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Karoline Johanna Baumann

The Stage as Palimpsest

Conceptions of Time and Temporality in Shakespeare's
Troilus and Cressida and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*



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Introduction

This study examines how different notions of time and temporality are reflected in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* and Shakespeare and Fletcher's *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. I will read the plays with the help of the metaphor of the *palimpsest*, a term borrowed from palaeography to express the simultaneous existence of multiple temporal layers in a particular moment of time, an object or a literary text. Both plays derive ultimately from ancient sources (the *Iliad*, the *Thebaid*) that were rewritten many times throughout the Middle Ages. For both plays, the author(s) draw mostly on Chaucer's adaptations (*The Knight's Tale*, *Troilus and Criseyde*), although translations of the ancient classical sources existed, foregrounding the multi-layered, palimpsest-like nature of literary texts. Traces of different times are inscribed in plot, characters, motifs and conventions of works of literature, and the well-documented past of these plays facilitates the 'excavation' of these traces. The metaphor of the antisequential palimpsest is therefore not only particularly useful for reading these plays, but is also a helpful way to imagine time in general. It is much more productive than the idea of time as a unilinear sequence of events or of history as a series of clearly distinguishable periods that succeed and replace one another in chronological order.

The figure of the palimpsest has been used widely in poststructuralist and postcolonial discourse at least since Gérard Genette's influential *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*,¹ but it was already popular in the 19th century after Charles Baudelaire, influenced by Thomas de Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, had compared human memory to a palimpsest in *Artificial Paradises*.² For the purpose of this study, however, I will mostly draw upon Jonathan Gil Harris's use of the term *palimpsest* in his book *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare*.³ Harris does not regard the palimpsest merely as writing, as a specific kind of textuality, as was usually done in the wake of Genette's analysis.⁴ Genette uses the palimpsest to describe a set of paratextual effects that alter and rewrite a past text. Harris reads *objects* as palimpsests as well, for example stage properties

¹ Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (Lincoln, Nebr.: University of Nebraska Press, 1997).

² Charles Baudelaire, *Artificial Paradises*, trans. by Stacy Diamond (New York: Citadel Press, 1996), pp.147-149. Baudelaire briefly refers to the literary tradition as palimpsest-like as well: "The Grecian tragedy seemed to be displaced, but was *not* displaced, by the monkish legend; and the monkish legend seemed to be displaced, but was *not* displaced, by the knightly romance". *Ibid*, p.149.

³ Jonathan Gil Harris, *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

⁴ Harris (2009), pp. 16-17.

whose “cultural biography”,⁵ he argues, also needs to be taken into account. The “‘new’ new historicism of the object,” as Patricia Fumerton calls it,⁶ tends, like the “‘old’ new historicism of the subject”,⁷ to contextualise *synchronically*, to focus, for the most part, on objects’ cotemporal ‘social life,’ their present social and cultural significance.⁸ In the practice of ‘thick description’⁹ made popular by Clifford Geertz, early modern feathers, for example, are discussed within the contexts of newly established global trade networks.¹⁰ But objects’ journey over time needs to be considered as well, because it forms and determines their cultural significance. To give an example, the religious past of early modern stage costumes, their former existence as ecclesiastical robes in churches and monasteries was still contained in them when they were used in theatres after the Reformation. Peter Stallybrass and Ann Rosalind Jones describe how the costume worn by the ghost of Hamlet’s father, for instance, is still haunted by its past.¹¹ As Stallybrass argues, “clothes have a life of their own; they both *are* material presences and they *encode* other material and immaterial presences”.¹² The sleeve which Troilus gives to Cressida as a token of love in *Troilus and Cressida*, and which Cressida then gives to Diomedes, incorporates its former owners, too: “Into the sleeve which passes from hand to hand, which has no secure owner or origin, are woven the identities of both Troilus and Cressida”¹³ or, as Cressida puts it, “He that takes that [the sleeve] doth take my heart withal”.¹⁴

⁵ Igor Kopytoff, “The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process”, in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp.64-91. See also Harris (2009), pp.8-9.

⁶ Patricia Fumerton, “Introduction: A New New Historicism”, in *Renaissance Culture and the Everyday*, eds. Patricia Fumerton and Simon Hunt (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), pp.1-17.

⁷ Harris (2009), p.1.

⁸ Harris (2009), p.8.

⁹ See Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), *passim*.

¹⁰ See Margaret W. Ferguson, “Feathers and Flies: Aphra Behn and the Seventeenth-Century Trade in Exotica”, in *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture*, eds. Margreta de Grazia, Maureen Quilligan and Peter Stallybrass (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 235-259, and Harris (2009), p.8.

¹¹ Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), especially pp. 245-268. See also Harris (2009), pp.9-10.

¹² Peter Stallybrass, “Worn Worlds: Clothes and Identity on the Renaissance Stage”, in *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture*, pp. 289-320, p.312.

¹³ Stallybrass, p.313.

¹⁴ *Troilus and Cressida*, ed. David Bevington, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Thomson Learning, 1998, 2006), 5.2.88. All future quotations from *Troilus and Cressida* are taken from this edition and will be given in the body of the text.

But it is equally insufficient to ‘read’ objects *only* diachronically. Harris argues that Fredric Jameson’s famous call to “always historicize!”¹⁵ should not be understood as *either* “always synchronize” *or* “always diachronize”, but should be taken to mean “always polychronize.”¹⁶ The palimpsest represents a *polychronic* temporality, a “temporality which is not one”, as Kathleen Biddick puts it.¹⁷ It means that the past, in fact multiple pasts (as well as futures), are contained in the present and that supposedly distinct, disparate moments of time are anachronistically conjoined, “compressed”¹⁸ in a palimpsest-like manner.

Not only objects such as the stage clothes can be read as palimpsests. A theatre company’s stage practices, acting styles or special effects constitute palimpsests as well.¹⁹ It is important to note that the palimpsest is not an inert accumulation of inscriptions that just passively accrue over time. The different temporal layers each retain their ability to speak and to act. The palimpsest thus constitutes a “network of agency”²⁰ in which the traces of various times constantly rework and rewrite each other. Earlier inscriptions transform what has been written over them, while this, in turn, changes earlier writings. The inscriptions are not necessarily transparently legible, but even the most archaic or even obscure inscriptions are able to reorganise later ones and vice versa, so that they are constantly in a process of mutual transformation. Most importantly, there is no linear or hierarchical relationship between them. And just as the material writing surface, the vellum or parchment on which a text is written, enables the writing even as it is transformed by it, readers and writers from different times who work upon the palimpsest transform it, and are themselves transformed by it.²¹

The concept of the palimpsest-like, simultaneous and ‘anachronistic’ existence of various temporal layers in one moment of time contradicts notions of linear, hierarchical time and periodization systems that organise time into discrete temporal units of distinct, successive epochs. A past that resides in the present (or multiple pasts that reside in the present) is (are) never completely over or gone.

Nevertheless, as Michel de Certeau has pointed out, our image of the past tends to be pre-structured by the idea that the past, by necessity, constitutes an

¹⁵ Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (New York: Methuen, 1981), p.I.

¹⁶ Harris (2009), p.10.

¹⁷ Kathleen Biddick, *The Typological Imaginary: History, Technology, Circumcision* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), p.20.

¹⁸ Harris (2009), pp.16, 86.

¹⁹ Harris (2009), p.20.

²⁰ Harris (2009), p.17.

²¹ Harris (2009), pp.16-17.

Other.²² We encounter the past with the preconceived expectation of encountering cultural alterity, because we assume an *a priori* gap between the present and the past. Therefore discourse on the past is, in a very predictable way, informed by prevalent notions of alterity²³ and almost invariably takes the form of a *heterology*, as de Certeau calls it, a discourse on the *Other*.²⁴

Of all past times this applies to the Middle Ages in a most particular way, because modernity usually defines itself in *opposition* to it. The Middle Ages or pre-modernity often gets assigned the role of the “all-purpose alternative”,²⁵ our “all-purpose other”.²⁶ A further theoretical concept I will draw upon is therefore the concept of Othering. Othering describes the mechanisms by which a Self constructs an Other, often in binary opposition, from those parts that it chooses not to acknowledge. This process is called Othering because those factors of the Self that are, for whatever reasons, perceived as negative, are externalised and projected elsewhere – on an Other created specifically for this purpose, which thus turns out as the Self’s binary opposite. While the process of differentiation enables the Self to define itself, the (fictional) separation from negative qualities, their externalisation, creates an illusion of mastery.²⁷ The concept of a “self-consolidating other”²⁸ is derived from Jacques Lacan’s description of the basic formation of identity²⁹ and the verb, “Othering”, was coined for the process of collective identity formation by Gayatri Spivak in a conference on “Europe and its Others”.³⁰ According to Lacan, a child that sees its own image in the mirror perceives enough resemblance in order to recognise itself but, at the same time, the reflection is sufficiently separate for the child to ground hopes of mastery. While the child had perceived itself, before this moment, as an incoherent and uncoordinated mass of limbs, this “anticipated mastery”, albeit a fiction, from now on becomes the basis of its ego.³¹ As Postcolonialists have shown in particular, collective identity construction can work

²² Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), pp.1-16.

²³ de Certeau (1988), p.5.

²⁴ Michel de Certeau, *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986, 1995), *passim*.

²⁵ Lee Patterson, “On the Margin: Postmodernism, Ironic History, and Medieval Studies”, *Speculum* 65 (1990), pp.87-108, p.93.

²⁶ Lee Patterson, “The Return to Philology,” in *The Past and Future of Medieval Studies*, ed. John Van Engen (Notre Dame: The University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), pp.231-244, p.237.

²⁷ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* (New York, London: Routledge, 1998), p.170.

²⁸ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “The Rani of Simur”, in *Europe and its Others, Vol. 1: Proceedings of the Essex Conference on the Sociology of Literature, July 1984*, ed. by Francis Barker *et al.* (Colchester: University of Essex, 1985), pp.128-151, p.131.

²⁹ See Jacques Lacan, “Some Reflections on the Ego”, *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 34:1 (1953), pp.11-17.

³⁰ *The Essex Conference on the Sociology of Literature* in 1984. See *Europe and its Others* and *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*, p.171.

³¹ See Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, p.170.

in a similar way; the ‘West’, for example, has defined itself with the help of alterity by constructing the Orient as its dichotomic Other. But mechanisms of Othering are at work in many other binary pairs as well, for example in the opposition of man/woman, black/white, animal/human, animal/machine, culture/nature, and also modern/premodern. Like the invention of the Orient as its geographical Other by the Occident it has invented the Middle Ages as its temporal Other, a colonised past: time and space are interconvertible in this respect.³² Othering occurs not only with geographically distinct areas, as Postcolonial Theory has pointed out, but also with areas of temporal distance. Premodernity arguably constitutes such a temporal Orient. It is no coincidence, therefore, that the first construction of the Middle Ages coincides with the beginnings of colonial expansion.³³ When Europe’s imperialist project was beginning, it distanced itself from its own past, creating “Europe’s Dark Continent of History, even as Africa is its Dark Ages of Geography”.³⁴ The Middle Ages, like the child in the mirror, are “both a native past and an exotic otherness”³⁵ for modernity, an inverted mirror image. While this has contributed to the marginalisation of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, on the other hand, is seen as the beginning of almost everything that is associated with the modern.³⁶ Whether subjectivity, nationalism or capitalism, it is readily supposed that its origins lie in the Renaissance, too readily supposed, as Margreta de Grazia argues: the link between the early modern and the latest modern is often taken for granted and parallels are too easily assumed and confirmed³⁷ when the Renaissance is made to appear as the beginning

of every modern this-or-that: of subjectivity, the literary, literary subjectivity, pragmatism, technology, the world market, mercantile capitalism, commodity fetishism, slavery, contact with the East, urban sprawl, providentially driven fatality akin to terrorism, every manner of consciousness and the unconscious, including historical consciousness and more recently ecological consciousness.³⁸

The Middle Ages, on the other hand, are condemned to be eternally Other, “obscure, difficult, strange, alien”.³⁹ But premodernity’s role as an area of undifferentiated Otherness⁴⁰ is as misleading as our taken-for-granted affinities with the

³² See John Dagenais and Margaret R. Greer, “Decolonizing the Middle Ages: Introduction”, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 30:3 (Fall 2000), pp.431-448, pp.434-435.

³³ See Dagenais and Greer, p.431.

³⁴ Dagenais and Greer, *ibid.*

³⁵ John M. Ganim, *Medievalism and Orientalism: Three Essays on Literature, Architecture and Cultural Identity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p.6.

³⁶ Cf. Patterson (1990), p.92.

³⁷ Margreta de Grazia, “The Modern Divide: From Either Side”, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 37:3 (2007), pp.453-467, p.458.

³⁸ de Grazia, p.458.

³⁹ Patterson (1990), p.92.

⁴⁰ Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, “Introduction: Midcolonial” in *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (London: Macmillan Press, 2000), pp.1-17, p.4.

early modern age and, as David Aers argues, they probably result from the history of the subject, for example, being told as a linear, developmental story, which thus needs a clear beginning. So a transition from a field of complete Otherness is posited, an Otherness in which the subject, or whatever needs to be described, did not exist and against which it can be defined.⁴¹

But like other progress narratives and teleological histories, this offers no explanation for the uncanny presence of supposedly past violence and traumata within 'modern' societies,⁴² just as the location of 'barbaric,' 'primitive,' cruel elements within foreign cultures does not explain their existence in one's own culture, or help deal with it, as the "fiction of mastery"⁴³ seems to promise.

Medievalists have therefore suggested the concepts of "Postcolonial Middle Ages"⁴⁴ and the Middle Ages' decolonisation as analogies to the decolonisation of geographical Otherness.⁴⁵ Constructed as a time of complementary Otherness, they argue, the Middle Ages are subject to the same colonised status as a colonised country, belonging to the nation of modernity, so to speak, but never able to achieve full citizenship in it.⁴⁶ The project of decolonisation, therefore, intends to disrupt linear time, like dichotomised space, and to excavate the "minus in the origin", in Homi Bhabha's words,⁴⁷ of Western progress narratives.⁴⁸ The notion of history's unidirectional movement through linear time⁴⁹ should be replaced by one of more hybrid temporalities⁵⁰ and, instead of constructing time's "linearisation as chronology",⁵¹ our idea of time should allow for temporal interlacement and the coexistence of various temporalities. Instead of believing the simple master narrative of progress and total alterity,⁵² we should conceive of the Middle Ages as an epoch that was different, but not the inverse of modernity.⁵³

⁴¹ Cf. David Aers, "A Whisper in the Ear of Early Modernists; or, Reflections on Literary Critics Writing the 'History of the Subject,'" in *Culture and History 1350-1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities and Writing*, ed. by David Aers (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), pp.177-202, p.196.

⁴² Cf. Cohen (2000), pp.2-3.

⁴³ Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, p.170.

⁴⁴ See *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (London: Macmillan Press, 2000), *passim*.

⁴⁵ Dagenais and Greer, *passim*.

⁴⁶ Dagenais and Greer, p.431.

⁴⁷ Homi K. Bhabha, "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation", in *The Location of Culture* (New York, London: Routledge, 1994), pp.199-244, p.222.

⁴⁸ See Kathleen Davis, "National Writing in the Ninth Century: A Reminder for Postcolonial Thinking about the Nation", *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 28:3 (1998), pp.611-637, p.630.

⁴⁹ Cf. Dagenais and Greer, p.434.

⁵⁰ Cohen (2000), p.1.

⁵¹ Cohen (2000), p.2.

⁵² Cf. Cohen (2000), p.6.

⁵³ See Davis, *A Reminder for Postcolonial Thinking about the Nation*, p.629.

A Middle Ages that is present in the Renaissance and that ‘acts’ in the early modern collective consciousness resists the hierarchizing narrative of time as a chronological, teleological sequence of events. *Troilus and Cressida*, the topic of the first part of this study, is set in ancient Troy with protagonists from the Middle Ages. Shakespeare’s adaptation of the Troy-material is not based on George Chapman’s then recently published translation of the *Iliad*, but draws, for the most part, on a medieval source: Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*. The characters Criseyde and Troilus are medieval additions to the Troy material that originate from the medieval romance tradition. If literature is to be seen as an especially dense repository of cultural memory,⁵⁴ then these ‘medieval’ antiquities put medieval lenses before our image of antiquity, or perhaps even stencils, creating a more complex image “of heterogeneity, overlap, sedimentation, and multiplicity”⁵⁵ than that of the Middle Ages as a simply ‘inversed’ modernity. The medieval characters acting in ancient Troy illustrate how recent history co-writes and re-writes more ancient history, how in a palimpsest recent layers rewrite and change earlier ones. The teichoscopy scene in *Troilus and Cressida* (Act I Scene 2) is also a good example of a polychronic network of multiple times, because it exists in so many variations since the ‘original’ scene of this kind in Book III of the *Iliad*, all of which have left traces in Shakespeare’s. Not only does the ‘original’ text and do earlier inscriptions influence more recent ones, in the way we perceive the scene, but also the other way around. The behaviour of the protagonists is to a high degree influenced by their own literary fame, which precedes them and of which they are fully conscious. Their futures, especially the one Robert Henryson devised for them in his sequel to, or rather alternative ending of, *Troilus and Criseyde*, *The Testament of Cresseid*, influences their behaviour at earlier points in the plot: they display a certain resignation with regard to their ‘fate’. This concerns not only the protagonists but also the larger frame, ancient Troy, where the story is set: the fall of Troy, although it does not occur in this play, appears to be a defining characteristic of the city of Troy even while it stands.

In the next chapter, I argue that *Troilus and Cressida* performatively recreates the period constellation of modernity and a Middle Ages constructed as its diametric opposite in the way the two opposed parties of Troy and Greece are arranged in binary opposition to each other, showing that indeed spatial concepts of alterity are applicable to fields of temporal distance. Troy and its Greek besiegers are drawn as complementary: while Troy appears as a medieval world that is committed to values like chivalry, honour, honesty and humility, connected with the literary genre of poetry, the Greeks are representatives of a Renaissance culture that is associated with cynicism, decadence, dissimulation, the lack of a

⁵⁴ See Ania Loomba, “Periodization, Race, and Global Contact”, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 37:3 (2007), pp.595-620, p.596.

⁵⁵ Cohen (2000), pp.2-3.

reliable value system, haughtiness, overestimation and the literary form of drama.⁵⁶ Although the Middle Ages appear more positive here, while modernity gets assigned the negative attributes, this is in fact coherent with the concept of Othering. The Other can also be idealised as something to aspire to. In that case, the inversion is inverted, so to speak, and what is positive is located with the Other and what is negative with the Self, as when the Middle Ages were, for example, idealised by the Romantics. The Middle Ages are then, typically, perceived as a time of stability, while the present is in a (constant) state of crisis. But this remains within the same paradigm, because the past, the Middle Ages, still remains the Other, entirely different from the Self. *Troilus and Cressida*, nonetheless, shows that the two parts are merely two sides of the same coin and that the separation is a projection mostly with the help of the key characters, Hector and Achilles, who are drawn as the embodiments of their respective parties. This goes so far that the scene in which Achilles kills Hector indicates not only the fact that Troy is going to be destroyed, but also the exact way in which this is going to happen. The two archenemies also assimilate here to such a degree that they become almost indistinguishable: employing the same metre and rhyme, they speak their verses in harmony and one takes up the line of the other and finishes it. Almost paradoxically, but not quite, it is their very opposition that makes Achilles and Hector so similar. The binary pairs Hector/Achilles, or Troy/Greece, medieval, premodern/(early) modern merge. The lines of division that marked off the dichotomic opposites vanish and leave the parts as inseparable, showing that they are ultimately one and the same, that the Other really is a part of the Self. I mean “merge” quite literally here, because I also argue that the way Achilles kills Hector, how he takes advantage of Hector’s defenceless situation and then repeatedly penetrates his body with swords, alludes to a rape. The violated (usually female) body often functions as a symbol for a nation under attack, either from without or within, as in *The Rape of Lucrece*. The killing and symbolic rape of Hector in *Troilus and Cressida* is still a little different, because it is also the culmination of an erotic attraction between him and Achilles that manifests early and increases throughout the play. So while Hector stands for ‘violated’ Troy here (the Greeks’ intrusion into the city at night), there is at the same time a bizarre parallel to one of Shakespeare’s most famous romantic scenes, namely the sonnet sequence that accompanies Romeo and Juliet’s first encounter. Romeo and Juliet are also lovers from two opposing parties, whose first encounter that has them converge in a kiss is diametrically opposed to the absolutely final one between Hector and Achilles. I would argue that Hector and Achilles’s dialogue from “Look, Hector, how the sun begins to set” to “Achilles

⁵⁶ For this, I draw upon Eric Scott Mallin, “Emulous Factions and the Collapse of Chivalry: *Troilus and Cressida*” in Mallin, *Inscribing the Time: Shakespeare and the End of Elizabethan England* (Berkeley: University of California Press), pp.25-61, pp.38-39.

hath the mighty Hector slain” (5.9.5-14) constitutes a sonnet as well, though a somewhat distorted one. It is not a complete sonnet, the rhyme scheme is a little different, but the sonnet tradition is definitely evoked and then dropped quickly, as if from shock at the parallel, or because an ugly, distorted sonnet fits such a horrible scene better. During the sonnet in *Romeo and Juliet*, the lovers approach each other, speak their lines together and then merge in a kiss, while Hector and Achilles merge for a killing and rape. If Achilles stands for ‘(early) modern’ Greece and Hector for ‘medieval’ Troy, its dichotomic Other, Hector’s end strongly emphasises the violence binary oppositions produce. For while the categories of identity and alterity are made and not given – Achilles and Hector, or Greece and Troy, turn out not to be so different after all – at the same time they produce very real effects, though not only for the Other: Hector is slaughtered brutally here, but his death also sets the clock ticking for Achilles, whose death, as we all know, is from this point on only a question of time.

The last chapter on *Troilus and Cressida* focuses on Cressida, the only character in the play who switches between the parties and belongs to both sides, Trojan and Greek. She is also associated with literature and text more than any other character in the play. According to Ulysses, “There’s language in her eye, her cheek, her lip/ Nay, her foot speaks” (4.5.56-57). The main reproach against her, that of falsehood and dissimulation, is, interestingly, exactly what the Elizabethan theatre was accused of by its opponents. By the ‘dissimulation’ of acting, it was argued, ‘natural’ hierarchies get confused, for example when a common citizen dresses like a gentleman for the stage. In *Plays Confuted in Five Actions*, Stephen Gosson employs the same metaphor of sickness that Ulysses uses to describe the Greeks’ major weakness.⁵⁷ But at the same time, Cressida is more confined by this role than any other character and she is fully aware of it. She knows her own future, her literary fame, and the limits it sets to her possibilities to act. In the speech in which she describes her reputation (“False, false, false!”, 5.2.185) as fixed from the beginning to the end of time she establishes an analogy to the biblical history of creation, in which language gets assigned the ultimate performative power (“‘Let there be light’; and there was light”, etc.). According to Judith Butler, who quotes the same passage of the *Book of Genesis* in this context, the citationality of performative utterances is concealed (“masqueraded”) by the installation of

⁵⁷ Compare Stephen Gosson: “If privat men be suffered to forsake their calling because they desire to walke gentlemen like in sattine & velvet [...] the whole body must be dismembered and the prince or the heade cannot chuse but sicken”. Stephen Gosson, *Plays Confuted in Five Actions* (1582), facsimile edition (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1972), C5r, G6v-G7v; cited in Louis Montrose, *The Purpose of Playing: Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of the Elizabethan Theatre* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp.35-36. Compare Ulysses: “Degree being vizarded/Th’unworthiest shows as fairly in the mask”(1.3.83-84); “O, when degree is shaken,/ [...] The enterprise is sick” (1.3.101-103); “every step,/ Exemplified by the first pace that is sick/ Of his superior, grows to an envious fever/ Of pale and bloodless emulation” (1.3.131-134).