive knowledge of mythology is necessary in order to understand and appreciate such allusions, it does not follow that the writer thinks that Shakespeare himself evidently had rather scant knowledge of such material. On the contrary, despite the casualness of the mythological allusions and their occasional inaccuracy in minor points, his use of them indicates that he was very familiar with the field, and that it was woven well into the texture of his knowledge.

There is no intention here, however, of trying to prove the extent of Shakespeare's learning, nor to argue about his first-hand or second-hand familiarity with the classics, nor to probe in any manner his source material. Regardless of how or where he received his information, his own background is evident. Yet because there are many who in regard to these subjects frequently cite those words of Ben Jonson about the Poet's "small Latine and
lesse Greek," apparently with the intention of discrediting Shakespeare's classical knowledge, one would simply like to point out that this statement, taken in context as it should be, bears no such implication. Baldwin has discussed this point at length and he formulates this absolute conclusion. "There is no apparent derogation in Jonson's statement when fairly interpreted in its context, and the standard against which Jonson places Shakespeare's attainments is the highest of which he has knowledge." 104

A final point yet to be touched on briefly is this. How does Shakespeare's use of the mythological allusions in the individual classical plays compare with his use of them in his other dramas? In order to make an authoritative answer to that question, one would need to have studied these allusions in great detail in every single one of Shakespeare's plays. Root, who is an authority on classical mythology in Shakespeare, has scattered statements which may be used as the basis for a partial comparison. He believes that there was a definite change in Shakespeare's use of the mythological allusions as his dramatic powers matured, and indicates four levels of development. In the very early period, when Ovidian influence was strongest, Shakespeare used mythological allusions chiefly as graceful ornamentation. In the next period, without sudden or complete change, he turned such allusions into material for jest or raillery. In the third period, he largely excluded from his plays the myths of Ovid and consequently the number of allusions dwindled. Those left were neither gracefully ornamentative nor playfully humorous; rather they seemed to imply a deeper

104 Baldwin, op. cit., p. 3.
underlying meaning or purpose. In the last period, he returned to Ovid again, but emphasized this deeper meaningfulness or appropriateness of the mythological allusions by using not the fables of Ovid, but rather his divinities as types of the great forces of nature or of moral forces in the life of man.

Now comparing the individual classical plays with these groupings one finds the following results.

According to point of time, Julius Caesar should fit probably into the third period, and according to characteristics, it does. There are but very few mythological allusions in the play, as will be recalled, and none of them are Ovidian.

Troilus and Cressida, however, immediately offers a problem for it simply does not fit into any one of these periods. It has many humorous allusions similar to those of the earlier periods, and yet it also has a large proportion of nature myths and constant references to the greater divinities which is characteristic of the last period. It has, too, all the intrinsic mythology which forms its very substance. Yet this play can hardly be cited as a disproof of Root's statements for in no way is this play really characteristic of Shakespeare.

The other three classical plays, according to period of time, should follow the characteristics of the last period in regard to mythological references, and they do. While there is great variation in frequency of use, all have the allusions to the greater divinities as types of the great forces of nature or of the moral forces in the life of man.
Individually, therefore, it would seem that, with the exception of 
Troilus and Cressida, the classical plays are similar in their use of the 
mythological allusions to other dramas belonging to the same period—at 
least in these very sketchy and broad outlines.

A good many years ago, Cruickshank, in a paper on Shakespeare's 
classical attainments, spoke of the Poet's use of mythological allusions. 
When concluding his remarks, he made comment that in "the great Shakespeare 
labyrinth" there are many by-paths. Some of these are circuitous or obscure 
or absolutely without thoroughfare; yet others are winding and lead to gentle 
eminences offering a survey of the immediate neighborhood. Such a winding 
path did he consider the present subject, and one well worth following "for 
it reveals to us something of the poet's mind."105

None will contest the first part of his statement, that the subject 
is a by-path only; but it is to be expected that assert to the last part, 
that it is a path worth following, will come only from such as are not only 
lovers of Shakespeare but also firm adherents to the belief that classical 
mythology is part of the cultural heritage of an educated people.

105 Cruickshank, op. cit., p. 65.
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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Sister Isabel Storch, S.P. has been read and approved by three members of the Department of English.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

Jan 15, 1949

Signature of Adviser