"What shriek is this?"
Exploring Cassandra's Language from the Page to the Stage
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This paper examines the figure of Cassandra in *Troilus and Cressida* as an archetype of the marginalised mad woman, exploring how Shakespeare constructs her character through prophetic insights that are dismissed by a patriarchal and war-torn society. Cassandra's "madness" isolates her not only from her family and community but also from a narrative of agency, positioning her as a tragic seer whose insights are overlooked by those around her. By investigating her role within the broader context of early modern portrayals of mental disability and gender, this study aims to uncover how Cassandra embodies the intersection of silenced femininity and societal marginalisation. Additionally, the paper analyses Greg Doran's 2018 staging of *Troilus and Cressida* (RSC), where Cassandra was played by Charlotte Arrowsmith, the first disabled actress to perform a major Shakespeare role on the RSC stage, who did her speech in British Sign Language. This dual approach—textual analysis paired with performance study—seeks to illuminate the complexities of Cassandra's character and language, as well as the ways her representation as a marginalised woman has evolved on the modern stage.

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"I had gone barefoot to India: *Troilus and Cressida* and the Global Renaissance"

In studies of the Global Renaissance, Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* rarely receives so much as a mention. There are a couple of possible reasons for this: its setting in Troy is not described in great geographical detail, and its cultural and intellectual preoccupations seem most directly related to England and Europe. For instance, early modern Englishmen thought of themselves as direct descendants of the Trojan hero Aeneas, while Shakespeare's intertextual engagements with authors such as Virgil and Chaucer situate the work within a distinctively European literary canon. Yet references to "the world" are recurrent in the play. Characters employ the language of the world and worldliness to make epistemological and ontological claims, to articulate their desires, motives, and expectations, and even, in the case of the Prologue, to comment on the capacity of "worldlings" to digest the play's wit. Moreover, Shakespeare repeatedly gestures to worlds beyond Troy with language which brings the Mediterranean into proximity with Africa and India, and which unsettles the positionalities of the play's characters by, for example, imagining Helen as a "blackamoor". This paper reflects on the discrepancy between the play's worldly commitments and its exclusion from studies of the Global Renaissance to examine the place of the "global" in early modern studies. It asks what the implications of *Troilus and Cressida* might be for our understanding of the conventional paradigms and parameters of the global early modern. What critical assumptions and shortcomings – including Eurocentrism and a focus on material which is overtly exoticizing and estranging – make a play like *The Tempest* more obviously "global" than *Troilus*? How could thinking about *Troilus* as "global" transform our understanding not only of Shakespeare's play, but of early modernity more broadly?

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Troilus and Cressida and the Early Modern Theatrical Code of Conduct

Alfred Harbage's book *Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions* describes the differences between the audiences of the "public" outdoor theatres and the "private" indoor playhouses in the first decade of the 17th century. His research suggests that there was in effect an unwritten code of conduct for the public theatres similar to the code that Hollywood films had to follow in the 1940s and 50s, a code from which the "private" theatres were apparently exempt. Central to the code were rules on sexual behavior: heroes and heroines had to be celibate before marriage, and adultery could never be shown as acceptable. Homosexual behavior could not even be mentioned. Plays for the outdoor theatres go to improbable lengths to avoid contravening this code. The central action of *Troilus and Cressida* is an apparently sympathetic portrayal of sex outside marriage. While many commentators acknowledge that the play might have written for performance at one of the Inns of Court, whose members dominated the audiences of the indoor theatres, they usually qualify this statement by suggesting that there could have been subsequent performances at the Globe. The play's serious breaches of the code make this transfer to a broader audience unlikely.

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SAA 2024: *Troilus and Cressida* Abstract

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Pandar's Bark: Commerce, Satire, and *Troilus and Cressida*

In the first scene of *Troilus and Cressida*, once Pandarus departs promising not to meddle any further with Troilus' love for Cressida Troilus invokes Apollo and requests help with understanding "what Cressid is, what Pandar, and what we" (1.1.101). The image he conjures up is explicitly mercantile: Troilus is a merchant, Cressida a pearl of India, and Pandarus a ship. In line with the general strangeness of the play, the image seems to promise that Cressida is less an end in herself than an object to be traded on. In this essay, I plan to consider the significance of this image of the affair as trade and explore connections to the play's investment in satire. The play trades in satirical language as much as it satirizes both the Troilus and Cressida romance and the larger Troy story, and that trade will be the focus of my essay.

Abstract

"Do you know what a man is?": Toxic Masculinity and the Production of Gendered Space in
Troilus and Cressida

Through an early conversation with Cressida, Pandarus poses the question "Do you know what a man is?" before listing the traits that supposedly make up a good man (1.2.243). While Cressida responds in jest, this question becomes a central consideration for many of the characters in *Troilus and Cressida*. The story is split between the city of Troy and the Greek camp outside its walls, as the Greek army has arrived on Trojan shores to retrieve the infamous Helen. In this paper, I examine the Greek war camp through the way Shakespeare's language paints it as a gendered, masculine space, as well as how the sociocultural composition of this environment affectively influences the characters who experience it. I trace the trajectory of how masculinity is invoked in this space throughout the play, and analyze how it impacts characters who do not conform to it. In particular, I look at Cressida's treatment due to the perception that she has "wanton spirits" and how Patroclus is treated while being suspected of being Achilles' "male varlet" and "masculine whore." In addition to Shakespeare's text, I analyze Gregory Doran's 2018 production of the play at the Royal Shakespeare Company, in which several women actors–including Adjoa Andoh as Ulysses and Suzanne Bertish as Agamemnon–play significant male characters that heavily contribute to the play's depiction of the toxic masculinity within the Greek war camp. The union between the play's language and this contemporary practice of gender-conscious casting helps to shine a light on the way gendered spaces are produced both historically and today.

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The Limits of Male Sexual Identity in *Troilus and Cressida,*

Ostensibly, *Troilus and Cressida* is set agains the backdrop of the Greeks' war against

Troy, yet this play is deceptively clever in that the quotidian experience of both Greeks and

Troyans are preoccupied with their relationships with their significant others whether they be

female and male. The play begins in the same fashion as a romantic comedy, but the play

is replete with differently-sexed erotic desire as well as same-sex erotic desire.

Early modern English dramatists apparently knew of the ancient world's same -sex eroticism

as depicted in the lived experiences. of Achilles and Patroculus, not to mention Pandar's

voyeuristic fetishization of Troilus and his Cressida's relationship and asexual Thersites' acerbic

view of human romantic relationships in general. In terms of functional, loving heteronormative

relationships, we have only to turn to that of Hector and Andromache. Throughout the play each

couple loses a significant other as if each removed figure is replaced by yet another figure.

There is an almost a seemingly interminable substations or replacements made. Despite the

prevailing provisos against same-sex relationships in early modern England, which would have

been described as sodomitical, Shakespeare depicts at least one same-sex relationship that is as

functional as the heteronormative one of Troilus and Cressida. This paring of a differently-sexed

relationship and a same-sex relationship functions to critique the entire early modern English

paradigm of whose relationships are more valuable than others. Thus said, this essay wishes to

argue that despite the deeply engrained prohibitions against same sex-relationships in early

modern England, Shakespeare chooses to depict one that is in many ways not unlike that of

Troilus and Cressida and Hector and Andromache, and in terms of masculine ferocity,

Achilles represents himself as masculine and devoted to his male partner as Hector and Troilus

are their female counterparts. In many ways, Shakespeare's depiction of Achilles very much

challenges any perception of males in same-sex relationships as feminine, but rather in the case of Troilus, he may even appear as effeminate with his excessive devotion to Cressida. In a word, throughout this play, the behavior of Greek and Troyan males constantly challenges the dominant representations of masculinity and its attendant heteronormative sexuality as they were depicted on the early modern English stage, and the civil authorities may even have considered them sodomitical.

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"[T]hings in motion sooner catch the eye": Attention, Distraction, and (Mind)-Wandering in *Troilus and Cressida*

Troilus and Cressida is a profoundly disorienting play. Its prefatory letter directs the attention away from the stage to an „eternal reader"; it also describes the play as "comical" even though the 1609 Quarto edition categorizes it as a 'history'. The title itself evokes Chaucer's renowned epic poem, yet the play's protagonists strive to resist the literary clichés that time, the „great-sized monster of ingratitudes", will eventually impose upon them ("As true as Troilus", "As false as Cressid", "This is and is not Cressid").

In *Troilus and Cressida*, sources, characters, and settings simultaneously "are" and "are not". The play probes the tension between audience expectations – "whirl[ing] us round" (like Troilus) – and performance, consistently testing our attentional capacities while offering potentially perilous distractions that reflect Early Modern anxieties about attention and anti-theatrical critiques of the time.

In my paper, I will argue that this play is not only merely 'tortive' but unveils and examines techniques of distraction and attention. To explore the interplay of attention, distraction, and mind-wandering in *Troilus and Cressida*, I will analyze characters who, like Troilus, "flow to great distraction" (5.2.44) and oscillate between "distraction, frenzy, and amazement" (5.3.91). I will further examine the connections between physical and mental movement, illustrating how these dynamics foster and help sustain a flexible, vigilant mind.

Additionally, I will examine potential parallels to *Othello* as another example of Shakespeare's 'theatre of attention'. Both plays scrutinise the perils of fixation while promoting a dynamic, alert mind, highlighting the necessity of balancing distraction and vigilance to navigate the complexities within the Early Modern but also within our contemporary 'distracted globe'.