
“[L]ike a fountain stirred”: Impure Hospitality in *Troilus and Cressida*

“[L]ike a fountain stirred”: L'hospitalité impure dans *Troilus and Cressida*

Sophie Emma Battell



Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/episteme/2383>

DOI: 10.4000/episteme.2383

ISSN: 1634-0450

Publisher

Association Études Épistémè

Brought to you by Bibliothèque Sainte-Barbe - Université Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris 3



Electronic reference

Sophie Emma Battell, « “[L]ike a fountain stirred”: Impure Hospitality in *Troilus and Cressida* », *Études Épistémè* [Online], 33 | 2018, Online since 12 September 2018, connection on 26 November 2018. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/episteme/2383> ; DOI : 10.4000/episteme.2383

This text was automatically generated on 26 November 2018.



Études Épistémè is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.

“[L]ike a fountain stirred”: Impure Hospitality in *Troilus and Cressida*

“[L]ike a fountain stirred”: L'hospitalité impure dans *Troilus and Cressida*

Sophie Emma Battell

- 1 The publisher’s preface inserted inside a revised quarto of *Troilus and Cressida* from 1609 assures its readership that “you have here a new play, never staled with the stage, never clapper-clawed with the palms of the vulgar” and it appeals to the buyer not to like the play any less “for not being sullied with the smoky breath of the multitude”.¹ Leaving to one side the intriguing questions that the preface raises about the performance history of *Troilus and Cressida*, it is the connection made between dirtiness and interaction with other members of the playhouse audience that is the opening point for this article. The allusion to unpleasant smells, together with the description of being roughly grasped at by unknown hands, implies that encounters with strangers are polluting. While the publisher’s advertisement might be little more than a marketing ploy, I suggest in this article that the association that it establishes between meetings with other people and pollution is a theme running throughout the play.
- 2 The preface to *Troilus and Cressida* encourages the reader to regard the presence of other bodies as not only dirtying on a surface level, but also as the cause of contamination. The play certainly intimates that transactions with other people might compromise the purity of body and identity, and we see this clearly in the many depictions of unhealthy bodies, and particularly those infected by venereal diseases such as syphilis. It is understandable, then, that critical approaches to the play have tended to focus on the representation of prostitution and sexual disease.² And yet, this emphasis on the sexual perspective should not lead us to overlook whether other forms of interaction between strangers in *Troilus and Cressida* are also vulnerable to polluting influences.
- 3 In order to redress this critical absence, in this article I consider the intersection between the depiction of pollution in *Troilus and Cressida* and hospitality in its many guises.³ While I begin by considering the contamination brought about through Cressida’s sexual infidelity, I then move on to explore some of the other forms of pollution at work in the

text. Specifically, I draw on the influential work of the anthropologist Mary Douglas in order to argue that hospitality and pollution are both cultural concepts. In *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, Douglas demonstrates that societal attitudes towards dirt are indicative of the moral outlook of that society and this will become important to my reading of *Troilus and Cressida* later on. But I am also interested in pursuing the aesthetic implications of pollution on stage. In addition to exploring cultural and anthropological responses to dirt, I therefore examine metaphors of pollution: for example, the many images of muddied or contaminated liquids which become a way of conveying the difficulty of wartime hospitality.

- 4 Throughout *Troilus and Cressida*, the figures on stage use metaphors of pollution when describing the hospitality experience. Their descriptions of formerly clear liquids that are adulterated through the addition of foreign substances are used to make a broader point about the problematic nature of welcoming guests during periods of war. The characters in *Troilus and Cressida* long for greater transparency in their dealings with other people, repeatedly emphasising the clarity of their thoughts and motivations. Nonetheless, many of the encounters in this play are a composite blend of the emotions, impossible to distil into anything resembling purity. In suggesting that the text’s sustained interest in pollution impacts its treatment of hospitality, I am indebted to the thinking of Jacques Derrida, who has done much to disclose the contradictory nature of this relationship.⁴ He argues that hospitality is always at risk of descending into violence, rendering the relationship impure from the beginning.

Metaphors of Dirt

- 5 The foul environment of *Troilus and Cressida* is well-known to readers of the play. Not only are there frequent references to diseases throughout, but the play ends with the seedy figure of Pandarus telling the audience about the hot sweats induced by traditional tub bath treatments for venereal disease. Conversely, it is perhaps owing to this insalubrious atmosphere that many of the characters in *Troilus and Cressida* strive for purity in their dealings with other people. In the romantic plot line between Troilus and Cressida, for example, both of the lovers stress the simplicity of their feelings for one another. While he is nervously waiting outside in Pandarus’s orchard to meet Cressida, for instance, Troilus says:

I am giddy; expectation whirls me round.
Th’imaginary relish is so sweet
That it enchants my sense. What will it be,
When that the wat’ry palates taste indeed
Love’s thrice-repured nectar? (III.ii.16-20)

- 6 Troilus imagines his senses becoming disorientated with excitement at the imminent encounter with Cressida. He is euphoric at the prospect of tasting “Love’s thrice-repured nectar”, and expects this to be more purified than his own “wat’ry” fantasies. The imagination is only a pale and watered down substitute for the sexual act itself. In a feminist psychoanalytic interpretation that reads Troilus’s speech as the desire to return to an infantilised oral state, Janet Adelman points out that “Troilus gives us none of the images of penetration that we might expect; instead, he imagines the sexual act as wallowing, tasting, dissolving”.⁵ However surprising the language might be, though, and

however counter to sexual stereotyping, Troilus’s longing to refine his palate is characteristic of the play.

- 7 After they have spent a romantic night together, in Act IV of *Troilus and Cressida*, the lovers realise that they will have to part, since it has been decided that Cressida is to be handed over to the Greek camp in return for the release of a Trojan prisoner named Antenor. Inconsolable at their impending separation, Cressida asks her uncle, Pandarus:

Why tell you me of moderation?
The grief is fine, full, perfect that I taste,
And violenteth in a sense as strong
As that which causeth it. How can I moderate it?
If I could temporize with my affection,
Or brew it to a weak and colder palate,
The like allayment could I give my grief.
My love admits no qualifying dross;
No more my grief, in such a precious loss. (IV.iv.2-10)

- 8 Through the allusions to tasting drinks and other libations, Cressida assures Pandarus that her sorrow at leaving Troilus behind is pure and unadulterated in its essence. By comparing her emotion to a translucent liquid solution, she says that it is an impossibility for her to dilute the strength of her feeling for Troilus. Bridget Escolme says of these lines that “It is as if she is being asked by her uncle to water down that which tastes properly strong, and even in the extremity of her grief she is able to speak of its fullness and perfection, how its strength is appropriate to the cause – her love for Troilus”.⁶ The metaphor of a crystal clear solution becomes a means to articulate the depth of her emotions, and Troilus makes a related point not long afterwards when he tells Cressida that he loves her “in so strained a purity” (IV.iv.23). In light of forthcoming events, however, the lovers’ declarations regarding the transparency of their feelings for one another begins to resemble a naïve form of idealism.

- 9 The irony of course is that not long afterwards the audience is made voyeurs to Cressida’s infamous disloyalty with the Greek warrior, Diomedes. Yet even before this dramatisation of sexual unfaithfulness, *Troilus and Cressida* destabilises its own discussion of purity. After Cressida’s emotional speech about her undiluted grief at leaving Troy, Troilus then says to her:

Injurious Time now with a robber’s haste
Crams his rich thiev’ry up, he knows not how.
As many farewells as be stars in heaven, With distinct breath and consigned kisses
to them,
He fumbles up into a loose adieu
And scants us with a single famished kiss,
Distasted with the salt of broken tears. (IV.iv.41-47)

- 10 In these few lines, Troilus personifies Time as a robber who has stolen the lovers’ more leisurely farewell moments. Alluding once again to metaphors of taste and gastronomic discernment, Troilus notices that even their “single famished kiss” has been rendered unpleasant-tasting through the addition of salt deposits from their “broken tears”.⁷ The text presents us with a spectacle of adulterated fluids, in the process foreshadowing the later sexual adultery. As Troilus and Cressida’s salty tears mix with the saliva from their goodbye kiss, the scene visually undermines their discussion of purity, perhaps leading us to question the oaths that we have overheard.

- 11 The foregrounding of the themes of prostitution and sexual infidelity throughout *Troilus and Cressida* makes all greetings suspect, but especially those of the female protagonists. As the absconded wife of the Greek general, Menelaus, Helen’s illegitimate position in Troy is often remarked upon in the play. Diomedes notes at one point that:

For every false drop in her bawdy veins
 A Grecian’s life hath sunk; for every scruple
 Of her contaminated carrion weight
 A Trojan hath been slain. (IV.i.71-74)

- 12 Even from this brief reference to Helen, it is clear that her body is viewed as “contaminated” as a result of her deception. Discussing which side in the conflict has the most valid claim to hold onto Helen, Diomedes also says:

Both alike.
 He merits well to have her that doth seek her,
 Not making any scruple of her soilure,
 With such a hell of pain and world of charge;
 And you as well to keep her that defend her,
 Not palating the taste of her dishonour,
 With such a costly loss of wealth and friends.
 He, like a puling cuckold, would drink up
 The lees and dregs of a flat ’tamed piece;
 You, like a lecher, out of whorish loins
 Are pleased to breed out your inheritors. (IV.i.56-66)

- 13 On account of his willingness to settle for an unfaithful wife, the cuckolded Menelaus is said to be similar to a drinker whose palate is so indiscriminating that he would consume even the “turbid sediment at the bottom of a wine cask that is broached and left open for so long that the wine has gone flat”.⁸ As Karen Britland argues, “[o]ne might imagine that women’s close association with nurture and food preparation in the early modern family would make them central to ideas of conviviality and hospitality. However, time and again [...] the figure of the woman delays or disrupts assemblies of men, acting as an impediment to the social”.⁹ Certainly the association between femininity and disrupted ideals of purity in *Troilus and Cressida* complicates women’s status as guests and hostesses.

- 14 Male anxieties at the allegedly dangerous consequences of accepting hospitality from women are part of a long literary tradition. Tracy McNulty explains that:

If Western literature is full of tragic hosts, it is equally replete with nefarious or conniving hostesses: Shakespeare’s evil Lady Macbeth and ungrateful Regan and Goneril, Aeschylus’s Clytemnestra, Milton’s wanton Eve, and the murderous biblical heroines Jael and Judith are but a few examples of the many hostesses charged with duplicitously receiving guests under the cover of an offer of hospitality, only to slaughter them or bring about their ruin.¹⁰

- 15 The conduct of female guests and hostesses is regarded with suspicion throughout *Troilus and Cressida*. Cressida’s appearance as a guest in the Greek military base in Act IV, for example, draws disapproval from Ulysses:

Fie, fie upon her!
 There’s language in her eye, her cheek, her lip,
 Nay, her foot speaks; her wanton spirits look out
 At every joint and motive of her body.
 O, these encounterers, so glib of tongue,
 That give accosting welcome ere it comes,
 And wide unclasp the tables of their thoughts
 To every tickling reader! Set them down

For sluttish spoils of opportunity
And daughters of the game. (IV.v.55-64)

In a misogynist critique of Cressida’s body language – which collapses any distinction separating hostess from prostitute – Ulysses accuses her of being unduly hospitable in a manner that implies loose morals. Cressida’s participation in the social rituals of hospitality exposes her to allegations that she is operating within the far seedier economy of prostitution.

- 16 The anticipated scene of sexual adultery between Cressida and Diomedes takes place in the Greek camp in Act V, and is secretly witnessed by Troilus (as well as by Ulysses and Thersites). In a despairing speech that he makes directly afterwards, Troilus plays on the different meanings of adulteration:

Cressid is mine, tied with the bonds of heaven;
Instance, O instance, strong as heaven itself,
The bonds of heaven are slipped, dissolved and loosed [.] (V.ii.161-163)

- 17 In a watery image that recalls his former desire to wallow in sensual pleasure with her, Troilus declares that Cressida’s sexual infidelity has “dissolved” the “bonds of heaven”.¹¹ In the early modern imagination, adulterated liquids often had sexual connotations. Indeed, in an article on the gendered transmission of venereal disease during the early modern period, Kevin Siena points out that “we can view the medical metaphor for female infidelity itself, with organs, fluids, and salts substituted for the men and women they represented. Some exponents even used the term ‘adulteration’ (a scientific term referring to the corruption of a solution) when discussing the mixture of semen”.¹² In *Troilus and Cressida* the discourse of liquid dilution exploits the imaginative potential of the association between adulteration and sexual adultery.

- 18 According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the term “adulteration” partly derives from the Middle French for the “action of drawing away from God, action of turning away from sworn faith”.¹³ And in *Troilus and Cressida*, Troilus interprets Cressida’s flirtatious behaviour with Diomedes as synonymous with a loss of faith. His response to her adultery blends together the sacred and the profane meanings of adulteration. Throughout, Troilus’s language inclines towards the religious when he is speaking about Cressida. After he learns that she is to be sent to the Greek camp, for instance, Troilus says:

I’ll bring her to the Grecian presently;
And to his hand when I deliver her,
Think it an altar and thy brother Troilus
A priest, there offering to it his own heart. (IV.iii.6-9)

- 19 In Act V of the play, when he sees Cressida present his former gift to Diomedes, Troilus remarks: “O beauty, where is thy faith?” (V.ii.69). He then goes on to say:

If beauty have a soul, this is not she;
If souls guide vows, if vows be sanctimonies,
If sanctimony be the gods’ delight,
If there be rule in unity itself,
This is not she.
[. . .]
The fractions of her faith, orts of her love,
The fragments, scraps, the bits and greasy relics
Of her o’ereaten faith, are bound to Diomed. (V.ii.145-167)

In these lines, Troilus reinterprets Cressida’s sexual adultery as a breaking of religious vows. By combining food leftovers with holy relics, his description soils both the altar and the table.

- 20 Discussing the cultural mythology of dinner rituals, Margaret Visser reflects that “Eating food, cooking it, serving it, sharing it out, and passing it to others requires intensely intimate contact, both with the food and with the dinner companions. Pollution rules hedge food about, therefore, with particular fierceness”.¹⁴ It is for this reason that “Pollution has always meant matter out of place, and rules broken. The *threat* of pollution has therefore been a powerful sanction for the rules and the categories by which a society organises its life”.¹⁵ Visser’s last point here develops the writings of the anthropologist Mary Douglas who, in an influential study, looked at different cultural attitudes to dirt and concluded that “pollution ideas relate to social life”.¹⁶ The allusions to dirt and waste matter in *Troilus and Cressida* are also closely related to how the society of Troy organises its sexual relations. Thus, after he witnesses Cressida’s betrayal, Troilus begins to use imagery of dirt – or the disgusting leftovers and scraps from the banquet table¹⁷ – when speaking about their romance. The comparisons imply that Troilus views Cressida as polluted through her sexual contact with Diomedes. But despite the ubiquity of dirt, Douglas also explains that “most pollutions have a very simple remedy for undoing their effects. There are rites of reversing, untying, burying, washing, erasing, fumigating, and so on, which at a small cost of time and effort can satisfactorily expunge them”.¹⁸ Troilus’s avowal that “The bonds of heaven are slipped, dissolved and loosed” (V.ii.163) reflects a similar desire to erase the taint of pollution, caught from Cressida.
- 21 While exploring Shakespeare’s portrayal of the women characters in *Troilus and Cressida*, Janet Adelman notes that, although the early scenes depict Cressida disclosing her most intimate thoughts and motivations to the audience through soliloquy, when she finally leaves Troy behind, “she recedes from us” and her “sudden move into opacity remains constant for the rest of the play”.¹⁹ It is as if Cressida also undergoes the polluting effects of her sexual unfaithfulness, rendering her persona on stage opaque and unfathomable. Throughout the romance plot, hospitality is depicted as impure in its essence. But although this might appear to be a straightforward consequence of the central act of sexual promiscuity, the text’s engagement with notions of pollution is more complex. Ideas about purity and pollution influence the many moments of encounter long before the adultery scene. As I argue in the next section, *Troilus and Cressida*’s interest in adulteration extends to the scenes between the warriors as well, here comprising an important component of the play’s anti-war sentiment.

Pollution and Distillation

- 22 Derrida argues that to be hospitable always means exposing oneself to a certain amount of risk. Moreover, this feeling of vulnerability on the part of guests and hosts can never be wholly eradicated without also sacrificing the conditions that are necessary to hospitality. Discussing how acts of hospitality conceal a latent threat of violence, Derrida gives as an example the wooden horse of Troy:
- Hospitality, what belabours and concerns hospitality at its core [*ce qui travaille l’hospitalité en son sein*], what works at it like a labour, like a pregnancy, like a promise as much as like a threat, what settles in it, within it [*en son dedans*], like a Trojan horse, the enemy (*hostis*) as much as the *avenir*, intestine hospitality, is indeed a contradictory conception.²⁰
- 23 In addition to the metaphors of bodily interiority – pregnancy, the womb, and the entrails – the wooden horse becomes, for Derrida, a means of expressing the hidden and therefore

dangerously unknowable nature of hospitality. Indeed, what he refers to as “intestine hospitality” is prone to violence because we can never know for certain the inward intentions of guests or hosts to one another, and this is particularly the case in wartime. In *Troilus and Cressida*, the figures on stage negotiate the contradictory states of hospitality and hostility. For instance, while he explains his intention to entertain his Trojan enemy, Hector, at his tent that evening, the Greek warrior, Achilles, states:

I'll heat his blood with Greekish wine tonight,
Which with my scimitar I'll cool tomorrow.
Patroclus, let us feast him to the height. (V.i.1-3)

The image of the guest's blood alternately warmed with wine and then spilt with weapons perfectly captures the impure nature of hospitality in *Troilus and Cressida*. The lines demonstrate how attempts to isolate moments of welcome from the violent background of the Trojan War appear predestined to failure.

- 24 In the Greek military camp in Act II, the general, Agamemnon, decides to pay a visit to Achilles, who has lately begun to shun the fighting, preferring to remain inside his tent. But when Agamemnon arrives, he is met with a show of inhospitality, as Achilles refuses to come outside and greet his guest, instead sending his companion, Patroclus, to deliver a feeble excuse. In response, Agamemnon says to Patroclus:

Go and tell him
We come to speak with him. And you shall not sin
If you do say we think him over-proud
And under-honest, in self-assumption greater
Than in the note of judgement; and worthier than himself
Here tend the savage strangeness he puts on,
Disguise the holy strength of their command,
And underwrite in an observing kind
His humorous predominance – yea, watch
His pettish lunes, his ebbs, his flows, as if
The passage and whole carriage of this action
Rode on his tide. (II.iii.119-130)

- 25 Agamemnon presumes that Achilles's impoliteness towards his visitor is produced by a “humorous” imbalance. As Jonathan Gil Harris notes, “There are numerous references in *Troilus and Cressida* to illnesses that demonstrate Shakespeare's familiarity with humoral discourse. The play's Greek characters repeatedly suffer from complexional dysfunctions, to the point where it can seem as if the play was initially conceived of as a comedy of humours”.²¹ The preoccupation with illness throughout *Troilus and Cressida* leads several of the Greek warriors to try and medically diagnose any complications with the hospitality relationship.
- 26 In a discussion of the passions in the early modern period, Gail Kern Paster argues that humoral discourse tended to stress the fluid composition of the body:
- The passions are like liquid states and forces of the natural world. But the passions – thanks to their close functional relation to the four bodily humours of blood, choler, black bile and phlegm – had a more than analogical relation to liquid states and forces of nature. In an important sense, the passions actually *were* liquid forces of nature, because, in this cosmology, the stuff of the outside world and the stuff of the body were composed of the same elemental materials.²²
- 27 For the early moderns, the humoral body was a “vessel of liquids”,²³ composed of the same elements as the natural environment. Thus, in *Troilus and Cressida*, when Agamemnon complains about Achilles's “pettish lunes, his ebbs, his flows” (II.iii.28), he

equates the passions to the gravitational pull of the moon and the ocean tides. Achilles reiterates this vocabulary later on when he comments: “My mind is troubled, like a fountain stirred / And I myself see not the bottom of it” (III.iii.309-310). The imagery of muddied waters offers a slightly different perspective on the discourse of hospitality in *Troilus and Cressida*. I have noted already the presence of guests and hosts with conflicted emotions, but the medical language of the humours also implies that something polluting happens at the level of the body.

- 28 In an essay on alcoholic beverages in Shakespeare’s plays, Karen Raber writes that “Well before he portrayed Falstaff’s betrayal of his office in the second tetralogy, Shakespeare had already considered many of the same connections between liquor and fluid, treasonous loyalties as they influenced those wars”.²⁴ The same association between the fluidity of wartime loyalties and the depiction of alcohol and other libations can also be found in *Troilus and Cressida*. Cressida’s father, Calchas – who changed sides by defecting to the Greek camp before the action begins – is one character who focuses our attention on conflicted loyalties. Yet the metaphor of diluted liquids also conveys the mixed national identities of some of the protagonists and, in particular, their blood connections. In Act IV of *Troilus and Cressida*, for instance, the Trojan prince, Hector and the foolish Greek warrior, Ajax, are due to take part in a chivalric tournament. Before they begin, however, it is revealed to the audience that Hector and Ajax are, in fact, closely related by blood:

This Ajax is half made of Hector’s blood,
In love whereof half Hector stays at home;
Half heart, half hand, half Hector comes to seek
This blended knight, half Trojan and half Greek. (IV.v.84-87)

- 29 There is perhaps something monstrous about these intermingled portraits of Hector and Ajax in the way that they are described as blended knights, composed of Greek and Trojan parts. Calling for an end to the tournament later on, Hector says to Ajax:

Why, then will I no more.
Thou art, great lord, my father’s sister’s son,
A cousin-german to great Priam’s seed.
The obligation of our blood forbids
A gory emulation ’twixt us twain.
Were thy commixtion Greek and Trojan so
That thou couldst say, ‘This hand is Grecian all,
And this is Trojan; the sinews of this leg
All Greek, and this all Troy; my mother’s blood
Runs on the dexter cheek, and this sinister
Bounds in my father’s’, by Jove multipotent,
Thou shouldst not bear from me a Greekish member
Wherein my sword had not impressure made
Of our rank feud. But the just gods gainsay
That any drop thou borrowed’st from thy mother,
My sacred aunt, should by my mortal sword
Be drained. Let me embrace thee, Ajax.
By him that thunders, thou hast lusty arms!
Hector would have them fall upon him thus.
Cousin, all honour to thee! [*They embrace.*] (IV.v.120-139)

Hector has a longing to distil Ajax’s dual bloodlines, so that he might kill the Greek part only. As Matthew Greenfield puts it, “In Hector’s fantasy Ajax’s mixed bloods are separated and his dual nationalities untangled”.²⁵ Although this is plainly an

impossibility, in the polluted atmosphere of Shakespeare’s *Troy*, the distillation of pure elements from compounds remains a potent source of fantasy.

- 30 After the abrupt end to the chivalric tournament, the Greeks gather around to greet Hector in what is, in many ways, a parallel scene to Cressida’s earlier entrance. Agamemnon, commander of the Greeks, is again the first one to welcome the newcomer, receiving Hector with the following words:

Worthy of arms! As welcome as to one
That would be rid of such an enemy –
But that’s no welcome. Understand more clear:
What’s past and what’s to come is strewed with husks
And formless ruin of oblivion;
But in this extant moment, faith and troth,
Strained purely from all hollow bias-drawing,
Bids thee, with most divine integrity,
From heart of very heart, great Hector, welcome. (IV.v.164-172)

- 31 In another fantasy of liquid distillation, Agamemnon conveys the poignant difficulty of separating hospitality from a culture of violence. He explains to Hector that he has “Strained purely from all hollow bias-drawing” this salutation of his enemy. In attempting to decontaminate “this extant moment” of welcome from the surrounding combat, he then reminds Hector that “What’s past and what’s to come is strewed with husks / And formless ruin of oblivion”.²⁶ The lines beautifully capture the impending destruction of *Troy* and also recall Cressida’s prophetic description from earlier in the play:

When time is old and hath forgot itself,
When waterdrops have worn the stones of Troy,
And blind oblivion swallowed cities up,
And mighty states characterless are grated
To dusty nothing [.]²⁷

- 32 John Bayley has made a case for the importance of the present time to *Troilus and Cressida*. He argues that because myths of the Trojan War are deeply ingrained in our cultural imagination, “The only surprise here must be a perpetual present”.²⁸ But the present moment is also crucial to hospitality during wartime. In the midst of military conflict, any hospitality between enemies is possible only under a temporary ceasefire.
- 33 In *Troilus and Cressida*, the emphasis on pollution and contamination becomes a productive means of approaching the complexity of Shakespeare’s staging of hospitality. As Derrida notes, “The closing of the door, inhospitality, war, and allergy already imply, as their possibility, a hospitality offered or received: an original or, more precisely, pre-original declaration of peace”.²⁹ He concludes that “Whether it wants to or not, whether we realise it or not, hostility still attests to hospitality”.³⁰ In the same way, hospitality in *Troilus and Cressida* is an adulterated concept, with many of the heroic figures on stage apparently struggling to separate moments of welcome from the violent backdrop of the Trojan War. The play’s recurrent imagery of impure liquids expresses the intermingling of hospitality and violence that ensues. While purification implies the recovery of an element that has been released from all polluting influences, when it comes to hospitality, it proves impossible to eradicate all traces of hostility. Greeks and Trojans alike are left longing for an unattainable ideal of purity. And yet, for the playwright, the polluted matter of the conflict furnishes the action of *Troilus and Cressida* with fertile aesthetic possibilities.

NOTES

1. William Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, ed. David Bevington, London, Cengage Learning, 1998, publisher’s preface, l.1-32. All subsequent references to the play are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the text. Bevington gives a good summary of the play’s uncertain stage history at the beginning of his introduction at p. 1-5. I would like to express my gratitude to Karen Britland, Anne-Marie Miller-Blaise and Line Cottegnies for their many helpful comments and suggestions on earlier versions of this article. Thanks are also due to Martin Coyle, who read several drafts and was typically astute and generous with his advice. Finally, I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer for their valuable feedback.
2. For further reading on the play’s many depictions of disease see, for example, Jonathan Gil Harris, *Sick Economies: Drama, Mercantilism, and Disease in Shakespeare’s England*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004; Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare’s Plays, Hamlet to The Tempest*, London and New York, Routledge, 1992; Patricia Parker, *Shakespeare from the Margins: Language, Culture, Context*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996; Valerie Traub, “Invading Bodies/ Bawdy Exchanges: Disease, Desire, and Representation”, in *Shakespeare’s Problem Plays: New Casebooks*, ed. Simon Barker, Basingstoke and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
3. For further reading on hospitality in early modern studies see, for instance, Felicity Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990; Daryl Palmer, *Hospitable Performances: Dramatic Genre and Cultural Practices in Early Modern England*, West Lafayette, IN.: Purdue University Press, 1992; and *Shakespeare and Hospitality: Ethics, Politics, and Exchange*, ed. David Goldstein and Julia Lupton, London and New York: Routledge, 2016. It is worth noting here a comparison to Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* as another play that shares similar themes of sexuality and violence and the horrors of war and pollution.
4. For more on Derrida’s writings on hospitality, a good starting point is: *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond*, trans. Rachel Bowlby, Stanford, Calif., Stanford University Press, 2000.
5. J. Adelman, *op. cit.*, p. 53.
6. Bridget Escolme, *Emotional Excess on the Shakespearean Stage: Passion’s Slaves*, London, Bloomsbury, 2013, p. 169.
7. A. D. Nuttall notes that Cressida’s goodbye kiss is unpleasantly salty: “I said earlier that *Troilus and Cressida* replaces the humane pity and fear of tragedy with a sour taste left in the mouth. So here even a kiss from the lips of the beloved Cressida leaves a salt, unpleasant taste behind”. See Nuttall, *Shakespeare the Thinker*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2007, p. 210.
8. Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, ed. by Bevington, *op. cit.*, IV.i.63-64n.
9. Karen Britland, “Circe’s Cup: Wine and Women in Early Modern Drama”, in *A Pleasing Sinne: Drink and Conviviality in Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. Adam Smyth, Cambridge, D. S. Brewer, 2004, p. 109-125, here p. 111.
10. Tracy McNulty, *The Hostess: Hospitality, Femininity, and the Expropriation of Identity*, Minnesota, University of Minnesota Press, 2006, p. xlii-xliii.
11. Making a related point in *Suffocating Mothers*, J. Adelman notes that, “The ending of the play, in which Troilus rearms himself after the defection of Cressida, answers to the logic of his first disarming: if he soils Cressida, transforming her into the image of the contaminated maternal body, she has from the beginning threatened to soil him, dissolving his masculine identity through her contaminating femaleness”, p. 59.

12. Kevin Siena, “Pollution, Promiscuity, and the Pox: English Venereology and the Early Modern Medical Discourse on Social and Sexual Danger”, *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 8.4, Apr. 1998, p. 553-574, here p. 568-569.
13. “adulteration, n.”. OED Online. June 2017. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com.abc.cardiff.ac.uk/view/Entry/2834?redirectedFrom=adulteration> [accessed January 05, 2018].
14. Margaret Visser, *The Rituals of Dinner: The Origins, Evolution, Eccentricities, and Meaning of Table Manners*, HarperCollins, Ontario, 1991, p. 335.
15. *Ibid.*
16. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, London, ARK Paperbacks, 1984, p. 3.
17. Compare Douglas’s point about “the attitude to rejected bits and pieces” (*ibid.* p. 160).
18. *Ibid.*, p. 135.
19. J. Adelman, *op. cit.*, p. 50.
20. Jacques Derrida, “Hostipitality”, in *Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil Anidjar, London and New York, Routledge, 2002, p. 356-421, here p. 359.
21. J. G. Harris, *op. cit.*, p. 87.
22. Gail Kern Paster, *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2004, p. 4.
23. *Ibid.*
24. Karen Raber, “Fluid Mechanics: Shakespeare’s Subversive Liquors”, in *Culinary Shakespeare: Staging Food and Drink in Early Modern England*, ed. David Goldstein and Amy Tigner, Pittsburgh, Duquesne University Press, 2016, p. 75-96, here p. 83.
25. Matthew Greenfield, “Fragments of Nationalism in *Troilus and Cressida*”, in *Shakespeare’s Problem Plays: All’s Well that Ends Well, Measure for Measure, Troilus and Cressida*, ed. Simon Barker, Basingstoke and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, p. 199-223, here p. 211.
26. In *Hospitality and Treachery in Western Literature*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2014, James Heffernan points out that, “Hospitality thus seems to furnish a respite from war, a moment of sympathy which, however fleetingly, transcends the murderous hatred and bitter resentment of the other, the stranger, the alien, the enemy”, p. 14.
27. III.ii.180-184. Alexander Leggatt says of Cressida that “Her vow of fidelity has already conveyed a hypnotic fascination with ruin.” See Leggatt, *Shakespeare’s Tragedies: Violation and Identity*, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 100.
28. John Bayley, “Time and the Trojans”, *Essays in Criticism*, 25.1, Jan. 1975, p. 55-73, here p. 58.
29. Jacques Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas, Stanford, Calif., Stanford University Press, 1999, p. 48.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

ABSTRACTS

The story of the gift of the wooden horse which brought about the destruction of Troy is one of the oldest cautionary tales of hospitality in Western literature. Shakespeare’s approach to the Trojan War in *Troilus and Cressida* also emphasises the problematic interrelationship between hospitality and violence. This article argues that Shakespeare uses the metaphors of dirt and

pollution to explore the complexity of the hospitality relationship. Through analysis of *Troilus and Cressida*, and by drawing on the writings of Jacques Derrida, I will illustrate how pollution is central to the play’s conceptualisation of wartime hospitality, as well as becoming a means of satirising the arbitrary nature of the conflict.

L’histoire du grand cheval de bois qui mena à la destruction de Troie est sans doute l’un des récits édifiants sur l’ambivalence de l’hospitalité les plus connus de la littérature occidentale. L’approche de Shakespeare de cet épisode dans *Troilus and Cressida* met, elle aussi, l’accent sur la relation problématique qui se noue entre violence et hospitalité. Cet article entend montrer que la salissure et la pollution sont des métaphores qui permettent au dramaturge d’explorer ce lien paradoxal. En analysant la pièce à la lumière de la pensée de Jacques Derrida, on verra comment la pollution est une notion essentielle pour la question de l’hospitalité en temps de guerre et qu’elle fournit aussi à Shakespeare un moyen de dénoncer la nature arbitraire du conflit.

INDEX

Mots-clés: hospitalité, guerre, pollution, salissure, distillation, fluides, William Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*

Keywords: hospitality, war, pollution, dirt, distillation, liquids, William Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*

AUTHOR

SOPHIE EMMA BATTELL

University of Exeter

Sophie Emma Battell is a Lecturer in Renaissance Literature at the University of Exeter. Prior to joining Exeter, Sophie taught at Cardiff University, where she also completed her PhD in 2018.

Sophie is currently working on a monograph on hospitality in early modern literature and culture. In 2018-2019 she is a Holland Visiting Fellow at Durham University.