



Greek Mythology and William Shakespeare

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Abstract

The aim of this article was to investigate what influence Greek mythology has had on Western society, more specifically regarding literature, while discussing the Ancient Greek writers, myths, and stories and how it was used by William Shakespeare. The thesis analyzes the British Renaissance and how William Shakespeare utilized classical writings to create his dramas, comedies, and sonnets and what techniques he used to do so (allusions, symbolism, plot-rewriting). The major part of the paper presents the impact of Greek mythology and Homer's Iliad on Shakespeare's less-known play Troilus and Cressida. The epic poem and the satirical tragedy are compared by the method of textual/literary analysis. A conclusion is made that, despite the similarity in topics and plot and partial coincidence of the major characters, Shakespeare's masterpiece is a very different view on the same events.

Keywords: Greek mythology, Shakespeare, allusions, symbolism

1. Introduction

It is very important to know one's cultural roots. For Europeans or, more exactly, for western nations ancient Greece was one of the pillars on which their culture has been built. As Chami (2015) writes, from language to sport, science, and literature this contribution of ancient Greek civilization is there, even if we do not really realize it. All this made the researchers immensely curious and stimulated them to investigate further this issue, especially from the viewpoint of literature. What is more, is that the period of the Renaissance all around the world is heavily and deeply based on Greek mythology. Hight (2015) writes that before rediscovering classic Greco-Roman style, writers would suffer in using words to explain their thoughts and ideas. As Greek orators had a real mastery in language, it is hard to find any literary devices they have not used, therefore, writers of Renaissance exercised this newly discovered power to create their own masterpieces. Accordingly, discussing the above-mentioned connection with one of the greatest periods of humankind, rebirth only seems rational to me.

The goal of this article is to explore this topic in respect of William Shakespeare and his play Troilus and Cressida. Troilus and Cressida is a play which is fully based on Greek stories; the setting, the plot, the characters, everything is 'copied' from Greek myths, which gives a perfect ground for comparison while giving the researchers the ability to analyze on a concrete example how and in what way Greek mythology influenced Western society. Moreover, as this theatrical piece is relatively less known than other comedies, dramas, or

sonnets that Shakespeare wrote, there are more places for discoveries and inventions.

Problem Statement

Pamias (2014) expressed an idea that "unlike the terms tradition, inheritance, or influence, (implying the projection from past to present) and survival or Nachleben (implying historical continuity) reception implies the active participation of readers in a two-way process, backward, as well as forward, in which the present and past are in dialogue with each other" (p.44). It is essential that we do not perceive the ancient Greek mythology and masterpieces of ancient Greek literature as something from the remote past that should be kept in museums, but it is interwoven in our today's understanding of life. Of course, time goes on and the 'reception' does change, but the bulk - the human relations and features, what we value, and what we disgust - largely remains the same.

Many contemporary youths are losing this sense of connection between the common European past and our today's life. In this investigation, the researchers intend to explore this connection and make a sense out of it regarding the British Renaissance period.

Goal Statement

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of Greek mythology on Shakespeare and his play Troilus and Cressida, as well as our contemporary 'reception' of both. In this way, the researchers wanted to see our cultural roots

better and to help those who decide to read this article to do so.

Research Questions

1. How has Greek mythology influenced the literature of the West?
2. How did Greek mythology influence, Shakespeare?
3. How did Greek mythology influence Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida?
4. What are the similarities and the differences between the Greek myth about Troy, Homer's epic, and Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida?

Novelty and Actuality

There have been scholars who were interested in the topic of Greek mythology and its influence on the world. Chami (2015), for instance, introduced and tried to prove the idea of Greek culture's general influence on the world, while Highet (2015) investigated Greco-Roman influence on literature specifically. There also has been research on mythology in Shakespeare's plays, including Coriolanus, and Julius Caesar (Storch, 1984). However, Greek mythology and literature, as well as Shakespeare's works are inexhaustibly deep, so the researchers intended to do this analysis regarding one of Shakespeare's relatively rarely discussed plays, Troilus and Cressida, and compare it to Homer's Iliad, as they discuss the same story both similarly and differently. The topics of war, heroism, wisdom, love, and loyalty, raised in both, remain as important to contemporary readers, as they were in ancient or Renaissance time.

Significance of the Problem

William Shakespeare is one of the greatest playwrights and poets we have ever known (Javed, 2020), therefore the researchers strongly believe that if he had found his muse, his interest in something, it is more than worth investigating, especially when we mention big mediums such as ancient Greek myths and literature. We hope that this research would help us to get close to the thoughts of great Renaissance artists and what they saw in investigating classical writings. Moreover, as this research investigates the influence of Greek culture and mythology on English and Renaissance literature, it would help people to understand and get deep insight on this connection.

Practical and Theoretical Value

This research can help everyone who is interested in Greek mythology and literature, Renaissance literature, and, foremost, Shakespeare. As this research investigates what is the basis of Renaissance for Shakespeare, it would show readers the way Greek literature led and guided him. It will help contemporary readers to think about Shakespearean writing from different points of view and, therefore, appreciate it on a deeper level.

Research Methods

The research method of textual analysis was used to study Troilus and Cressida. This technique suggests that, instead of conducting surveys or interviews, one works on the chosen

text closely, reads into details, and highlights the most important parts for its significance (Belsey, 2013).

2. Literature and textual analysis

Beginning with one of the most famous comedies by Shakespeare, *The merchant of Venice*, one could say that there are even more allusions than one might expect to find. From the very first pages, in Act I, scene 1, we see the name Nestor, a person who was famous in both mythology and Homer's *Iliad* for being extremely intelligent and based on his knowledge giving advice in the Trojan War. Shakespeare uses his name to say that even if he said something humorous, some people still would not laugh, even though based on Nestor's word whole actions were taken and he was respected by all.

That they'll not show their teeth in way of smile
Though Nestor swear the jest be laughable.
The Merchant of Venice, Act 1, Scene 1.

In the same play, scene 2 we meet an allusion of Sybilla, who, according to Greek mythology, was a prophet to whom Apollo promised eternal life. William Shakespeare uses simile to express Portia's frustration of not being able to obtain her father's will by suitors, even if she lived forever as Sybilla herself.

If I live to be as old as Sibylla, I will die as
chaste as Diana unless I be obtained by the manner
of my father's will

The merchant of Venice, Act 1, scene 2.

In the opening part of Act II of *The Merchant of Venice*, we come across the allusion of Hercules and his servant Lychas in the speech of the prince of Morocco, saying that even if one is weak, if he tries to be dexterous, he might win.

If Hercules and Lychas play at dice
Which is the better man, the greater throw
May turn by fortune from the weaker hand

The merchant of Venice, Act 2, Scene 1.

Another play containing allusions to Greek mythology is *The merry wives of Windsor*. As stated above, writers love to mention Hector in their writing as a representation of heroism. Yet, for Greeks, he illustrates a different idea of intimidator, which was taken as an example of representation of mood by Shakespeare.

Thou 'rt an emperor—Caesar, Keiser, and
Pheazar. I will entertain Bardolph. He shall draw,
10

He shall tap. Said I well, bully Hector?

The merry wives of Windsor, Act 1, Scene 3.

In *The merry wives of Windsor* Mistress Page mentions the mountain of Pelion, a real mountain in Greece, which is also seen in myths of centaur Chiron, famous for being a tutor of Achilles. Yet, the mistress here recalls the clash between Titans and Gods and mentions Pelion as the place from where they could reach the Olympus mount.

I had rather be a giantess and lie
under Mount Pelion.

The merry wives of Windsor, Act 2, Scene 1.

Needless to say, William Shakespeare is not only famous for writing comedies, moreover, his tragedies are considered as one of the best in this branch. To add richness and classical Greek depth to his play *Hamlet* he used some allusions to ancient Greece, its mythology, and literature. In this tragedy we read about Queen Hecuba (Priam's wife, Hector, and Paris's mother), as a metaphor of grief or emotional expression by Hamlet himself in act II scene 2, stating that actors in the play need to show more feelings as the miserable queen did.

It shall to the barber's, with your beard. Prithee, say
on: he's for a jig or a tale of bawdry, or he sleeps:
say on come to Hecuba.

Hamlet, Act 2, Scene 2.

In Act I Scene 2 Hamlet has a speech saying that his mother marrying his uncle so soon after the death of her husband is wrong and he uses multiple allusions which are traced back to Greece, such as Hyperion, a Titan god, and Niobe, who is known for mourning her children and dying from it. That is what the protagonist of the play expects from his own mother as well.

Hyperion to a satyr; so loving to my mother
That he might not be teem the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth!
Must I remember? why, she would hang on him,
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on: and yet, within a month--
Let me not think on't--Frailty, thy name is woman!--
A little month, or ere those shoes were old
With which she followed my poor father's body,
Like Niobe, all tears:--why she, even she--
Hamlet, Act 1, Scene 2.

While discussing tragedies, we have to also mention *Othello* and say that even though it is about love, betrayal, imaginary and illicit affairs, we can say that Shakespeare still goes back to ancient Greece to find some allusions there. As mentioned above, Prometheus is one of the most famous heroes of ancient Greek stories, with his fire alongside. The Bard of Avon uses this reference to state that when Othello kills his wife, Desdemona, even the godly fire that Prometheus stole from the gods cannot help her in Act V, scene 2.

But once put out thy light, Thou cunning'st pattern
of excelling nature,

I know not where is that Promethean heat That can
thy light relume.

Othello, Act V, Scene 2.

One more play the researchers would like to discuss is *Midsummer night's Dream*. This particular one is full of allusions, because of the setting of the story in ancient Greece, which tells us that the story is based on characters from Greek mythology, and, therefore, contains dozens and dozens of

allusions. The play is developing around the wedding of Theseus, Greek hero, and Hippolyta, the queen of Amazons. Yet, the main characters of the play are Demetrius, Lysandrus, and Helena, who can be rooted to myths.

Furthermore, in some sonnets, Shakespeare refers to Cupid, the Roman god of love (his Greek equivalent is Eros, the son of Aphrodite, goddess of love), and Diana, the Roman goddess of animals and hunting (her Greek equivalent is Artemis):

Cupid laid by his brand and fell asleep:
A maid of Dian's this advantage found,
And his love-kindling fire did quickly steep
In a cold valley-fountain of that ground...
(Shakespeare, sonnet 153)

(It will be shown later in this articles that Shakespeare in *Troilus and Cressida* also sometimes uses the Roman names instead of the Greek ones, which is a sort of historic confusion).

As one can see, Shakespeare's writings have a tight connection with Greek mythology, even in the plays the plot of which is not based on Greek mythology. As in almost every other Renaissance representation, we see Hector, Prometheus, Greek settings, and comparisons based on myths. This is not at all surprising, as revival authors very often found their inspirations in the Hellenic Republic. Besides, the public that came to the performances was well aware of the allusions, so they easily understood what was said between the lines. However, knowing and being able to put it into impact are two totally different branches and I believe that the amazing knowledge and ability to use Greek mythology makes Shakespeare a distinguished playwright.

As stated above, Shakespeare often has found his inspiration in Greek philosophy and artistry, sometimes in a way of using allusions (*Hamlet*, *Othello*, *The merchant of Venice*) or some other times using characters who have roots in Greek mythology (*Midsummer's night Dream*). Another amazing usage of Greek culture and literature is to incorporate not only personages but also plots and settings in one's work. An astonishing example of this mastery would be William Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, based on the Trojan War reflected in the ancient Greek mythology and *Iliad* by Homer with reminiscing old topics (war, love, family, heroism), yet assimilating new themes and characters as well (*Troilus*, *Cressida*, etc.). Needless to say, this does not mean Shakespeare did not have his own ideas, but his supremacy was in the ability to use the already familiar to the public/readers plots to create something new that would interest everyone. Furthermore, using as much of symbolism and allegories from ancient Greece as possible was characteristic of Renaissance literature, as it was considered to add value, depth, and richness to any literary pieces during the Elizabethan era. The play *Troilus and Cressida* is discussed in the article in terms of the plot and characters, as well as its comparison to Homer's *Iliad*.

The plot of *Troilus and Cressida* is not basic, as in many other Shakespearean worlds we are locking ourselves in a universe of love, intrigues, families, and illicit affairs. There are several plot twists and peripeteias, which make the play thought-provoking and complex, throwing us to the intricacy of humanistic behaviors, which creates tragedy and drama through wars. Yet, Shakespeare does not forget that the public/readers of his plays are humans and even in the darkest times such as battles and combats our feelings do not leave us.

The theatrical drama begins with a small preamble stating that the scene is occurring in Troy, Greek city country, and in it Shakespeare suggests that this prologue even though is the beginning of his play, the story he starts to tell is from the middle. It almost feels as if the playwright gives a very brief analysis of the Trojan War, mentioning participants and settings.

In Troy, there lies the scene. From isles of Greece
Beginning in the middle; starting thence away...

Troilus and Cressida, Prologue.

The first act consists of three scenes - Troy, before Priam's place; Troy. A street; and the Grecian camp. Before Agamemnon's tent, two people are telling us about the ongoing romance between Troilus and Cressida and not the affairs of war, which is used as a tool by Shakespeare to establish the emotional connection between the characters and viewers. Moreover, as the crash of Greeks and Trojans was not something newly discovered, it could not play as a hook to the audience and they would need to focus their attention on something different, such as new themes, which would drive the public to a whole new direction. To go back to the first two scenes, we can say that in act I scene 1, Shakespeare is opening up with Troilus (The son of King Priam and Queen Hecuba of Troy, Hector and Paris's brother, mentioned in *Iliad*, but playing an unimportant role there) who states that he cannot go into war, as he is in love and suffering from it, and ask Pandarus, (Cressida's uncle) to be a matchmaker in-between two love birds.

They lie indrench'd. I tell thee I am mad
In Cressid's love.

Troilus and Cressida, Act I, Scene 1.

As for Cressida, we see that she is not that vocal about her true feelings with others, and in dialogue with Pandora, it almost feels like she is interested in Hector more. Later, she discovers that she is afraid of confessing her true desires, which is to be with Troilus. This rare insight of character's, especially in women's minds, gives us a hint of how ridiculous medieval standards were for the female while on the contrary, the lead male protagonist weeps about how much he suffered from being in love.

Shakespeare had the golden mean of balancing farce and drama which clearly is visible in act I, scene 3, in which our attention is drawn to actual war affairs. We meet the mighty Agamemnon, his brother Melanus and Ulysses, with Nestor and them discussing that the main problem they have is an undisciplined army, which is led by Achilles, and Ajax. Here

these two are portrayed as troublemakers, egocentric and insolent as said by Ulysses.

What glory our Achilles shares from Hector,
Were he not proud, we all should share with him;
But he already is too insolent;

Troilus and Cressida, Act I, Scene 3.

Scene 3 is followed by act II, also consisting of three scenes, The Grecian Camp, Troy; Priam's place; and The Grecian camp, Before the tent of Achilles. The whole act is completely about war, discovering different characters and adversaries. In scene 1 Shakespeare develops the relationship between Ajax and Achilles, portraying them as two childlike men, who have power to win a war, but they are dishonorable and brutish. To do so, he uses Thersites, which for me is kind of the author's voice, speaking the harsh truth for Greeks, commenting on every action they take in an ill-mannered way.

Act II, scene 2 is the part most dedicated to war strategists' issues in the whole play, where we read about honorable Hector, who at first is willing to give Helen back to her Greek husband to prevent further war loss, Troilus stating that if they do so, they will look weak, and Paris, the war breaker obviously agreeing with his brother Troilus, the protagonists of the story. Here Shakespeare also mentions Cassandra, Priam's daughter who is said to be a prophet in Greek mythology, cursed by Apollo to always tell the truth but no one ever to believe her, saying that the doom of Troy is close.

Virgins and boys, mid-age and wrinkled eld,
Soft infancy, that nothing canst but cry,
Add to my clamours. Let us pay betimes
A moiety of that mass of moan to come.
Cry, Trojans, cry. Practise your eyes with tears.
Troy must not be, nor goodly Ilium stand;
Our firebrand brother, Paris, burns us all.
Cry, Trojans, cry, A Helen and a woe!
Cry, cry. Troy burns, or else let Helen go.

Troilus and Cressida, Act 2, Scene 2.

As for the last scene from Act II, we go back to the Greek side of the story, where Commanders are trying to motivate Ajax to fight with Hector because they believe it will help with his and Achilles's pride in both cases, whether he wins or dies. All this fuss illustrates both Ajax and Achilles as immature, easily governed people when in reality they are supposed to be the strongest fighters from the Greek army (this interpretation of 'heroic' figures makes Shakespeare different from Homer, which perfectly reveals the difference between their epochs).

From Act III, the themes of the play *Troilus and Cressida* change again. We are back to a place of love and secrets, with a couple of allusions from mythology (mentioning the river Styx and Charon, who is believed to carry the souls of the dead to the underworld) and foreshadowing the ending of the war. In this act, we see that an illicit affair between the main characters changes into marriage with a little help from Pandarus. This union seems rather hurried, which obviously happens because Shakespeare has to move to the main part of

the Trojan War, where Achilles and Hector finally fight. The end for this act is again in front of the Greek camp, Cressida's father trying to have her back in exchange for some slaves.

Act IV, is the part in which things feel speeded up, political and romantic plots are merged and the newly-wed couples have to say their farewells to each other. Yet, it would not happen without changing the tokens of love, for Cressida, it is a sleeve, part of Troilus's outfit, while for her husband it is a glove. This very specification is kind of a foreshadowing for the reader that their love story is not as pure as, for example, that of Romeo and Juliet. Moreover, Troilus is full of doubts, asking Diomedes to be nice with his beloved one, but the latter answers that he would not do a thing Cressida would say no to.

I'll nothing do on charge: to her own
worth She shall be priz'd. But that you say 'Be't
so,'
I speak it in my spirit and honour, 'No.'
Troilus and Cressida, Act 4, Scene 4.

Even though the whole play lacks the classical structure, Act IV, scene 5 is the climax of the love story, as there is drastic change in the character of Cressida. Yes, she does not say a lot and much of it depends on the interpretation by the readers or audience, but the fact is that she seems rather flirtatious, free, and coquette in responses she gives to Agamemnon, Nestor, Patroclus, and, most importantly, Diomedes, who is romantically interested in her after greeting kisses she gave to Greek commanders.

The concluding act is divided into ten scenes. In-between love and war we read about betrayal (Cressida giving up Troilus's token of love to Diomedes) and finally seeing the resolution where Achilles and Hector fight for life. Of course, in a theater having a war zone would be almost impossible, therefore, some personages enter and leave the scene. Scene 5 in the final act is made to grab the attention of the spectators. We see Patroclus die, Ajax and Diomedes going for Troilus, and Achilles searching for Hector.

AJAX.
Troilus! thou coward Troilus!

DIOMEDES.
Ay, there, there.

ACHILLES.
Where is this Hector?
Come, come, thou boy-queller, show thy face;
Know what it is to meet Achilles angry.
Hector! Where's Hector? I will none but Hector.
Troilus and Cressida, Act 5, Scene 5.

We all know that Hector falls in this battle, yet Shakespeare chose to portray this famous scene differently, illustrating that the fight between the greatest Trojan warrior and Achilles was not fair, as in the very moment when Achilles has to kill him, Hector is unarmed, therefore, there is no combat in-between the two, and it is the shameless Greek who orders his army to commit war crimes and murder a Trojan prince.

HECTOR.
I am unarm'd; forego this vantage, Greek.

ACHILLES.
Strike, fellows, strike; this is the man I seek.
So, Ilion, fall thou next! Now, Troy, sink down;
Here lies thy heart, thy sinews, and thy bone.
On, Myrmidons, and cry you all amain
'Achilles hath the mighty Hector slain.'
Troilus and Cressida, Act 5, Scene 8.

The last two scenes are just unfinished, with very limited information about how Greek and Trojan commanders receive the news of Hector's death, which could not even be called the resolution, as the story is not over. Nor is the story of two lovers - Troilus and Cressida.

Yet, we can say that Shakespeare chose to use this plot to represent different perspectives of the same famous characters, where Achilles and Ajax are childlike, Diomedes falls in love with someone's "wife", Paris and Helen do not care much what will happen to the people of Troy. The topic of heroism and love in Homer's epic poem are shifted to the topic of betrayal and indifference in Shakespeare's drama. In Homer's interpretations, Achilles and Hector are rivals, but both of them are war heroes (Morgandale, 2013). In Shakespeare's interpretation, the Greek commander Agamemnon, king of Mycenae, wants to send the brave (but stupid) Ajax to fight Hector, as clever (but unmotivated) Achilles refuses to do so, thinking that if Ajax is killed, the Greeks will still have a hero to fight.

He that is proud eats up himself: pride is
his own glass, his own trumpet, his own chronicle;
and whatever praises itself but in the deed, devours
the deed in the praise.

Troilus and Cressida, Act II, Scene 1.

On the other hand, practical Hector doesn't want to fight for his brother's beloved woman (as she betrayed her Greek husband):

If this law Of nature be corrupted through
affection...

Troilus and Cressida, Act II, Scene 1.

While Paris's another brother Troilus is ready to fight because of his understanding of 'honour':

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...

Troilus and Cressida, Act II, Scene 1.

Besides, Homer's beautiful Helen becomes an egoistic woman caring about her earthly pleasures in Shakespeare's play. His Cressida is no better. The play was written by mature, not very young Shakespeare, between 1600 and 1603, probably, disappointed in high-flown words like 'heroism', knowing that politicians with some background interests initiate wars like the Earl of Essex, former favorite of Queen Elizabeth,

attempted a rebellion against her, sometime before the play was written (Morgandale, 2013).

There is no evidence whether the play was ever performed in Globe or any other theater, so it is not known how Shakespeare's contemporaries reacted to the more than unusual and innovative even for Shakespeare play. For contemporary readers the play which is a mixture of tragedy (major characters die) and satirical comedy and even farce (e.g., episodes between Cressida and her uncle) is perceived as standing apart from his other plays. Heroism and love of Greek myths gave way to narcissism and lust in this play. How different it is from anthems to love in say, *Romeo and Juliet*:

PANDARUS

Love, love, nothing but love, still more!
For, O, love's bow
Shoots buck and doe:
The shaft confounds,
Not that it wounds,
But tickles still the sore.
These lovers cry Oh! oh! They die!
Yet that which seems the wound to kill,
Doth turn oh! oh! to ha! ha! he!
So dying love lives still:
Oh! oh! A while, but ha! ha! ha!
Oh! oh! groans out for ha! ha! ha!
Heigh-ho!

Troilus and Cressida, Act II, Scene 1.

Renaissance artists were constantly referencing Greek mythology in their works, whether it would be in a piece of art, sonnet, or play. Starting from Caravaggio and his most famous painting *Narcissus* to Raphael and his *The Triumph of Galatea*, the list of painters who re-used mythical characters as a muse is endless. The same could be said about Shakespeare and his sonnets, including *Romeo and Juliet*, in which he mentions Echo, the above-mentioned Narcissus's admirer and the nymph, Cynthia, A.K.A Artemis, Helios, and his son Phaeton. The technique of supplementing characters or using allusions was a way of representing the author's mastery, giving readers/audience the ability to connect mythology to work to acknowledge characters better.

Troilus and Cressida might be a bit different from Shakespeare's classical plays, in regard to structure or themes, but he definitely used mythical characters in this work as well. This sub-sub chapter will go deeper into this topic and discover some allusions connected to ancient Greek mythical characters.

In Act I Scene 1, the major character Troilus uses Homeric language and calls for Apollo and mentions Daphne, to compare his platonic love to Cressida. According to him, his love was the same kind as the Greek god had for Daphne, as both were examples of unrequited love. Shakespeare, by using this allusion means that at that point of the storyline, Troilus has no clue about Cressida's feelings and that is why he feels hopeless.

Tell me, Apollo, for thy Daphne's love,
What Cressid is, what Pandar, and what we?
Troilus and Cressida, Act I, Scene 1.

Act IV, scene 1, represents Anchises, Aeneas's father, who was famously known as Aphrodite's lover, which is followed by mentioning of Venus. Venus is the Roman equivalent to the goddess of love, fertility, and passion - Aphrodite - from Greek mythology. I think this style might be confusing to an average reader now, yet it tells us a lot about the ordinary citizens of England back then, who not only were erudites in Greek mythical characters but of Romanized versions of them as well.

Welcome to Troy! Now, by Anchises' life,
Welcome indeed! By Venus' hand, I swear
No man alive can love in such a sort
The thing he means to kill, more excellently.
Troilus and Cressida, Act IV, Scene 1.

The earlier mentioned Charon was a purely mythological creature whose job was to carry dead people's souls over the mythical river Styx which flows to the underworld. The usage of this character in Act III scene 2, is quite interesting for the reader/audience. It is a metaphor used by Troilus to describe the role of Pandarus as a go-between him and Cressida similar to Charon as carrier.

TROILUS.

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 these fields
Where I may wallow in the lily beds
Propos'd for the deserfer! O gentle Pandar,
from Cupid's shoulder pluck his painted wings,
and fly with me to Cressid!

Troilus and Cressida, Act III, Scene 2.

Several times we meet characters of *Troilus and Cressida* using the name "Jove", which is another name for Jupiter, latinized for Zeus. Character's like Cressida or Diomedes are using this name to present exclamations similar to what we use nowadays - "O my god".

DIOMEDES.

The one and other Diomed embraces.
Our bloods are now in calm; and so long health! But
when contention and occasion meet,
By Jove, I'll play the hunter for thy life
Troilus and Cressida, Act IV, Scene 1.

CRESSIDA.

O Jupiter! there's no comparison.
Troilus and Cressida, Act I, Scene 2.

CRESSIDA.

Juno have mercy! How came it cloven?
Troilus and Cressida, Act I, Scene 2.

Or Ulysses mentioning Venus and saying that he would kiss Cressida only if Helen became a maid again, which we all know is impossible.

ULYSSES.

Why then, for Venus' sake give me a kiss
When Helen is a maid again, and his.
Troilus and Cressida, Act IV, Scene 5.

While talking about Romanized versions of Greek gods, it is necessary to mention the allusion of the famous Cupid, god of passion and desire, which in Greek mythology is known as Eros. With Shakespeare he is mentioned by Helen of Troy in Act III, scene 1 in a dialogue with Pandarus, while they are trying to choose a song he has to sing, and Paris's twin flame says that the song should be about love, therefore, mentions Cupid.

HELEN.

Let thy song be love. This love will undo us all. O
Cupid, Cupid, Cupid!
Troilus and Cressida, Act III, Scene 1.

Overall, we can say that Shakespeare did not evade his tradition of being influenced by Greek mythology in *Troilus and Cressida* either, sometimes he used direct allusions, with direct names, but other times he preferred to substitute them with Latinized versions. This technique itself seems rather interesting, as it is clear that this usage was deliberate. Of course, he had this possibility because his audience was educated enough to be aware about all Greek-Roman versions of names. Moreover, we can say that this skill and proficiency of revival of classical literature makes him a typical representative of the British Renaissance. Plenty of allusions to mythical creatures and places creates the atmosphere of the classical world, which helps the readers/audience believe that they are really there.

The fact is that William Shakespeare has found his muse in classical writings, yet it was necessary that he used his mastery to reshape them. This difference is clear if we compare Homer's *Iliad* and Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, as both are about the same war and characters, however, reading them will ensure readers that themes differ from each other. Storch (1948) writes that even though we see Shakespeare borrowing topics and characters from Homer's epic, he tends to substitute heroic figures with more mundane ones, which is one of many other major contrasts a reader can see. This sub-sub chapter will focus on these dissimilarities based on themes, structures, genre and plot, and characters.

Themes - Both *Iliad* and *Troilus and Cressida* share the same topic of war, a clash between two major kingdoms of Greece and Troy. The conflict that emerged because the Trojan prince fell in love with Helen, the wife of Menelaus, the King of Sparta, known to be the most beautiful woman on the planet. We, moreover, see war episodes, illicit affairs, and political games in both, so at one glance the themes are the same. In spite of that, a closer look at the plot will guarantee to see the differences. The theme of war is differently presented in the two works - while in *Iliad* war is heroic and tragic, in *Troilus and Cressida* it is based on dirty political games and, due to it, it filthy, however, tragic - but in a very different way (tragic are the consequences of the dirty games).

Another theme in both works is love. And here, again, love is glorified by Homer, however, what Paris and Helen experience is a rather egoistic feeling (they do not care too much for those who die to protect their right to be together), and Troilus's love is rather passion/desire, to say nothing about Cressida's love, which easily turns into infidelity. "The play's great theme is infidelity, and it is this that links together the various separate actions. There are three stories here - that of Troilus and Cressida, that of the Greeks' quarrel with Achilles, and that of Hector's downfall - and all three pivots around a revelation or demonstration of infidelity" (Oates, 1999).

Genre and meter - Homer's work is known as an *epic poem*, which denotes the idea that it is based on legend or tradition and is a work of art. Merriam-Webster Dictionary (n.d.) suggests that epic is "a long narrative poem in elevated style recounting the deeds of a legendary or historical hero". Therefore, from the very beginning, we know that the narration is focused on heroic deeds, which is represented by elevated speech, as it should be in epics.

Homer's epic poem was not created to be written, it was orally transmitted (sung) poetry, which later, at some point was made into writing. West (1997) writes that typically Homer's poetry is created in a single meter, where the same metrical pattern is used in almost every line, which is customary in many cultures. *Iliad* was written in dactylic hexameter (a foot consisting of one long syllable followed by two short ones, repeated six times), the meter typical of Greek and Roman poetry (a long syllable followed by two short syllables). Moreover, West writes: "The meter of Homer, like that of all classical Greek verse, is 'quantitative,' based on the opposition of long and short syllables, not (like English verse) on the opposition between accented and unaccented elements" (pp. 218-237), it is mostly unrhymed (blank verse, e.g.:

SING, goddess Muse, the wrath of Peleus' son,
The wrath of Achileus with ruin fraught,
That to Achaians brought unnumbered woes,
And many mighty souls of heroes hurled
To Hades' home, but gave themselves a prey
To dogs and every fowl.
Iliad, Book 1.

Troilus and Cressida is a play, written in a rough iambic pentameter, typical for English poetry of Shakespearean time (unstressed syllable, stressed syllable x 5).

In Troy, there lies the scene. From isles of Greece
The princes orgulous, their high blood chafed,
Have to the port of Athens sent their ships,
Fraught with the ministers and instruments
Of cruel war: sixty and nine, that wore
Their crownets regal, from the Athenian bay
Put forth toward Phrygia...

Troilus and Cressida, Act 1, Prologue.

Shakespeare's play is written in blank verse, as many other playwrights used to in Elizabethan drama.
Structure and Plot - I believe another major difference

between *Iliad* and *Troilus and Cressida* is in the structures they are written in. *Iliad* is divided into 24 songs according to the ionic alphabet. *Troilus and Cressida* is divided into five acts with multiple scenes in each.

Furthermore, one more major difference is that with “*Iliad*” we don’t get to read the introduction of war, we just dive into the 10th year of the ongoing siege of Troy. Although we can say that Shakespeare does not give us much information about the battle itself, we do have a prologue, introducing the setting and characters.

The plot of the play *Troilus and Cressida* is not classical, there is no traditional unity of time, place, and action. Finding climax, or inciting incidents seems rather hard, as each scene feels like it has its own, as almost each of them develops different themes resulting in the Shakespearean satirical approach to the Trojan War. We can say that Shakespeare’s way of building up the plot is quite different from Homer’s. Homer, typically for an epic, starts telling from one point and all storylines that follow are sequential with no jumps and everything stays within logic frame lines. This technique creates the image of solemnity and the readers start perceiving the plot with whole seriousness. Needless to say, all these plot and structural differences engender the central difference, based on reflecting the attitude and perception of the importance of structure by the storyteller.

As *Troilus and Cressida* is a satirical presentation of Trojan War, and its characters are almost grotesque, with their self-interested choices, childlike actions, imperfect souls, and sexual desires, Shakespeare, instead of following the timeline, dives deep into the characters of people, and finds faults with them, rather than showing them as heroic. It gives us the chance to call his play a satirical tragedy on war (“cruel war”), rather than a war epic.

ULYSSES

They tax our policy, and call it cowardice,
Count wisdom as no member of the war...
Troilus and Cressida, Act 1, Scene 3.

Characters - One might think that, as both *Iliad* and *Troilus and Cressida* are based on the same story, they must have one and the same major characters, which sounds logical, but it is not entirely true. In this part, the differences between the two works will be discussed in terms of major and minor characters in two above-mentioned literary pieces with the differences appearing from their characterization. *Iliad* starts with mentioning the wrath of *Achilles*, the son of *Peleus*, denoting the idea that the central figure of the story we are about to read is *Achilles*. Therefore, the major (protagonist?) The characters of the plot are he and his person of interest, the one who made him vexed, *Hector* (antagonist?).

With Homer *Achilles* is this mighty hero. In *Iliad*, we read about his courageous and honorable character, and even the very first line in the epic ensures to illustrate him as such.

Achilles' wrath, to Greece the direful spring
Of woes unnumber'd, heavenly goddess, sing!

That wrath which hurl'd to Pluto's gloomy reign
The souls of mighty chiefs untimely slain;
Whose limbs unburied on the naked shore,
Devouring dogs and hungry vultures tore.
Since great *Achilles* and *At* rides strove,
Such was the sovereign doom and such the will of
Jove!

Iliad Book I.

Achilles has the understanding of obligations he has with the Greek army and tries to fight with the desires of honor in order to help others. He has aims and is the man of his word, not fighting in war until he is forced to. Shakespearean representation of Homer’s major characters is absolutely different. *Achilles* is the greatest of warriors in the play as well, yet here he is portrayed as a problem, which is getting bigger and bigger as time goes by:

CRESSIDA

There is among the Greeks *Achilles*, a better man
than *Troilus*.

PANDARUS

Achilles! a drayman, a porter, a very camel.
Troilus and Cressida, Act 1, Scene 1.

He creates chaos, is being dishonorable (in the way he kills *Hector*), and, most importantly, childish. *Achilles'*s whole representation in *Troilus and Cressida* has a snowball effect of being a problematic character. While the characterization of *Hector* in both *Iliad* and *Troilus and Cressida* is indeed heroic, he represents honour, force, and an ideal soldier. In song nine of *Iliad* *Agamemnon* states that as he is ideal and even *Zeus* loves him and this feeling is equal to having a whole army and that is why he helps *Hector* to slaughter many Greeks.

Worth a whole host is he
Whom *Zeus* doth dearly love, as now this man *He*
honours, and afflicts *Achaia's* host.
Iliad, Embassy to entreat *Achilleus*.

The major characters of William Shakespeare’s play, however, are in the center of the love story, so they are *Troilus* and *Cressida*. They are mentioned in Greek mythology - *Troilus* is one of King *Priam's* sons and, consequently, one of *Hector's* brothers, while *Cressida* is a Trojan women, whose father *Calchas* escaped to the Greeks, and whose uncle is *Pandarus*. However, they almost do not exist in Homer’s poem. There is a brief mention of *Troilus* when the king *Priam* talks about his dead sons, yet there is no further information, not even his name, and *Cressida* is a character who just appears in reinterpretations of the Trojan War.

Troilus characterizes himself as “weaker than a woman's tear, tamer than sleep, fonder than ignorance, less valiant than the virgin in the night, and skillless as unpractised infancy”, however, he is a man of honor and is ready to fight in order not to return *Helen* to the Greeks, as

PANDARUS:

Mark him; note him. O brave Troilus! Look well upon him, niece: look you how his sword is bloodied, and his helm more hacked than Hector's, and how he looks, and how he goes! O admirable youth! he ne'er saw three and twenty. Go thy way, Troilus, go thy way!

Troilus and Cressida, Act 1, Scene 2)

TROIUS:

Fie, fie, my brother!

Weigh you the worth and honour of a king

So great as our dread father in a scale

Of common ounces?

Troilus and Cressida, Act 2, Scene 2.

Naturally, discussing the Trojan War one must as well discuss the war breakers, Helen and Paris. Even though the plot neither in *Iliad* nor in *Troilus and Cressida* follows their love story, they are the ones who were the reason (or the pre-text) for the war. It could be said that Helen of Troy stays as more or less a minor character in the Homeric world, whilst Paris is one of the major commanders, in contrast with Shakespeare's play.

As for other important characters, they include King Agamemnon of Mycenae and Odysseus, who in Shakespeare's play is mentioned under his Roman name Ulysses. The King Agamemnon, in *Iliad* is a very central figure; he has the power and will to initiate the war, for his gain. Moreover, he is a great warrior and leader, as many seem to believe and follow him. What stops him to be as heroic as Hector is his lack of having honor, otherwise he is one of the best soldiers. In *Troilus and Cressida* he is not as strong-willed, as we see him to be in *Iliad*, his army is hectic, unarranged, and unsettled:

ULYSSES:

Agamemnon,

Thou great commander, nerve and bone of Greece,

Heart of our numbers, soul, and only spirit.

In whom the tempers and the minds of all

Should be shut up, hear what Ulysses speaks.

Besides the applause and approbation...

AGAMEMNON:

This chaos, when degree is suffocate,

Follows the choking.

And this neglect ion of degree it is

That by a pace goes backward, with a purpose

It hath to climb.

Troilus and Cressida, Act 1, Scene 3

He is governed by Greek army commanders such as Nestor, Ulysses, Achilles, and Ajax. He cannot maintain discipline and does not have the possibility to win the war on his own. As we have mentioned, Odysseus, Aka, Ulysses, is a major character in both works. He is represented as an intelligent and wonderful warrior, but what makes Shakespeare's Ulysses differ from Homer's Odysseus is little personal nuances of his character by Shakespeare, with whom he is rather straight and cynical.

Another major difference with the major characters in these two works is the lack of participation of gods and goddesses in *Troilus and Cressida*. *Iliad* heavily stresses their involvement in the plot, they are the ones who create the climate of the battle and decide who is lucky enough to survive a combat and who is not. However, they are portrayed as human-like, rather than divine creatures. In the play *Troilus and Cressida*, on the other hand, they are only mentioned, like figures of speech (**HELEN:** Let thy song be love: this love will undo us all. O, Cupid, Cupid, Cupid!).

It is natural that after mentioning major characters, the following topic is personages that have less of importance. In *Iliad* we can assume this to be Patroclus, Achilles's best friend and companion who also appears in *Troilus and Cressida*, yet in *Iliad* he is a more active participant and his actions drive Achilles to war. *Troilus and Cressida* involves some characters who are not present in the Greek epic, such as Pandarus, Cressida's uncle who plays matchmaker in between lovebirds, and Thersites, a witty soldier servant who speaks harsh truth.

The bottom line of this sub-sub chapter is the idea that in spite of the fact that Homer's *Iliad* can be said to be original source material for Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, there is a good deal of difference between the ways they were written in terms of characterization of personages, themes, and structures.

3. Conclusion

From Ancient Greece to Renaissance and its summit, Shakespeare, there should have been approximately 18.5 centuries, as Ancient Greek culture started with Homer and his *Iliad* and *Odyssey* around 8BC, while Shakespeare lived in the 16-17 centuries. Eighteen and a half centuries, but somehow Greek myths still paved their way through art and literature into a moderately new world. Yet, how did this happen? Or can we, 21st-century people, see that impact that is talked about so much?

The analysis in the article has revealed that the influence and dominance of ancient mythology is quite visible. Many of his plays and sonnets stand on Greek entities, which is metaphorically a pillar to the period of rebirth. Moreover, to represent this we have dramas and comedies - *The merry wives of Windsor*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Othello*, *Hamlet*, etc., in which we not only find numerous allusions and metaphors based on Greek mythology, but also entire Greek mythological plots. This additionally answers the question of how Shakespeare used myths in his work. Renaissance authors had an advantage, of their audience knowing all about Greco-Roman culture, they knew all the stories, they knew all the names and most importantly they knew all the myths. Casually mentioning Charon, Cupid, or even Odysseus was not a surprising element, as their background was familiar to the readers/audience's eyes. Thus, one can confidently say that Greek mythology was an immense influence on Shakespeare and his works.

To narrow all this down for the play of *Troilus and Cressida*, one can very easily say that this play is the one which was the most influenced by Greek myths. Almost every character there, starting with Hector, Achilles, Paris, Agamemnon to Odysseus, Ajax, etc. are participants of Ancient Greek stories. The plot, which is about the Trojan War is a copycat of *Iliad*, we see mythical figures and creatures from Greek culture as well, alongside some gods and goddesses. More than that, *Troilus and Cressida* is *the Iliad* written in the style of Renaissance plays and dramas. See in Table 1 a summed-up comparison between the myth of Troy, Homer's *Iliad*, and Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*.

Table1. Comparison of the myth, Homer's poem, and Shakespeare's play

	Ancient Greek Myth on Troy	Homer's <i>Iliad</i>	Shakespeare's <i>Troilus and Cressida</i>
genre	prose	heroic epic poem	tragic-satirical play
meter	n/a	dactylic hexameter	rough iambic pentameter
structure	n/a	24 songs	five acts with multiple scenes in each

plot	Events of Trojan war, its prehistory (love affair between Paris and Helen), inciting incident (beginning of war), suspense (the Trojan horse), climax (the fall of Troy), and denouement (all dead, Odysseus leaves on his journey)	Events of Trojan war, its prehistory (love affair between Paris and Helen), inciting incident (beginning of war), suspense (the Trojan horse), climax (the fall of Troy), and denouement (all dead, Odysseus leaves on his journey)	Not a clearly structured plot (it's already the 10th year of war), however, setting is shortly given in the beginning
Major characters	People (Agamemnon, Menelaus, Paris, Priam, Helen of Troy, Hector, Priam, heroes (Achilles), and gods (Zeus, Hera, Athena, Apollo, Aphrodite, Poseidon, Iris))	People (Agamemnon, Menelaus, Patroclus, Odysseus, Diomedes, Ajax, Nestor, Menelaus, Hector, Priam, Helen, Hecuba), heroes (Achilles), and gods (Zeus, Hera, Athena, Apollo, Aphrodite, Poseidon, Iris)	People (Troilus, Cressida, Agamemnon, Achilles, Ajax, Priam, Pandarus, Thersites, and 'heroes' (Achilles, Hector))

Minor characters	Diomedes, Calchas, Peleus, Aeneas, Pandarus, Troilus, etc.	Diomedes, Calchas, Peleus, Aeneas, etc.	Helen, Paris, Odysseus, Nestor, Hecuba, Aeneas, Helenus, Patroclus, Meleanus, Cassandra, Andromache, Diomedes
Topic	War, love, beauty	War (heroic), (great) love, (divine) beauty	Cruel, senseless war, bodily passion, infidelity

Summing up, it is important to mention that Renaissance was based on Greco-Roman culture; it is a mother that gave birth to revival and the ground that later was transformed into a 'building'. The same can be said concerning the British Renaissance and Shakespeare with his plays, including *Troilus and Cressida*.

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