

# SHAKESPEARE'S VOICE AS SPOKEN BY HIS CHARACTERS

MICHAEL G. AUDLEY-CHARLES



SHAKESPEARE'S VOICE AS SPOKEN BY HIS  
CHARACTERS:

A review of the 37 plays of Shakespeare

2<sup>nd</sup> Edition

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## *Notes and Acknowledgements*

This second edition of *Shakespeare's voice as spoken by his characters* corrects the minor typographical errors to be found in the first edition, but also includes an introduction on Shakespeare's experiences as a young man, previously published as a stand alone essay at <http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/1420633/>.

*The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* (OUP 1970) has 66 pages of quotations attributed to the writings of William Shakespeare in which there are 2369 quotations, which may reflect well over 5000 speeches, discussions, observations and comments that are present in Shakespeare's work. It is largely from those speeches and discussions on Shakespeare's 37 plays, as well as his, and others' poems, that examples have been taken here. In this book all quotations from his poems and plays have been taken from various editions of the Arden Shakespeare.

The writer is very much indebted to the rapid response provided by his son, Henry Audley-Charles, for guidance, advice and repairs to his ageing PC, that Henry provided at all hours. Without this assistance over the last 3 years this book could not have been written. In addition, the writer is indebted to Monsieur Francis Saillart for his knowledge of Shakespeare's plays and poems shared during our many discussions. I am also indebted to my wife Brenda Amy Cordeiro for years of support, and for proof reading and help with this book. Finally, I acknowledge the debt I owe to Professor David Price of UCL. He has acted as the Editor and the guide for the whole project.

The five characters from *The Tempest* that have been displayed in this book were sketched by Monsieur Francis Saillart. He has translated elsewhere all of Shakespeare's 154 sonnets into French, many of these translations are remarkably successful. His translation of *The Tempest* into French was performed on the stage in Paris in 2011 to much acclaim. In view of the importance of *The Tempest*, and to the other three Romance plays, Francis Saillart has kindly permitted us to display a copy of five of his sketches that can be seen on pages of this book that is focused on Shakespeare's words spoken by his characters.

A number of people, from various parts of the world have, over many years, participated in an annual commemoration and rejoicing over the life and work of William Shakespeare, that used to take place in East Sussex, but this moved 20 years ago to southwest France, since when it led to the writing of this book. The anniversaries include a lunch, with what we trust is, as close as we can make it possible to traditional fare, of a kind that we hope would have been recognised by Will Shakespeare. We cannot pretend that these lunches, in their quantity, would have satisfied Sir John Falstaff, whose passing, with many other of Shakespeare's characters, are also remembered and honoured at these annual lunches, celebrated at La Serre on every 23<sup>rd</sup> of April, the anniversary of the birth, and honoured at this same anniversary of the death of William Shakespeare.

MGA-C  
La Serre





## *List Of Shakespeare's Plays*

(Some of these dates remain to be settled by scholars)

### *An introduction to the ten History of England plays*

A listing and discussion of Shakespeare's history plays with the date of writing and dates of the reigning monarch are provided on pages 224-225. Chapter 15 provides a condensed text of some of the history plays, with a particular emphasis on King Henry VIII. All the earlier plays were written before 1600. The high quality and range of the published discussions of the history of England plays has led to this book only attempting to deal with some particular issues related to some aspects of some of Shakespeare's History of England plays. They tend to have been widely distributed through the text. Henry VIII\* has been discussed in several places with the Romances and especially with The Tempest.

	<u>Date of writing</u>	<u>Location of play</u>	
Henry VI i	1590	England & France	p. 221
Henry VI ii	1590	England & France	p. 221
Henry VI iii	1590	England & France	p. 221
Richard III	1592	England	p. 221
Richard II	1595	England	p. 221
King John	1596	England & France	p. 242
Henry IV i	1596	England	p. 221
Henry IV ii	1598	England	p. 221
Henry V	1598	England & France	p. 221
Henry VIII	1612	England	p. 151, 213, 221

### *Ten Tragedies*

	<u>Date of writing</u>	<u>Location of play</u>	
Titus Andronicus	1593	Roman play	p. 377
Romeo & Juliet	1594	Italy	p. 245
Julius Caesar	1599	Roman play	p. 252
Hamlet	1600	Denmark	p. 264
Othello	1604	Italy	p. 273
King Lear	1605	England	p. 296
Macbeth	1605	Scotland & England	p. 326
Antony & Cleopatra	1606	Roman play	p. 347
Coriolanus	1607	Roman play	p. 353
Timon of Athens	1607	Greek play	p. 366

### *Twelve Comedies*

	<u>Date of writing</u>	<u>Location of play</u>	
Two Gentlemen of Verona	1593 ?	Italy	p. 129
The Taming of the Shrew	1593 ?	Italy	p. 129
The Comedy of Errors	1592	Ancient Greek City	p. 129
Loves Labours Lost	1594	Kingdom of Navarre (NE Spain)	p. 129
Midsummer Night's Dream	1595	Greece	p. 129
Merchant of Venice	1596 ?	Italy	p. 129
Much Ado About Nothing	1598	Italy	p. 129
As You Like It	1599	England	p. 129
Twelfth Night	1599	Illyria and Adriatic coast	p. 129

Merry Wives of Windsor	1600	England	p.129
All's Well that Ends Well	1602	France & Italy	p.129
Measure for Measure	1604	Vienna	p.129

### *Greek and Roman Plays*

There are seven Greek & Roman plays also classified by some scholars as tragedies: Troilus & Cressida is the only one of these plays that is not also classified as a tragedy. That is the reason here for only classifying Troilus & Cressida as a Greek & Roman play

	<u>Date of writing</u>	<u>Location of play</u>	
Troilus & Cressida	1601-1602	Troy & Greece	p. 395

### *Four Romances or Tragi-comedies*

Commentary on The Tempest and its important links to the play King Henry VIII, includes very brief mention of Shakespeare's rejection of the concept of life after death, and its associated concept of the punishment of sin after death. See Chapter 8 Twelfth Night p.131, Chapter 9 p. 145, but Chapter 14 provides extended discussion of these issues.

	<u>Date of writing</u>	<u>Location of play</u>	
Pericles	1608	Mediterranean various locations.	p. 161
Cymbeline	1609	England & Italy	p. 177
The Winter's Tale	1610	Sicily & Bohemia	p. 185
The Tempest	1611	Italy & Mediterranean	p. 191, 213

# *Shakespeare's experiences as a young man in continental Europe*

## **Introduction**

The 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2014 marked the 450th anniversary of the birth of William Shakespeare in the town of Stratford on Avon, that is situated in the middle of England. This paper is written as a contribution to the celebration of his work.

We present here the case and explanation for the reason why, perhaps counter to expectations, the majority of his plays were set in places outside England and Scotland. The majority of his plays were in fact set in continental European countries, namely: Italy, Sicily, Bohemia, Greece, Denmark, Illyria, and the Adriatic coast as well as in France, Vienna, and in what was then called Troy (which is now called Hisarlik) in NW Turkey.

The following pages of this paper will go some way, we hope, to explain why and how it was that from 1592 and continuing until 1611 he was able to describe in his plays in great detail the nature of life in foreign lands. We suggest that he was writing in fact from memory years after he had returned from those countries and had returned to England. We therefore concur with recent authors (e.g. RP Roe's *The Shakespeare Guide to Italy*, 2011) that Shakespeare spent a period of his life on the Continent.

Shakespeare reveals his intimate knowledge of foreign parts and practices in many ways, although all his plays are written in English, and all for English audiences. Thus, Shakespeare would never have been permitted by the Lord Chamberlain to allow any obviously important and grand English personages to be insulted or ridiculed on the London stage. Instead, the acting characters in such plays who were ridiculed or insulted, or who were cruel to other characters always had to be characterised as foreigners and not as English. The Lord Chamberlain would always keep a close eye on any such digressions. We contend that on his travels, Shakespeare must have taken careful notice of the appearance, clothing, manners and other characteristics of foreigners who he subsequently used in his plays. The fact that Shakespeare was able to remember the details from his youthful days during his European tours is an indication of his remarkable memory and his obvious intent to make playwriting his way of life. We suggest that it would also seem intuitively obvious that Shakespeare would have kept a record of anything that he thought would be useful to his play writing when he returned to England, although no such document has been found.

We can now review briefly what some leading biographers of Shakespeare have recorded in their biographies of this early stage of Shakespeare's career. We must obviously begin with the short biography of William Shakespeare that was recorded by the well-known biographer of his time, namely John Aubrey, who lived from 1626-97 and whose brief obituaries were first published in print in 1813. Aubrey's obituary of William Shakespeare includes these brief but valuable observations:

*“writing of Shakespeare that understood Latine pretty well: for he had been in his younger years a schoolmaster in the countrey.”*

He also noted that Shakespeare as a boy worked with his father as a butcher. However, Greenblatt in his biography of Shakespeare published by Jonathan Cape in 2004 noted Aubrey’s observation that Shakespeare had been a schoolmaster in the country, and ‘that people had suggested he had been a school master in Lancashire.’ Duff Cooper, who himself had been a courageous soldier in WW1, reported that Shakespeare had been a Sergeant in the army fighting in the Netherlands.

However, we have more to hear about the young William Shakespeare’s working life, if it is to be believed. Peter Ackroyd in his biography reported that the young William Shakespeare had worked as a lawyer’s clerk in London. Later he was reported to have joined the travelling players passing through Stratford.

It is notable that our biographers seem to have worked in packs to some extent, for the late Professor Nutthall, in his biography of Shakespeare published by Yale University Press in 2007, also reports that the missing 8 years from Shakespeare’s career were filled by biographers who reported that Shakespeare worked for a lawyer, and that he served in the army, and was also a schoolmaster. This list of Will’s employments seem to correspond, except for the fact for the improbability of his combining all these employments within the same period of 8 years.

What is missing and severely absent is clear evidence of all these careers filled by William Shakespeare in those 8 years of his early manhood.

One hesitates to suggest that Shakespeare was even more occupied with yet another form of travail in those years from his 20<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> year. Yet from the evidence in his plays, and the knowledge of continental Europe that they contain, we suggest that it is clear to quite a strong degree that throughout those 8 years William Shakespeare must have spent some of that time in Italy, and quite likely he spent some time in other European continental countries near Italy, including Sicily, Greece and the Adriatic borderland, and quite possibly he spent some time in Vienna and even Denmark, and very possibly in Troy. The indications for these claims are present in the pages of this paper, and support further the claims laid out by Roe.

### **The dates and settings of Shakespeare's plays**

The chronology and setting of Shakespeare’s plays are as follows:

DATE OF PLAY	TITLE OF PLAY	LOCATION OF PLAY
1590	Henry VI, in 3 parts	England & France
1592	Richard III	England
1592	Comedy of Errors	Ephesus
1593	Taming of the Shrew	Italy
1593	Titus Andronicus	Italy
1594	Two Gentlemen of Verona	Italy

1594	Romeo and Juliet	Italy
1594	Loves Labour Lost	NE Spain
1595	Richard II	England
1595	Midsummer Night's Dream	Greece
1596	King John	England & France
1596	Henry IV, pt 1	England
1596 ?	Merchant of Venice	Italy
1597	Henry IV, pt 2	England
1598	Henry V	England & France
1598	Much Ado About Nothing	Italy
1599	Julius Caesar	Italy
1599	As you Like It	England
1599	Twelfth Night	Illyria (Balkan Peninsula & Adriatic)
1600	Hamlet	Denmark
1600	Merry Wives of Windsor	England
1601-2	Troilus & Cressida	Greece and Troy
1602	All's Well that Ends Well	Italy and France
1604	Measure for Measure	Vienna
1604	Othello	Italy
1605	King Lear	Scotland and England
1605	Macbeth	Scotland and England
1606	Antony & Cleopatra	Egypt and Rome
1607	Coriolanus	Italy
1607	Timon of Athens	Greece
1608	Pericles	Mediterranean sites
1609	Cymbeline	England and Italy
1610	The Winter's Tale	Sicily and Bohemia
1611	The Tempest	Italy and an island
1612	Henry VIII	England

As can be seen above, there are 16 of Shakespeare's 39 plays (if we include Edward III and The Two Noble Kinsmen) that are set in Britain, of which 11 are dedicated to English history, and there are only 5 of his other plays that are set in England and Scotland, and one of which (Cymbeline) is set in both England and Italy. We can note that 14 of his plays take place in what is now Italy, and one of these is Cymbeline, with longer scenes in England. That means that more than 35% of Shakespeare's plays are set in Italy. This concentration of locations might support the suggestion that Shakespeare could have visited and perhaps spent some considerable time in Italy during his early years, before becoming a playwright.

Shakespeare made reference in *The Winter's Tale* to the work of Julio Romano (v, ii, 93-101), an Italian artist born in Rome 1492-1499. Most of Romano's work was in Mantua where he began working in 1524, and where he died Nov 1546. He was an architect and painter, and pupil of Raphael (who died 1520), much of whose unfinished work Julio Romano completed. Romano's main work, that was extensive, and his greatest work was *Palazzo del Te* on the outskirts of Mantua. The show piece of his work was the *trompe l'oeil* decoration from floor to ceiling. It was this specific work that Shakespeare referred to in *The Winter's Tale*. Of course this reference by Shakespeare

could have resulted from someone telling him about it, or it could have been perhaps derived from Shakespeare's reading about this extraordinary work; but the fact that he made this reference as he did would seem to suggest that Shakespeare had seen this work for himself when, one must presume, he was himself in Mantua. But Shakespeare must have been well aware that this was an anachronism, as the scenes of the play are set in an age long passed and certainly long before the art work of Julio Romano was completed.

It is notable that eight of Shakespeare's Italian plays were based in the Mantua region, which suggests he might have been particularly familiar with this part of Italy, thus for example: *The Winter's Tale* (*Mantua*) *The Merchant of Venice* (*Venice & Padua*), *Tempest* (*Milano*), *Romeo & Juliet* (*Verona, Padua, Mantua*), *Othello* (*Venice*), *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (*Verona*), *The Taming of the Shrew* (*Padua & Verona*), *Much Ado About Nothing* (*Padua & Florence*). All these towns are relatively close to each other, such that a man might know them all if he became familiar with this region of Italy. But *All's Well that Ends Well* is set in France and in Italy (specifically it is set in Florence that is located between Rome and Mantua).

There are four of his plays based in and around Rome, namely *Titus Andronicus*, (*Rome*), *Antony & Cleopatra* (*Rome & Egypt*), *Julius Caesar* (*Rome*), *Coriolanus* (*Rome*).

There is a group of his sixteen plays that are set around the Mediterranean: *The Winter's Tale* in Sicily; *Timon of Athens* is set in Greece; *Pericles* takes place in various sites in the eastern Mediterranean; *Comedy of Errors* is set in an ancient Greek city; *The Two Noble Kinsmen* is set in Greece; while *Troilus & Cressida* is set on the coast of the Aegean Sea at Troy, which was the ancient city of what is now Hisarlik in NW Asian Turkey only 6.4 km from mouth of Dardanelles; and *Twelfth Night* is set along the Adriatic coast.

### **Possible implications**

Few things are certain when we come to consider the movements of William Shakespeare in his early adult life. Those eight years from 1584 and 1592, which cover his life from age 20 to 28 are known as his 'missing years' because there is no firm evidence of his whereabouts during this time.

What he achieved in his 52 years of life suggests that he must have been an extraordinary young man. He was educated in a Stratford on Avon school, from where he had acquired a working knowledge of Latin, that would have been useful when travelling in Europe; and maybe he could read and speak French (if his play *Henry V* is anything to go by); he may even have had some knowledge of ancient Greek. His works reveal that he was very inquisitive. Equally he was ambitious, as his great achievements show, and he had an exceptionally powerful, brilliantly creative imagination. He was an observer of Nature, that he seems to have loved, and he was interested in and enjoyed music as his works show. His sense of humour revealed in his works is witty, creative and entertaining. In these 'missing years', when he was young, it must have been obvious to educated people that he was exceptionally bright, and as reported by John Aubrey (who lived from 1626-1697), who gathered what information he could about

Shakespeare from the comments he could gain from those who knew Shakespeare, he was polite, and he is referred to as 'gentle Shakespeare'. His wit as a playwright was recognised by his contemporaries. What this all adds up to is that he would have been an entertaining, witty, polite, lively and knowledgeable young man with a marvellous turn of phrase and astonishing use of English. Did fortune grant him, and thus all of us, by seeing to it that Shakespeare was invited to accompany a rich man who was planning to travel to Italy, and maybe around parts of the eastern Mediterranean, where the Roman Empire had left its mark, and, where earlier, those astonishingly creative Athenians of fifth century BC had lived and worked? Will's written works leave us in no doubt that among such a wide range of subjects he was curious about the roles and consequences that Fortune sometimes kindly, or equally unkindly, plays in Men's lives. By these possibilities did Will Shakespeare spend some years with such a rich patron in Italy, with a visit to Sicily perhaps, and possibly spending some time around the Aegean and Adriatic, in Greece and even visiting what was left of Troy on the Aegean coast of what is now NW Turkey? Consider the possibility of all or part of this experience having been visited on Shakespeare in his 20's. Think of it in terms of the influence it very likely would have had on his writings, especially in view of his astonishingly powerful memory. There is no proof of Shakespeare's visiting any of these places during his life between his age of 20 to 28, but neither is there any evidence that he did not make such journeys during those 'lost years'. What cannot be disputed is that more than 35% of his plays he set mainly in two parts of Italy, the area around Mantua, and in Rome and in one play in Florence.

## Discussion

Only 11 of his 39 plays are about the history of England and only 3 of his tragedies and 2 of his comedies are set in England. All his other 23 plays we have by Shakespeare are set outside Britain. Shakespeare's decisions to write less than 41% of his 39 plays that were set in England and Scotland seems a surprising way to have chosen how he wanted to entertain English audiences in the middle & late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. We need to bear in mind that very likely most of the audience who were standing would not have ventured beyond the shores of Britain. However, some of those who watched the plays from their comfortable seats will very likely have travelled on the European continent beyond the shores of Britain. But why, in particular, did Shakespeare choose to set the majority (23) of his plays in Italy, Greece, France, the Adriatic coast, the Aegean Sea and in Vienna. France is by far the nearest country to England so that may not be surprising. But his plays set in Greece and Italy meant in Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome, and he chose Vienna for his marvellous play *Measure for Measure*.

One obvious reason for Shakespeare choosing locations for his plays in continental Europe rather than in Britain is that such plays that insulted, denigrated, traduced and ridiculed important English people, and who were in positions of power in England, having high status and influence, would likely be rejected and refused a permit to be shown on the stage immediately by the Monarch's Lord Chamberlain, and its author warned against criticising and ridiculing such important English people.

On the other hand, to traduce, vilify, and ridicule important foreigners would probably not disturb the Lord Chamberlain who would permit such plays to be shown on the

London stage where they could include all kinds of important people committing all kinds of wickedness and cruelty, and the proud and important could be ridiculed. It is notable that Shakespeare in his history of England plays stopped writing these histories with the killing of Richard III in battle in 1485 by the future king Henry VII. Shakespeare did not write a play of Henry VII, and his play Henry VIII was not written until 1612, which was nine years after the death of Queen Elizabeth (the daughter of Henry VIII) in 1603. This Queen would certainly not have tolerated a play about the last Tudor monarchs by Shakespeare, or by anybody else, on the London stage during her life time. Shakespeare's splendid play of Henry VIII scrupulously avoids showing Henry VIII tearing down or selling off monasteries, nor sending his wives to the scaffold. It is notable and little surprising how Henry VIII's cruel behaviour to his Queen Catherine, who is deemed to have been greatly admired and liked was permitted to be shown on the London stage. However, this queen was a Spanish woman and Spain was detested and feared in England during Elizabeth's time. But Elizabeth having died, Shakespeare's plays must have seemed acceptable by the Lord Chamberlain and the Monarch, James I, where any play that showed Henry VIII, father of Queen Elizabeth, in a poor light would never have been permitted on the stage during her lifetime. Cautious and prudent Will Shakespeare waited those nine years after her death before he produced his play about the father of Queen Elizabeth who was the last monarch of the Tudor family to sit on the throne of England.

One of Will's characteristics seems to have been his prudent and careful behaviour throughout his life to avoid personal and private difficulties especially with the influential and powerful of England.

Let us just look at some of the indications that hint at Shakespeare possibly having lived in the foreign towns in continental Europe, and in one example of the play *Troilus & Cressida* in Troy. Why Italy and Greece and especially why Troy? The educated members of the audience at the Globe would immediately know they were in for Ancient Greece, Ancient Rome and the ancient city of Troy famous for the Greek legend. Troy must have been a very attractive subject for a playwright as skilful as Will Shakespeare who wished to entertain a sophisticated and educated audience as could be found in London. The strongly political themes in this play revolve around the questions of authority, justice and the law. It involves debate about value and will and even more so is it concerned with what is right and what is wrong and this is extended into debate about will and power. These topics are not exactly what helps the English monarch and her nobles to sleep comfortably in their beds a' night. But set these themes in Troy of over a thousand years ago, and with the intervening love story of Troilus and the beautiful Cressida, and with her lascivious tendencies to seek other's beds, and the pandering of Pandarus and Thersites sexual banter, and the Lord Chamberlain concerned with the security and protection of the English throne from dangerous plays would not object to the searching political debates concerning governments of peoples in far off and forgotten Troy.

Now let's consider why Shakespeare might have chosen Vienna for his play *Measure for Measure*, when this play could have been set equally well in England, or if he had to place it in a foreign land why not in France? One reason for choosing Vienna may have been because the form of government in Vienna could be linked to the story line of *Measure for Measure*, a story of gross misgovernment for reasons of the temporary



ruler's lust for a young novice nun.

A very different example is the comedy of *Twelfth Night* set in Illyria on the Adriatic coast. This must have seemed to the audience as being as geographically remote in the minds of those standing in the pit as could have been chosen. Here again the malleable, comic and entertaining possibilities of the story line of his play were suited to a story that could best be located in a far-away town on the Adriatic coast. Perhaps Shakespeare had visited this lovely region during his postulated European tour. It might have been too difficult to convince a London audience with the improbable gullibility of Malvolio. Equally the dressing up of the lovely young woman, Viola, as the young man, called Cesario, with whom the Countess falls in love, thinking Cesario a man, who at one stage has to participate in a sword fight. And then, finally, Viola has to admit she is not a man but a woman dressed up as a man, Cesario. On now knowing that the handsome young man Cesario is really a lovely young woman, Viola, the Duke Orsino then marries her. If all this were to have been set in England, it might have been difficult to convince a London audience. This is just part of this fabulous comedy which is set in Illyria, which most of the audience, would probably not know, but which sounded suitably exotic to be acceptable as a splendid comedy on the London stage.

It is obvious that we cannot with complete confidence answer this question of why Shakespeare chose these foreign topics and historical events in foreign places for the majority of his plays; except in so far that if he wanted to write a play about the killing of Julius Caesar and the behaviour of Antony and Brutus, and the historical associations and consequences then the play would have had to be set in Rome. And once again a sophisticated, literary and educated London audience would be entertained by such a topic where the drama and characters would be as convincing as any that Will Shakespeare created.

We close this discussion of why and how it was that Shakespeare wrote so many of his plays that he set not only in England or Scotland alone but a majority in Italy and many other European counties. One reason that Shakespeare seems to have decided to leave England for those 8 years of his early manhood, and to travel to Italy and the many other countries of western Europe, seems likely to have been because he recognised that to become the kind of very great writer he wanted to be, then he needed to spend sufficient time seeing a wide range of people and how and where they lived.

What was so important to Shakespeare in those 8 years was that he was seeing people of so many different languages, different music, different kinds of work, how they and their children behaved, what other skills they had. One great consequence was that the majority of characters he created showed something of the wider range of humanity. Yes, he made them all speak English, but he gave some of them different names, names belonging to their language, and he dressed some of them in the clothes of their region. But what he gave us, his own people, was a wide range of men and women. He wrote so much of his work in beautiful language both in prose and poetry.

His works and language will be explored further in the remainder of this book.



## *A review of Shakespeare's 37 plays*

Shakespeare created hundreds of speaking characters for the actors in his 37 plays, and that included the women's parts played by boys and young men. It is widely recognised that the great range of his poetry and prose spoken on the stage, and preserved in his published plays, is exceptional, felicitous and individual. Shakespeare died when he was 52 at his home in Stratford Avon in 1616.

This book is not in any way biographical, nor is it concerned with any historical questions about the authorship of his plays. It is intended not only for the reader who may not be familiar with Shakespeare's plays, but also for those who are interested in the implications of the enormous amount and variety of Shakespeare's texts spoken by his actors and accessible to readers. The book discusses the characters created by Shakespeare who range from the very rich and powerful and through the whole of the middle and poorest members of society. This book is concerned with how these characters react to authority and the law, how they express forgiveness, compassion, cruelty, kindness, greed, ambition, weakness and strength, as well as integrity and moral purpose. The content and implications of the speeches made by these actors today, and read by a variety of readers, were, as Jan Kott (1964) pointed out, still relevant at the end of the second millennium. Some aspects of human society have not changed significantly over 400 years. As Hamlet told Polonius, when describing his actors who came to Elsinore Castle to entertain the King and his Court:

'they are the abstract and brief chronicles of the time'.

What Shakespeare achieved with his actors 400 years ago, our actors today achieve by transporting us into the realms of his plays, just as Shakespeare carried his actors and audiences into earlier times than those in which they were living. He was confident that we, who would be born so much later, would enjoy his plays when they would be acted on our stages by our actors and actresses long after he had died. Here are a few of his prophetic words spoken by Cassius, a character from his play Julius Caesar, that scholars consider Shakespeare wrote probably about 1599:

'How many ages hence  
Shall this our lofty scene be acted over,  
In states unborn, and accents yet unknown'?

Many scholars have suggested that we cannot know any of Shakespeare's ideas and opinions. One must remember that Shakespeare scrupulously avoided pedagogy and proselytizing of his work. Where his ideas are to be found is in what many of his speaking characters say on the stage. Examples are indicated in the text of this book.



## *Preface*

### *Shakespeare's voice as spoken by his characters*

This preface begins with the key issue concerning what it is that distinguishes an important aspect of the writing of Shakespeare from other major poets and playwrights such as Milton and Bernard Shaw, some of whose writings are polemical, which was something that Shakespeare eschewed. This scrupulous avoidance of pedagogy and proselytizing by Shakespeare of his own views and opinions had a great influence on his literary methodology, and on the ways he used his speaking characters. He gave them the language to express political and social views across an exceptionally wide range of intellectual concerns, and he endowed them with language they used in all their circumstances in both war and peace.

As John Keats made clear, Shakespeare wrote with 'negative capability', a matter followed up in this book with discussion of examples. Samuel Johnson considered that Shakespeare failed to give his works a moral purpose. This book attempts to show, and explain with examples, how it is that Shakespeare's works are rich in moral purpose, expressed on a stage where they are discussed by many of his characters.

Scholars have suggested that we do not hear Shakespeare's own ideas and opinions. A very clear example is to be found in the late Professor Nuttall's recent publication *Shakespeare the Thinker, Yale University Press, 2007*, in which he pointed out that 'we have no idea what Shakespeare thought finally about any question'. We can find many of his plays that are rich in ideas. He does not seem to hesitate to let his actors express some of these ideas, in particular we see this in his Romance plays, where ideas concerning politics and religion are spoken by some of his characters. It is worth recalling that Jan Kott in 1964 pointed out that the content and implications of the speeches of Shakespeare's actors were still relevant in his, Jan Kott's, day. Shakespeare seems to have foreseen dangers from those in authority, and he made sure that he did not leave himself open to prosecution. There were too many executions going on in London and elsewhere in England in late Tudor times. In the first weeks after King James took up his English crown Shakespeare was elected to be a member of what was called 'The King's Men', an acting group, appointed by King James with Shakespeare's name high on the list.

Perhaps Shakespeare's years of prudence and responsible behaviour in the eyes of the Court, and especially in the eyes of the Lord Chamberlain, had favourably influenced the King and his advisors in their recognition of William Shakespeare.

We can also recognise some of the technical methods Shakespeare used in his writing: such as are referred to here as the *Shakespeare-Keats coefficient of beauty and truth*, and in Shakespeare's '*literary sandwich device*', both of which he employed extensively. These methods he designed to allow him the great freedom of expression, although some of it could be regarded as hyperbole, were it not for his employing these two literary devices, that are explained in detail below.

They are intended, in part, to advance understanding of his language by his audiences and readers. This book also discusses the use of magical and fairytale stories, that helped Shakespeare to create his late four Romance plays, that are different in style, content and purpose from his earlier plays. The important links between these late four Romance plays, and their common link to the great penultimate play of Henry VIII, are reviewed here. This very late play has received a varied response.

To give just one example of what some of this book attempts is the discussion of the four main themes that dominate much of the play Hamlet, viz., the Prince's periods of depression linked to his admitting to suicidal tendencies; both seem to be linked to his revulsion to sexual lust without love ; and to his hesitation to assassinate King Claudius in order to revenge his father's murder. Hamlet's observation that '*there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so*' deserves our reflection, and an attempt to provide this is part of the discussion of '*Hamlet*' in this book. That observation by the character Prince Hamlet seems to have been a part of the review of good and evil that very much concerns so many of Shakespeare's created characters, and it runs through many of the plays.

We find some discussion of sin, that dominated Christian dogma long before and after the times in which Shakespeare lived. Sin is mentioned in several of his plays, but it is nowhere analysed nor reviewed, but its consequences are discussed in a few of his late plays. Politically it was a delicate subject for his actors to debate on the London stage in late Tudor and early Jacobean times. Perhaps he would have had some considerable difficulty persuading the Lord Chamberlain to license such very sensitive matters for the London stage when the Protestant and Catholic Churches remained divided on many issues. Furthermore, the notoriously evil behaviour of Henry VIII, the father of Queen Elizabeth, who reigned for 45 years, could have been a serious obstacle; for Shakespeare was writing his plays for the London stage for the last 13 years of Elizabeth's reign, and writing plays for the first 9 years of the of the reign of King James 1 of England.

Other important themes, that are many in number, run through Shakespeare's plays, they include authority, the law, stability of the State, their impact on the individual; mercy and justice and their links to power. Examples are taken from Troilus & Cressida, Measure for Measure, Merchant of Venice and from many of his other plays. The affections between his created characters are explored, for example by Shakespeare in *Antony & Cleopatra*, and in many of his other plays. Behaviour and reflections related to cruelty, courage, compassion, natural dignity, forgiveness and magnanimity are widely involved in Shakespeare's dramatic writings; they are notably discussed by some of his characters who reflect on their fall from power, and others in a range of his plays who reflect on authority.

This book has two parts. Part 1 comprises seven chapters that concentrate on analysis of some of the main plays in terms of principal topics that have been listed in the Preface. Part 2 is devoted to a review of the plays in the context of their subject, such as Tragedy or Comedy, with their important links discussed in terms of Shakespeare's intentions for his actors, as indicated in the paragraphs of the Preface, and in Part 1 of this book, and especially in the actors' use of his most important poetry and prose that is also discussed in Parts 1 and 2.

# SHAKESPEARE'S VOICE AS SPOKEN BY HIS CHARACTERS

## PART 1

Imagined realities enriched by a great variety of created  
characters in diverse scenes





# *Chapter 1*

## *An Introduction*

The late A.D. Nuttall, Professor of English at Oxford University, wrote in the first paragraph of his Introduction to his scholarly book *Shakespeare the Thinker*, Yale University Press, 2007: 'We know what Milton thought about many things. He didn't believe in the doctrine of the Trinity ; he thought the execution of Charles I was morally right ; he believed that married couples who didn't get on should be allowed to divorce. But we have no idea what Shakespeare thought, finally, about any question.' That appears to be a somewhat paradoxical conclusion in view of the title of his book, and that was one of the provocations that led to the writing of this book.

This book is based on reading all the 37 plays of Shakespeare, seeing many of them performed over many years, and from studying the BBC complete set of plays in DVDs. It is based on the words spoken by the hundreds of speaking characters that Shakespeare created for the stage. The book is an attempt to review the language of the actors spoken in the stories of the plays in the context of Shakespeare's writings about moral purpose, humour, compassion, courage, friendship, sexual love and lust, ambition, aggression, respect and many other matters. He wrote about love, he wrote about war, he created men and women who revealed cruel and ruthless ambition. He also showed us men and women who revealed that they could be kind, considerate and sensitive towards others. However, it seems likely most of us behave well, less than well, and even badly during a lifetime. Hamlet would seem to exemplify that statement. Shakespeare made sure his characters were not dull unless that served his dramatic purpose.

Shakespeare gave us characters who, in his plays, were concerned with the problems associated with authority and the law, and their impact on the life of the individual citizen. These are matters that still concern us today. Jan Kott, in his book (*Shakespeare our Contemporary*, Polish Scientific Publishers, Warszawa, 1964), wrote about the many ways in which Shakespeare's plays are so relevant to our lives today and the society in which we live. Shakespeare wrote about men responsible for the administration of the law who abuse their powers, but he did not omit to also write about those who respect the law and their fellow citizens. Much of what he wrote in poetry and prose for his plays is in beautiful language, so much so that many of his lines remain in our memory, and they can rise uncalled for into our consciousness at unpredictable moments in our lives.

Shakespeare wrote 37 plays for which he created hundreds of speaking acting characters, and others not speaking. These actors were intended to serve the drama. Some are designed to amuse us, and they can fill the theatre with laughter, some are sorrowful, others violent or cruel, and some display other characteristics. What happens to the characters and how they behave in his plays leave us in no doubt that Shakespeare is, as Jan Kott showed us, our contemporary.

The lines spoken by his characters, were created by Shakespeare more than 400 years ago, in a world that we recognise as being very different in so many respects from ours today. Yet so many of his lines appear to be so relevant to our lives now. Once we have become familiar with his language, then his actors, their discussions and speeches can be understood as we watch the plays, or as we read them. Shakespeare's plays were designed as vehicles for his actors to entertain us with the stories that his invented characters present on the stage. The dramatic poetry and prose as they are relayed into our minds influence our thoughts and feelings through his imagined realism. When we read these plays they affect us differently because we only have his words and, without any distraction from the actions and inter-actions of the characters on the stage, those words can exercise an even greater effect on us, although paradoxically the words alone may not be as entertaining as watching a performance of his play. Although Shakespeare designed his plays to entertain the public on a stage, he obviously knew that his crafted language of the plays would be read, because, in the excitement and other distractions created by performances, there is seldom enough time to fully comprehend, or to reflect upon his words. The complexity or profundity of some of his lines, some with their several meanings and the puns that he so enjoyed, can only fully reveal their meanings when read away from the distractions that are a natural part of a play's performance.

### **Creative processes in Shakespeare's writings.**

Let us take for example, *A Midsummer Night's Dream Act 5, Scene 1, Lines 7-27*,

Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,  
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend  
More than cool reason ever comprehends.  
The lunatic, the lover and the poet  
Are of imagination all compact:  
One sees more devils than vast hell can hold ;  
That is the madman: the lover, all as frantic,  
Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt:  
The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,  
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven ;  
And as imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name.

The lines quoted above suggest how much we depend on, and are disturbed by, our own and others' imaginations which can affect us, for example, through resentments, kindness, generosity or ingratitude, and in so many other ways. Some of us continue to envisage a glorious heaven beyond the Welkin; whereas men and women of creative science bring us wonders they have revealed , from mathematics, physics, chemistry, the earth and life sciences, as well as in engineering and the technologies; while those working in the arts, architecture, music and literature have brought us consolations, embellishments, and enhancements of life, working partly through our perceptive imaginations.

## John Keats' letters, Shakespeare's work, Milton's polemic style, and Keats' creative perceptions.

Milton was born in 1608, nearly eight years before Shakespeare died. Nuttall demonstrated that we know many of Milton's ideas. But Nuttall did not tell us why and how it is that we cannot know any of Shakespeare's ideas or opinions. The answer is complicated but discernible. Perhaps the main reason is that Shakespeare, unlike Milton, was not a polemical writer. It is polemics that provide the literary form for presenting and arranging one's ideas and opinions by means of pedagogy and proselytizing. I doubt any scholar would wish to deny the claim that Shakespeare eschewed both pedagogy and proselytizing throughout his creative writing, except in Hamlet's speech to the players, where Prince Hamlet does rather lecture them about how they should perform and speak their lines (Arden Shakespeare: **Act 3, Scene 2, Lines 1-45**). And what could have been more important to the actor and audience and to the author's intentions? Even in his poem, '*The Phoenix and Turtle*', that John Finnis and Patrick Martin (T.L.S. pp.12-14, 18<sup>th</sup> April 2003) suggested is concerned to commemorate and to sorrow over the vicious and brutal execution in 1601 of harmless individuals, that included Mrs. Anne Line, Shakespeare avoids proselytizing his own views. However, some scholars think that this poem does not make any reference to Anne Line, for example, Katherine Duncan-Jones & H.R. Woudhuysen (in Shakespeare's Poems, Third Series, 2007) have presented a well argued case for their different views of the meanings in this poem. But whatever was intended by Shakespeare is to some extent hidden in the obfuscations he wrote into this poem, perhaps to protect himself and others from prosecution, but it seems clear that the poem involves some degree of mourning. The suggestion that Shakespeare's writing in this poem displays elements of sadness and of grief seem unlikely to be challenged by scholars.

John Keats, apart from being a poet, was a writer of remarkable letters (*The Letters of John Keats* Ed. M.B. Forman, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, OUP 1952). They include some of Keats' perceptive views of Shakespeare's work. Keats was born in 1795, that was 179 years after Shakespeare died and 147 years after Milton's death. Keats' letters reveal to his correspondents and, since his very early death in 1821, to us, his readers, what he called Shakespeare's '*negative capability*'.

Keats wrote to his two brothers in (Letter 32) on 21<sup>st</sup> December 1817, '... It struck me what a quality went to form a Man of Achievement especially in Literature and which Shakespeare possessed so enormously—I mean *Negative Capability*, that is *when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts without any irritable reaching after fact and reason.....*'. Keats defined *negative capability* for us as the way in which 'the greatest English poetry does not suffer from *any irritable searching after fact and reason*'. In other words, Shakespeare had no wish to be polemical, pedagogical or to proselytize as he showed by their absence from his writings; he was not concerned to argue his opinions of social, political or religious matters. Shakespeare does not engage in polemics. He was interested in behaviour of men and women, their ambitions and the details of their characters and how they viewed their world. Keats recognised what were the great differences between the creative literary processes of William Shakespeare and those fine, but very different processes, that characterise the work of John Milton. One way to help elucidate an aspect of Keats' concept of *negative capability* is to draw an analogy with the way that great painters, such as Raphael and

Rembrandt, just to cite two, who in painting a portrait would reveal something of the range of character in the person sitting for their portrait. The attractive and less admirable qualities are both revealed in the painting. So it is with Shakespeare's negative capability, where he shows us the evil and the good in his characters' behaviour and in their thoughts. That is part of the cognizance of Shakespeare, and it reflects the remarkable understanding of Shakespeare's work by the young poet, John Keats. However, unlike painters, Shakespeare created *ab initio* all his characters by giving them the words they speak.

In his letter No: 93 written to Woodhouse on 27<sup>th</sup> October 1818, Keats wrote: 'As to the poetical Character itself (I mean that sort of which, if I am any thing, I am a Member; that sort distinguished from the wordsworthian or egotistical sublime ; which is a thing *per se* and stands alone) it is not itself--it has no self--it is everything and nothing--It has no character--it enjoys light and shade ; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated--It has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. What shocks the virtuous philosopher delights the camelion poet'. Keats, in this letter, categorizes Wordsworth's poetry in most apposite terms as the '*egotistical sublime*', that so distinguishes it from Shakespeare's poetry.

Keats, writing to his friend Reynolds on 21<sup>st</sup> September 1819, wrote: 'I have given up *Hyperion*--there were too many Miltonic inversions in it--Miltonic verse can not be written but in an artful or rather artist's humour. I wish to give myself up to other sensations. It may be interesting to you to pick out some lines from *Hyperion* and put a mark x to the false beauty proceeding from art and / to the true voice of feeling.'

In one of his long letters to his brother and sister-in-law, dated the 17-27 September 1819, Keats told them: 'I have but lately stood on my guard against Milton. Life to him would be death to me. Miltonic verse cannot be written but (in) the vein of art--I wish to devote myself to another sensation.'

In 1630, when Milton was 22, he wrote this sonnet on Shakespeare:

What needs my Shakespeare for his honour'd Bones,  
The labour of an age in piled Stones.  
Or that his hallowed relics should be hid  
Under star-ypointing Pyramid?  
Dear son of memory, great heir of Fame,  
What need'st thou such weak witness of thy name!  
Thou in our wonder and astonishment  
Has built thyself a live-long Monument.  
For whist to th'shame of slow-endeavouring art,  
They easy numbers flow, and that each heart  
Hath from the leaves of thy unvalu'd Book  
Those Delphick lines with deep impression took,  
Then our fancy of it self bereaving,  
Dost make us Marvel with too much conceiving;  
And so Sepulcher'd in such pomp dost lie,  
That kings for such a Tomb would wish to die.

What a difference there is between this early sonnet by Milton and the sonnets of Shakespeare ; but Shakespeare's earliest sonnets were probably written in 1599, or not long before that, when he was about 35, and the rest were written over the next 10 years (*Shakespeare's Sonnets*, Third Series, Edited by Katherine Duncan-Jones, 1997, Thomas Nelson & Sons, Ltd), so it is not surprising that we find a greater maturity in Shakespeare's sonnets.

Here is a well known Sonnet 29 by Shakespeare with which anyone can identify:

When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes  
I all alone beweep my outcast state,  
And trouble deaf heav'n with my bootless cries,  
And look upon myself, and curse my fate,  
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,  
Featured like him, like him with friends possessed,  
Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,  
With what I most enjoy contented least;  
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,  
Haply I think on thee, and then my state,  
Like to the lark at break of day arising,  
From sullen earth sings hymns at heaven's gate;  
For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings  
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

Those three similes in lines 5 & 6, emphasizing Shakespeare's description: '*like him with friends possessed*', are revealing enough to suggest that maybe Shakespeare was not a man to have had very close friends with whom he shared his private thoughts at that stage, and maybe at any stage of his life; but even this lacks evidence; perhaps because we lack any of his private letters both from and to him that might have unequivocally revealed his opinions.

Here is another of Shakespeare's sonnets, equally well known, that finds application to Nature, and it applies to the creative arts ranging from architecture, painting, sculpture, literature and music, to the making of a garden. It is a sonnet with a profound meaning to which we shall return a little later in this chapter.

#### **Shakespeare's Sonnet 54**

O how much more doth beauty, beauteous seem  
By that sweet ornament which truth doth give!  
The rose looks fair but fairer we it deem  
For that sweet odour which doth in it live:  
The canker blossoms have as deep a dye  
As the perfumed tincture of the roses,  
Hang on such thorns, and play as wantonly,  
When summer's breath their masked buds discloses:  
But for their virtue only is their show  
They live unwooded, and unrespected fade,  
Die to themselves. Sweet roses do not so;  
Of their sweet deaths are sweetest odours made;

And so of you, beauteous and lovely youth;  
When that shall vade, my verse distils your truth.

The chapters of this book, that follow this Introduction, are intended to continue the review of the behaviour and opinions that Shakespeare bestowed on the characters that he created. There is no reason to think that Shakespeare was not a humane man with civilised views concerning human behaviour, even though we have no direct evidence of those personal opinions. What is important about the man Shakespeare, is what his so creative and imaginative mind left us in his published works. Similarly, it is evident that the eccentric opinions, outside the field of science, held by Isaac Newton (1642-1727) are of relatively little, if any, serious interest ; it is Newton's understanding of physics and the physical laws, that his creative and mathematically brilliant mind produced, that is what are so important and interesting .In the case of this exceptionally talented man, Shakespeare, we can find some of his own opinions, and these are indicated in the text of this book, but a great number of ideas and opinions, affections, morals and ambitions Shakespeare put into the minds of the characters he created: Hamlet, Cleopatra, Ulysses, Imogen, Falstaff, Perdita, Prince Hal, Brutus, Lady Macbeth, and Cassius, to mention just a few. He thus endowed with his lines, many among the hundreds of speaking characters that he created.

We know almost nothing of Shakespeare's emotional life but it would seem unlikely to have been fundamentally different from that of the wide generality of men. A key question is: how could any real couple be as linguistically talented as are the couples created by Shakespeare? For example, Antony and Cleopatra, who, in their discourse with each other, about each other, in their behaviour to each other, and in what others observe and say about them, who have so enriched our language with phrases and expressions that we still celebrate today. They seem likely to survive with the last of us who speak English.

#### **Antony & Cleopatra Act 1, Scene 1, lines 10-17.**

This play opens with Philo and Enobarbus, two loyal soldiers and friends of Antony who are talking about him and Cleopatra. What splendid lines with which to open this play! They are muffled and partly lost when the audience are not yet quite settled, and still a little noisy; and sometimes these lines are spoken too quickly and from too far back on the stage when they should be delivered closer to the front and to one side of the stage, from where the two actors, facing each other begin to speak only when the audience become still and silent. Philo begins with his lines slowly and in a tone indicating his respect for their general, Antony, but whose obsession with Cleopatra both worry and amuse him. Enobarbus listens attentively to what Philo has to say. By this means the audience can grasp every word, wanting to hear all that passes on the stage, as the actors draw the audience into their discussion.

#### **Philo:**

Nay, but this dotage of our general's  
O'erflows the measure: those his goodly eyes,  
That o'er flow the files and musters of the war  
Have glowed like plated Mars, now bend, now turn  
The office and devotion of their view  
Upon a tawny front: his captain's heart,

Which, in the scuffles of great fights hath burst  
The buckles on his breast, reneges all temper,  
And is become the bellows and the fan  
To cool a gipsy's lust.

Then, as soon as Antony and Cleopatra appear, their brief lines reveal the affection these two lovers have for each other. Their excitement engenders ours, the audience, as we find ourselves observers.

Now enter Antony and Cleopatra with her ladies and Eunuchs fanning her. The two friends, Philo and Enobarbus, should continue their observations from a vantage point just a little further back from the front, near one of the wings as Philo speaks:

**Philo:**

Look where they come:  
Take but good note, and you shall see him  
The triple pillar of the world transform'd  
Into a strumpet's fool: behold and see.

Now to cap this opening are these lines that follow with the two lovers talking to each other with a teasing tenderness and lightly borne humour.

**Cleo:**

If it be love indeed, tell me how much.

**Ant:**

There's beggary in the love that can be reckon'd,

**Cleo:**

I'll set a bourn how far to be below'd.

**Ant:**

Then must thou needs find out a new heaven, new earth.

They pause now before the next lines, which is something we can only know when we are watching a stage performance, not reading it alone with none of the distractions from the stage. Now we hear the lovers' conversation with Antony assuring Cleopatra that he has no intention of leaving her and returning to Rome:

**Antony & Cleopatra Act 1, Scene 1, lines 33-38**

Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch  
Of the rang'd empire fall! Here is my space,  
Kingdoms are clay: our dungy earth alike  
Feeds beast as man; the nobleness of life  
Is to do thus: when such a mutual pair,  
And such a twain can do't, in which I bind,  
On pain of punishment, the world to weet  
We stand up peerless.  
Some time has passed:

**Antony & Cleopatra Act 1, Scene 3, Lines 32-38.**

Antony now awakes to the political and military needs for him to return to Rome, he has to listen to Cleopatra's recognition of reality, and of her fear that their love may quickly fade after Antony leaves her and goes back to Rome:

**Cleo:**

Nay, pray you, seek no colour for your going,  
But bid farewell, and go: when you sued staying,  
Then was the time for words; no going then;  
Eternity was in our lips, and eyes,  
Bliss in our brows' bent; none our parts so poor  
But was a race of heaven. They are so still,  
Or thou, the greatest soldier of the world,  
Art turn'd the greatest liar.

What is it that transforms Shakespeare's language that in places would be preposterous hyperbole in ordinary daily life, into entrancing dramatic poetry and prose that is accepted as reality? The answer is to be found in the Shakespeare-Keats coefficient of Beauty and Truth, and in practical terms in Shakespeare's literary sandwich device with which he carefully presents some of his more exotic and difficult metaphoric poetry.

These words of Cleopatra, cited above, are an example of Shakespeare's lines that would be rejected as hyperbole if used by lovers in daily life in any epoch. Yet Shakespeare's language, linked to his imagined realities, is so powerful and convincing that it does not shake our belief in the reality of the language used by Antony and Cleopatra. It is great dramatic poetry that holds us in thrall; and when we read the play we are also convinced of the truth of their affections. What is it that transforms the language used by Shakespeare from being preposterous hyperbole into a reality on the stage or when we read his play? It is the poetry (or it can be Shakespeare's prose) in a language built on and around Shakespeare's imagined realities that, so holds us by its beauty and power that our minds and our feelings accept this language as reality. But to strengthen this claim we need a little more analysis of these lines by Cleopatra. To begin: notice the second and third lines of this speech reprinted below:

But bid farewell and go: when you sued staying,  
Then was the time for words; no going then;

Now look at the last two lines of this short speech:

Or thou, the greatest soldier in the world,  
Art turn'd the greatest liar.

These lines from the first and last parts of this speech could both stand alone as acceptable language between two people living in 2013 with the sole exception of their use of 'thou', and the use of 'Art' in place of 'are' in the last two lines. Now let's look at the rich metaphoric filling in this literary sandwich consisting of the three metaphoric lines that are repeated below to show the difference:

Eternity was in our lips, and eyes



Bliss in our brows' bent, none our parts so poor  
But was a race of heaven. ....

There we find Shakespeare's metaphors with which his imagined realities become transmuted into his entrancing language by his coefficient of beauty and truth.

In this example from *Antony & Cleopatra*, the opening, like the closing lines, are realistic but they are also fine poetry. Thus, we are led to digest the more exotic and thrilling poetry of these three lines. And we enjoy the excitement of that exotic poetry for reasons that Shakespeare explained to us in the last six lines of the quotation from *A Midsummer night's Dream* on page 14, and then in the opening lines of his sonnet 54 on page 17 where the way it works on us is revealed:

O how much more doth beauty beauteous seem  
By that sweet ornament which truth doth give!

We can accept unrealistic language close to hyperbole such as Shakespeare uses for describing his imagined realities because we can recognise that the language he creates is beautiful and so functions as the truth. The key to this claim is the metaphoric use by Shakespeare of this profound coefficient 'sweet ornament' appearing as the 'truth' because it is 'beautiful'. We can understand why and how John Keats could have picked this up from Shakespeare's sonnet 54 as the inspiration for his poem *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. Only the last 5 lines of the last six stanzas of this poem by Keats, who was only 22 when he wrote it in May 1819, are quoted here:

When old age shall this generation waste,  
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe  
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,  
Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

We can now take another, but more extreme example, of treating his audience to exotic and powerful poetry in circumstances where it would have seemed too exaggerated to be acceptable. Macbeth hears that his queen has died and this is how he responds: Seyton, a servant to Macbeth, who is King of Scotland, comes to tell the King his wife has died.

**Macbeth:**

She should have died hereafter:  
There would have been a time for such a word.—  
To-morrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,  
To the last syllable of recorded time;  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!  
Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
And then is heard no more: it is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.

Despite the exaggerated expression of grief, this magnificent language appears in the theatre to be accepted, because of the power, beauty and truth of the poetry. This is an example that is taken from near the end of the play. The audience would have already heard much great poetry throughout the earlier scenes of this play because this play is characterised by having some of the richest poetry of all his plays, so that Shakespeare judged that he did not need to use his sandwich device, which he omitted.

However, in the lines from near the beginning of *Macbeth*: in **Act 1, Scene 7 lines 12-28**, (that we can study below) Macbeth, in a soliloquy in which he and his wife reveal that they are planning to kill King Duncan so that Macbeth may seize the crown of Scotland. This poetry is so rich in imaginative metaphor and simile that the audience sit there thrilled by this language quite as much as by the vicious and violent scheme planned by Macbeth and his wife to kill their King Duncan, a guest in their house.

He's here in double trust:  
First, I am his kinsman and his subject,  
Strong both against the deed; then as his host,  
Who should against his murderer shut the door,  
Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan  
Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been  
So clear in his great office, that his virtues  
Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongu'd, against  
The deep damnation of his taking-off;  
And pity, like a naked new-born babe,  
Striding the blast, or heaven's Cherubins, hors'd  
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,  
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,  
That tears shall drown the wind.—I have no spur  
To prick the sides of my intent, but only  
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself  
And falls on th' other—

Note how the use of the sandwich technique in this excerpt above from *Macbeth* in the first seven lines, and in the last three lines of conventional daily language that encase the sandwich filling. And note the seven lines of exceptionally imaginative poetry of the rich metaphors that fill his literary sandwich device.

### **Antony & Cleopatra Act 1, Scene 3, Lines 87-91.**

Now here is some more reality from Cleopatra as she speaks to Antony in touching and beautiful language that gives way to her longings and foreseen loss of her lover, Antony:

**Cleo:**

Courteous lord, one word:  
Sir, you and I must part, but that's not it:  
Sir, you and I have loved, but that's not it:

That you know well, something it is I would,—  
O my oblivion is a very Antony,

And I am all forgotten.

**Antony & Cleopatra Act 1, Scene 5, Lines 18-26.**

Antony, back in Rome, has been gone from his 'Egypt' for some time. Here Cleopatra is speaking to one of her closest attendants in the language of memories that provoke and excite her longings for Antony:

O Charmian!  
'Where think'st thou he is now? Stands he, or sits he?  
Or does he walk? Or is he on his horse?  
O happy horse to bear the weight of Antony!  
Do bravely, horse, for wot'st thou whom thou mov'st,  
The demi-Atlas of this earth, the arm  
And burgeonet of men. He's speaking now,  
Or murmuring, 'Where's my serpent of old Nile?'  
For so he calls me.....'

**Antony & Cleopatra Act 1, Scene 5, Lines 72- 78.**

Cleopatra now realises that she must work to keep Antony desiring her, she talks to her close attendants: She refers to the past when she was young and had the relatively unexciting Octavius Caesar for her lover, long before she had met Antony:

**Cleo:**  
My salad days,  
When I was green in judgement; cold in blood,  
To say as I said then. But come, away,  
Get me ink and paper,  
He shall have every day a several greeting,  
Or I'll unpeople Egypt.

**Antony & Cleopatra Act 2, Scene 3, Lines 233-240.**

Antony still in Rome, two soldiers are talking about him and what he will do next. Enobarbus, who knows Antony well, predicts correctly what will happen: Shakespeare maintains the sexual excitement in the description of Cleopatra:

**Maecenas:**  
Now Antony must leave her utterly.

**Enobarbus:**  
Never; he will not:  
Age cannot wither her: nor custom stale  
Her infinite variety: other women cloy  
The appetites they feed, but she makes hungry,  
Where most she satisfies. For vilest things  
Become themselves in her, that the holy priests  
Bless her, when she is riggish.

**Antony & Cleopatra Act 3 Scene 13, lines 177-184.**

Antony, after he has lost the battles of Actium, sails back to Alexandria where he realises that all is probably lost but he is prepared to try a last fight against the overwhelming odds of Caesar's army. Now re-united with Cleopatra, who also realises that their military situation is probably hopeless, Antony cheers her up by suggesting a jolly party that night with his military captains, and in doing so he gives us the exultant expression of 'a gaudy night'.

**Cleo:**

That's my brave lord!

**Ant:**

I will be treble-sinew'd, hearted, breath'd,  
And fight maliciously for when mine hours  
Were nice and lucky, men did ransom lives  
Of me for jests: but now, I'll set my teeth,  
And send to darkness all that stop me, Come,  
Let's have one more gaudy night: call to me  
All my sad captains, fill our bowls once more;  
Let's mock the midnight bell.

**Antony & Cleopatra Act 4, Scene 15, Lines 58-68.**

Antony having allowed himself first to be out manoeuvred by Caesar on the sea and then losing his battle on land against Caesar, Antony has to retreat back to Egypt. Being deliberately misinformed that Cleopatra, who sent him a message that she was dead, he is profoundly distressed and now attempts suicide himself, but, making a mess of it, he is now slowly dying from his self-inflicted wounds. Cleopatra's servants carry him to Cleopatra where he is close to his death.

**Cleo:**

Noblest of men, woo't die?  
Hast thou no care of me, shall I abide  
In this dull world, which in thy absence is  
No better than a sty? O, see my women:  
The crown o' the earth doth melt.

*(Antony dies)*

Now there is a long pause that freezes the audience who realise that Antony is dead. Cleopatra is silent and she looks at Antony losing herself in the recognition that he has gone. Then, with her voice almost breaking with grief, she calls him questioningly in two words:

My lord?

Still holding on to her dignity she says slowly in a quiet voice:

O' withered is the garland of the war,  
The soldier's pole is fall'n: young boys and girls  
Are level with men: the odds is gone,  
And there is nothing left remarkable  
Beneath the visiting moon.

**Antony & Cleopatra, Act 5, Scene 2, Lines 82-92.**

Cleopatra later, talking to one of Caesar's senior soldiers about Antony, pours out her grieving heart to him in poetry rich in imaginative metaphors and similes. She pauses in the 4<sup>th</sup> line before '*For his bounty there was no winter in it*': so that we hear her re-living her grief:

**Cleo:**

His legs bestrid the ocean, his rear'd arm  
Crested the world: his voice was propertied  
As all the tuned spheres, and that to friends:  
But when he meant to quail, and shake the orb,  
He was as rattling thunder. For his bounty,  
There was no winter in't: an autumn 'twas  
That grew the more by reaping: his delights  
Were dolphin-like, they showed his back above  
The element they lived in: realms and islands were  
As plates dropp'd from his pocket.

Here follows the great speeches as Cleopatra and her two women attendant, Iras and Charmian, arrange her suicide

**Antony & Cleopatra Act 5 Scene 2, Lines 279-319.**

These lines show us Cleopatra preparing her own exit by suicide, intent now on following Antony. She is with her close women attendants to whom she now makes great speeches of farewell, all of whom also commit suicide; one before and one after Cleopatra. Her voice is slow with deliberation of what she wishes to say:

**Cleo:**

Give me my robe, put on my crown, I have  
Immortal longings in me. Now no more  
The juice of Egypt's grape shall moist this lip.  
Yare, yare, good Iris; quick: methinks I hear  
Antony call. I see him rouse himself  
To praise my noble act. I hear him mock  
The luck of Caesar, which the gods give men  
To excuse their after wrath. Husband, I come:  
Now to that name, my courage prove my title!  
I am fire, and air; my other elements  
I give to baser life. So have you done?  
Come then, and take the last warmth of my lips,  
Farewell, kind Charmian, Iras, long farewell.

*(Kisses them, Iras falls and dies)*

Have I the aspic in my lips? Dost fall?  
If thou and nature can so gently part,  
The stroke of death is as a lover's pinch,  
Which hurts, and is desir'd. Dost thou lie still?  
If thus thou vanishest, thou tell'st the world  
It is not worth leave-taking.

**Charmian:**

Dissolve, thick cloud, and rain, that I may say,  
The gods themselves do weep!

**Cleo:**

This proves me base:  
If she first meet the curled Antony,  
He'll make demand of her, and spend that kiss  
Which is my heaven to have, Come, thou mortal  
wretch,

*(To an asp, which she applies to her breast)*

With thy sharp  
Teeth this knot intricate  
Of life at once untie: poor venomous fool,  
Be angry, and despatch. O, couldst thou speak,  
That I might hear thee call great Caesar ass,  
Unpoliced!

**Charmian:**

O eastern star!

**Cleo:**

Peace, peace!  
Dost thou not see my baby at my breast,  
That sucks the nurse asleep?

**Charmian:**

O, break! O, break!

**Cleo:**

As sweet as balm, as soft as air, as gentle.  
O Antony! Nay, I will thee too

*(Applying another asp to her arm,)*

What should I say--

*(Dies)*

### **Charmian:**

In this vile world? So fare thee well.  
Now boast thee, death, in thy possession lies  
A lass unparallel'd. Downy windows, close,  
And golden Phoebus, never be beheld  
Of eyes again so royal! Your crown's awry,  
I'll mend it, and then play.

### **Some brief comments on Shakespeare's daily life**

We know little, but we can form some idea of a likely estimate of his daily life from the work of scholars versed in the history of those times, and from others who have recently written biographies of Shakespeare such as: Ian Wilson, *Shakespeare the Evidence* 1993, Headline Book Publishing Ltd; Peter Ackroyd, *Shakespeare the Biography* 2005, Chatto & Windus; Antony Holden, *William Shakespeare*, 1999 Little Brown & Co; Jonathan Bate, *Soul of the Age*, 2008, Viking; Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World*, 2004, Jonathan Cape.

Obviously those with a great talent live a daily life as do the rest of us, and that must have applied equally to William Shakespeare. Much of his adult life seems likely to have been spent in trying to make money, worrying about his family left in Stratford on Avon, avoiding the attacks of the plague, endeavouring to avoid trouble from authorities for writing plays that touched on politically sensitive subjects, maintaining good relations with important, rich people close to the Court who were interested in the work of poets and playwrights, worrying about the finances and management of the Globe and other London theatres, concerned when an actor became suddenly unavailable for the part he had designed especially for him. There was his need to keep on the right side of the authorities who wanted to close the London theatres.

Who knows in what love affairs he may have been involved? He may also have had problems with his health from time to time. He had needed to write poems that would make him money when the theatres were closed down by the authorities. On top of all that he wrote the greatest sequence of sonnets in the language, and he wrote 37 plays in the period from about 1590 to 1612. Of those 37 the majority are the most brilliant plays in the English Language and perhaps even the most brilliant in any language.

### **Imagined realities enriched by a great variety of created characters speaking entrancing language**

It seems appropriate to end this Introduction with a quotation from J.B. Black who, as Editor of the volume *The Age of Elizabeth*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 1959 (of *The Oxford History of England* on pp. 299-300), noticing the opinions of Bradley and Brandes, summarised the work of Shakespeare as: "The greatness of Shakespeare rests essentially upon the extraordinary range of his gifts. His power of characterization, objectivity, inventiveness, and universality of appeal are all unique. Unlike Lyly, Kyd, Marlow, or even Ben Jonson, he had no mannerisms that could be copied. He wrote lyrical, historical, tragic, comic, romantic, and fairy plays with equal facility and equal distinction ; and a reference to the chronology of his works will show that he could turn from one *genre* to another, even within the same period, without any apparent effort. It has been said with truth that there are more immortal characters in one of his greatest plays than in all the

plays of his contemporaries taken together. When he took up the role of historiographer he not only revived the past, he recreated it ; and the lineaments of the historical personages that throng his gallery stand out with greater permanence than reality itself. So strong was the impress of his genius on national history that palpably false creations like his **Richard III** persist in defiance of historical research ; and a great critic, Froude, could aver: 'The most perfect English history which exists is to be found, in my opinion, in the historical plays of Shakespeare.' In addition to all this the felicity of his diction, imagery, and thought has made his plays the mightiest store-house of aphorisms in the English language. In short, we might apply to him the words, slightly modified, spoken by Enobarbus of Cleopatra: 'Age cannot wither nor custom stale *his* infinite variety'.



## Chapter 2

### *Did Shakespeare write with any moral purpose?*

The 18<sup>th</sup> c. lexicographer, Samuel Johnson, made the well known observations about Shakespeare's plays: 'his first fault is that to which may be imputed most of the evil in books or in men. *He sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct, that he seems to write without any moral purpose* ` {my italics}. (The Harvard Classics, *Preface to Shakespeare* paragraphs 1-40 Samuel Johnson, 1765).

One purpose that could be said with confidence to have engendered Shakespeare's plays and some poems was his need to make money. He seems to have chosen to work for the theatre but, when they were closed, because of the plague, or for political reasons, then he fell back on writing sonnets and other poems as a potential source of income. However, the essence of Johnson's criticism of Shakespeare's plays lacking moral purpose is revealed in just two of Johnson's words cited above:—'to instruct'. Johnson's criticism was aimed at the fact that he failed to find any evidence of Shakespeare's own moral purposes being presented in his instructions to his audience and readers. Johnson was looking for Shakespeare's polemic in his texts where Johnson expected to find Shakespeare instructing us over moral issues concerning human behaviour. In that sense of Johnson's criticism there can be no dispute; nowhere in any of Shakespeare's writings do we find that tendency towards pedagogy or proselytizing of his own moral or other opinions. But what we do find throughout Shakespeare's plays are many cases of his characters showing concern over moral and other issues that affect their lives; in that sense Shakespeare's plays are rich in moral purpose. That is something that only a thoughtful reading of, or familiarity with Shakespeare's texts can reveal. It seems obvious that the many moral issues that Shakespeare's created characters spoke about and worried over appear to have escaped the attention of Dr. Samuel Johnson. It seems appropriate to present here excerpts from a range of Shakespeare's plays that contain a variety of good examples of Shakespeare having written with a moral purpose but only as they appear in the spoken words of his actors who, in that sense, are the owners of the moral purposes.

**Authority, the law, justice, stability of the State, their impact on the individual; examples of moral purpose expressed in the voices of Shakespeare's created characters.**

**King Lear: Act 4 Sc 6 , lines 155-171 Arden Shakespeare 1965.** Lear, close to his death, speaks to the now blinded Gloucester:

**Lear:**

There thou  
might'st behold  
The great image of Authority:  
A dog's obey'd in office.  
Thou rascal beadle, hold thy bloody hand!

Why dost thou lash that whore? Strip thine own back;  
 Thou hotly lusts to use her in that kind  
 For which thou whipp'st her. The usurer hangs  
 the cozener.  
 Through tatter'd clothes small vices do appear;  
 Robes and furr'd gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold  
 And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks;  
 Arm it in rags, a pygmy's straw does pierce it.  
 None does offend, none, I say, none; I'll able 'em:  
 Take that of me my friend, who have the power  
 To seal th'accuser's lips. Get thee glass eyes;  
 And, like a scurvy politician, seem  
 To see the things thou dost not.  
*(Lear now distracted, loses his theme)*  
 Now, now, now, Now;  
 Pull off my boots; harder, harder; so.

*[Glossary: Beadle: a parish constable with powers to arrest whores and other criminals; Cozener: a fraudster; Glass eyes: Gloucester has no eyes, both having been ripped out by the Duke of Cornwall, husband of Regan].*

Lines 3 and 15 are observations by King Lear on the quality of Elizabethan political men; and they ring a familiar note, as Jan Kott (1964) might have observed, of the quality of some of the men who have entered politics in our own time. King Lear makes a general criticism by his expostulation 'a dog's obeyed in office', meaning that some men (and today including women) seek to hold office, not primarily because they wish to help society, nor because of their skilful judgements and, least of all perhaps, because of their honesty or reliability. No, it is the holding of office that gives the holder power, and power can be, and too often is, abused by its holder. The shameful corruption and stealing from the public purse by many members of the House of Commons in the British Parliament, shown up in recent years, is but one example. Then the simile at line 19 of a 'scurvy politician' is a truism widely noted: that politicians may not be trusted, and that their main ambition is too often self-advancement. Thus, in today's terms, 'a dog' and 'the scurvy' will support political party leaders, and the whips on behalf of ministers, with whom they might strongly disagree on moral, practical or other grounds. For seeking advancement in office what succeeds like sycophancy? Today that voice of King Lear, written about 1605, makes an echo in the offices of monarchical, parliamentary, or dictatorial administrations throughout Europe, the Middle East and beyond.

### **The Merchant of Venice: A plea for mercy to temper justice**

Portia, the advocate for Antonio, is pleading to Shylock (a Jewish money lender), in the High Court in Venice not to demand the taking of the life of Antonio, the merchant of Venice (who cannot now repay his loan) . The key to this speech and to the pleading by Portia resides in Portia's reply to the Jew who asks Portia why he should show mercy to Antonio. She tells the Jew it is because mercy blesses both the giver and recipient of mercy. Mercy is greatest when given by the most powerful, and it is this theme that occurs throughout Shakespeare in different guises, for example in Measure for Measure, The Tempest, Henry IV pt 2 where Falstaff is forgiven in the last scene, As

You Like It, Cymbeline, All's Well that Ends Well, Much Ado About Nothing , and in many other plays, mercy and forgiveness are prominent features. Now from this point onwards the speech is adventitious: it is not necessary to the story, nor for the characters to build up this theme by repeating it, by using what, in effect, is an extended variety of hendiadys. Kermode, in his book, *Shakespeare's Language* (2000), shows how Shakespeare often uses this figure of speech as an emphasis, and Portia is extending the use of the hendiadys to 22 lines, using it to argue the case for different examples of mercy needing to be shown by those with authority and power over others. Portia's use of hendiadys is a powerful tool in her pleading.

**Act 4 scene 1, lines 172-202 Arden Shakespeare 1965**

**Portia:**

Is your name Shylock?

**Shylock:**

Shylock is my name

**Port:**

Of a strange nature is the suit you follow,  
Yet in such rule, that the Venetian law  
Cannot impugn you as you do proceed.  
You stand within his danger, do you not?

**Ant:**

Ay, so he says.

**Port:**

Do you confess the bond?

**Ant:**

I do.

**Port:**

Then must the Jew be merciful.

**Shy:**

On what compulsion must I? Tell me that.

**Port:**

The quality of mercy is not strain'd,  
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven  
Upon the place beneath: it is twice blest,  
It blesseth him that gives, and him who takes,  
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest, it becomes  
The throned monarch better than his crown.  
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,  
The attribute to awe and majesty,  
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings:  
But mercy is above this sceptred sway,

It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,  
It is an attribute to God himself;  
The earthly power doth then show likest God's  
When mercy seasons justice: therefore Jew,  
Though justice be thy plea, consider this,  
That in the court of justice, none of us  
Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy,  
And that same prayer, doth teach us all to render  
The deeds of mercy. I have spoken thus much  
To mitigate the justice of my plea,  
Which if thou follow, this strict court of Venice  
Must needs give sentence 'gainst the merchant  
there.

And an apposite quotation from a somewhat unexpected source: **Titus Andronicus, Act 1, Scene 1, lines 116-120**, where Tamora uses Hendiadys.

**Tamora:**

Stain not thy tomb with blood:  
Wilt thou draw near the nature of the gods?  
Draw near them then in being merciful ;  
Sweet mercy is nobility's true badge:  
Thrice-noble Titus, spare my first born son.'

**Measure for Measure: The powerful in office denying mercy to the weak**

This play was written four years after *Hamlet* and is one in that group of nine remarkable, and all very different plays that Shakespeare wrote after *Hamlet*. The Italian scholar and novelist, Giuseppe di Lampedusa (1896-1957), who was a life-long student of English literature and history, having a wide and deep knowledge of European literature and history, regarded *Measure for Measure* as one of the greatest of Shakespeare's plays. He is reported by his biographer, David Gilmore ( in *The Last Leopard*, 1988 page 112), as saying that if all of Shakespeare's plays had to be destroyed except only one that he, Lampedusa, would choose to save *Measure for Measure* above all others of Shakespeare's works.

Let us now turn to this play, *Measure for Measure*, where we see a novice nun, Isabella, pleading for the life of her brother, Claudio, who has made pregnant his girl friend to whom he is legally engaged to be married. The new temporary governor of Vienna, Angelo, is a man of seemingly icy temperament, single minded, of narrow perspective, and obsessed to stamp out the 'sins' of fornication and adultery in Vienna while he is the governor of the city. Angelo has a reputation for not being interested in women, but he was once engaged to a girl, Mariana, whom he then jilted. The existing law in Vienna at this time punished men for fornication and adultery by death, however, this law had not been enacted for decades. These scenes between Angelo and Isabella deal with the issues of authority, the law and mercy for the offenders not able to defend themselves against the powerful ruler, Angelo. Angelo has already taken the decision to have the young Claudio executed for his sin of fornication. Here again we shall see the lack of mercy allied to the powerful will of Angelo, who wishes to satisfy his desire for what he claims is the need to activate the law against fornication by executing the weak

unprotected man, Claudio. But his acting and his reasoning suggest, that it is not so much his concern for the law against a sin committed by Claudio, that is driving Angelo to his decision, so much as Angelo's desire to show his power over the socially insignificant members of the population.

We can recall from the middle years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Judge Manningham Buller, renowned in the English courts for his exceptionally severe judgements, including the hanging of those found guilty of murder, some of whom, alas, were later found to have been innocent and some probably innocent. This judge's decisions on many charges were often regarded as unfair, so much so, that the newspapers of those days, gave him the sobriquet of Judge Bullying Manner. This Judge, Manningham-Buller, was also the subject of a book in which his career was severely criticised by Justice Patrick Devlin. Here we have a parallel example of one who could not resist using his 'power into will and will into appetite'.

Below is the dramatic part of the play where we see Angelo v Isabella and the great dialogue that ensues between these two actors:

**Act 2 Scene 2, lines 34-159 Arden Shakespeare 1965.**

**Angelo:**

.....Well: What is your suit?

**Isabella:**

There is a vice that mostly I do abhor,  
And most desire should meet the blow of justice;  
For which I would not plead, must that I must;  
For which I would not plead, but that I am  
At war 'twixt will and will not.

**Angelo:**

Well: the matter?

**Isabella:**

I have a brother is condemned to die;  
I do beseech you, let it be his fault,  
And not my brother.

**Provost:**

Heaven give thee moving graces!

**Angelo:**

Condemn the fault, and not the actor of it?  
Why, every fault's condemned ere it be done:  
Mine were the very cipher of a function  
To fine the faults, whose fine stands in record,  
And let go by the actor.

**Isabella:**

O just but severe law!

I had a brother, then: heaven keep your honour (*leaving the stage*)

**Lucio:** (*To Isab*)

Give't not o'er so. -To him again,  
Entreat him,  
Kneel down before him, hand upon his gown ;  
You are too cold. If you should need a pin,  
You could not with more tame a tongue desire it.  
To him, I say.

**Isabella:**

Must he needs die?

**Angelo:**

..... Maiden, no remedy.

**Isabella:**

Yes: I do think that you might pardon him,  
And neither heaven nor man grieve at the mercy.

**Angelo:**

I will not do't.

**Isabella:**

But can you if you would?

**Angelo:**

Look, what I will not, that I cannot do.

**Isabella:**

But might you do't and do the world no wrong,  
If so your heart were touch'd with that remorse  
As mine is to him?

**Angelo:**

He's sentenc'd, 'tis too late.

**Lucio:** (*to Isabel*)

You are too cold.

**Isabella:**

Too late? Why, no. I that do speak a word  
May call it again.—Well, believe this:  
No ceremony that to great ones longs,  
Nor the king's crown, nor the deputed sword,  
The marshal's truncheon, nor the judge's robe,  
Become them with one half so good a grace  
As mercy does.  
If he had been as you, and you as he,  
You would have slipp'd like him, but he like you

Would not have been so stern.

**Angelo:**

.....Pray you be gone.

**Isabella:**

I would to heaven I had your potency,  
And you were Isabel! Should it then be thus?  
No; I would tell what 'twere to be a judge,  
And what a prisoner.

**Lucio:** (*to Isabel*)

Ay, touch him: there's the vein,

**Angelo:**

Your brother is a forfeit of the law,  
And you but waste your words.

**Isabella:**

Alas, alas!  
Why, all the souls that were, were forfeit once,  
And He that might the vantage best have took  
Found out the remedy. How would you be  
If He, which is the top of judgment, should  
But judge you as you are? O, think on that,  
And mercy then will breathe within your lips,  
Like man made new.

**Angelo:**

Be you content, fair maid ;  
It is the law, not I, condemn your brother ;  
Were he my kinsman, brother, or my son,  
It should be thus with him. He must die tomorrow.

**Isabella:**

Tomorrow? O, that' sudden.  
Spare him, spare him!  
He's not prepared for death. Even for our kitchens  
We kill the fowl of season: shall we serve heaven  
With less respect than we do minister  
To our gross selves? Good, good my lord, bethink you:  
Who is it that hath died for this offence?  
There's many have committed it.

**Lucio:** (*to Isabel*)

..... Ay, well said.

**Angelo:**

The law hath not been dead, though it hath slept:  
Those many had not dar'd to do that evil

If the first that did th'edict infringe  
Had answer'd for his deed. Now 'tis awake,  
Takes note of what is done, and like a prophet  
Looks in a glass that shows what future evils,  
Either new, or by remissness new conceiv'd,  
And so in progress to be hatch'd and born,  
Are now to have no successive degrees,  
But ere they live, to end.

**Isabella:**

..... Yet show some pity.

**Angelo:**

I show it most of all when I show justice ;  
For then I pity those I do not know,  
Which a dismiss'd offence would after gall,  
And do him right that, answering one foul wrong,  
Lives not to act another. Be satisfied ;  
Your brother dies tomorrow ; be content.

**Isabella:**

So you must be the first that gives this sentence,  
And he, that suffers. O, it is excellent  
To have a giant's strength, but it is tyrannous  
To use it like a giant.

**Lucio:** (*to Isabel*)

That's well said.

**Isabella:**

Could great men thunder  
As Jove himself does, Jove would ne'er be quiet,  
For every pelting petty officer  
Would use his heaven for thunder ; nothing but thunder.  
Merciful heaven,  
Thou rather with thy sharp and sulphurous bolt  
Splits the unwedgeable and gnarled oak,  
Than the soft myrtle. But man, proud man,  
Dress'd in a little brief authority,  
Most ignorant of what he's most assur'd—  
His glassy essence—like an angry ape  
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven  
As makes the angels weep ; who, with our spleens,  
Would all themselves laugh mortal.

**Lucio:**(*to Isabel*)

O, to him, to him, wench! He will relent ;  
He's coming: I perceive't.

**Provost:** (*aside*)



Pray heaven she win him.

**Isabella:**

We cannot weigh our brother with ourself.  
Great men may jest with saints: 'tis wit in them,

**Lucio:** (*to Isabella*)

Thou'rt i th'right, girl ; more o' that.

**Isabella:**

That in a captain's but a choleric word,  
Which in the soldier is flat blasphemy.

**Lucio:** (*to Isabella*)

Art avis'd o' that? More on 't.

**Angelo:**

Why do you put these sayings upon me?

**Isabella:**

Because authority, though it err like others,  
Hath yet a kind of medicine in itself  
That skins the vice o'th'top. Go to your bosom,  
Knock there, and ask your heart what it doth know  
That's like my brother's fault. If it confess  
A natural guiltiness, such as is his,  
Let it not sound a thought upon your tongue  
Against my brother's life.

**Angelo:** (*aside*)

..... She speaks, and 'tis such sense.

**Isabella:**

Gentle my lord, turn back.

**Angelo:**

I will bethink me. Come again tomorrow.

**Isabella:**

Hark, how I'll bribe you: good my lord, turn back.

**Angelo:**

How! Bribe me?

**Isabella:**

Ay, with such gifts that heaven shall share with you.

**Lucio:** (*to Isabella*)

You had marr'd all else.

**Isabella:**

Not with fond sickles of the tested gold,  
Or stones, whose rate are either rich or poor  
As fancy values them: but with true prayers,  
That shall be up at heaven and enter there  
Ere sunrise: prayers from preserved souls,  
From fasting maids, whose minds are dedicate  
To nothing temporal.

**Angelo:**

..... Well: come to me tomorrow.

**Lucio:** (*to Isabel*)

Go to: 'tis well; away.

**Isabella:**

Heaven keep your honour safe.

**Angelo:** (*aside*)

..... Amen  
For I am that way going to temptation,  
Where prayer's cross'd.

We have witnessed in these scenes the ruthless desire of Angelo to wield power to the extent of wishing to execute a young man, Claudio, for fornicating with the girl he is engaged to marry. The powerful and well argued appeals for mercy by the novice nun Isabella, have failed, but we are suspicious that Angelo is beginning to lust after Isabella, whom he invites to come back to his office to discuss this matter again the next morning. This question of mercy being refused reminds us of the severity or even annulment of laws in the centuries that followed, long after Shakespeare had died. We are aware of hungry and desperately poor children having been severely punished for stealing a loaf of bread, and of the laws permitting the excessively long working hours of small children and young mothers in the mills and mines of England in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In Shakespeare's day Catholics who were caught saying their prayers or seeking to confess their sins were punishable by execution, as we saw from the Finnis and Martin interpretation of Shakespeare's poem *The Phoenix & Turtle*. Shakespeare's actors show us how the laws of Shakespeare's times could mean that without power or influence one could easily fall foul of the law. Perhaps it was one aspect of his life that placed him in some danger for writing historical and other plays and poems that might not be welcomed by those in power.

**Measure for Measure: How the great continue to deny justice to the weak**

**Act 2 Scene 4, lines 30-186 Arden Shakespeare 1965.**

Now we hear from Isabella who discovers when she returns the next morning to meet Angelo what is the price she must pay to authority (being the power & the universal wolf). With authority pretending to uphold the law and justice of the State, Isabella realises that any chance of her plea for mercy for her brother Claudio being pardoned will depend entirely on her giving up her virginity to Angelo's lust. This hypocrisy and

abuse of power reflects not just on society in Shakespeare's time but, it was seen in earlier times and it extended after 1604, when this play was written. Shakespeare has his actors entertain his audiences who were comprised of a very wide social range of the London population, and some foreign visitors. He showed them some realities of what happens when men get into power. The details of their behaviour has changed over the centuries, but how much has really changed since Shakespeare wrote?

**Angelo**

How now, fair maid?

**Isabella**

I am come to know your pleasure.

**Angelo** (*aside*)

That you might know it, would much better  
Please me,  
Than to demand what 'tis. -Your brother cannot live.

**Isabella**

Even so. Heaven keep your honour.

**Angelo**

Yet he may live a while ; and, it may be,

**Angelo**

As long as you or I; yet he must die.

**Isabella**

Under your sentence?

**Isabella**

When, I beseech you? That in his reprieve,  
Longer or shorter, he may be so fitted  
That his soul sicken not.

**Angelo**

Ha? Fie, these filthy vices! It were as good  
To, pardon him that hath from nature stolen  
A man already made, as to remit  
Their saucy sweetness that do coin heaven's image  
In stamps that are forbid. 'Tis all as easy  
Falsely to take away a life true made,  
As to put mettle in restrained means  
To make a false one.

**Isabel**

'Tis set down so in heaven, but not in earth.

**Angelo**

Say you so? Then I shall pose you quickly .  
Which had you rather, that the most just law  
Now took your brother's life ; or to redeem him,  
Give up your body to such sweet uncleanness  
As she that he hath stain'd?

**Isabel**

Sir, believe this:  
I had rather give my body than my soul.

**Angelo**

I talk not of your soul: our compell'd sins  
Stand more for number than for accompt.

**Isabel**

How say you?

**Angelo**

Nay, I'll not warrant that: for I can speak  
Against the thing I say. Answer to this:  
I---now the voice of the recorded law---  
Pronounce a sentence on your brother's life:  
Might there not be a charity in sin  
To save this brother's life?

**Isabel**

Please you to do't,  
I'll take it as a peril to my soul ;  
It is no sin at all, but charity.

**Angelo**

Pleas'd you to do't, at peril of your soul,  
Were equal poise of sin and charity.

**Isabel**

That I do beg his life, if it be sin,  
Heaven let me bear it ; you granting of my suit,  
If that be sin, I'll make it my morn prayer  
To have it added to the faults of mine,  
And nothing of your answer.

**Angelo**

Nay, but hear me ;  
Your sense pursues not mine: either you are ignorant,  
Or seem so, crafty ; and that's not good.

**Isabel**

Let me be ignorant, and in nothing good,  
But graciously to know I am no better.

**Angelo**

Thus wisdom wishes to appear most bright  
When it doth tax itself: as these black masks  
Proclaim an enciel'd beauty ten times louder  
Than beauty could, display'd. But mark me ;  
To be received plain, I'll speak more gross.  
Your brother is to die.

**Isabel**

So.

**Angelo**

And his offence is so, as it appears,  
Accountant to the law upon that pain.

**Isabel**

True

**Angelo**

Admit no other way to save his life--  
As I subscribe not that, nor any other,  
But in the loss of question--that you, his sister,  
Finding yourself desir'd of such a person  
Whose credit with the judge, or own great place,  
Could fetch your brother from the manacles  
Of the all-binding law ; and that there were  
No earthly mean to save him, but that either  
You must lay down the treasures of your body  
To this supposed, or else to let him suffer:  
What would you do?

**Isabel**

As much for my poor brother as for myself ;  
That is, were I under terms of death,  
Th'impression of keen whips I'd wear as rubies,  
And strip myself to death as to a bed  
That longing have been sick for, ere I'd yield  
My body up to shame.

**Angelo**

Then must your brother die.

**Isabel**

And 'twere the cheaper way.  
Better it were a brother died at once,  
Than that a sister, be redeeming him,  
Should die for ever.

**Angelo**

Were you not then as cruel as the sentence

That you have slander'd so?

**Isabel**

Ignominy in ransom and free pardon  
Are of two houses: lawful mercy  
Is nothing kin to foul redemption.

**Angelo**

You seem'd of late to make the law a tyrant,  
And rather prov'd the sliding of your brother  
A merriment than a vice.

**Isabel**

O pardon me, my lord ; it oft falls out  
To have what we would have, we speak not what  
We mean.  
I something do excuse the thing I hate  
For his advantage that I dearly love.

**Angelo**

We are all frail.

**Isabel**

Else let my brother die,  
If not a feodary but only he  
Owe and succeed thy weakness.

**Angelo**

Nay women are frail too.

**Isabel**

Ay, as the glasses where they view themselves,  
Which are as easy broke as they make forms.  
Women?—Help, heaven! men their creation mar  
In profiting by them. Nay, call us ten times frail;  
For we are soft as our complexions are,  
And credulous to false prints.

**Angelo**

I think it well ;  
And from this testimony of your own sex—  
Since I suppose we are made to be no stronger  
Than faults may shake our frames—let me be bold.  
I do arrest your words. Be that you are,  
That is, a woman ; if you be more, you're none.  
If you be one ---as you are well express'd  
By all external warrants—show it now,  
By putting on the destin'd livery.

**Isabel**

I have no tongue but one ; gentle my lord,  
Let me entreat you speak the former language.

**Angelo**

Plainly conceive, I love you.

**Isabel**

My brother did love Juliet,

**Angelo**

And you tell me that he shall die for't.  
He shall not, Isabel, if you give me love.

**Isabel**

I know your virtue hath a licence in't,  
Which seems a little fouler than it is,  
To pluck on others.

**Angelo**

Believe me, on my honour,  
My words express my purpose.

**Isabel**

Ha? Little honour, to be much believed,  
And most pernicious purpose! Seeming, seeming!  
I will proclaim thee, Angelo, look for't.  
Sign me a present pardon for my brother,  
Or with an outstretch'd throat I'll tell the world aloud  
What man thou art.

**Angelo**

Who will believe thee, Isabel?  
My unsoiled name, th'austereness of my life,  
My vouch against you, and my place i'th'state  
Will so your accusation outweigh,  
That you shall stifle in your own report,  
And smell of calumny. I have begun,  
For now I give my sensual race the rein:  
Fit they consent to my sharp appetite:  
Lay by all nicety and prolixious blushes  
That banish what they sue for. Redeem thy brother  
By yielding up thy body to my will ;  
Or else he must not only die the death,  
But thy unkindness shall his death draw out  
To ling'ring sufferance. Answer me tomorrow,  
Or by the affection that now guides me most,  
I'll prove a tyrant to him. As for you,  
Say what you can: my false o'erweighs your true.  
(*Angelo exits now*)

**Isabel:** (*alone*)

To whom should I complain? Did I tell this,  
Who would believe me? O perilous mouths,  
That bear in them one and self same tongue  
Either of condemnation or approval,  
Bidding the law make curtesy to their will,  
Hooking both right and wrong to th'appetite,  
To follow as it draws! I'll to my brother.  
Though he hath fall'n by prompture of the blood,  
Yet he hath in him such a mind of honour,  
That had he twenty heads to tender down  
Or twenty bloody blocks, he'd yield them up  
Before his sister should her body stoop  
To such abhor'd pollution.  
Then, Isabel live chaste, and brother, die:  
More than our brother is our chastity.  
I'll tell him yet of Angelo's request,  
And fit his mind to death, for his soul's rest.

**Troilus & Cressida: Shakespeare's actors show by discussion something of the power, value and judgement in human affairs**

This play involves debate about moral issues that have long been a concern. One such topic has revolved about authority and the individual. Ulysses in *Troilus and Cressida* makes long speeches on this subject, while Hector and Troilus dispute the question of individuals concerning the moral law and the nature of States (**Act 2, Scene 2, lines 8-97**). However, while Hector is thoughtful, mature, patient and fearful of disaster for Troy in face of the Greek armies landed on their coast, Troilus is young, passionate about fighting, love and honour. Their debate about honour and fame, are they merely about reputation or are they intrinsic to the individual citizen but subject to the influence of time (**Act 3, Scene 3, lines 145-174**)? The corrupting power of sexual lust is discussed in (**Act 4, Scene 4 lines 32-47**). The ways of sexual love, friendship and even love of god are, or can be, too often corroded or destroyed are discussed by Ulysses in (**Act 5, Scene 3, lines 165-180**).

The intellectual debates in *Troilus and Cressida* dominate the first part of the play. They weave in and out of the story as though they are intended to provoke the actors and the audience. Overall, it seems that in this polemical play, as usual, there is no pedagogy or proselytizing by Shakespeare of his own views and opinions. What we see and hear are the actors involved in a polemic, that ranges around the questions that have long concerned human gatherings that require decisions to be taken by the few for the majority.

It is impossible to know if Shakespeare wanted us, the audience, to reflect upon these issues that make up the story lines of intellectual themes that comprise the thrust of this play. Shakespeare's characters develop the moral debates while Shakespeare never preaches to us, so there is none of the proselytising that, for example, characterise discussions of social morality in the plays of Bernard Shaw. In Shakespeare the framework of themes serves as a mechanism that allows the debates to form an entertaining drama involving a wide range of strong and very different characters of men



and women that include Ulysses, Hector, Troilus, Pandarus, Thersites, Cassandra, Cressida, Achilles, Agamemnon and Ajax. The basis and quality of authority, and the dangers from those unqualified or otherwise unsuited to be so politically ambitious, relate to the stability of the State. All this reminds us that Jan Kott has already shown us that Shakespeare is our contemporary.

It also reminds us that Samuel Johnson considered that Shakespeare seems 'to write without any moral purpose'. It would appear that Dr. Johnson did not read *Troilus and Cressida* with sufficient attention to recognise the debates about moral purpose that characterise this play, perhaps, even more than any other that Shakespeare wrote.

**Act 1 Scene 3, line 101-135 Arden Shakespeare 1965.**

Ulysses talking to Agamemnon about the importance of acceptable authority:

O, when degree is shak'd,  
Which is the ladder of all high designs,  
The enterprise is sick. How could communities,

Degrees in schools, and brotherhoods in cities,  
Peaceful commerce from dividable shores,  
The primogenity and due of birth,  
Prerogative of age, crowns, sceptres, laurels,  
But by degree stand in authentic place?

.....  
And this neglect of degree it is  
That by a pace goes backward, with a purpose  
It hath to climb.

This speech finds an echo in the poem by W.B. Yates written some 321 years after Hamlet:

**W.B. Yates, *The Second Coming*, 1921, first stanza.**

Turning and turning in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer:  
Things fall apart: the centre cannot hold:  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned:  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.

**Hector arguing against Troilus, who is much younger and impetuous, that value should be determined on evidence and not just on opinion.**

**Act 2 Scene 2 lines 54-61 Arden Shakespeare 1965**

**Hector**

But value dwells not in particular will:

It holds his estimate and dignity  
As well wherein 'tis precious of itself  
As in the prizer. 'Tis mad idolatry  
To make the service greater than the god;  
And the will dotes that is attributive  
To what infectiously itself affects,  
Without some image of th'affected merit.

Then Ulysses talking to Agamemnon (**Act 1, Scene 3, lines 114-123**) speaks as though Shakespeare was thinking back to one of his earliest plays, *Richard III*, and one of those later great tragedies, such as *Macbeth*, where he showed clearly what can happen later when a man seeks to achieve his ambitions. Here is another potential consequence of stable political power being disrupted ; self-will grows into self-gratification, and Ulysses warns of this threat that he poses here:

Strength should be lord of imbecility,  
And the rude son should strike his father dead;  
Force should be right—or rather, right and wrong,  
Between whose endless jar justice resides,  
Should lose their names, and so should justice too.  
Then everything includes itself in power,  
Power into will, will into appetite,  
And appetite an universal wolf,  
So doubly seconded with will and power,  
Must make perforce an universal prey  
And last eat up himself.

This play is concerned about the need for political and thus social stability: here is Ulysses summarising some of his concerns to Agamemnon (**Act 1, Sc 3, L.109-114**):

Take but degree away, untune that string,  
And hark what discord follows. Each thing melts  
In mere oppugnancy ; the bounded waters  
Should lift their bosoms higher than the shores,  
And make a spooof of all this solid globe ;

Now moving from polemical *Troilus and Cressida* (categorised as a Comedy) to one of Shakespeare's great tragedies, *Macbeth*, written about the middle of the great burst of Shakespeare's creativity that began with *Hamlet* in 1600 and closed with the tragic Roman history play of *Coriolanus* in 1607. *Macbeth* is one of the bloodiest tragedies and it is also one that clearly reveals Shakespeare's negative capability . The following paragraph and the text of *Macbeth* illustrate the compassion that can be shown by Shakespeare's actors on their receiving a report of savage blood-letting violence.

**A scene of sorrow and compassion following savage blood-letting by those supporting the ambitious Macbeth who had the appetite of an universal wolf**

Here is a scene from one of Shakespeare's mature tragedies, *Macbeth*. Macduff and young Malcolm, have fled from Scotland to England in the hope of raising some

military support. Here they receive the news from Scotland, told to them by Rosse, that Macduff's castle has been surprised in his absence.

**Macbeth, Act 4, Scene 3 lines 201-219:**

**Rosse:**

Let not your ears despise my tongue for ever,  
Which shall possess them with the heaviest sound,  
That ever yet they heard.  
.....

**Rosse**

Your castle is surpris'd ; your wife and babes,  
Savagely slaughter'd: to relate the manner,  
Were, on the quarry of these murther'd deer  
To add the death of you.

**Malcolm**

Merciful Heaven!--  
What, man! ne'er pull your hat upon your brows;  
Give sorrow words; the grief, that does not speak,  
Whispers the o'er-fraught heart, and bids it break.

**Macduff**

My children too?

**Rosse**

Wife, children, servants, all  
That could be found.  
.....

**Macduff**

He has no children.--All my pretty ones?  
Did you say all? O Hell-kite!--All?  
What all my pretty chickens, and their dam,  
At one fell swoop?

**Power into will: the bloodshed associated with the ambitions of political men of all epochs.**

These 18 lines above recount the scene created by Macbeth, who had recently snatched political control of Scotland, and who then sent armed thugs to slaughter the unprotected wife and children of MacDuff, a potential rival. One has only to look at the death count of WW1 where military losses numbered over 8 million, and in WW2 where civilian deaths exceeded 27 million, while military losses were more than 14 million (data from *Europe a History* by Norman Davies, p.1328, O.U.P. 1996) to realise that what Shakespeare described happening in 11<sup>th</sup> century Scotland (Macbeth) and in the Wars of the Roses during the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries were equally bloody, but different in scale from great wars that affected all of Europe, and even more recently what has been happening in the Middle East. For example, a leading politician sent his

British armed forces to begin his war against Iraq from 2003-2008. The RAF was sent to drop high explosive bombs at night onto the houses of civilians in the suburbs of Baghdad where the families of ordinary Iraqi men, women and their children were killed or dreadfully maimed. The British politicians in parliament at this time made no attempt to consult the British people, who had already shown their strong objections to the proposal to begin this war, by their marching in their tens of thousands in the London streets. After that war, this leading British politician responsible for initiating it, stated publicly that he had 'no regrets' for making his war. Jan Kott in his *Shakespeare our Contemporary* (*The Kings*, pp.1-47, Polish Scientific Publishers, Warszawa, 1964) reminded us how politicians have behaved in our times. Brutal, barbarous politicians were shown to us by Shakespeare in seven of his plays. Shakespeare's character, Ulysses, in his play *Troilus and Cressida* (**Act 1, Scene 3, Lines 120-124**), described these political savages as those who are determined to take for themselves:

Power into will, will into appetite,  
And appetite, an universal wolf,  
So doubly seconded with will and power,  
Must make perforce an universal prey  
And last eat up himself.

Shakespeare's Macbeth does not express regrets over his brutal slaughter of Duncan, the King of Scotland, nor of his former close colleague in arms, Banquo, nor even of his own servants, and no regrets for ordering the vicious slaughter of MacDuff's family. The characters in Shakespeare's plays reveal that the initiating and employment of this barbarous behaviour is driven by their political ambitions because they expect to profit from wars and other violence in one way or another; that is what always engenders wars-It is '*power into will, will into appetite...*' The bloody savagery in the Roman play, Titus Andronicus, is not surpassed in any of Shakespeare's plays. Henry V against France, a war initiated by Henry and arguably unjustified; King Richard III who slaughtered any who stood in his way, until he himself was cut down in battle by the Earl of Richmond, who was then to become a responsible King Henry VII.

Richard II was deposed by the more skilful Bollingbroke who then had Richard II assassinated in prison. This list could fill pages. For example, even Hamlet involves seven violent deaths: Rosencrantz & Guildenstern were executed, Hamlet's father by Hamlet's uncle slain, and the play ends with the poisoning of the Queen, the stabbing of Claudius, and then both Hamlet and Laertes die from a poisoned rapier. All these violent deaths in Shakespeare's plays are linked in one way or another to political ambition, in the same way as are the wars reported in our daily newspapers in the second millennium. Of course, there are other factors that have played a part.

### **The Phoenix and Turtle**

An unusual poem by Shakespeare, that he called *The Phoenix and Turtle*, was published by Robert Chester in 1601 under Shakespeare's name in a book of poems titled '*Loves Martyr*'. Other writers with poems in this book included Ben Jonson, John Marston and George Chapman. Shakespeare's poem is the shortest in the book. It is based around the story of the mythical female bird, the Phoenix, and the male Turtle Dove. The ancient story involves the two birds dying together in a funeral pyre.

John Finnis and Patrick Martin, published their interpretation of the meaning of this poem in the pages 12-14 of the T.L.S. on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2003. It was received with considerable interest by scholars and common readers alike. Later, in 2007, Katherine Duncan-Jones & H.R. Woudhuysen, in their third series of *Shakespeare's Poems* (The Arden Shakespeare), pointed out (p.93) that the Finnis and Martin interpretation of this poem had already been suggested by Clara Longworth, Comtesse de Chambrun in 1935. But even more interesting was their alternative explanation of the meaning of this poem that appears to have been deliberately obscured by Shakespeare. The case presented by Katherine Duncan-Jones and H.R. Woudhuysen is that the author may have intended the Phoenix to represent Queen Elizabeth and Turtle is Sir John Salusbury 'in the specific context of the 1601 Parliament' from which Salusbury was excluded. They argue that this view allows the meaning of the Phoenix and Turtle together with the other poems in the volume of *Love's Martyr* to be better understood.

Whatever interpretation is put on this poem it would be difficult to deny that suffering and sadness are not part of the author's meaning. For the purpose only of illustrating the most cruel and horrific events that occurred in Elizabeth's reign, that happen to be part of the Finnis and Martin interpretation, is their view of the poem set out here. In the unlikely case that it is ever proved that the author's meaning was close to the Finnis and Martin interpretation of this poem, it would be an example of Shakespeare's moral purpose; just as it would also reveal his courage in having published this poem, that implies such strong criticism of the brutality of Elizabeth's judiciary, and of this well educated and obviously intelligent and cultivated Queen, who must have been aware of these barbaric executions carried out in her name.

According to the Finnis and Martin interpretation, Shakespeare takes the ancient myth of *The Phoenix and Turtle* to commemorate a most brutal and horrific execution at Tyburn. This was a triple gallows set up in Queen Elizabeth's time for public executions. It was on these gallows on a freezing cold February 27 in 1601 that a small group of Catholics were executed, after having been discovered by the Queen's spies, celebrating their religious duties in deep secret, because that was then prohibited by the laws of Queen Elizabeth's Protestant England. The details of the trial and execution are documented. Finnis and Martin consider that the principal cause for this poem to be written was the especially vicious execution of Mrs Anne Line and her Catholic friends who are recalled in this powerful and beautiful poem that is filled with hidden references, puns and allusions; all carefully designed by Shakespeare to disguise the meaning of the poem to all except a probably small circle of Catholics. The reference to the execution of Catholics for their faith—Mrs Anne Line being such an example referred to obliquely in Shakespeare's sonnet 124, lines 13-14. The careful obfuscation of Mrs Line's name in the poem seems likely to have been intended by Shakespeare to hide it from authority.

This small group of harmless people were taken to Tyburn without any warm clothing against the freezing cold. They were all hanged, Anne Line being first. The two priests in the group had their bowels cut out and burned before they themselves were cut down from the gallows, when each was then hacked into four pieces. The writing of this poem is thought by some to reveal something of the intense wounding of the spirit of William Shakespeare, who was taking a considerable risk in having this poem published, albeit in a somewhat inconspicuous book, and with deliberate obfuscation of the language of this poem. That kind of risk taking would be exceptional in that Shakespeare seems to

have led a very careful life. He usually avoided upsetting the authorities or naming people who might have caused trouble. The two authors of the interpretation of this poem, Finnis and Martin, if correct, means that it was written close to the time when Shakespeare's group of players put on a special performance of *Richard II*, that shows this King being driven from his throne, deposed and assassinated by Bolingbroke who thus became King Henry IV. This performance of the play took place in London at the special request of the Earl of Essex and his political supporters shortly before their abortive rebellion against the Queen Elizabeth. Shakespeare and his fellow actors were questioned by the authorities about the reasons for their putting on this particular play for one performance for the politically active Earl of Essex, at this sensitive time. It is reported that the actors were not eventually prosecuted.

All the stanzas of the first two parts of this poem have four lines each. The first part has five Stanzas followed by the 'Anthem' having 8 stanzas.. The third and last group that is called the 'Threnos' has 5 stanzas.

*The Phoenix and Turtle* is printed here with commentary on the first five stanzas being taken from the article published by Finis and Martin, 2003, other commentaries have been added for the other stanzas.

Let the bird of loudest lay  
On the sole Arabian Tree  
Herald sad and trumpet be,  
To whose sound chaste wings obey.

Bird may refer to the catholic musician William Byrd whose anthem on martyrdom would have been known to the Line group and some of his music was played along the freezing cold route to their execution at Tyburn. Sole Arabian tree is the Palm- symbolic for Christian martyrs; Chaste may be a pun on the political pursuit of these Catholics. For trumpet: see John I. i. 27.

But thou shrieking harbinger,  
Foul procurer of the fiend,  
Augur of the fever's end,  
To this troop come thou not near.

Reference to the cruel Judge at Anne's trial, Sir John Popham.

From this session interdict  
Every fowl of tyrant wing,  
Save the eagle, feather'd king ;  
Keep the obsequy so strict.

May refer to heraldry of the Earl of Worcester, whose escutcheon included an eagle; he was a senior Catholic at Court and thus invited to Anne's obsequies.

Let the priest in surplice white,  
That defunctive music can,  
Be the death-divining swan,  
Lest the requiem lack his right.

Father Page was dressed in a white surplice when caught by Protestant spies. The swan may relate to the mute swan that sings before a death: the Candlemas not having taken place the ceremony lacked the 'rite' but the requiem would function in a 'right' way.

And thou treble-dated crow,  
That thy sable gender mak'st  
With the breath thou giv'st and tak'st,  
'Mongst our mourners shalt thou go.

The treble-dated crow was Father Garnet, a Jesuit dressed in black who supported this Catholic group. The myth is that crows reproduce sexually by the mouth ; sable gender implies black offspring. It may also imply that Father Garnet was comforting the mourners as he moved amongst them.

### **Anthem**

Here the anthem doth commence:  
Love and constancy is dead;  
Phoenix and Turtle fled  
In a mutual flame from hence.

The first of the next 8 verses of the 'Anthem' commemorates the nature of the persons of the Phoenix and Turtle who have fled, in other words who are now dead. They had love and constancy. The two persons are Roger Line and Anne Line who though married promised to remain celibate.

So they lov'd, as love in twain  
Had the essence but in one:  
Two distincts, division none;  
Number there in love was slain.

Roger and Anne were a couple but though separated physically were as one person in the love of each other and of God, so much so that these two people were like one person.

Hearts remote, yet not asunder ;  
Distance and no space was seen  
'Twixt this Turtle and his queen  
But in them it were a wonder.

Definition of a line that occupies no space but is indicated by distance between its two ends is displayed by Roger and Anne who while separated they were so close and thus they corresponded to a Euclidian line, thus Anne & Roger 'Line'.

So between them love did shine  
That the Turtle saw his right  
Flaming in the Phoenix's sight:  
Either was the other's mine.

The Turtle's (Roger's) marriage rights were fulfilled symbolically by the metaphorical flames that he shared with his celibate Phoenix bride. The richness of their union is compared with that of a gold mine . ( Shakespeare's pun on 'mine').

Property was thus appalled  
That the self was not the same:  
Single nature's double name  
Neither two nor one was called

Their mutually wished celibate married love meant that the importance of self, as in sexually active marriages, did not exist for Roger and Anne; (their passion was not seeking orgasms) but as they were two different people who were united, Nature had to close with this agreement they had made together and thus Nature had to accept their duality was a union.

Reason in itself confounded,  
Saw division grow together,  
To themselves yet either neither,  
Simple were so well compounded:

This stanza reinforces the previous stanza's emphasis on the overriding importance of the unity of their love which was above reasoning because reason was confused by their being two people who made a celibate unity of married love.

That it cried, 'How true a twain  
Seemeth this concordant one;  
Love hath reason, reason none,  
If what parts can so remain.'

This stanza reinforces the power of love in this celibate marriage where sexual congress, which can engender selfishness, is absent from this harmonious union, where their love of God was as great as their married celibate love. This could not have been achieved if they had been selfish in any way.

Whereupon it made this Threne  
To the Phoenix and the Dove,  
Co-supremes and stars of love,  
As Chorus to their tragic scene.

This last stanza of the Anthem indicates the tragedy that was the destruction of their holy and loving lives by driving Roger out of England to die in France, starving and ill, and the hideously brutal and unjustified execution of Anne Line at Tyburn.

The Threnos being the last five stanzas of the poem have each only 3 lines, all the stanzas of the earlier parts of this poem have four lines. Thus in the Threnos we have lost a line; that is the symbol of having lost Anne Line by execution.



## Threnos

Beauty, truth and rarity  
Grace in all simplicity,  
Here enclosed in cinders lie.

The reference to cinders may be linked to an urn or cinders that was reported present at the commemoration when the ashes from the palms from the previous year were distributed on Ash Wednesday. That would require that Easter was early that year.

Death is now the Phoenix' nest,  
And the Turtle's loyal breast  
To eternity doth rest;

Leaving no posterity:  
T'was not their infirmity,  
It was married chastity.

Truth may seem but cannot be;  
Beauty brag, but 'tis not she;  
Truth and beauty buried be.

To this urn let those repair  
That are either true or fair:  
For these dead birds sigh a prayer.



## Chapter 3

### *Four linked themes dominate the play of Hamlet*

Four linked themes dominate Hamlet: Hamlet's revulsion from lust without love, his associated periods of depression, his thoughts of suicide and his shame at not assassinating his uncle Claudius as he had promised his father's ghost.

William Shakespeare, to judge from his writings, and that may not be a reliable guide to his own feelings and senses, seems to have been much disturbed by lust (and that is not to deny that lust may disturb quite a lot of people). He also appears to have been conscious of the natural and instinctive concupiscence of some women (Lady Anne in Richard III, Queen Gertrude in Hamlet, Goneril in King Lear, to give but three examples). It has been pointed out that Shakespeare's marriage in 1583 to Anne Hathaway, when he was only 18, a woman eight years his senior, seems to have taken place after it was obvious that she was pregnant with his child. Moreover, indications that he was in love with another local girl of his own age at this time have been mooted on the basis of some evidence (*Will in the World*, by Stephen Greenblatt, Jonathan Cape, 2004). However, there are other opinions of these events, and some take the view that this marriage may not have been forced on Shakespeare in this way, and that, quite the contrary, it was welcomed on both sides (*Shakespeare* by Peter Ackroyd, Chatto & Windus, 2005). The location and mode of life of Shakespeare from about 1584 to 1592 remains uncertain. It seems that he left his Stratford home in the mid-late 1580's, after the birth of his three children, Susanna in 1583 and the twins Hamnet & Judith in 1585, a view that seems to be widely held, and that he then moved to London, leaving his wife and children in Stratford. That suggests that Shakespeare's affections for his wife were not strong, especially as he appears to have stayed in London working and returned to Stratford only about once a year according to Aubrey (cf. *Aubrey's Brief Lives*, Ed: Oliver Lawson-Dick, Mandarin Paperback 1992), until about the last few years of his life when he retired to his Stratford home. There is no firm evidence of Shakespeare having other amorous activities, but considerable speculation that they occurred. The sonnets Nos: 127 to 154 are all addressed to a woman and strongly suggest amorous or just lustful affairs with this or perhaps several women. Some sonnets, including numbers 137, 153 and 154, suggest that the man involved may have contracted sexual disease from one or more women who are described in the sonnets as promiscuous. Most of the sonnets addressed to the 'dark woman' are unflattering in their description of her and suggest that she was promiscuous. Sonnet 129, in this last series of 28 sonnets is presented in a strongly worded account as the man involved experienced a sexual encounter of lust without love. None of the 28 sonnets in this sequence, addressed to a dark woman, seem to imply loving affection between the woman and man. Katherine Duncan Jones (*Shakespeare's Sonnets*, Ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones, The Arden Shakespeare 1997) suggests, the relationship between this couple, seems to have been no more than a 'sexual convenience' for the man involved. The presence of Sonnet 129 so early in this last sequence of 28 sonnets lends support to this interpretation for it is followed by 24 sonnets of the sequence of mostly lecherous 28 sonnets discussed above. However, we still cannot assume that the man

involved in these sexual encounters was definitely Shakespeare. There remains no certainty about his sexual life.

King Lear, written about 1605, in showing bitter thoughts about lust suggests they may have been still troubling Shakespeare, but that may not have been so, perhaps it was his writing of creative drama that called forth these images and metaphors from him, and they may not, perhaps, in any way reflect on the author's personal life.

**Lear Act 4, Scene 4, line 114-5:**

The wren goes to 't, and the small gilded fly  
Does lecher in my sight

**Samuel Johnson's criticism of Shakespeare's lack of moral purpose; and the significance of Shakespeare's avoidance of the very different drama that could have resulted from Gertrude's adultery instead of her marriage with Claudius.**

Today, we might think that Samuel Johnson's view of the lack of moral purpose in Shakespeare's work resulted from insufficient understanding by Johnson of Shakespeare's methodology. For Shakespeare excluded the proselytizing and pedagogy Johnson probably expected, for that would have allowed the author, if he had left Gertrude as a widow who succumbed to the advances of Claudius, then Hamlet could then have lectured his mother against adultery. Adultery was in late Tudor times a sin that Shakespeare could have spoken against with a pedagogical intent. Instead, by marrying Gertrude off so quickly to Claudius, who had murdered her husband (although Gertrude is shown as having no knowledge of that until much later when Hamlet told her of it), the speeches Shakespeare gave Hamlet rail against his mother's legitimate enjoyment of her sexual excitement with the newly married husband. There is no proselytizing or pedagogy here. Hamlet does not seem to be moved by any Christian morality. Hamlet tells his mother that she is too old to be in love (**Act 3, Scene 4, lines 69-71**: '..... *You cannot call it love; for at your age // The heyday of the blood is tame, it's humble, // And waits upon the judgement,...*'), Hamlet indicates that his mother can only be experiencing sexual lust with her husband. Sexual congress that is only lust Shakespeare presents as revolting in his sonnet 129 that appears to have been written about 1600, close to the time that he wrote Hamlet.

An example of moral purpose that is present in this play is the evil displayed in the character and behaviour of King Claudius, the evil in the two former school friends of Hamlet, namely Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who betrayed Hamlet with the intention of ensuring that he would be assassinated in England. These evil characters were discovered and killed long before Hamlet is killed at the very end of the play. The moral decency is displayed by Hamlet, his friend Horatio, the ghost of Hamlet's father, and Ophelia, (to whom he was unkind at times) while Gertrude is also guiltless of evil. Ophelia is a good character who suffers a very early death and seems to be one of life's losers. Laertes and Hamlet appear to also be decent people who lose out in life. This summary reflects Shakespeare's 'negative capability' for, in real life, unconnected with dramatic works of art, some good die young and there is nowhere any sign of Nature's bias in taking care of the good rather than those who are evil. There is a notable absence from sentimentality in the works of Shakespeare.

Now we go to the end of Act I when Hamlet meets his father's ghost (**Act 1, Scene 5 lines 42-57**) who revealed to his son, Hamlet, that he had been killed by Claudius who lusted after Gertrude. The details of lust, between his uncle and mother prompted Hamlet's horror of this lust, and led on to the main events of the play and resulted in Hamlet's depression. Here is the exchange of words between Hamlet and his father's ghost (**Act I, Sc. V. 39-52**).

**Ghost:**

The serpent that did sting thy father's life  
Now wears his crown.

**Hamlet:**

O my prophetic soul! My uncle!

**Ghost:**

Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast,  
With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts—  
O wicked wit, and gifts that have the power  
So to seduce!—won to his shameful lust  
The will of my most seeming-virtuous queen.  
O Hamlet, what a falling off was there,  
From me, whose love was of that dignity  
That it went hand in hand even with the vow  
I made to her in marriage, and to decline  
Upon a wretch whose natural gifts were poor  
To those of mine.  
But virtue, as it never will be mov'd,  
Though lewdness court it in a shape of heaven,  
So lust, though to a radiant angel link'd,  
Will sate itself in a celestial bed  
And prey on garbage.

Now we return to an earlier Scene of Act 1 before Hamlet had been told how Claudius died.

Hamlet realises that his position as next to the throne has been weakened, notwithstanding Claudius reminding Hamlet of his being next in line '*for let the world take note, you are the most immediate to out throne*' (**Act I, Scene 2, Lines 108-109**). There is no clear evidence that Hamlet broods on this and it does not appear to become an issue in Hamlet's mind. Instead four dominating themes are closely linked in the play: Hamlet's revulsion against sexual lust, his moods of depression and thoughts of suicide that run throughout most of the play, and then his hesitation and consequent shame to avenge his father's death.

These four linked themes begin to appear in **Act 1 Scene 2, line 129**, before Hamlet knows that his uncle killed his father. Hamlet shows his profound and lasting grief over the premature death of his father, described by King Claudius as Hamlet's "obsequious sorrow".

'O that this too too sullied flesh would melt,

Thaw and resolve itself into a dew,  
Or that the Everlasting has not fix'd  
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter. O God! God!  
How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable  
Seem to me all the uses of this world!

He reveals his profound grief and his horror at his mother's hasty marriage. After another 11 lines of this speech Hamlet breaks out in line 146 into:

'..... , Frailty, thy name is woman—  
A little month, or ere those shoes were old  
With which she follow'd my poor father's body  
Like Niobe, all tears--- why, she—  
O God, a beast that wants discourse of reason  
Would have mourned longer—married with my uncle  
My father's brother—but no more like my father  
Than I to Hercules.....'

This speech continues only to end with these last three powerful lines that portend what tragedies are to follow: **(Act I, Sc. II, 155-158)**.

'She married—O most wicked speed! To post  
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!  
It is not, nor it cannot come to good.'

At this early stage in the play Hamlet is not yet aware that his father was murdered by Claudius, now king and married to Hamlet's widowed mother. Hamlet is revolted by his mother's sexual desire for her new husband, and Hamlet breaks off his loving friendship with Ophelia to whom he also speaks out against sexual intercourse. These themes seem to be closely linked to the last 28 sonnets, where Shakespeare has a man expressing revulsion towards sexual lust, and in particular where this man in these late sonnets expresses sexual desire for a woman with whom he does not seem to share loving affections, and whom he claims is promiscuous and sexually diseased. This provokes two linked questions: can we suppose that these sexual activities were written by Shakespeare solely to entertain his playgoers and readers of his sonnets; because there is no way of knowing whether they suggest, or even indicate, that Shakespeare is revealing something of his own personal experiences?

Katherine Duncan-Jones in the Introduction to her Arden Shakespeare volume of *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1997, page 1) points out that two from the last 28 sonnets, viz., Nos: 138 and 144 were first published in 1599 (in *The Passionate Pilgrim*). That suggests that these and perhaps some or many of the other 'dark woman' sonnets in the 127 to 154 sequence, were likely to have been written in the same general period of time as Hamlet. Harold Jenkins, in his edited edition of the Arden Shakespeare of Hamlet (1982), with reference to the date of when the play Hamlet was written, noted that 'A date between the middle of 1599 and the end of 1601 appears thus beyond dispute'.

There are several indications that about this time Shakespeare might have been disturbed by sexual desires. Anthony Burgess, in his discussion of 'the main facts about

the life and society from which the poems and plays arose' (*Shakespeare*, Penguin Books 1972) suggested that Shakespeare found he had need for mutual loving affections to be part of any sexual congress. But we might take a look, at this stage, at the well known sonnet 116 that, to the writer of this book, seems to present the very different kind of love that can exist between friends without involving any sexual behaviour.

Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
Admit impediments; love is not love  
Which alters where it alteration finds,  
Or bends with the remover to remove.  
O no, it is an ever-fixed mark,  
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;  
It is the star to every wand'ring bark,  
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.  
Love's not times fool, though rosy lips and cheeks  
Within his bending sickle's compass come;  
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,  
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.  
If this be error and upon me proved,  
I never writ, not no man ever loved.

One is aware that some scholars take a view of this poem that was intended to mean, something very different from the unsophisticated view offered here. In her compendious volume (*The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, Harvard University Press, 1997) Helen Vendler wrote: 'This famous almost "impersonal" sonnet on the marriage of true minds has usually been read as a definition of true love. That is, most readers decide to see the poem (guided by its beginning) as an example of the genre of definition, and this initial genre-decision generates their interpretation. Let me begin by saying that I read this poem as an example not of definition but of dramatic refutation or rebuttal.'

This sonnet claims that 'love is not love which alters where it alteration finds,'. The first line speaks of 'the marriage of true minds'. This emphasis on 'true' could imply chastity that avoids adultery, but with sexual activity within the marriage that may be implied by line 9. We should bear in mind that sonnet 116 is well within the group of sonnets that are thought by scholars (*Shakespeare's Sonnets* Edited by Katherine Duncan-Jones, Arden Shakespeare, pp 342-343, Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd, 1997) to be concerned with Shakespeare's writing about a young man and friend. But a marriage of true minds could mean a couple living without any sexual love making. A marriage of a couple who have made love but never outside the marriage and who remain together until death would seem to be the most obvious subject of this sonnet. But it could also imply chastity in a marriage of friends without any sexual congress, and that could mean a marriage of minds between two of the same sex .

**The difference between sexual love and a loving friendship with someone of the same sex is shown by Shakespeare's characters in an example discussed below.**

It is perhaps the appropriate place to recall now that a man has always been able to say in English that he loves his friend, who is a man, without it having any overt homosexual

implications. Many people in the past, and today, have been aware that friendship between two men, as between two women, has long been a treasured experience in life. Life without loving friendships with people of the same sex, that is never linked to any kind of sexual activity or desire whatsoever, is an impoverished life. To claim this does not exist is either nonsense, pretence or a serious limitation of one's experience. Some might wish to remind us of the four words in the Greek language that clearly differentiate sexual love from other kinds of affection.

An English language example that serves well to illustrate the use of the word love between two men without any sexual connotation is this description of a battle scene by English soldiers in Shakespeare's play *Henry V*, **Act 4, Scene 6, lines 30-33**: The battle of Agincourt over, King Henry is questioning the Duke of Exeter about his section of the battlefield: The Duke of Exeter describes to the King how he saw the Duke of York wounded on the field, where he then died with the Earl of Suffolk.

**Exeter:** (*The Duke of York seeing the Earl of Suffolk lying with blood on his face called to him*):

“.....Tarry, my cousin Suffolk!  
My soul shall thine keep company to heaven;  
Tarry, sweet soul, for mine, then fly abreast,  
As in this glorious and well-foughten field  
We kept together in our chivalry!”  
Upon these words I came and cheer'd him up;  
He smil'd me in the face, raught me his hand,  
And, with feeble gripe, says, “Dear my lord,  
Commend my service to my sovereign”.  
So did he turn, and over Suffolk's neck  
He threw his wounded arm, and kiss'd his lips;  
And so espous'd to death, with blood he seal'd  
A testament of noble-ending love.  
The pretty and sweet manner of it forc'd  
Those waters from me which I would have stopp'd;  
But I had not so much man in me,  
And all my mother came into mine eyes  
And gave me up to tears.’

This quotation from *Henry V* is intruded here into the discussion of friendship between men to illustrate the principle by an example used by Shakespeare.

To return now to the study of Shakespeare's work: we can also note the uninhibited and very frequent use of bawdy language, sexual references and sexual jokes of all kinds throughout Shakespeare's plays and poems (Partridge, *Shakespeare's Bawdy*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968). We cannot deduce whether this bawdy finds such wide use in Shakespeare's plays only because his audiences and readers enjoy and are entertained by it, and, or because it gives the appropriate colour to certain scenes and particular speeches and exchanges, or thirdly, perhaps, because Shakespeare's mind was so often engaged by bawdy and sexual reference.

We can digress here to consider briefly how poets can confuse us where they chose not to declare their position or intent, using the example of the 17<sup>th</sup> century metaphysical



poet, Andrew Marvell (1621-1678) who wrote a well known poem published in 1681, that he had entitled, *The Definition of Love*, from which some stanzas are selected here to illustrate ambiguity and even perhaps something more deliberate, obfuscation.

My love is of a birth as rare  
As 'tis for object strange and high:  
It was begotten by despair  
Upon impossibility.

Magnanimous Despair alone  
Could show me so divine a thing,  
Where feeble Hope could ne'r have flown  
But vainly flapt its Tinsel Wing.

For Fate with jealous Eye does see,  
Two perfect Loves; nor lets them close:  
Their union would her ruin be,  
And her Tyrannick pow'r depose

As lines so Loves *oblique* may well  
Themselves in every Angle greet:  
But ours so truly Parallel,  
Though infinite can never meet.

Therefore the love which us doth bind,  
But Fate so enviously debars,  
Is the Conjunction of the Mind,  
And Opposition of the Stars

This poem could have at least six notably different meanings: it could concern a couple unable to love because they were separated by having very different social status; it could mean one partner was married and unwilling to break that marriage, it could refer to a homosexual love that could not be sanctified, it could be no more than the author deliberately being ambiguous in order to display his metaphysical skills, it could also mean the author was just writing to entertain his readers without reference to any real love being involved. This poem is cited as the double meanings and obscurities could almost be Shakespearean were it not for the particular metaphysical aspects and the structure of the verse rhythms and forms.

To return to our author, Shakespeare: there is no evidence that he took a mistress in place of his wife, during his 20 years or so in London lodgings, and there is not a hint that he sired a bastard in London. Neither is there any indication that he wished to have his wife to visit him there, although again there is an absence of evidence either way. Shakespeare seems to have been regarded as having an amiable temperament, he avoided difficulties of all kind with others, and especially with authorities, there is a tradition that he was not a heavy drinker, quite the opposite, and was of a generally quiet and gentle manner (William Shakespeare In *Aubrey's Brief Lives*, Ed., Oliver Lawson-Dick, Mandarin Paperback 1949, pp.275-276). The best known portrait of Shakespeare is the Droeshout engraving, printed in the First Folio in 1623 is entitled 'gentle Shakespeare', and the D.N.B.(O.U.P., 1998, Vol XVII, pp.1323-1236)

describes him as ‘amiable’, and the comments of his rival and friend Ben Jonson in the First Folio are that he was ‘gentle’. All this would seem to suggest that this was indeed his behaviour and his temperament. There is not a single report of him being involved in any show of physical violence or inebriation. Such a well known man was not involved in any show of physical violence or inebriation even though he was perforce often in the surroundings of the Globe Theatre with its bear baiting, cock fighting and brothels, yet no unseemly report against him has been found.

Shakespeare indicates in his sonnet 129 (see below) how lust can be revolting. Bearing in mind the absence of any overt homosexual desires revealed in his sonnets, and noting that the sonnets from 127 to the last 154 are all addressed to a woman, many of which are not flattering, so much so that they might even be taken to suggest sexual disillusionment or disdain with concupiscent women. Did he then perhaps become infected with sexual diseases? There is no documented clear evidence of this, but it might be taken by some as being implied in sonnets 147, 150, 152, 153 & 154.

Furthermore, Hamlet’s strong language and passionate objections to what Hamlet perceives as his mother’s lust, and his behaviour in the scene with his mother, Gertrude, (**Act 3, Scene 4, Lines 7-190**) are similar in tone to Shakespeare’s lines in Sonnet 129. There is evidence that Shakespeare may have lived in lodgings for most of his life in London (*Shakespeare the biography*, by Peter Ackroyd, Chatto & Windus, 2005 ). It is interesting to note here Shakespeare’s adventitious comment in **Henry V, Act 1, Scene 2, lines 271-272:**

‘.....as ‘tis ever common  
That men are merriest when they are from home.’

It is difficult to know how to treat this observation, especially as Shakespeare must have been very well aware and conscious of this; thus it did not require much reflection, as he is believed to have lived a large part of his London life in lodgings.

The speech by Prince Hamlet shows that he views his mother as having married Claudius in such a haste after her husband was dead, and that it must have only been her lust for Claudius that drove her to it. But Hamlet also makes clear that Claudius is such a poor specimen by comparison with Hamlet’s father, so her lust for Claudius is difficult to understand. Was this written in a hurry and not carefully proof read?

This is another example in Shakespeare’s writing in the 1599-1601 period where he shows revulsion against sexual congress driven only by lust and without love. What can we make of it? Is it just to entertain the audience and his readers, or to unburden his own troubled mind brimming over with the consequences of his years of celibate, lonely life in lodgings, or a sexual disease burdening him, that he now transfers to his character, Hamlet? We have no documentation, no letters of any kind, nothing to help us identify whether any of Hamlet’s revulsion was shared to any extent by his author, Shakespeare.

Moreover, Claudius and Gertrude, two principal characters created by Shakespeare, appear to have strong affections for each other. This leaves in the minds of the audience and readers a sense that Gertrude’s lust and affections for Claudius may not have dimmed. Is Shakespeare intending to leave his audience with the sense that

Hamlet is revolted by, or disapproving of, women driven by their sexual excitement for a particular man based only on lust? One can, recall the scene from **King Lear (Act 4, Scene 2, lines 26-28)** where Goneril addresses Edmund, who has become her lover, as:

‘My most dear Gloucester.’

*(Edmund then leaves the stage, when she adds a very brief soliloquy in his absence)*

‘ Oh! the difference of man and man.

To thee a woman’s services are due:

A fool usurps my bed.’

Sexual attraction like this is powerful, and Gertrude, Hamlet’s mother, had been shown to us, the audience, as having experienced this with Claudius, as Hamlet, the other key player in this scene created by Shakespeare, recognised. An important aspect of Hamlet’s behaviour, that may possibly also reflect Shakespeare’s own troubles, are the repeated expressions by Hamlet of his being depressed, and his recurrent contemplations of suicide, that also seem to be linked at least partly with his revulsion from sexual lust. In the first of these speeches and discussions, Hamlet talks of suicide and of his disillusionment with the world, **Act 1, Scene 2, lines 129-158**. That speech occurs before his first encounter with the ghost of his father, from whom he learns of his father’s murder. However, one explanation of Hamlet’s behaviour at this moment might be that Shakespeare, when he came to write this speech, had forgotten that Hamlet had not yet learned from the ghost of his father that his uncle had murdered his father. That only affects the timing of this speech, not the cause of the depression that continues to be a feature of Hamlet throughout the play.

**(Act 1, Sc 2, 129-158) Hamlet’s soliloquy:**

O that this too, too sullied flesh would melt,  
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew,  
Or that the Everlasting had not fix’d  
His canon ‘gainst self-slaughter. O God! God!  
How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable  
Seem to me all the uses of this world!  
Fie on’t, ah fie; ‘tis an unweeded garden  
That grows to seed ; things rank and gross in nature  
Possess it merely. That it should come to this!  
But two months dead—nay, not so much, not two—  
So excellent a king, that was to this  
Hyperion to a satyr, so loving to my mother  
That he might not betem 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 ; --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—  
O God, a beast would have mourn’d longer—married with my uncle,  
My father’s brother—but no more like my father

Than I to Hercules. Within a month,  
Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears  
Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,  
She married—O most wicked speed! To post  
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!  
It is not, nor it cannot come to good.  
But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue.

Then a little later in **Act 1, Scene 4, lines 23-38**, Hamlet speaking to Horatio, with Marcellus present, the three of them on the battlements of Elsinore Castle, Hamlet makes another important speech:

So, oft it chances in particular men  
That for some vicious mole of nature in them,  
As in their birth, wherein they are not guilty  
(Since nature cannot choose her origin),  
By their o'ergrowth of some complexion,  
Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason,  
Or by some habit, that too much o'erleavens  
The form of plausive manners—that these men,  
Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,  
Being Nature's livery or Fortune's star,  
His virtues else, be they as pure as grace,  
As infinite as man may undergo,  
Shall in the general censure take corruption  
From that particular fault. The dram of evil  
Doth all the noble substance often dout  
To his own scandal.

One can note the three descriptions of fundamental weaknesses in men, identified by Hamlet: 'The vicious mole of nature in them'; 'the 'o'ergrowth of some complexion, oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason'; and 'some habit, that too much o'erleavens the form of plausive manners'; they are all categorised by Hamlet as being 'the stamp of one defect'. Are these intended to identify Hamlet's own weaknesses, or those 'perhaps' of a person unidentified, or are they just a general observation that he makes to his friend Horatio, who, incidentally, does not comment?

Not long after this speech, and still in **Act 1, but now Scene 5, lines 92 -112**, Hamlet is left alone after his discussion with the ghost of his father who leaves Hamlet on the battlements of Elsinore. We now hear the onset of yet another cause for Hamlet's depression, in this soliloquy:

O all you host of heaven! O earth! What else?  
And shall I couple hell? O fie, Hold, hold, my heart,  
And you my sinews; grown not instant old,  
But bear me stiffly up. Remember thee?  
Ay, thou poor ghost, whiles memory holds a seat  
In this distracted globe. Remember thee?  
Yea, from the table of my memory  
I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,

All saws of books, all forms; all pressures past  
That youth and observation copied there,  
And they commandment all alone shall live  
Within the book and volume of my brain,  
Unmix'd with baser matter. Yes, by heaven!  
O most pernicious woman!  
O villain, villain, smiling damned villain!  
My tables. Meet it is I set it down  
That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain---  
At least I am sure it may be so in Denmark.  
So, uncle there you are. Now to my word.  
It is 'Adieu, adieu, remember me.'  
I have sworn't.

Hamlet is now deeply concerned by his father having been murdered by Claudius. Moreover, Hamlet is now more than ever inflamed against his mother: **Act 2, Scene 2 lines 222-251**. We see Hamlet's encounter with Rosencrantz & Guildenstern, and we hear Hamlet's further expression of his being depressed by living in Denmark, and there are signs of his disenchantment with women. Both comments emerge in his chatter, about mixed vulgarities and about women, with these two former school-fellows. We can note that Hamlet speaks to them both almost entirely in questions after their formal greetings. The impression is that Hamlet is not giving much away to these two men.

**Guild**

My honoured lord.

**Rosen**

My most dear lord.

**Ham.**

My excellent good friends. How dost thou, Guildenstern?

Ah, Rosencrantz.

Good lads, how do you both?

**Rosen**

As the indifferent children of the earth.

**Guild**

Happy in that we are not over-happy:

On Fortune's cap we are not the very button.

**Ham**

Nor the soles of her shoe?

**Rosen**

Neither my lord.

**Ham**

Then you live about her waist, or in the middle of her favours?

**Guild**  
Faith her privates we.

**Ham**  
In the secret parts of Fortune?  
O most true; she is a strumpet.  
What news?

**Rosen**  
None my lord, but the world's grown honest.

**Ham**  
Then is doomsday near. But your news is not true.  
Let me question you more in particular.  
What have you my good friends, deserved at the hands of Fortune that she  
sends you to prison hither?

**Guild**  
Prison, my lord?

**Ham**  
Denmark's a prison.

**Rosen**  
Then is the world one.

**Ham**  
A goodly one, in which there are many confines, wards and dungeons,  
Denmark being one o'th' worst.

**Rosen**  
We think not so, my lord.

**Ham**  
Why, then 'tis none to you; for there is nothing either good or bad but thinking  
makes it so. To me it is a prison.

This is a serious and philosophical point that Hamlet makes, and the chatter remains serious. Not long after this exchange, it reveals Hamlet making a confession to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern of his depressed state of mind (**Act 2, Scene 2, lines 295-310**; see also discussion on later in this book). We obviously note that Shakespeare creates this condensed speech by Hamlet in prose. There are now no flippancies in these prose statements by Hamlet., until 'Man delights not me....'. Shakespeare seems to want us to comprehend the importance of this speech at this particular juncture in his play where he grips the attention of the audience with this.

**Hamlet**  
'.....I have of late, but wherefore I know not, lost all my mirth,  
foregone all custom of exercises; and indeed it goes so heavily with my

disposition that this goodly frame the earth seems to me a sterile promontory, this most excellent canopy the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why it appeareth nothing to me but a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god: the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals---and yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust. Man delights not me--nor woman neither, though by your smiling you seem to say so.'

The only explanations that seem to accommodate this speech by Hamlet are either that Hamlet is intending to impress both Rosencrantz and Guildenstern with his state of depression, or he is aiming to embarrass them both by his pointing out how splendid and decent can some men and women be, but alas, too many of them behave badly and are disappointing.

It is not long before we see Hamlet alone again on the stage in **Act 3, Scene 1, lines 56-89** where he makes his famous soliloquy that surprisingly is not about his need to kill his uncle, that we might have expected from him, it is almost entirely taken up by his questions concerning suicide, that he is obviously now contemplating.

#### Hamlet

To be, or not to be, that is the question:  
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles  
And by opposing end them. To die--to sleep,  
No more ; and by that sleep to say we end  
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks  
That flesh is heir to: 'tis a consummation  
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep ;  
To sleep, perchance to dream--ay, there's the rub:  
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,  
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,  
Must give us pause--there's the respect  
That makes calamity of so long life.  
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,  
Th'oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,  
The pangs of dispriz'd love, the law's delay,  
The insolence of office, and the spurns  
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,  
When he himself might his quietus make  
With a bare bodkin? Who would fardels bear,  
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,  
But that the dread of something after death,  
The undiscover'd country, from whose bourn  
No traveller returns, puzzles the will,  
And makes us rather bear those ills we have  
Than fly to others that we know not of?  
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,

And thus the native hue of resolution  
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,  
And enterprises of great pitch and moment  
With this regard their current turn awry  
And lose the name of action. Soft you now,  
The fair Ophelia! Nymph in thy orisons  
Be all my sins remember'd.

This speech ends when he notices Ophelia who is at her prayers. Now for the first time Hamlet speaks to her in a cold manner, and asks her to remember all his sins in her prayers for forgiveness. He knows that the King and Polonius are hidden and listening to their conversation.

Ophelia, shocked by Hamlet's coldness, replies politely but Hamlet continues to speak to her in this cold, detached way. In this same **Scene 1 of Act 3, lines 90 to 151** Hamlet speaks to her in such a hurtful manner, telling her that she should go to a nunnery and ending his speech to her by telling her she should never get married, and repeating his insistence that she should enter a nunnery. All this profoundly upsets her, for Hamlet had given her good reasons for thinking he loved her.

Ophelia is greatly surprised, and shocked, so very hurt by Hamlet's behaviour and his most cruel and unexpected words to her. Hamlet having left the stage, Ophelia now makes her moving soliloquy in a state of shock, almost in collapse: **Act 3, Sc.1, 152-**

O, what a mind is here o'erthrown!  
The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's eye, tongue, sword  
Th'expectancy and rose of the fair state,  
The glass of fashion and the mould of form,  
The observed of all observers, quite, quite down!  
And I of ladies most deject and wretched,  
That sucked the honey of his music vows,  
Now see that noble and most sovereign reason  
Like sweet bells jangled out of tune and harsh,  
That unmatch'd form and feature of blown youth  
Blasted with ecstasy. O woe is me  
T'have seen what I have seen, see what I see.

The next time they meet is in the following **Act 3, Scene 2, lines 110-117** where the courtiers are gathering with the King and Queen to see the play arranged by Hamlet that he called 'The Mousetrap'. Here, Hamlet has suddenly swung back into his friendly manner towards Ophelia, publicly showing his favours towards her, by insisting that he should sit next to her. But there he makes some bawdy jokes that seem to be in poor taste, bearing in mind the presence of the King and Queen and Ophelia's father. Furthermore, Ophelia is a well-born young virgin so that such bawdy and in such a public place is not to be expected. Here is the exchange between them:

**Hamlet**

Lady, shall I lie in your lap?

**Ophelia**



No, my lord.

**Hamlet**

I mean, my head upon your lap.

**Ophelia**

Ay, my lord.

**Hamlet**

Do you think I meant country matters?

**Ophelia**

I think nothing, my lord

**Hamlet**

That's a fair thought to lie between a maid's legs.

**Hamlet**

Then makes even more vulgar sexual suggestions, and she rebukes him for it.

Now, the play, 'The Mousetrap', begins.

This upsetting of Ophelia with sexual innuendos in such a public place may be no more than Shakespeare's dramatic invention for entertaining the crowds at The Globe. But it might be a consequence of Shakespeare's own life experiences at the time of writing. His creation, Prince Hamlet, seems to be going through a period where he is pre-occupied by sexual matters. The play Hamlet and the Sonnet 129 seem likely to have been written about the same time, and not very far from the time when he was writing the other sexually charged sonnets in sequence of the last 28. Was Shakespeare in a sexually troubled stage of life where he was frustrated by lacking a loving woman as Antony Burgess had suggested? It is impossible to say. Here, despite these indications of the possibility of Shakespeare suffering a sexual turmoil, that could have resulted from several different causes, we cannot find any clear indication of his state of mind nor of his purpose in writing as he did.

Certainly Shakespeare's sonnet 129 (see below) and Hamlet's scene with his mother (Hamlet, **Act 3, scene 4, lines 7-190**) are both indicating a profound revulsion from sexual intercourse that seems to be based upon lust without love. For Hamlet emphasises that he cannot imagine his mother being in love with Claudius, as the following lines make clear:

**Hamlet's torment over his mother's sexuality seen in Hamlet's meeting his mother, at her bidding, in her bedroom.**

**Hamlet**

Now, mother, what's the matter?

**Queen**

Hamlet, thou has thy father much offended.

**Hamlet**

Mother, you have my father much offended.

**Queen**

Come, come you answer with an idle tongue.

**Hamlet**

Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue.

**Queen**

Why, how now, Hamlet?

**Hamlet**

What's the matter now?

**Queen**

Have you forgot me?

**Hamlet**

No, by the rood, not so.  
You are the Queen, your husband's brother's wife,  
And, would it were not so, you are my mother.

**Queen**

Nay, then I'll set those to you that can speak.

**Hamlet**

Come, come, and sit you down, you shall not budge.  
You go not till I set you up a glass  
Where you may see the inmost part of you.

**Queen**

What wilt thou do? Thou wilt not murder me?  
Help, ho!

**Polonius**

What ho! Help! (Polonius is hidden behind a curtain)

**Hamlet**

How now, A rat! Dead for a ducat, dead. (thrusts rapier thro curtain)

**Polonius**

O, I am slain.

**Queen**

O what a rash and bloody deed is this!

**Hamlet**

A bloody deed. Almost as bad, good mother,  
As kill a king and marry with his brother.

**Queen**

As kill a king?

**Hamlet**

Ay, lady, it was my word--  
Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell.  
I took thee for thy better. Take thy fortune:  
Thou find'st to be too busy is some danger.--  
Leave wringing of your hands. Peace, sit you down,  
And let me wring your heart ; for so I shall  
If it be made of penetrable stuff,  
If damned custom have not braz'd it so,  
That it be proof and bulwark against sense.

This scene of Hamlet in the queen's bedroom can be judged almost as adventitious, except that it is made so powerful because of the dramatic poetry and Hamlet's behaviour towards his mother. His mother's replies, in fine lines of the same kind of structured poetry that are balanced with Hamlet's, but his are masculine and filled with anger, her behaviour is feminine, in the sense that they are weaker and largely submissive responses to her son's strong criticisms and accusations. The erotic flow of language is polarised from Hamlet to his mother. Hamlet's strongly worded criticism of his mother's sexual desire and behaviour with her husband, King Claudius, and the submissive replies from Gertrude contrast with the forceful argument and accusation from her son. It is such an emotional scene where the language and physical movements involve Hamlet in forcing his mother to look into a glass that he holds in front of her with such force that she is frightened. It is almost an erotic choreography of the son with his mother. This scene, played by these two actors, has a very dramatic effect in the theatre (**Act 3, Scene 4, Lines 38-103**):

**Queen**

What have I done, that you dar'st wag thy tongue  
In noise so rude against me?

**Hamlet**

.....Such an act  
That blurs the grace of modesty,  
Calls virtue hypocrite, takes off the rose  
From the fair forehead of an innocent love  
And sets a blister there, makes marriage vows  
As false as dicers' oaths—O, such a deed  
As from the body of contraction plucks  
The very soul, and sweet religion makes  
A rhapsody of words. Heaven's face does glow  
O'er this solidity and compound mass  
With trustful visage; as against the doom,  
Is thought-sick at the act

If that were not powerful enough a caution and discredit against her second husband, King Claudius, her princely son in condemning and more, in scolding castigation of, and warning to, his mother in middle age, her son now continues with more precise

detailing of her husband's failings and grievous faults. Hamlet makes a comparison between his father and what Hamlet presents as a rotten specimen that now shares with her, what had been her loyal, unstained and honourable bed.

**Queen**

Ay me, what act  
That roars so loud and thunders in the index?

**Hamlet** continues:

Look here upon this picture, and on this,  
The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.  
See what a grace was seated on this brow,  
Hyperion's curls, the front of Jove himself,  
An eye like Mars to threaten and command,  
A station like the herald Mercury  
New-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill,  
A combination and a form indeed  
Where every god did seem to set his seal  
To give the world assurance of a man.  
This was your husband. Look what follows.  
Here is your husband, like a mildew'd ear  
Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes?  
Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed  
And batten on this moor? Ha, have you eyes?  
You cannot call it love; for at your age  
The heyday in the blood is tame, it's humble,  
And waits upon judgment, and what judgment  
Would step from this to this? Sense sure you have,  
Else could you not have motion; but sure that sense  
Is apoplex'd for madness would not err  
Nor sense to extacy was ne'er so thrall'd  
But it reserved some quantity of choice  
To serve in such a difference. What devil was't  
That thus hath cozen'd you at hoodman-blind?  
Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight,  
Ears without hands or eyes, smelling sans all,  
Or but a sickly part of one true sense  
Could not so mope. O shame, where is thy blush?  
Rebellious hell,  
If thou canst mutine in a matron's bones,  
To flaming youth let virtue be as wax  
And melt in her own fire; proclaim no shame  
When compulsive ardour gives the charge,  
Since frost itself as actively doth burn  
And reason panders will.

.....

**Queen**

O Hamlet, speak no more.  
Thou turn'st my eyes into my very soul,  
And there I see such black and grained spots

As will not leave their tinct.

**Hamlet**

Nay, but to live  
In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed,  
Stew'd in corruption, honeying and making love  
Over the nasty sty!

**Queen**

O speak to me no more.  
These words like daggers enter in my ears  
No more, sweet Hamlet.

**Hamlet**

A murderer and a villain,  
A slave that is not twentieth part of the tithe  
Of your precedent lord, a vice of kings  
A cutpurse of the empire and the rule,  
That from the shelf the precious diadem stole  
And put it in his pocket---

**Queen**

No more.

**Hamlet**

A king o shreds and patches---

Here the ghost of Hamlet's father enters, talks with Hamlet, reminding Hamlet that he has a duty to kill his uncle. The Ghost departs leaving Hamlet with his mother in her bedroom, (**Act 3, Scene 4, lines 158-190**):

**Queen**

O Hamlet, thou has cleft my heart in twain.

**Hamlet**

O throw away the worser part of it  
And live the purer with the other half.  
Good night. But go not to my uncle's bed.  
Assume a virtue if you have it not.  
That monster, custom, who all sense doth eat  
Of habits evil, is an angel yet in this,  
That to the use of actions fair and good  
He likewise gives a frock or livery  
That aptly is put on. Refrain tonight,  
And that shall lend a kind of easiness  
To the next abstinence, the next more easy ;  
For use almost can change the stamp of nature,  
And either lodge the devil or throw him out  
With wondrous potency. Once more, good night,  
And when you are desirous to be blest,

I'll blessing beg of you. ....  
.....  
One word more, good lady.

**Queen**

What shall I do?

**Hamlet**

Not this, by no means, that I bid you do:  
Let the bloat king tempt you again to bed,  
Pinch wanton on your cheek, call you his mouse,  
And let him for a pair of reechy kisses,  
Or paddling in your neck with his damn'd fingers,  
Make you ravel all this matter out  
That I essentially am not in madness,  
But mad in craft.

Now compare the language, the details of the sexual behaviour, the passion, and the vocabulary displayed in this sonnet, so like Hamlet's language to his mother in her bedroom that we have just witnessed:

**Sonnet 129**

The expense of spirit\* in a waste\* \* of shame  
Is lust in action ; and till action, lust  
Is perjured, murd'rous, bloody, full of blame,  
Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust ;  
Enjoy'd no sooner but despised straight ;  
Past reason hunted ; and no sooner had,  
Past reason hated, as a swallow'd bait,  
On purpose laid to make the taker mad:  
Mad in pursuit, and in possession so ;  
Had, having, and in quest to have, extreme ;  
A bliss in proof, and proved, a very woe ;  
Before, a joy proposed ; behind, a dream.  
All this the world well knows ; yet none knows well  
To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell.

[*Glossary*: (note Shakespeare's pun on waste and waist); \* spirit = semen, \* \* waste = waist, being the narrow passage of the female genitals].

All this may be no more than Shakespeare's dramatic invention for entertaining the crowds at The Globe, but it could perhaps be Shakespeare's own life experiences that he was trying consciously or unconsciously to purge from his memory or his mind. They seem to come together at this time in Shakespeare's life when he may have been stressed with sexual problems such as venereal disease. Whatever was driving this extremely powerful play and the sexually charged last sonnets they are obviously very personal. They are emotional as we view them on the stage or as we read them. Deepening our dilemma, we have Hamlet's speech to his close friend, Horatio, that includes these focussed and pertinent lines ( **Act 3, Scene 2, lines 57-87**):

.....Give me that man  
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him  
In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart,  
As I do thee.

### **Appalling consequences of the King's lust for the young woman, Anne Bollen, in Shakespeare's penultimate play: Henry VIII**

It seems likely that Shakespeare had been forced to wait many years before writing the last historical play that closed his sequence on the Wars of the Roses and especially the house of Tudor. The reason is obvious. There were laws preventing the publication of English history. Moreover, the mortal moon (aka Queen Elizabeth I) was on her throne when Shakespeare came of age as an author. The greatest monarch that ever graced England's throne was not likely to allow such a modest citizen, as was William Shakespeare, to write a play focussed on the life of her ruthless and brutal father. She knew who had driven Catholicism out of England; who had torn down and wrecked great architectural monuments in the process, and who had destroyed an efficient poor law that fed the destitute. No play of William Shakespeare's was going to be allowed to remind the London public of the horrendous problems associated with that earlier Tudor monarch, her father Henry VIII.

*The mortal moon hath her eclipse endured*, as Shakespeare (in Sonnet 107) termed the death of the Queen in 1603. Nine years later in 1612 Shakespeare wrote his play Henry VIII. It has had a mixed reception on the 'review shambles', as John Keats termed the experience that authors have to endure. Whatever views others may have of this play, the writer of this book regards it as brilliant, powerful and of making profound use of four great historical characters for whom Shakespeare wrote with great understanding: King Henry VIII, Cardinal Wolsey, who had become the Chancellor of England, and the Archbishop of Canterbury in the person of Cranmer, as well as a woman of great spirit, the Spanish Princess and Henry's Queen, Katherine of Aragon. What a wonderful finish to his astonishing career and life is this powerful and deeply moving play about the broad spectrum of life at the top. Four years later, in April 1616, aged 52, Shakespeare was dead.

Only four years or less, after King Henry had been able to enjoy opportunities to satisfy his lust with Anne Bollen, that lust for her had begun to fade, and then it turned to hate because he wanted rid of her, and planning how to achieve that as quickly as possible in order to enjoy another must have irritated him considerably. Here, if ever, in these cruel lines that represent disenchantment beyond measure, we take from Shakespeare's sonnet 129; it was indeed a case where every line tells it as it was found by the lascivious King Henry.

Enjoyed no sooner but Surpris'd straight;  
Past reason hunted ; and no sooner had,  
Past reason hated, as a swallow'd bait  
On purpose laid to make the taker mad ;

For comparison, here is a sonnet written by the Jesuit priest, Gerard Manley Hopkins, 1844-1889; it was written between 1876-1889. It has been chosen because it has a similar style of prosody to Shakespeare's great sonnet 129, and because it is also partly

concerned with the author's suffering from his tortured feelings of lust (in Hopkins' case for strong handsome young men) that, for him, his desires were not just unrequited they remained untried. By strong contrast Shakespeare's sonnet struggles with the torment of the experience of '*lust in action*', perhaps because it was love that was also unrequited, and for him love that does not fulfil his desire for loving kindness, instead it is lust that fails both the heart and mind. Hopkins' poem is also included here because both men were great masters of the English language, and both experimenters with it. This sonnet, like Shakespeare's, was conceived in passion, but Hopkins' poem is more complex as it ranges over the various sources of love that tormented him too, none of which are requited, and even the sight of Nature, that he loved, is a source of torment by reminding him of his sterility. Worse, his own God, he suggests in this poem, seems to have at least partly abandoned him.

Thou art in deed just, Lord, if I contend  
 With thee ; but, sir, so what I plead is just.  
 Why do sinner's ways prosper? and why must  
 Disappointment all I endeavour end?  
 Wert thou my enemy, O thou my friend,  
 How would'st thou worse, I wonder, than thou dost  
 Defeat, thwart me? Oh, the sots and thralls of lust  
 Do in spare hours more thrive than that I spend,  
 Sir, life upon thy cause. See, banks and brakes  
 Now, leavèd how thick! lacèd they are again  
 With fretty chervil, look, and fresh wind shakes  
 Them ; birds build—but not I build ; no, but strain,  
 Time's eunuch, and not breed one work that wakes.  
 Mine, O thou lord of life, send my roots rain.

Hopkins' poem reveals his horror of sexual lust that troubled him, it seems, perhaps for the lack of any shared experience of a joyous physical union, or for its being forbidden by his Jesuit rules. Shakespeare's disillusionment and revulsion was caused by his bitter disappointment of the experience of sexual congress associated only with lust. Shakespeare seems to have found that lust takes but does not give the happy, thrilling union associated with two loving hearts that so desire to give pleasure and joy to one's lover. That was something of which we can assume Hopkins had no experience. But it seems probable that Shakespeare knew the shared joyous union of love as well as the cold, loveless misery associated with the repellent ending of a congress that was only lust.



## Chapter 4

### *Cruelty, courage, compassion, dignity, forgiveness and magnanimity shown by Shakespeare's characters.*

Here is the scene where Queen Katherine has to defend herself not just against the King but against the whole of his judiciary, and from the Papacy, represented by Cardinal Campeius, drawn up against her and under the powerful demands of the King. She has been summoned to appear before the Court. Is it not obvious that Shakespeare expects his audience and readers to be moved with sympathy towards the Queen in her vulnerable plight?

**Henry VIII Act 2 Sc 4, opening line to line 54, Arden Shakespeare 1965, (present: *The King, Cardinal Wolsey, Cardinal Campeius, & Queen Katherine.*)**

**Wolsey**

Whilst our commission from Rome is read,  
Let silence be commanded.

**King**

What's the need?  
It hath already publicly been read,  
And on all sides th'authority allow'd ;  
You may then spare the time.

**Wolsey**

Be't so ; proceed.

**Scribe**

Say, Henry, King of England, come into the court.

**Crier**

Henry King of England

**Scribe**

Katherine Queen of England

**Katherine**

*(kneels at the feet of the King Henry VIII)*  
Sir, I desire you do me right and justice,  
And to bestow your pity on me ; for  
I am a most poor woman, and a stranger,  
Born out of your dominions: having here  
No judge indifferent, not no more assurance

Of equal friendship and proceeding. Alas sir,  
 In what way have I offended you? What cause  
 Hath my behaviour given to your displeasure,  
 That thus you should proceed to put me off,  
 And take your good grace from me? Heaven witness,  
 I have been to you a true and humble wife,  
 At all times to your will conformable,  
 Even in fear to kindle your dislike,  
 Yea, subject to your countenance, glad or sorry  
 As I saw it inclin'd. When was the hour  
 I ever contradicted your desire  
 Or made it not mine too? Or which of your friends  
 Have I not strove to love, although I knew  
 He were mine enemy? What friend of mine,  
 That had to him deriv'd your anger, did I  
 Continue in my liking? nay, gave notice  
 He was from hence discharg'd? Sir, call to mind  
 That I have been your wife in this obedience  
 Upward of twenty years, and have been blest  
 With many children by you. If in the course  
 And process of this time you can report,  
 And prove it too, against my honour aught,  
 My bond to wedlock, or my love and duty  
 Against your sacred person ; in God's name  
 Turn me away, and let the foul'st contempt  
 Shut door upon me, and so give me up  
 To the sharp'st kind of justice. Please you, sir,  
 The king your father was reputed for  
 A prince most prudent, of an excellent  
 And unmatched wit and judgement: Ferdinand  
 My father, King of Spain, was reckon'd one  
 The wisest prince that there had reign'd by many  
 A year before. It is not to be question'd  
 That they had gather'd a wise council to them  
 Of every realm, that did debate this business,  
 Who deem'd our marriage lawful: wherefore I  
 Humbly beseech you sir, to spare me till I may  
 Be by my friends in Spain advis'd whose counsel  
 I will implore. If not, i'th' name of God  
 Your pleasure be fulfill'd.

Then later in the play, Cardinal Wolsey, who has been the universal wolf for over 15 years when, as lord Chancellor of England, he enriched himself with millions, in today's money. Wolsey's deceits greatly exceed those of members in recent British Administrations, who deceived not only the House of Commons, but also the British people. But unlike so many with power in, for example, the British House of Commons today, Wolsey had many compatriots killed while he was in power.

William Blake (1788-1824) commented on the relative and temporary power of the great in authority:

For a tear is an intellectual thing,  
And a sigh is the sword of an Angel King,  
And the bitter groan of the Martyr's woe,  
Is an arrow from the Almighty's Bow.

The hand of vengeance found the Bed  
To which the Purple Tyrant fled ;  
The iron hand crushed the Tyrant's head  
And became a Tyrant in his stead.

The dramatised Granada version of Paul Scott's '*Raj Quartet*' revealed the violence during the division of Pakistan from India in 1946; outcome of the political ambitions of Jinnah for separation. It was evident that Scott had sympathy for the terrible sufferings of both Hindus and Moslems, whose mutual slaughter followed (see *The Natural History of Aggression*, Eds, J.D. Carthy & F.J.Ebling. Academic Press 1964).

When we watch the scene in **Act 4, Sc 5, lines 77-83** of Hamlet, where Ophelia has been shocked and hurt into a deep distress, so that the cruel, vicious King Claudius is drawn unexpectedly to show compassion and even tenderness (an example of Keats' discovery of Shakespeare's negative capability) when Claudius says to his Queen:

**King**

.....'O Gertrude, Gertrude,  
When sorrows come, they come not single spies,  
But in battalions. First her father slain ;  
Next, your son gone, and he most violent author  
Of his own just remove; .....

Watching or reading this do we not recognise that Shakespeare had shown his character, Claudius, having compassion and tenderness towards such suffering? Can we doubt that he is expressing these emotions because he felt them for his invented characters. Who has not shed tears watching the middle section of **Act 2 Scene 1** of **Verdi's *La Traviata***? Remember the great climax of Violetta's distress when she could no longer cling to hope, for she had given all she had:

**Violetta**

Ah! Dite alla giovane, si bella e pura  
Ch'avvi una vittima, della sventura  
Cui resta un unico, raggio di bene—  
Che a lei il sacrifice—e che morrà!

**Germont**

Piangi, pinagi, o misera. Supremo, il veggo,  
E il sacrifizio—che ora tichieggo.  
Sento nell, anima--già le tue pene ;  
Coraggio--e il nobil tuo cor vincerà  
Ed il cor vincerà.

**Violetta**

Morro! la mia memoria

Non fia ch'ei maledica:  
Se le mie pene orribili  
Vi sia chi almen almen gli dica .

Verdi must have been fully conscious of the powerful feelings of grief and sympathy with Violetta that his music and Piave's libretto would create in members of the audience at this scene. Was that not those authors' intentions, their creation? It was, but it was not pedagogical nor proselytizing. We can find other examples in Shakespeare:

About 1596 or even a little later, in the play, *King John*, we have a most apposite comparison with the Romance plays, for in *King John*, the wife of the King's nephew, Constance, whose son, Arthur, died because of agents of the King. This bears comparison with the grief caused by the supposed loss by *Pericles* of his daughter, Marina, and the supposed loss of his daughter, Imogen, by the King *Cymbeline*. It differs, of course, by the accident to the young Arthur, Constance's son. This is Constance's speech on the death of her son that includes her riveting question in the last line before the break indicated by pecked lines included here. Does not Shakespeare show by moving us in sympathy with Constance how he views such grief, not unlike the loss of his own son, Hamnet, at a similar age?

**Act 3, Scene 3, lines.93-105:**

Grief fills the room up of my absent child,  
Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me,  
Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,  
Remembers me of all his gracious parts,  
Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form;  
Then have I reason to be fond of grief?

.....  
O Lord! my boy, my Arthur, my fair son!  
My life, my joy, my food, my all the world!  
My widow-comfort, and my sorrow' cure!

We shall see later the comparison with this fullness of grief in the concentrated, brief, distillation into fewer words in the prosody of the Romances.

In that same year 1596 we have *The Merchant of Venice*. Here is the opening lines of Portia's first courtroom speech: **Act 4, Scene 1, lines 180-185:**

The quality of mercy is not strain'd,  
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven  
Upon the place beneath: it is twice blest,  
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes,  
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest, it becomes  
The throned monarch better than his crown.

Then later in *Hamlet*, **Act 4, Sc 4, 30-66** in an important speech where he, after dismissing Fortinbras and one of his officers, is now alone, and in a soliloquy allows us to hear his sense of shame at his not fulfilling his promise to the ghost of his murdered father. There are also perhaps hints of Shakespeare's own thoughts concerning the

nature of our lives and perhaps our duty to make good and responsible use of our short time here.

### Hamlet

I'll be with you strait. Go a little before.  
*(Exit all but Hamlet)*  
How all occasions do inform against me,  
And spur my dull revenge. What is a man  
If his chief good and market of his time  
Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more.  
Sure he that made us with such large discourse,  
Looking before and after, gave us not  
That capability and godlike reason  
To fust in us unus'd. Now whether it be  
Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple  
Of thinking too precisely on th'event—  
A thought which, quarter'd hath but one part wisdom  
And ever three parts coward—I do not know  
Why yet I live to say this thing's to do,  
Sith I have cause, and will, and strength, and means  
To do't. Examples gross as earth exhort me,  
Witness this army of such mass and charge,  
Led by a delicate and tender prince,  
Whose spirit, with divine ambition puff'd,  
Makes mouths at the invisible event,  
Exposing what is mortal and unsure  
To all that fortune, death, and danger dare,  
Even for an eggshell. Rightly to be great  
Is not to stir without great argument,  
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw  
When honour's at the stake. How stand I then,  
That have a father kill'd, a mother stain'd,  
Excitements of my reason and my blood,  
And let all sleep, while to my shame I see  
The imminent death of twenty thousand men  
That, for a fantasy and trick of fame,  
Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot  
Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,  
Which is not tomb enough and continent  
To hid the slain? O, from this time forth  
My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth.

This speech of compassion and sorrow, and his recognition of his failure so far to do his duty to avenge his father's murder is key to Hamlet's coming to acknowledge that he has been unsure, and to some extent perhaps unwilling, to make the revenge killing of his uncle, now the King of Denmark. His father's ghost on the Elsinore battlements asked Hamlet to revenge his death early in the play, and Hamlet promised his father's ghost that he would kill his uncle in revenge. But Hamlet, until the very last moments of the play, seems repeatedly unable to take the decision to assassinate the King to revenge his father's murder. He does not in other ways appear to lack courage. But maybe it

was Hamlet's inability to take very difficult decisions, or he may have felt a conscious, moral prohibition against murder. Hamlet's acting up, pretending to be mad seem to have been designed to allow himself to extend his indecision and prevarication over the need for him to kill Claudius. This is the first speech by Hamlet on this subject, and quite late in the play, that leaves us in no doubt that Hamlet is now ashamed of not having yet killed his uncle Claudius.

In the film of this play, in the mid-1940's, made by the actor, Laurence Olivier, he made a short statement in which he summarised his view of the play Hamlet as: '*The tragedy of a man who could not make up his mind*'. This view of the play, during the subsequent decades, seems to have been overlooked or even forgotten. It is difficult to dismiss entirely that view of this play but, to us in 2013, what may appear to be of greater significance still revolves around the Prince of Denmark. But, now, I think, many might conclude that the play Hamlet is the story of man who suffered from profound depressions that led him towards suicide. At times in the play it seems that maybe Shakespeare was revealing confusion with his own sexual troubles when he was dealing with sexual behaviour of Hamlet's mother. Perhaps there is some near contemporaneity between his writing sonnet 129, the other sonnets in the sequence 127- 154, and his writing his play 'Hamlet'. Certainly we are shown that Hamlet's sworn obligation, to revenge the murder of his father by Claudius, troubled Hamlet. Moreover we see that Hamlet was greatly pained by the recent second marriage of his mother, by his relations with Ophelia, and by his discovery of his father's murder. Even as skilled an author as Shakespeare might have found it difficult to keep all these and all the other themes active simultaneously on the stage in this one play.

Some notable aspects of the play suggest either that Shakespeare may have been unable to tidy them up satisfactorily, or that he was content to leave them as uncertainties. They are:

(i) Hamlet's excessive cruelty to and rejection of Ophelia, whom he claimed in the **Act 5, Sc.1, 264-278**, when she is buried after her drowning, to have deeply loved; his actual words at the graveside were:

I loved Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers  
Could not with all their quantity of love  
Make up make up my sum. ....

(ii) That unexpected or is it half-expected? Scene at that staging of the play *The Mousetrap*, a charade, where Hamlet, who having been so cruel to Ophelia, suddenly shows her his affections that are more than just affection when he insists on sitting with her to watch the Mousetrap play-out the crucial scenes that will ensnare and reveal the King's guilt. Had Shakespeare forgotten, or chosen to ignore, the earlier scenes where Hamlet has been so cruel to Ophelia? Or, because they are in such full public view in the Court of the Danish King, did Shakespeare wish to show publicly Hamlet's enduring attachment to Ophelia? These are questions no one can answer.

Was Shakespeare, perhaps, urged not to put his play Hamlet on the London stage while Queen Elizabeth was still living, because two kings living in Denmark, that is very close to England, and both are assassinated in this play?

(iii) There seems to be some possibility that Shakespeare was conscious, or may even have been advised against his having the two successive kings of Denmark assassinated in a major play on the London Stage at that time. The play Hamlet, according to the evidence marshalled by Harold Jenkins 1982 in the Arden Edition, was in repertory at the Globe between the middle of 1599 and the end of 1601. Queen Elizabeth was on her throne and died in 1603. Plays in the public arena that entertain by the murder of two kings living in a country close to England may have been bad news for the English Queen at that stage ; bearing in mind that she had had the Earl of Essex executed for treason in the late winter of 1601, following his failed rebellion against her, and remembering that Shakespeare was known to have had close connections with members of the rebellious plotters associated with the Earl of Essex.

### **The roles of forgiveness, mercy and compassion in the plays**

We have in this book noted that Shakespeare has his characters express forgiveness, mercy and compassion in his plays. One example is to be found in Antony & Cleopatra, in **Acts 4 Scenes 5 & 6**. Antony on discovering that after long years, Enobarbus, his most loyal companion in arms and a valiant soldier, has, at a crucial moment in battle, abandoned Antony to join Caesar's army because Enobarbus realised that Antony joining forces with Cleopatra is doomed and can never succeed. Antony immediately tells his soldiers to send to Enobarbus all his treasure and personal effects that he left behind in Antony's camp: Antony's words are (**Act 4, Scene 5, lines 14-19**):

Go, Eros, send his treasure after, do it,  
Detain not a jot, I charge thee: write to him----  
I will subscribe----gentle adieus, and greetings;  
Say, that I wish he never find more cause  
To change a master. O, my fortunes have  
Corrupted honest men. Despatch.-Enobarbus.

Enobarbus, now in Caesar's camp, receives all his belongings and valuables assembled over years of campaigning, and with them the generous letter from Antony. Enobarbus, mortified at his own behaviour, recognises the magnanimity of Antony in this fine and equally generous and loving speech made by Enobarbus just before he kills himself with shame at his behaviour towards Antony after so many years together, fighting with his master on the fields of battles.

O sovereign mistress of true melancholy,  
The poisonous damp of night disponge upon me,  
That life, a very rebel to my will,  
May hang no longer on me. Throw my heart  
Against the flint and hardness of my fault,  
Which being dried with grief, will break to powder,  
And finish all foul thoughts. O Antony,  
Nobler than my revolt is infamous,  
Forgive me in thine own particular,  
But let the world rank me in register  
A master-leaver, and a fugitive:  
O Antony! O Antony!

These two intimately linked speeches of first Antony and then Enobarbus disclose Shakespeare showing the loving forgiveness between two old soldiers, well known and well tried of each other. One cannot be unaware that Shakespeare must have been fully conscious of these sympathies that he created.

### **Prince Hal and Hotspur: Prince Hal is magnanimous in victory**

Now another pair of soldiers, but younger, Hal, Prince of Wales, son of Henry IV aka Bolinbroke, King of England and of Wales finds himself in the field against Henry Percy aka Hotspur, who is justly in rebellion against King Henry IV of England and of Wales, whom Hotspur's family had helped to put King Henry IV on his throne. The young sons now find themselves face to face in the critical battle to resolve this civil war. The two men fight and Hotspur falls mortally wounded by Prince Hal.

Hotspur is on the ground dying from his wounds:

#### **Hotspur:**

O Harry, thou has robbed me of my youth!  
I better brook the loss of brittle life  
Than those proud titles thou has won of me;  
They wound my thoughts worse than thy sword my  
flesh:  
But thoughts, the slaves of life, and life, time's fool,  
And time, that takes survey of all the world,  
Must have a stop. O, I could prophesy,  
But that the earthy and cold hand of death  
Lies on my tongue: no, Percy, thou art dust,  
And food for---

#### **Prince Hal**

For worms, brave Percy. Fare thee well, great heart!  
Ill-weav'd ambition, how much art thou shrunk!  
When that this body did contain a spirit,  
A kingdom for it was too small a bound ;  
But now two paces of the vilest earth  
Is room enough. This earth that bears thee dead  
Bears not alive so stout a gentleman.  
If thou wert sensible of courtesy  
I should not make so dear a show of zeal ;  
But let my favours hide thy mangled face,  
And even in thy behalf I'll thank myself  
For doing these fair rites of tenderness.  
Adieu, and take thy praise with thee to heaven!  
Thy ignominy sleep with thee in the grave,  
But not remember'd in thy epitaph!

The generous encomium from Prince Hal for his very dangerous and most brave adversary, Hotspur, shows the forgiveness for his errors and recognises his gallantry,



and noble behaviour. This is another example of one of Shakespeare's created characters showing his quality of forgiveness .

### **The Tempest**

We can remember another notable forgiveness scene from *The Tempest*, where at the end of the play, in **Act 5 Scene, lines 130-134** Prospero forgives his brother Antonio everything: He forgives him usurping his Duke-dome of Milan, forgives his attempt to kill Prospero and his daughter, then a small child, by abandoning them at sea in a tiny boat with no provisions. He even forgives him for taking all of Prospero's property, and denying him access to his great library, that was of such importance to Prospero.



## *Chapter 5*

### *The great and powerful when they lose their power and influence*

Let us consider several examples:

**Antony & Cleopatra: Act 5, Sc 2, lines 1-8 Arden Shakespeare 1965:**

#### **Cleopatra**

My desolation does begin to make  
A better life: 'tis paltry to be Caesar:  
Not being Fortune, he's but Fortune's knave,  
A minister of her will: and it is great  
To do the thing that ends all other deeds,  
Which shackles accidents, and bolts up change ;  
Which sleeps, and never palates more the dung,  
The beggar's nurse, and Caesar's.

Having witnessed Queen Cleopatra on the stage where we see her as a monarch and a sexually charged woman full of fun, and enjoying life richly as a youthful matron, with her new lover in the form of the powerful, courageous and world conquering Antony. His unnecessary death from a botched suicide means that Cleopatra knows it's obvious consequence will be her public humiliation by Caesar. Cleopatra therefore recognises she too must commit suicide. In this short soliloquy she shows us why she must die and how Antony, now being dead, she recognises that the greatest soldier in the known world is now Caesar, who would be her destroyer. Cleopatra tells us that being Caesar is paltry, he is just a minister of Fortune's commands. She thinks suicide is the correct action for her now that Antony is dead. Death ends everything, it leaves one free from the accidents of life, and from unnecessary changes, and even from having to eat every day like everyone else, both high and low. These indicate the ordinariness of daily life that brings us all to the same level; and that includes the great Caesar, whom she now despises, as being part of that commonplace that is life that everyone has to endure. This implies a kind of dishonour for the mighty who imagine themselves to be so great and so fundamentally different from others.

#### **Katherine of Aragon**

From **King Henry VIII, Act 3 Sc 1, line 1-80 Arden Shakespeare 1965**. Katherine, the devoted Queen and wife to King Henry VIII now rejected by him looks at her condition that is so unjustly forced upon her by Henry. She, now publicly humiliated, in fear for her life, thinking possibly to be falsely accused and executed. Katherine is our second example of a powerful person who loses all her influence and status.

#### **Katherine**

Take thy lute wench, my soul grows sad with troubles

Sing and disperse 'em if thou canst: leave working.

*(Un-named serving girl sings to her lute)*

**Song:**

Orpheus with lute made trees  
And the mountain tops that freeze  
Bow themselves when he did sing:  
To his music, plants and flowers  
Ever sprung, as sun and showers  
There had made a lasting spring

Every thing that heard him play,  
Even the billows of the sea,  
Hung their heads and then lay by  
In sweet music is such art,  
Killing care and grief of heart  
Fall asleep, or hearing die.

*(Enter a gentleman)*

**Katherine**

How now?

**Gent**

And't please your grace, the two great cardinals  
Wait in the presence.

**Katherine**

Would they speak with me?

**Gent**

They will'd me say so madam.

**Katherine**

Pray their graces  
To come near: what can be their business  
With me, a poor weak woman fall'n from favour?  
I do not like their coming ; now I think on't,  
They should be good men, their affairs as righteous:  
But all hoods make not monks.

*(Enter the two Cardinals Wolsey and Campeius)*

**Wolsey**

Peace to your highness.

**Katherine**

Your graces find me here part of a housewife ;  
I would be all, against the worst may happen:  
What are your pleasures with me, reverent lords.?

**Wolsey**

May it please your noble madam, to withdraw  
Into your private chamber ; we shall give you  
The full cause of our coming.

**Katherine**

Speak it here.  
There is nothing I have done yet o' my conscience  
Deserves a corner ; would all other women  
Could speak this with as free a soul as I do.  
My lords, I care not (so much I am happy  
(above a number) if my actions  
Were tried by e'vry tongue, ev'ry eye saw 'em,  
Envy and base opinion set against 'em  
I know my life so even. If your business  
Seek me out, and that way I am wife in,  
Out with it boldly: truth loves open dealing.

**Wolsey**

*Tanta est erg ate mentis integritas Regina serenis-  
Sima—*

**Katherine** (*laughing slightly*)

O my good lord, no Latin ;  
I am not such a truant since my coming  
As not to know the language I have liv'd in ;  
A strange tongue makes my cause more strange,  
suspicious:  
Pray speak in English ; here are some will thank you,  
If you speak truth, for their poor mistress' sake ;  
Believe me she has had much wrong. Lord cardinal,  
May be absolv'd in English.

**Wolsey**

Noble lady,  
I am sorry my integrity should breed  
(And service to his majesty and you)  
So deep suspicion where all faith was meant ;  
We come not by way of accusation,  
To taint that honour every good tongue blesses,  
Nor to betray you in any way to sorrow—  
You have to much, good lady: but to know  
How you stand minded in the weighty difference  
Between the king and you, and to deliver  
(Like free and honest men) our just opinions  
And comforts to your cause.

**Campeius**

Most honoured madam

My lord of York, out of his noble nature,  
Zeal and obedience he still bore your grace,  
Forgetting (like a good man) your late censure  
Both of his truth and him (which was too far)  
Offers, as I do, in a sign of peace  
His service and his counsel.

**Katherine** (*aside making her immediate retort*)

To betray me.—  
My lords I thank you both for your wills,  
Ye speak like honest men (pray God ye prove so)  
But how to make ye suddenly an answer  
In such a point of weight, so near mine honour  
(More near my life I fear) with my weak wit,  
And to such men of gravity and learning,  
In truth I know not. I was set at work  
Among my maids, full little (God knows) looking  
Either for such men or such business ;  
For her sake that I have been (for I feel  
The last fit of my greatness)—good your graces  
Let me have time and counsel for my cause

Katherine was not fooled by these powerful men, and she was rightly fearful for her future, even for her life, in light of the schemes of the King, Wolsey and Campeius. We are shown her quiet dignity and self-control in her isolated and greatly reduced circumstances.

One of the powerful scenes in this great play is the dying of Katherine of Aragon, almost destitute and lonely in an isolated modest abode, she is ill and very soon to take to her death bed. Now she receives a visit from Lord Capuchius (Ambassador from the Emperor Charles V) in **Act IV Sc. II, line 107-172**. She begs the Lord Capuchius to deliver to King Henry VIII a letter from her; for it is obvious she is shortly to die. And she begs that the Lord Capuchius will try to persuade the King to do something for her few remaining destitute servants:

..... My next poor petition  
Is that his noble grace would have some pity  
Upon my wretched women, that so long  
Have follow'd both my fortunes faithfully,  
Of which there is not one, I dare avow  
(And now I should not lie), but will deserve  
For virtue and true beauty of the soul ,  
For honesty and decent carriage,  
A right good husband (let him be noble),  
And sure those men are happy that shall have 'em.  
The last is for my men, they are the poorest  
(But poverty could never draw them from me),  
That they may have their wages duly paid 'em,  
And something over to remember me by.  
If heaven had pleased to have given me longer life

And able means, we had not parted thus.  
These are the whole contents, and good my lord,  
By that you love the dearest in this world,  
As you wish Christian peace to souls departed  
Stand these poor people's friend, and urge the king  
To do me this last right.

Then finally she says to him:

I thank you honest lord. Remember me  
In all humility unto his highness:  
Say his long trouble now is passing  
Out of this world. Tell him in death I bless'd him,  
For so I will; mine eyes grow dim. Farewell  
My lord.

Griffith farewell. Nay Patience,  
You must not leave me yet. I must to bed,  
Call in more women. When I am dead, good wench,  
Let me be us'd with honour ; strew me over

With maiden flowers, that all the world may know  
I was a chaste wife to my grave: embalm me,  
Then lay me forth; although unqueen'd, yet like  
A queen, and daughter to a king inter me.  
I can no more.

What can we hear and read for ourselves in these sweet, sad lines? It is significant that this final speech that takes Katherine from us for ever in her characteristic dignity and calm, is followed by Act 5 having 4 Scenes and an Epilogue in which Katherine, now dead, finds no more mention. Shakespeare, in so timing the disappearance of Katherine, is reminding us of the subsequent ruthlessness and cruelty of Henry VIII, and also lets us reflect that his baby daughter, Elizabeth, entered that world to become the Queen 25 years later, when she had to overcome the political, social and religious legacy that her father and sister left her, notwithstanding that Henry left England with a stronger economic position than he found on coming to the throne.

### **King Richard II**

And now our third example of a great one losing power: Richard II. The king recognises that very soon he will be deposed by Bollingbroke who will then be crowned as King Henry IV. Richard knows not what shall happen to him, but fears he will be destroyed. Here is an observation, for all time, concerning those who seek great power.

**Act III Scene 4 lines 200-202 Arden Shakespeare 1965.**

***King Richard II (speaking to Bollingbroke about to become King Henry IV):***

They well deserve to have  
That know the strong'st and surest way to get.

### Cardinal Wolsey's fall.

Our fourth example of how the great fall: Shakespeare shows us how the mighty Wolsey, even at his end, still takes great pride in the power he wielded and the riches he acquired. Wolsey had destroyed many in his rise to greatness. This contrasts with the integrity and honour of Queen Katherine during her life, and her dignity and modesty despite the rejection and humiliation she suffered from the King, her husband, whose power and sexual lust was the appetite of the universal wolf, like the lust for power and riches of Wolsey. Few lives of the great could be in more contrast from first to last than those of Shakespeare's Queen Katherine compared with this King and Cardinal Wolsey:

**Act 3 Sc 2 , lines 403-460 Arden Shakespeare 1965.** We find Cromwell (who is Wolsey's servant) as Cromwell is in the middle of his reporting to Wolsey what has been happening at court (Lady Anne is already Queen Anne Bollen):

#### Cromwell

Last, that the Lady Anne,  
Whom the king hath in secrecy long married,  
This day was view'd in open as his queen,  
Going to chapel ; and the voice is now  
Only about her coronation

#### Wolsey

There was the weight that pulled me down. O  
Cromwell,  
The King has gone beyond me: all my glories  
In that one woman I have lost for ever.  
No sun shall ever usher forth mine honours,  
Or gild again the noble troops that waited  
Upon my smiles. Go get thee from me Cromwell,  
I am a poor fall'n man, unworthy now  
To be thy lord and master. Seek the king  
(That sun I pray may never set) I have told him  
What, and how true thou art ; he will advance thee:  
Some little memory of me will stir him  
(I know his noble nature) not to let  
Thy hopeful service perish too. Good Cromwell  
Neglect him not. ; make use now, and provide  
For thine own future safety.

#### Cromwell

O my lord,  
Must I then leave you? must I needs forgo  
So good, so noble and so true a master?  
Bear witness, all that have not hearts of iron,  
With what a sorrow Cromwell leaves his lord.  
The king shall have my service ; but my prayers



For ever and for ever shall be yours.

**Wolsey**

Cromwell, I did not think to shed a tear  
In all my miseries ; but thou has forc'd me,  
Out of thy honest truth, to play the woman.  
Let's dry our eyes ; and thus far hear me Cromwell,  
And when I am forgotten, as I shall be,  
And sleep in dull cold marble, where no mention  
Of me more must be heard of, say I taught thee ;  
Say Wolsey , that once trod the ways of glory,  
And sounded all the depths and shoals of honour,  
Found thee a way (out of his wrack) to rise in,  
A sure and safe one, though thy master miss'd it.  
Mark but my fall, and that that ruin'd me:  
Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away ambition,  
By that sin fell the angels ; how can man then,  
The image of his maker, hope to win by it?  
Love thyself last, cherish those hearts that hate thee;  
Corruption wins not more than honesty.  
Still in thy right hand carry gentle peace  
To silence envious tongues. Be just, and fear not ;  
Let all the ends thou aim'st at be they country's,  
Thy God's and truth's: then if thou fall'st, O Cromwell,  
Thou fall'st a blessed martyr.  
Serve the king; and prithee lead me in:  
There take an inventory of all I have,

To the last penny, 'tis the King's. My robe,  
And my integrity to heaven, is all  
I dare now call mine own. O Cromwell, Cromwell,  
Had I but served my God with half the zeal  
I served my king, he would not in mine age  
Have left menaced to mine enemies.

**Cromwell**

Good sir, have patience

**Wolsey**

So I have. Farewell  
The hopes of court, my hopes in heaven do dwell.



## *Chapter 6*

### *Integrity, decency and fair play by powerful men in authority.*

Shakespeare shows us a man with power and authority, Pompey, who is offered an easy and completely safe way to slaughter all his political and military rivals in a matter of minutes. Pompey declines this opportunity because it would require him to behave treacherously to his rivals who were also his colleagues. It's an example of what men in the British colonies before the end of the 1950's used to refer to as 'the British sense of fair play'. Some time in 1950-1951 an Indian politician, or it may have been an Indian journalist, speaking on the BBC wireless mentioned to his interviewer how this sense of British 'fair play' had been respected and admired. This principle has to a large extent disappeared from England now, not entirely, but it is becoming rare, as one can see from film clips on the BBC television, showing professional football teams, where players will illegally trip or drag a player, from the opposing team, away from the ball by pulling him from the ball when the referee cannot see this.

But here Shakespeare shows us what must have been an old and great tradition, in honourable fair play by Sextus Pompeius, rejecting the unique opportunity of a lifetime to have seized the Imperial crown of the Roman Empire (in Act 2 Scene 7 lines 60-79) of Antony & Cleopatra).

This last part of scene 7 has been included where Shakespeare shows the camaraderie that exists between these warrior political leaders. .

Here is an example of what the young John Keats, age 22, had defined as Shakespeare's 'negative capability'. Pompey has committed any number of cruel and brutal acts in his career, but faced with an opportunity to take the imperial crown for himself by cheating, he rejects it because it would have been dishonourable to his friends and colleagues. It is a very neat piece of theatre created by Shakespeare showing us integrity in a man. It seems likely that this was remembered and spilled out following this particular scene.

#### **Antony & Cleopatra: The dramatic act of fair play by Pompey**

**Act 2, Scene 7, line 55-110 Arden Shakespeare 1965.** Menas is with Pompey, who would like to become one of the Emperors, on a boat where are the three drunken leaders of the Roman Empire, exposed and highly vulnerable to assassination)

**Menas** (*whispered aside to Pompey*)

If for the sake of merit thou wilt hear me,  
Rise from thy stool.

**Pompey** (*aside to Menas*)

I think th'art mad. The matter? (*Rises and walks aside*).

**Menas**

I have ever held my cap off to my fortunes

**Pompey**

Thou has served me with mush faith: what's else to say?  
Be jolly , lords.

**Antony**

These quick-sands, Lepidus,  
Keep off them, for you sink.

**Menas**

Wilt thou be lord of all the world?

**Pompey**

What say'st thou?

**Menas**

Wilt thou be lord of the whole world? That's twice.

**Pompey**

How should that be?

**Menas**

But entertain it,  
And thou think me poor, I am the man  
Will give thee all the world.

**Pompey**

Hast thou drunk well?

**Menas**

No, Pompey, I have kept me from the cup.  
Thou art, if thou dar'st be, the earthly Jove:  
What'er the ocean pales, or sky inclips,  
Is thine, if thou wilt ha't.

**Pompey**

Show me the way.

**Menas**

These three world-sharers, these competitors,  
Are in the vessel. Let me cut the cable,  
And when we are put off, fall to their throats:  
All three is thine.

**Pompey**

Ah, thus thou should'st have done,

And not have spoke on't! In me 'tis villany,  
In thee, 't had been good service. Thou must know,  
'Tis not my profit that does lead mine honour;  
Mine honour, it. Repent that e'er thy tongue  
Hath so betray'd thine act. Being done unknown,  
I should have found it afterwards well done,  
But must condemn it now. Desist, and drink.

**Menas** (*aside*)

I'll never follow thy pall'd fortunes more.  
Who seeks and will not take, when once 'tis offer'd  
Shall never find it more.

**Pompey**

This health to Lepidus!

**Antony**

Bear him ashore, I'll pledge it for him, Pompey.

**Enobarbus**

Here's to thee, Menas!

**Menas**

Enobarbus, welcome!

**Pompey**

Fill till the cup be hid.

**Enobarbus** (*pointing to the Attendant who carries off Lepidus*)

There's a strong fellow, Menas

**Menas**

Why?

**Enobarbus**

'A bears the third part of the world, man ; see'st not?

**Menas**

The third part, then, is drunk: would it were all,  
That it might go on wheels!

**Enobarbus**

Drink thou; increase the reels

**Menas**

Come.

**Pompey**

This is not yet an Alexandrian feast

**Antony**

It ripens towards it ; strike the vessels, ho!  
Here's to Caesar!

**Caesar**

I could well forbear't.  
It's monstrous labour when I washed my brain  
And it grow fouler.

**Antony**

Be a child o' the time.

**Caesar**

Possess it, I'll make answer:  
But I had rather fast from all, four days;  
Than drink so much in one.

**Enobarbus** (*to Antony*)

Ha, my brave emperor,  
Shall we dance now the Egyptian Baccanals,  
And celebrate our drink?

**Antony**

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

**Eobarbus**

All take hands,  
Make battery to our ears with loud music:  
The while, I'll place you, then the boy shall sing.  
The holding every man shall bear as loud  
As his strong sides can volley.

*(Music plays, as Enobarbus places them. The song in which they all join in dancing hand in hand singing loudly and very drunk)*

**Song**

Come, thou monarch of the vine,  
Plumpy Bacchus with pink eyne!  
In they fats cares be drowned  
With thy grapes our hairs be crown'd  
Cup us till the world go round  
Cup us till the world go round!

## *Chapter 7*

### *Shakespeare's characters reflecting on the Human Condition*

There are two quotations from Hamlet one following immediately after the other that show something of Hamlet's views about how those in power should behave to the less well placed members of society. They reveal how Hamlet considered the great should behave towards skilled but socially inferior people such as actors. We can note in passing that 'bounty', was a word Shakespeare used rarely and usually to powerful effect.

**Hamlet, Act 2, Sc 2 ; 518-528**

**Hamlet**

.....Good my lord, will you see the players well bestowed? Do you hear, let them be well used, for they are the abstract and brief chronicles of the time? After your death you were better have a bad epitaph than their ill report while you live.

**Polonius**

My lord, I will use them according to their desert.

**Hamlet:**

God's bodkin, man, much better. Use every man after his desert, and who shall scape whipping? Use them after your own honour and dignity: the less they deserve, the more merit is in your bounty. Take them in.

Now let us read and listen to Hamlet talking with his friend, Horatio, a man of no wealth or position, but respected as a fellow student and true friend by Hamlet:

**Act 3, Sc.2, 53-74**

**Hamlet:**

What ho, Horatio!

**Horatio**

Here, sweet lord, at your service.

**Hamlet**

Horatio, thou art e'en as just a man  
As e'er my conversation cop'd withal.

**Horatio**

O my dear Lord

**Hamlet**

.....Nay, do not think I flatter,  
For what advancement may I hope from thee  
That no revenue hast but thy good spirits  
To feed and clothe thee? Why should the poor be  
flatter'd  
No, let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp,  
And crook the pregnant hinges of the knee  
Where thrift may follow fawning. Dost thou hear?  
Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice,  
And could men distinguish her election,  
Sh'ath sealed thee for herself; for thou has been  
As one, in suffring all, that suffers nothing,  
A man that Fortune buffets and rewards  
Hast ta'en with equal thanks; and blest are those  
Whose blood and judgment are so well commeddled  
That they are not a pipe for Fortune's finger  
To sound what stop she please. Give me that man  
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him  
In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart,  
As I do thee.

**Hamlet Act 1 Scene 4 lines 23-38.** Hamlet speaking to Horatio in the presence of Marcellus (a member of the king's guard), all on the high battlements of Elsinore Castle on a cold night:

So, oft it chances in particular men  
That for some vicious mole of nature in them,  
As in their birth, wherein they are not guilty  
(since nature cannot choose his origin),  
By their o'ergrowth of some complexion,  
Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason,  
Or by some habit, that too much o'erleavens  
The form of plausible manners---that these men,  
Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,  
Being Nature's livery or Fortune's star,  
His virtues else, be they as pure as grace,  
As infinite as man may undergo,  
Shall in the general censure take corruption  
From that particular fault. The dram of evil  
Doth all the noble substance often dout  
To his own scandal.

Are these not likely Hamlet's observations based on the behaviour of people Shakespeare had observed or known? Hamlet is making a statement of how he has observed people's behaviour in general. These lines are not exactly adventitious but they could be excised and leave the play unscarred.



Hamlet says to Rosencrantz (**Act 2 Sc 2. L. 250**) that:

‘there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so’,

Shakespeare may well have been influenced by Montaigne, but Shakespeare has his character, Hamlet, that he created, make an important observation about the concept of good and evil. It matters not if, perhaps, Shakespeare had lifted it from an essay of Montaigne, it was an apposite opinion to plant on Prince Hamlet (**Act II, Sc 2, Lines 249-251 on page 250**).

**Act 5, Sc. 2, 1-11.**

The text below is the discussion that Hamlet had earlier promised Horatio in which he would tell Horatio what happened to him after he was sent to England for secret execution by the King of England; a journey from which Hamlet escaped and managed to return to Denmark, leaving Rosencrantz & Guildenstern to continue to England where they were to be executed in place of Hamlet.

**Hamlet:**

So much for this, sir.  
Now shall you see the other.  
You do remember all the circumstances?

**Horatio:** (*emphasising to Hamlet just how profoundly he remembers all the details*)  
Remember it, my lord!

**Hamlet:**

Sir, in my heart there was a kind of fighting  
That would not let me sleep. Methought I lay  
Worse than the mutines in the bilboes. Rashly—  
And praised be rashness for it: let us know  
Our indiscretion sometime serves us well  
When our deep plots do pall ; and that should learn us  
There’s a divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough-hew them how we will—

The editor of the Arden text, Harold Jenkins 1982, in his ‘longer notes’ points out that: Hamlet’s comments: ‘*There’s a divinity that shapes our ends, Rough-hew them how we will*’, shows Hamlet recognising a design in the universe he had previously failed to find.’ It is this kind of adventitious comment by Hamlet that suggests we might, perhaps, be hearing something of Shakespeare’s own voice in these words.

**Act 5, Sc 2, 213-220**

These lines below spoken by Horatio and Hamlet result from the audience knowing the King and Laertes plotted in secret to murder Hamlet under the guise of an accident in a duelling game with rapiers set up by the King, with a poisoned rapier for Laertes to use against Hamlet. Nobody but the King and Laertes know anything about this poisoned rapier. Horatio is instinctively suspicious that this duelling game, set up by the King and Laertes is dangerous for Hamlet, and he warns Hamlet against this duel.

**Horatio:**

If your mind dislike anything, obey it.  
I will forestall their repair hither and say you are not fit.

**Hamlet:**

Not a whit. We defy augury. There is a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come ; if it be not to come, it will be now ; if it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all. Since no man , of aught he leaves, knows aught, what is't to leave betimes? Let be.

Note that the editor of the Arden Shakespeare *Hamlet*, Harold Jenkins, points out that Hamlet does not speak for himself alone, but says 'We defy augury'. This leaves us thinking that we maybe hearing Shakespeare's voice in this passage so very close to the end of the play when Hamlet is killed. Moreover, is not Hamlet's reply open to us reading it as Hamlet's wish to be gone from this world if chance would have it so?

### **Deposing of a king, and the king's thoughts on his deposition from power**

King Richard II was deposed by Bolingbroke as a result of Bolingbroke's superior political and fighting skills. If we pick up on the early part of a speech by King Richard 11, before he was deposed, we can find Richard recognising reality .

#### **Act 3, Scene 2, lines 149-166**

.....for what can we bequeath  
Save our deposed bodies to the ground?  
Our lands, our lives, and all, are Bolingbroke's,  
And nothing can we call our own but death;  
And that small model of the barren earth  
Which serves as paste and cover to our bones.  
For God's sake let us sit upon the ground  
And tell sad stories of the death of kings:  
How some have been depos'd, some slain in war,  
Some haunted by the ghosts they have deposed,  
Some poisoned by their wives, some sleeping kill'd,  
All murdered—for within the hollow crown  
That rounds the mortal temples of a king  
Keeps Death his court, and there the antic sits,  
Scoffing his state and grinning at his pomp,  
Allowing him a breath, a little scene,  
To monarchize, be feared, and killed with looks;  
In fusing him with self and vain conceit,  
.....

And King Richard II's speech continues at this powerful level for another 12 lines.  
Later still we hear Richard say in: **Act 3; Scene 4, lines 200-201**

They well deserve to have

That know the strong'st and surest way to get.

And then later, Richard II, realising he will soon be assassinated on Bolingbroke's command, he reflects on his predicament and on wider issues, **Act 5, Scene 4, lines 42-54:**

Music do I hear?  
Ha, ha! keep time—how sour sweet music is  
When time is broke and no proportion kept!  
So is it in the music of men's lives.  
And here have I the daintiness of ear  
To check time broke in a disordered string;  
But for the concord of my state and time,  
Had not an ear to hear my true time broke:  
I wasted time, and now doth time waste me;  
For now hath time made me his numb'ring clock;  
My thoughts are minutes, and with sighs they jar  
Their watches on unto mine eyes, the outward watch,  
Whereto my finger, like a dial's point,  
Is pointing still, in cleansing them from tears.

This speech continues for another 10 lines with such metaphysical wit that is fine to read, but perhaps a modern audience cannot keep its attention for this; whereas did Shakespeare's audience, or part of it, at least, in 1595-7 hear this in admiration for the author and, even perhaps, with thoughts of the young, spirited Earle of Essex?

By great contrast here is Juliet reflecting on her discovering herself in love with the dashing young man, Romeo. Then, with her youthful, great indiscretion, she tells Romeo in, **Romeo and Juliet, Act 2, Scene 2, lines 133-135:**

My bounty is as boundless as the sea,  
My love as deep: the more I give to thee  
The more I have, for both are infinite.

Never mind that Juliet was only 13 years old when she says this to Romeo in such exceptional language that few adults could have found. Then, here is her Romeo, waking from their first night in the nuptial bed as dawn breaks and, as he is peering under the curtains and out at the sky, he reminds Juliet that he must leave as he is under sentence of execution if he is found to be in this town after dawn.

**Act 3, Scene 5, lines 9-11:**

Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day  
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops.  
I must be gone and live, or stay and die.

Now, in the war zone, here is some reality from an ordinary soldier, Michael Williams, talking to the king in **Henry V: Act 4, Scene 1, lines 143-144:**

'I am afeard there are few die well that die in a battle;'

Under other skies and older times King Lear reflects after a long life, **Lear 4-1-38:**

As flies to wanton boys, are we to th'Gods  
They kill us for their sport

Here is a young shepherdess, Perdita, making her unequivocal observation on some great ones who fail to acknowledge or even to recognise Nature's realities, **Winter's Tale Act 4- Scene 4 lines 443-447:**

I was not much afeard; for once or twice  
I was about to speak and tell him plainly,  
The selfsame sun that shines upon his court  
Hides not his visage from our cottage, but  
Looks on alike.

How night, far distant times and misery could be all viewed in the late Tudor and early Jacobean epochs as recorded below, **Hamlet Act 1, Scene 2, lines 192-194:**

**Horatio (to Marcellus)**

In the dead waste and middle of the night

**Tempest 1-2-50**

In the dark backward and abysm of time

**Tempest 2-2-41**

Misery acquaints a man with strange bedfellows

The next quotation from a very early play of Shakespeare's shows us an example of the situation one sees even in our world today where some are irritated by one who has a useful skill that is highly regarded and which sets them apart from those who lack it.

**Henry VI ii., Scene 7, 55.**

Away with him! away with him! he speaks Latin.

Now Macbeth's thoughts on sleep, whose last four lines sound as they might be Shakespeare talking, **Macbeth Act 2, Scene 1, Lines 34-38:**

Me thought I heard a voice cry, 'Sleep no more!  
Macbeth does murder sleep,' the innocent sleep,  
Sleep that knits up the ravelled sleeve of care,  
The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath  
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,  
Chief nourisher in life's feast.

The *Prologue to Henry V* had to be spoken to the audience just before the actors arrive on stage, telling the audience that they will have to imagine the violent events that will be acted out on this tiny stage, they must imagine they are looking at the great fields in northern France where armies of men on horses were fighting. We do not know which actor spoke these lines.

O, for a Muse of fire, that would ascend  
 The brightest heaven of invention ;  
 A kingdom for a stage, princes to act  
 And monarchs to behold the swelling scene!  
 Then should the warlike Harry, like himself,  
 Assume the port of Mars; and at his heels,  
 Leash'd in like hounds, should famine, sword, and fire  
 Crouch for employment. But pardon, gentles all,  
 The flat unraised spirits that hath dar'd  
 On this unworthy scaffold to bring forth  
 So great an object: can this cockpit hold  
 The vasty fields of France? or may we cram  
 Within this wooden O the very casques  
 That did affright the air at Agincourt?  
 O, pardon! Since a crooked figure may  
 Attest in little place a million ;  
 And let us, ciphers to this great accompt,  
 On your imaginary forces work.  
 Suppose within the girdle of these walls

Are now confined two mighty monarchies,  
 Whose high upreared and abutting fronts  
 The perilous narrow ocean parts asunder  
 Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts;  
 Into a thousand parts divide one man,  
 And make imaginary puissance;  
 Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them  
 Printing their proud hoofs i' the receiving earth;  
 For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings,  
 Carry them here and there, jumping o'er times,  
 Turning the accomplishment of many years  
 Into an hour glass: for the which supply,  
 Admit me Chorus to this history;  
 Who prologue-like your humble patience pray,  
 Gently to hear, kindly to judge, our play.

*Julius Caesar* was written in 1599 when Shakespeare must have been confident as a playwright. We can hear the adventitious commentaries on life and our passage through it—a few have been selected here, **Act 1, Scene 2, lines 133** (*Cassius speaking to Brutus*);

Why, man, he doth bstride the narrow world  
 Like a colossus ; and we petty men  
 Walk under his huge legs, and peep about  
 To find ourselves dishonourable graves.  
 Men at some time are masters of their fates:  
 The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,  
 But in ourselves, that we are underlings.

**Act 2, Scene 2, lines 32-37** (*Caesar speaking to Calphurnia*):

Cowards die many times before their deaths;  
The valiant never taste death but once.  
Of all the wonders that I yet have heard,  
It seems to me most strange that men should fear;  
Seeing that death, a necessary end,  
Will come when it will come.

**Act 2, Scene 1, lines 63-69** (*Brutus's soliloquy*):

Between the acting of a dreadful thing  
And the first motion, all the interim is  
Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream:

**Act 4, Scene 3, lines 217-223** (*Brutus to Cassius before the battle at Philippi*)

There is a tide in the affairs of men,  
Which taken at the flood, leads on to fortune ;  
Omitted, all the voyage of their life  
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.  
On such a full sea are we now afloat,  
And we must take the current when it serves,  
Or lose our ventures.

Then in **Henry VI, iii, Act 2, Scene 5, lines 42-46** (*Henry's soliloquy on being a king*):

Gives not the hawthorn-bush a sweeter shade  
To shepherds looking on their silly sheep  
Than doth a rich embroidered canopy  
To kings that fear their subjects treachery?  
O yes, it doth; a thousand-fold it doth.

And in **Henry V**, in which , **Act 4, Scene 1** opens with probably the best known of all the Chorus speeches. It is included here because it reveals Shakespeare's presentation of the courage and consideration for his troops shown by the warrior King Henry V. How reliable is this view of the king, and how much it is drawn to please his audience is uncertain; but it is interesting as an example of the splendid and apposite language Shakespeare would choose for his audience, when revealing something of the conditions of these justly famous historic events, soldiers and of this king.

Now entertain conjecture of a time  
When creeping murmur and the poring dark  
Fills the wide vessel of the universe.  
From camp to camp through the foul womb of night  
The hum of either army stilly sounds,  
That the fix'd sentinels almost receive  
The secret whispers of each other's watch:  
Fire answers fire, and through their paly flames  
Each battle sees the other's umber'd face ;  
Steed threatens steed, in high and boastful neighs

Piercing the night's dull ear ; and from the tents  
The armourers, accomplishing the knights,  
With busy hammers closing rivets up,  
Give dreadful note of preparation.  
The country cocks do crow, the clocks to toll,  
And the third hour of drowsy morning name,  
Proud of their numbers, and secure in soul,  
The confident and over-lusty French  
Do the low-rated English play at dice ;  
And chide the cripple tardy-gated night.

.....  
O, now, who will behold  
The royal captain of this ruin'd band  
Walking from watch to watch, from tent to tent,  
Let him cry, "Praise and glory on his head!"  
For forth he goes and visits all his host,

Bids them good-morrow with a modest smile,  
And calls them brothers, friends and countrymen.  
Upon his royal face there is no note  
How dread an army hath enrounded him ;  
Nor doth he dedicate one jot of colour  
Unto the weary and all-watched night:  
But freshly looks and overbears attaint  
With cheerful semblance and sweet majesty ;  
That every wretch, pining and pale before,  
Beholding him, plucks comfort from his looks.  
A largess universal like the sun  
His liberal eye doth give to every one,  
Thawing cold fear, that mean and gentle all,  
Behold, as may unworthiness define,  
A little touch of Harry in the night.  
And so our scene must to the battle fly ;  
Where, O for pity! we shall much disgrace  
With four or five most vile and ragged foils,  
Right ill-dispos'd in brawl ridiculous,  
The name of Agincourt. Yet sit and see ;  
Minding true things by what their mock'ries be.

His lines such as '*When creeping murmur and the poring dark ; a largess universal like the sun*' ; and '*a little touch of Harry in the night*', have in their own right, and, in this context, their immortality, as they convey to us the sensitivities of their author.

This from the last chorus of this play:

Thus far, with rough and all-unable pen,  
Our bending author hath pursu'd the story;  
In little room confining mighty men,  
Mangling by starts the full course of their glory.  
Small time, but in that small most greatly liv'd

This star of England: Fortune made his sword,  
By which the world's best garden he achiev'd,  
And of it left his son imperial lord.  
Henry the Sixth, in infant bands crown'd King  
Of France and England, did this king succeed ;  
Whose state so many had the managing,  
That they lost France and made his England bleed:  
Which oft our stage hath shown ; and, for their sake  
In your fair minds let this acceptance take.

(A brief digression to recall these few lines taken from this chorus.

Small time, but in that small most greatly liv'd  
This star of England

It was reported that these lines were written on the gravestone of 38 years old Raymond Asquith who, showing such courage, like so many of his generation, was cut down by machine gun fire in northern France in 1916. Was this, perhaps, at the suggestion of Winston Churchill, who knew and admired him?)

Here three passages taken from the last Scene of the last Act of this play that deals with King Harry wooing Katherine, Princess of France, to become his wife and queen. It is written in a melange of English, French and Franglais. It is a charming and delightful part of the play and makes a great contrast with the battle scenes and the preparations for the war. The scene is in Troyes in the French King's Palace. It is included here because it seems to reveal something of the tenderness of Shakespeare presented through the words of his characters.

#### **Act V Scene 2 lines 104-120**

**K. Hen.**

O fair Katherine! if you will love me soundly with your French heart, I will be glad to hear you confess it brokenly with your English tongue.  
Do you like me, Kate?

**Kath.**

Pardonnez-moi, I cannot tell what is "like me".

**K.Hen.**

An angel is like you, Kate, and you are like an angel.

**Kath.**

Qui dit-il? Que je suis semblable à un ange?

**Alice**

Oui, vraiment, sauf votre grace, ainsi dit-il

**K. Hen**

I said so, dear Katherine, and I must not blush to affirm it.



**Kath.**

O bon Dieu! les langues des homes sont pleines de tromperies.

**K. Hen.**

What says she, fair one? that the tongues of men are full of deceits?

**Alice**

Oui, dat de tongues of de mans is be full of deceits: dat is de princess.

**Act V Scene 2 Lines 173-275**

**Kath.**

Is it possible dat I sould love de enemy of France?

**K.Hen.**

No; it is not possible you should love the enemy of France, **Kate**; but, in loving me, you should love the friend of France, for I love France so well that I will not part with a village of it; I will have it all mine: and **Kate**, when France is mine and I am yours, then yours is France and you are mine.

**Kath.**

I cannot tell wat is dat.

**K. Hen.**

No, **Kate**? I will tell thee in French, which I am sure will hang upon my tongue like a new-married wife about her husband's neck, hardly to be shook off. Je quand sur le possession de France, et quand vous avez le possession de moi—let me see, what then? Saint Denis be my speed! donc votre est France, et vous êtes mienne. It is as easy for me, **Kate**, to conquer the kingdom as to speak so much more French: I shall never move thee in French, unless it be to laugh at me.

**Act 5, Scene 2, lines 276-297**

**K. Hen.**

Madam my interpreter, what says she?

**Alice**

Dat it is not de fashion pour les ladies of France—I cannot tell wat is baiser in English.

**K.Hen**

To kiss.

**Alice**

Your majesty entendre better que moi.

**K.Hen**

It is not the fashion for the maids in France to kiss before they are married, would she say?

Alice

Oui, vraiment.

**K Hen**

O Kate! nice customs curtsy to great kings.

Dear Kate, you and I cannot be confined within the

weak list of a country's fashion: we are the makers of manners,

Kate; and the liberty that follows our places stops the mouth of all

find-faults, as I will do yours, for upholding the nice fashion of your

country in denying me a kiss: therefore, patiently and yielding. [Kissing her].

You have witchcraft in your lips, Kate: there is more eloquence in a sugar

touch of them than in the tongues of the French Council; and they should

sooner persuade Harry of England than a general petition of monarchs.

Pardon the grotesque closeness of having this example to follow the fineness of the quotation that precedes it here in this selection of reflections on the human condition; thus does it bring to mind Shakespeare's 'negative capability'.

**Lear 4.2.38**

Wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile:

Filths savour but themselves

Now here is **Hamlet** noting the intrinsic weaknesses in some men:

- (1) That for some vicious mole of nature in them (**Act 1, Scene 4, line 25**)
- (2) By their o'ergrowth of some complexion,  
Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason (**lines 27-28**)
- (3) Or by some habit, that too much o'erleavens  
The form of plausive manners--- (**Act 1, Scene 4, lines 29-30**)

Shakespeare identifying aspects of human behaviour where a single weakness can lead to great failures and difficulties such as he had observed over years of studying the behaviour of people he needed for his writing of plays? He must have had opportunities for studying the behaviour of the rich, great and powerful on the occasions when he was invited to stay in the houses of the great, just as he had different opportunities for studying lesser persons in late Tudor society.

The late Anthony Burgess, in his Book *Shakespeare*, Penguin Books 1972, pp.208, gives us a brief account when the Countess of Pembroke revealed how William Shakespeare was at Wilton, her family home in 1603, where he was probably present as a guest. Her descendent, Lady Pembroke, about 250 years later, referred to a letter in the family archives written by the great Countess in 1603, telling her son to bring King James to see *As You Like It*, and the Countess added 'We have the man *Shakespeare with us*'. This would seem to indicate that while Shakespeare had no political status, he was recognised as a distinguished man of achievement who moved among members of the Court in 1603, and thus had some social status.

Here we have a very different part of **Troilus & Cressida** having already witnessed the intellectual debates between the Greeks, Ulysses & Achilles, and between two Troyans, Hector & Troilus, discussed in Chapter 2. Now we see the witty and bawdy exchanges between two Troyans, Pandarus and Cressida.

**Act 1 Scene 2 Lines 255-276 ,**

**Cress.**

Well, well.

**Pand.**

Well, well? Why, have you any discretion? Have you any eyes?  
Do you know what a man is? Is not birth, beauty, good shape, discourse,  
Manhood, learning, gentleness, virtue, youth, liberality and such like, the  
The spice and salt that season a man?

**Cress.**

Ay, a minced man; and then to be baked with no date in the pie, for then  
The man's date is out.

**Pand.**

You are such a woman, a man knows not at what ward you lie.

**Cress.**

Upon my back, to defend my belly; upon my wit, to defend my wiles ;  
Upon my secrecy, to defend mine honesty ; my mask to defend my beauty ;  
and you, to defend all these ; and at all these wards I lie, at a thousand  
watches.

**Pand.**

Say one of your watches.

**Cress**

Nay, I'll wash you for that, and that's one of the chiefest of them too. If I  
cannot ward what I would not have hit, I can watch you for telling how I  
took the blow, unless it swell past hiding, and then it's past watching.

**Pand.**

You are such another.

**Act 1 Scene 3 Lines 282-300**

**Cress**

Adieu, uncle.

**Pand.**

I shall be with you, niece, by and by.

**Cress**

To bring, uncle?

**Pand**

Ay, a token from Troilus.  
*(exit of Pandarus)*

**Cress**

By the same token you are a bawd.  
Words, vows, gifts, tears, and love's full sacrifice  
He offers in another's enterprise ;  
But more in Troilus thousand-fold I see  
Than in the glass of Pandar's praise may be;  
Yet hold I off. Women are angels, wooing:  
Things won are done ; joy's soul lies in the doing.  
That she belov'd knows aught that knows not this:  
Men prize the thing ungain'd more than it is.  
That she was never yet that ever knew  
Love got so sweet as when desire did sue.  
Therefore this maxim out of love I teach:  
'Achievement is command ; ungain'd, beseech.'  
Then tho my heart's content firm love doth bear,  
Nothing of that shall from mine eyes appear.  
*(Exit)*

**Act 2 Scene 3 Lines 47-70.** Now we have moved camp; here are three Greeks: Achilles, Thersites and Patroclus, who are three very different characters:

**Thesites**

Where's Achilles?

**Patroclus**

What, art thou devout? Wast thou in prayer?

**Thesites**

Ay, the heavens hear me!

**Patroc**

Amen.

**Achill** *(within)*

Who's there?

**Patroclus**

Thesites, my lord.

**Achill** *(within)*

Where? where?—O where?—Art thou come?

*(Enter Achilles)*

Why, my cheese, my digestion, why hast thou not served thyself in to my

table so many meals?  
Come, what's Agammemnon?

**Thers**  
Thy commander, Achilles: then tell me Patroclus, what's Achilles?

**Patroc**  
Thy lord, Thersites: then tell me I pray thee, what's Thersites.

**Thers**  
Thy knower, Patroclus: then tell me Patroclus, what art thou?

**Patroc**  
Thou mayst tell that knowest.

**Achill**  
O tell, tell.

**Thers**  
I'll decline the whole question. Agammemnon commands Achilles,  
Achilles is my lord, I am Patroclus' knower, and Patroclus is a fool.

**Patroc**  
You rascal!

**Thers**  
Peace, fool, I have not done.

**Achill**  
He is a privileged man: proceed, Thersites.

**Thers**  
Agammemnon is a fool, Achilles is a fool, Thersites is a fool, and , as  
aforesaid, Patroclus is a fool.

**Achill**  
Derive this: come.

**Thers**  
Agammemnon is a fool to offer to command Achilles, Achilles is a fool  
to be commanded of Agammemnon, Thersites is a fool to serve such a  
fool, and this Patroclus is a fool positive.

**Patro**  
Why am I a fool?

**Thers**  
Make that demand of the Creator, it suffices me thou art. Look you, who comes  
here?

In moving on to **Act 3 Scene 2 Lines 156-168** we reach the discussion between the two lovers, Cressida and Troilus, in Shakespeare's blank verse, revealing the sad disappointment of the young Troyan warrior, Troilus with his Cressida:

**Troil**

O that I thought it could be in a woman—  
As if it can, I will presume in you—  
To feed for aye her lamp and flames of love ;  
To keep her constancy in plight and youth,  
Outliving beauty's outward, with a mind  
That doth renew swifter than blood decays!  
Or that persuasion could but thus convince me  
That my integrity and truth to you  
Might be affronted with the match and weight  
Of such a winnow'd purity in love—  
How were I then uplifted! But alas,  
I am as true as truth's simplicity,  
And simpler then the infancy of truth.

Later in **Act 3 Scene 3 Lines 74-94** we are back with the Greek warriors and Achilles' introspective reflections (in Shakespeare's blank verse of unrhymed iambic pentameters) as so little progress has been made by the Greek armada against Troy. Employing this verse in this speech shows Achilles' unhappiness, just as in the preceding example of blank verse spoken by Troilus emphasised his unhappiness:

**Achill**

What, am I poor of late?  
'Tis certain, greatness once fall'n out with fortune  
Must fall out with men too. What the declin'd is,  
He shall as soon read in the eyes of others  
As feel in his own fall ; for men like butterflies,  
Show not their mealy wings but to the summer,  
And not a man, for being simply man,  
Hath any honour, but honour for those honours  
That are without him—as place, riches, and favour:  
Prizes of accident as oft as merit—  
Fortune and I are friends ; I do enjoy  
I'll interrupt his reading.  
How now, Ulysses!

**Act III, Scene 3, Lines 127-155.** Some comments on the human condition by Ulysses:

**Ulyss**

Nature, what things there are  
Most abject in regard and dear in use!  
What things again most dear in the esteem  
And poor in worth! Now shall we see tomorrow—  
An act that very chance doth throw upon him—  
Ajax renown'd . O heavens what some men do,  
While some men leave to do!

How some men creep in skittish Fortune's hall,  
While others play the idiots in her eyes!  
How one man eats into another's pride,  
While pride is fasting in his wantonness!  
To see these Grecian lords!—why, even already  
They clap the lubber Ajax on, the shoulder,  
As if his foot were on brave Hector's breast,  
And great Troy shrieking.

**Achill**

I do believe it, for they passed by me  
As misers do to beggars, neither gave to me  
Good word nor look. What, are my deeds forgot?

**Ulyss**

Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back  
Wherein he puts arms for oblivion,  
A great-siz'd monster of ingratiitudes.  
Those scraps are good deeds past, which are devour'd  
As fast as they are made, forgot as soon  
As done. Perseverance, dear my lord,  
Keeps honour bright: to have done is to hang  
Quite out of fashion, like a rust mail  
In monumental mockery.

**Act 3 Scene 3 Lines 165-174**, Ulysses' fine speech abbreviated to catch the good ending:

**Ulysses**

For time is like a fashionable host  
That slightly shakes his parting guest by th'hand,  
And with his arms out-stretch'd, as he would fly,  
Grasps in the comer. Welcome ever smiles,  
And farewell goes out sighing.

**Act 4 Scene 4 Lines 32-47**, has more fine blank verse from young Troilus to Cressida at their parting:

**Troil**

And suddenly ; where injury of chance  
Puts back leave-taking, jostles roughly by  
All time of pause, rudely beguiles our lips  
Of all rejoindure, forcibly prevents  
Our lock'd embrasures, strangles our dear vows  
Even in the birth of our own labouring breath.  
We two, that with so many thousand sighs  
Did buy each other, must poorly sell ourselves  
With the rude brevity and discharge of one.  
Injurious Time now with a robber's haste  
Crams his rich thiev'ry up, he knows not how ;-

He fumbles up into a loose adieu,  
And scants us with a single famish'd kiss  
Distasted with the salt of broken tears.

By **Act 4 scene 4 lines 82-95**, the decision seems to have been taken by the Trojans to trade Cressida to the Greeks instead of returning Helen to Menalaus. Troilus must lose his Cressida ; the emotions in these two young people are confused:

**Cress**

O heavens you love me not!

**Troil**

Die I a villain then  
In this I do not call your faith in question  
So mainly as my merit: I cannot sing,  
Nor heed the high lavolt, nor sweeten talk,  
Nor play at subtle games—fair virtues all,  
To which the Grecians are most prompt and pregnant ;  
But I can tell that in each case of these  
There lurks a still and dumb-discoursive devil  
That tempts most cunningly. But be not tempted.

**Cress**

Do you think I will?

**Troil**

No  
But something may be done that we will not ;  
And sometimes we are devils to ourselves,  
When we will tempt the frailty of our powers,  
Presuming on their changeful potency.

Of course, Cressida is tempted by the sexual excitement of a new lover among the Greek warriors where she will be lodged.

**Act 5. Sc 1, lines 46-66**, lets us end these examples from Troilus and Cressida with the splendid speech in prose from one of several great characters in this play, Thersites, who gives one of his characteristic assessments of these two Greek commanders, Achilles and Patroclus:

**Thesites**

With too much blood and too little brain these two may run mad,  
but if with too much brain and too little blood they do, I'll be a curer  
of madmen. Here's Agammemnon: an honest fellow enough, and  
one that loves quails, but he has not so much brain as ear-wax ; and  
goodly transformation of Jupiter there, his brother the bull, the  
primitive statue and oblique memorial of cuckolds, a thrifty shoeing-  
horn in a chain at his brother's leg: to what form but that he is,  
should wit larded malice and malice forced with wit turn him to?  
To an ass were nothing: he is both ass and ox ;to an ox were



nothing: he is both ox and ass. To be a dog, a mule, a cat, a fitchhook, a toad, a lizard, an owl, a puttock, or a herring without roe, I would not care ; but to be Menelaus I would conspire against destiny. Ask me not what I would be, if I were not Thersites; for I care not to be the louse of a lazar, so I were not Menaleus.—  
Hey-day! sprites and fires!

**Act V, Scene 2, Lines 87-98** presents another speech (soliloquy) by Thersites' criticism of Diomed who has taken Cressida in the Greek camp:

**Thersites**

That same Diomed's a false-hearted rogue, a most unjust knave:  
I will no more trust him when he leers than I will a serpent when he hisses. He will spend his mouth and promise, like Brabblers the hound: but when he performs, astronomers foretell it, it is prodigious, there will come some change. The sun borrows of the moon when Diomed keeps his word. I will rather leave to see Hector than not to dog him ; they say he keeps a Trojan drab, and uses the traitor Calchas' tent. I'll after. Nothing but lechery: all incontinent varlets!

**Act V, Scene 10, Lines 35-57**, while the following speech by Pandarus closes the play:

A goodly medicine for my aching bones! O world, world, world! Thus is the poor agent despised. O traitors and bawds, how earnestly are you set awork, and how ill requited. Why should our endeavour be so loved and the performance so loathed? What verse for it, what instance for it?—let me see:

Full merrily the humble-bee doth sing  
Till he hath lost his honey and his sting ;  
And being once subdu'd in armed tail,  
Sweet honey and sweet notes together fail.

Good traders in the flesh, set this in your painted cloths:

As many as be here of Pandar's hall,  
Your eyes, half out, weep out Pandar's fall;  
Or if you cannot weep, yet give some groans,  
Though not for me, yet for your aching bones.  
Brethren and sisters of the hold-door trade,  
Some two months hence my will shall here be made,  
It should be now, but that my fear is this:  
Some galled goose of Winchester would hiss.  
Till then I'll sweat and seek about for eases,  
And at that time bequeath you my diseases.



**SHAKESPEARE'S VOICE AS SPOKEN BY HIS  
CHARACTERS**

**PART 2**

Aspects of Individual and Categories of Shakespeare's  
Plays



## *Chapter 8*

### *Introduction to the Twelve Comedies*

The 12 comedies are believed to have been written over 12 years, from between about 1590 and 1604, with never more than two years between them. The word comedy in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century implied a play with a satirical or amusing character, usually with a happy ending. To a varying extent the use of the word comedy is still applied now to some of Shakespeare's plays such as the Merchant of Venice, Troilus & Cressida and Measure for Measure, although it seems inappropriate today, but the long tradition of the use of the word comedy is maintained.

One of the notable features of Shakespeare's writing is that these comedies were begun and continued at a regular spacing of one or two years, when they were written closely interlocking with his History plays and Tragedies. Thus Shakespeare was able to produce his plays as a melange spread throughout his professional working life as a playwright and poet.

The study of Shakespeare's comedies in this book is focussed on providing a short concentrated account of the main themes. There is an attempt to identify particular and unique features that are shared with other comedies, as well as any notable differences between the role of the acting on the stage and the written text. It is notable, for example, that in these comedies the acting usually emphasises more of the humour, whereas farce tends to be concentrated on the stage more than is recognised in the texts. On the other hand, some plays in this Part 2 are discussed at greater length.

The Two Gentlemen of Verona, and the Taming of the Shrew are thought by some scholars to have been among the earliest of the Comedies written, and among the all early plays, with dates of 1593 as being thought likely.

#### *Two Gentlemen of Verona*

In his Introduction to the Arden Edition (1969) of the Two Gentlemen of Verona, Clifford Leech notes that, 'No one is likely to claim that The Two Gentlemen of Verona is a masterpiece or anything like it.' Leech goes on to point out its seminal nature for Shakespeare --- anticipating *The Merchant of Venice*, is the account of Julia's suitors in **Act I, Scene II** of this play. There is comparison with Romeo and Juliet in the planned elopement, the rope ladder, and the banishment of the lover, and his extravagant response to it. There is also some similarity in *As You Like It*, where it suggests the use of a forest setting.

A little later in his Introduction Leech commented that The Two Gentlemen of Verona is not a play where detailed comment on the characters is a worthwhile occupation . Leech's thoughtful Introduction is particularly helpful in his last pages where he pulls these assessments together for us. He comments on the prosody draws

us to note that ‘Perhaps more important is a comment on the use of prose and verse in this play. On the whole it is very good prose....’ The verse varies from the mechanical to the deliberately high flown, to the pathetic and (on rare occasions) the truly eloquent:

At its best, it is fully assured though over sweet.....

Now in another helpful assessment here is the Arden Editor, Cliff Leech, in the last page of his summing up : ‘ The Two Gentlemen appears to take its place among his most artificial plays, as a play on the debate-theme of love versus friendship, but on a deeper inspection it exhibits the fragility, the minor quality, of both love and friendship. It is not merely that men fall in and out of love, and may betray their friends: the very idea of attachment is in this play presented as a small thing, however large its claim, however high its dignity, for the human beings involved. That does not mean that Julia or Silvia or Valentine or even Proteus is outside the range of our, or the playwright’s , sympathy. It does suggest, however, that our involvement is slighter than in some of the later comedies, even though then there is a doubleness of view. Here Julia gets her Proteus, for what he is worth; Valentine gets his Silvia and all she is worth. The two gentlemen reassume the positions of gentility..... We are Bound to wonder about the future of Proteus and Julia, though we know that Valentine and Silvia are story-book figures, whose existence stops with the play.

What more, Leech asks, could one suggest after Leech’s editorial summing up ?

### *The Taming of the Shrew*

Tony Tanner in his chapter on *The Taming of the Shrew*, (Prefaces to Shakespeare, 2010) noted in his comments on Brian Morris’s Arden Edition analysis of the *Taming of the Shrew*, “that Adriana, wife to Antipholous of Ephesus (in the *Comedy of Errors*) is much more complex, more intellectually and emotionally advanced character than the relatively primitive Kate” (in the *Taming of the Shrew*) who is not very intelligent; though, importantly, shown to be more ‘educable’ than her sister.

These first two of Shakespeare’s comedies are very different in their story line and this results, naturally enough, in the difference of behaviour of the characters. The characters in the *Comedy of Errors* are much less given to such strong dispute of the kind that dominates the behaviour of Kate and Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew*. This play is essentially for the most part a battle between Kate, as a young woman, given to shrewish behaviour towards any man showing her any affections including members of her own family, such as her sister Bianca and her father, and especially to any man who suggests marriage with her. Although there are sub-plots in this play, it is dominated by Kate and by Petruchio who woos her to be his wife. Petruchio after a study of her behaviour, determines on a strategy of employing her own aggressive and abusive behaviour that gradually subdues her, so that she eventually agrees to marry him.

There is less humour and less fun in this comedy and there is an absence of farce in the *Taming of the Shrew* in contrast with the *Comedy of Errors*. However, *The Taming of the Shrew* is a comedy in that this play has a happy ending with Kate marrying

Petruchio, and in the interludes of comedy, such as surround the marriage procedures, the marriage feast where Petruchio creates considerable amusement for the audience. However, most of the humour in this play depends on the acting on stage, it does not work anything like as well in reading the play. In this respect too there is a resemblance with *The Comedy of Errors*.

The wooing of Kate takes up less than half of the play and Kate's part is short as she is given only a little of the text, this results from her part being concentrated on her involvement with Petruchio. Much of her part is entirely verbal disagreement. The wooing, taming and the wedding of Kate are strongly dominated by Petruchio whose character and behaviour overwhelms her as she comes to accept his dominance and natural authority. What all this means is that love and marriage are a major feature of the play because the focus of the play is exactly as its title suggests; Petruchio's taming of this shrewish young woman is in order to bring her to accept marriage to this man. Petruchio's role is unusual, as is Kate's, in that both man and woman spend much of their pre-nuptial time together in fighting each other

Once Kate has allowed herself to listen to Petruchio it is soon clear that she is affected by both love and the prospect of marriage. Once she has married and has submitted to Petruchio we can see that Kate is going to have more influence, but she will treat Petruchio carefully as she acquires some power and influence in the marriage in relation to her husband whose strength and role she respects.

### *The Comedy of Errors*

The play has *no great characters, little memorable verse, and a great deal of buffoonery*. The play opens with an old tired man called Egeon, a merchant of Syracuse, who is under threat of execution for an infringement of the law. As this is a comedy, he remains under this threat until the very last scene of the play in **Act 5, Scene 1**. However, most of the play revolves around the mistake in the identity of two sets of twin brothers. The older twins are both called Antipholous, one from Ephesus, the other from Syracuse. Both are merchants currently trading in Ephesus. The other set of twins are the Dromio brothers, who to make the play more complicated and entertaining, are servants to different brotherly twins Antipholous.

None of these relationships are revealed until the last scene of the play in **Act 5**. Both of these brotherly twins have been separated in childhood. However, in the last scene of the play the Duke of Ephesus, a kindly ruler, who understands many errors that have occurred in the past, he forgives Egeon, when Emilia, the Abbess, who is Egeon's wife, who long ago had lost sight of her husband, Egeon, he forgives their two sons, both known just as Dromio during the play, when all is revealed. They have all been separated since childhood and are now united with great happiness. There are many mistakes of identity that led to errors of behaviour, that had caused considerable distress, although without any physical damage or loss of property. Everything is restored to their rightful owners when the identity of the four men becomes recognised. This last scene is filled with joy and rejoicing.

The overall impression of the play is one of relatively gentle distress that provides the audience with much amusement during the play that ends when all is put right and everyone finds happiness in the last scene.

### *Love's Labour's Lost*

Richard David, the editor of the reprinted Arden edition of this play (1966) leaves us in no doubt that he considered this play is exceptional in design and prosody and its somewhat narrow focus in character, while probably many of the original actors seem likely to have been drawn from a troupe of choristers attached to a great house. The Editor, David, states: 'Love's Labour's Lost stands firmly in its own right. No play of Shakespeare's is more distinct, has more character "aura" of its own, and in few is the spell of personality so strong. The attraction springs from an unique combination of formality and actuality, fantastication and common sense.'

One can understand these enthusiasms, but when one reflects on the range of the language, on the dramatic force in the play, on the power to move the theatregoers and readers alike, the characters, soldiers, lovers, those bereaved, the heroic achievements and sacrifices, the intellectual issues debated, and the skill in creating the greatest of the plays. But then one thinks of Measure for Measure, Hamlet, Lear, Henry VIII, Antony and Cleopatra, Julius Caesar, Macbeth, Henry IV i and ii, Henry V and The Merchant of Venice, if we are talking about the greatest achievements, of which not all are listed here. This suggests that this brief and highly condensed listing indicates that one can oversell Love's Labour's Lost, entertaining though it is among his earliest works. It seems very doubtful that Love's Labours Lost would find a place among the widely recognised great plays listed above in this paragraph.

### *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

And what a dream it is for the actors and for the audience in the theatre, and for the readers to lose themselves, to browse and to ponder over. This is one of Shakespeare's most wondrous fantasies; it is one of his most curious imagined realities enriched by such a variety of his created characters. What enormous self-confidence he shows in writing this play; confidence in what his actors are going to do and to say convincingly, and confidence in how his audience will receive this work.

Harold Brooks, the editor of the Arden Edition (1979), points up that 'love and marriage' is the central theme: love aspiring to and consummated in marriage, or to a harmonious partnership within it. Three phases of love are depicted: its renewal, after a breach, in the long standing marriage of Oberon and Titiania ; adult love between mature people in Theseus and Hippolyta ; and youthful love with its conflicts and their resolution, so that stability is reached, in the group of two young men and two girls. The affirmation of its value is the work of the whole dramatic action, from the opening line spoken by Theseus, to Oberon's final benediction: but there is no one expression of it so intense and profound as Juliet's' ( Edited by Brian Gibbons, Arden Edition 1980 **Act 2, Sc. 2, 133-135**).



‘My bounty is as boundless as the sea  
My love as deep: the more I give to thee,  
The more I have, for both are infinite.’

This summary by Brooks, points out the importance and depth of concern and understanding that Shakespeare’s characters reveal on the subject of love and marriage, and which are to be found through the large majority of his comedies, and in many of his other plays. But it is impossible to know to what extent Shakespeare’s characters are reflecting the views of William Shakespeare himself, or the views of some or many of his audience, and his contemporary readers. For the adult population of England in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the subjects of love and marriage appear to be moving away from the views expressed in these plays. One cannot help but suspect that among modern audiences of his plays, films and DVD’s, and among his readers, some take somewhat cynical views, quite distant, from what was expressed about these 16<sup>th</sup> century commitments. The importance of financial strategies may be as relatively important today as they were when Juliet first spoke those so beautiful lines in Shakespeare’s Tragedy in the 1590’s, on the boards of the open stages in London, and perhaps in some great private houses of the rich and influential. It is, of course, not possible to compare the scale and importance of opinions held by the public at such a distance of time. The population of London would have been a fraction of what it is today, but it is possible that the theatres could have been filled for a popular playwright. One cannot know the opinion of thousands today on such an uncertain and changing subject as the influence of money on love and marriage.

As we approach the end of this play there is in the opening verses of the last **Scene 1 of the last Act 5** a marvellous, even magical, exchange between Theseus, the Duke of Athens and Hippolyta who is Queen of the Amazons, who is betrothed to Theseus:

**Hippolyta:**

‘Tis strange, my Theseus, that these lovers speak of.

**Theseus**

More strange than true. I never may believe  
These antique fables, nor these fairy toys.  
Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,  
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend  
More than cool reason ever comprehends.  
The lunatic, the lover, and the poet  
Are of imagination all compact:  
One sees more devils than vast hell can hold ;  
This is the madman: the lover, all as frantic,  
Sees Helen’s beauty in a brow of Egypt:  
The poet’s eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,  
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven ;  
And as imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the poet’s pen  
Turns them to shapes, a name.  
Such tricks hath strong imagination,  
That if it would but apprehend some joy,  
Or, in the night, imagining some fear,

How easy is a bush supposed a bear!

**Hippolyta**

But all the story of the night told over,  
And all their minds transfigured so together,  
More witnesses than fancy's images,  
And grows to something of great constancy ;  
But howsoever, strange and admirable.

These lovely but disturbing lines are a long, long way from those that disturb us through Shakespeare's ten brutal violent tragedies and ten violent plays of England's history. These are attached here to show how the scholars have recognised some of the peculiarities of some of Shakespeare's comedies. For these lines attached immediately below belong to Troilus and Cressida that is classified as a comedy:

Power into will, will into appetite,  
And appetite, an universal wolf,  
So doubly seconded with will and power,  
Must make performe an universal prey,  
And last eat up himself

These powerful lines are a long way from love and marriage but the forces inside our minds belong with ambition. What is so different about the ambitions associated with love and marriage? Is the ambition for the benefit, care and concern for the loved one blended with the ambitions of the will associated with our passions? One can see how care and concern for the loved one might decline when the appetite of the passions become more an appetite of the will.

One might classify the characters in the MSND into three distinct groupings:

- 1). The Toffs: who comprise  
Theseus, Duke of Athens,  
Hippolyta , Queen of the Amazons,  
Lysander & Demetrius a young courtier and in love with Hermia;  
Hermia in love with Lysander,  
Helena, in love with Demetrius,  
Egeus, Hermier's father,  
Philostrate as 'Theseus', Master of the revels.
- 2). The Fairies:  
Oberon, King of the Fairies  
Titania Queen of the Fairies  
A Fairy in Titania's service  
Puck or Robin Goodfellow - Oberons jester and lieutenant  
Peaseblossam  
Cobweb Fairies in Titanias's service  
Moth  
Mustardseed
- 3). The Artisans:

Peter Quince, a carpenter  
Nick Bottom, a weaver  
Francis Flute, a bellows mender  
Tom Snout, a tinker  
Snug, a joiner  
Robin Starveling, a tailor.

The very helpful notes provided by the Editor, Harold Brooks, draw attention to ‘the impeturbability of Bottom as a regular gambit for high class clown humour’.

‘The finest passage in Bottom’s part is his monologue when he awakens without the ass-head, and the finest thing in that is its conclusion. The ballad Quince is to write ‘shall be called “Bottom’s Dream , because it has no bottom’.

‘Comedy of language, of stage spectacle and of situation, all contribute to make Bottom’s a great comic role. Furthermore, not forgetting Puck, he is the foremost comic personality of the play.’

‘Pyramus and Thisby bring into the Dream yet another type of comic burlesque’.

The Editor, Harold Brooks, considers the design and plot of this play to be ‘a masterly exposition’ that ‘contains in embryo virtually the whole play, including the principles of its structure. The design presents a sequence of woodland scenes developing and resolving the dramatic conflicts, and framed within scenes laid in Athens. As part of the exposition, the transition has been made from Theseus and the Athenian polity to Oberon and the realm of magic in the wood; the transition is matched subsequently in reverse. Within Athens the play has moved from Theseus to Quince and the artisans, who are among his citizens, again, a move to be repeated in reverse. Hence Theseus and with him Hippolyta, immune.....’ The design depends, too, upon the chiaroscuro of night and day: daylight for opening scenes in Athens; moonlight followed by fog and then dawn, in the wood; day, presumably, for Bottom’s return to his comrades; night for married couples in the palace, with “moonshine” in Pyramus and Thisbe, finally the fairies enter.’

‘The wood itself, as an otherworld creates the largest-scale pattern of the play.’

## *Merchant of Venice*

This is a comedy with not much humour, not much to laugh about except at other’s misfortunes, and even that is limited. There is no farce of any kind. The classification of this play as a comedy rests almost entirely on the happy ending with the escape with his life of a merchant, Antonio, who had borrowed a substantial sum from the financial trader, Shylock, to lend to his friend Bassanio. Because Antonio could not find the money to repay his debt to Shylock Antonio was in danger of being executed by Shylock in the Court. This led Shylock to being revealed as an exceptionally cruel man not only towards Antonio, but we have seen earlier how cruel and unkind is Shylock to his own daughter Jessica. There is one part of the play where Portia is following instructions of her deceased, very rich father concerning who shall marry her. This entails humorous behaviour by some of the men who wish to marry this very rich girl,

but beyond that, there is very little cause for laughter. The play has no warfare and no wounding or killing but there are scenes of powerful drama.

The main theme of the play is the study of the quality of mercy that is central and closely linked to everything that follows the opening of the court trial of Shylock, the Jewish financial trader. This subject occupies the courtroom from the first scene of **Act 1, Sc.V**, where Portia, the heiress, recently married to Bassanio, who has borrowed a large sum of money from merchant Antonio, who, in turn, owes this large sum to Shylock. Portia has taken it upon herself to act the part, in disguise, of the advocate defending the merchant Antonio in this high court of Venice.

There are some less important themes in the play but several of them are linked in some degree to the main theme led by Portia against Shylock.

As with the other Shakespeare comedies there is an important role for love and marriage, but in this play love and marriage are not examined in detail, and they have, in effect, a less prominent role, even though they take place between Portia and Bassanio, a rich couple, and between Nerissa, a servant to Portia, and Gratiano, a friend to Antonio and Bassanio. There are also a pair of lovers, Jessica and Lorenzo, who have been able to come together as servants to Portia. These last two couples provide minor themes in the play.

Another theme that is evident is the differences between the Christian and two Jewish roles namely, Shylock, a major actor in the play and his daughter, Jessica, a minor part in this play when she deserts her father; Shylock, because of his cruelty and meanness, and because of her love for Lorenzo, a Christian. Shylock is taken by surprise when his daughter leaves their home to join her lover, Lorenzo.

The last part of the play shows the impoverished merchant, Antonio, have his great debt to Shylock cancelled by the Court in Venice because of the vicious and wholly unreasonable behaviour of Shylock. Then, just before the Court closes, Antonio suggests that half of Shylock's riches on his death be granted to his future son-in law, Lorenzo, who will be married to Jessica.

Antonio also asks the Court to make Shylock give up his Jewish faith and for him to take on the Christian faith instead. This, of course, causes Shylock great distress.

One of the main features of the first half of the play revolves around usury that Antonio calls 'interest'. This is ridiculed by Shylock in his several encounters over the question of profiting from usury. The play, as a whole, is laid out to be a tour de force for two characters: Shylock and Portia. Both these parts demand actors of high skills. Shylock, from start to finish, creates a very Jewish view of money lending and a strong dislike of Christians and their trading behaviour. The other great contribution is made by Portia, first as a young rich woman involved in being chosen by strangers who, in a competition, devised by her deceased father, all wish to take this rich woman as their wife. In the event the man who wins her is much to her liking. This part of the play is intended to provide humour from the range of somewhat eccentric candidates for her hand in marriage. Portia's second role, after she had won a very acceptable husband, is her pretending, when she is wearing disguise in the Venice Court, to be a judge, who

effectively carries the very serious legal case brilliantly against Shylock . She achieves this by winning for Antonio a spectacular conclusion in his favour.

A small but interesting feature of the play is the danger of ships laden down with cargoes that can too easily be lost at sea. The Christian versus Jewish trading behaviour is another minor but notable part of the play. Given very good actors and excellent production this play can be a superb example of Shakespeare's dramatic works that is classified as a comedy. This play also reads extremely well.

### *Much Ado About Nothing*

This play is without question designed to make audiences laugh. It could only be classified as a comedy where much, but not all, of the behaviour on stage is designed to make us laugh. Parts of this comedy can be produced as a farce where the treatment of the English language, spoken by uneducated men, can be hilarious, and that is clearly intended by Shakespeare. Where Shakespeare shows us his dramatic skills, and where he knows how to make an audience laugh, he is inviting actors and directors to play it for laughs. Another Shakespearean dramatic skill is the way he blends into his comic drama other examples of powerful, vicious cruelty that brings with it much sadness and regret by the characters who are touched by the cruel treatment of the gentle young woman, Hero, daughter of Leonato, Governor of Messina. Then the plot of repair and reconciliation between Hero and Claudio brings the two sets of lovers together, to be married in the last scene of the play.

This play is a *tour de force*, whereby the first plot sees the happiness of Hero wrecked until it is restored in the last scene. This plot is powerful in the degree of cruelty played against an innocent young woman on the point of marriage that is distressing to her and her friends, and to the audience. The love plot between Beatrice and Benedict is very amusing and supported by its fast witty exchanges between the two lovers. The last plot links both the other plots as two un-educated men, Dogberry and Verges, who provide hilarious exchanges of malapropisms over such very serious matters that had been used to wreck the marriage of Hero and Claudio in the earlier scenes

### *As You Like It*

This play is thought to have been written in 1599, only about a year after *Much Ado About Nothing*. It is another of Shakespeare's comedies. The story line and characters are all very different from those in *Much Ado*, and the *Merchant of Venice*.

One of the most interesting characters in this play is Jaques, whose famous speech begins with ' *All the world's a stage*'. It is so well known because it is so easy to understand, even by people unaccustomed to Shakespeare's language. The speech is somewhat adventitious except for the fact that it suits the character of the speaker so perfectly. Furthermore, it is one of those speeches that, while being notable, it does not need to be followed up, and which Shakespeare ends abruptly, and moves on immediately with three quite different characters. These three are Duke Senior who,

like all the group around him in the forest, are living in exile, driven out by the tyrant, Duke Frederick, who has usurped the castle and lands. Duke Senior is the chief person of all those who have run away together to be safe, and who support Duke Senior. The other two are a very old peasant man, Adam, and young Orlando who has been protecting him during their passage through the forest to join the group led by Duke Senior. This last part of **Act II, Scene vii** also carries a song sung by Amiens that is also sour and sceptical, and, as such, complements the song that was sung by Jaques a few minutes earlier. We note that both these singers; Jaques and Amiens are listed as two Lords attending on the banished Duke Senior. One of the strange lines in Amiens' song is:

‘Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly.’

These off-the-cuff judgements of human behaviour, that we find in Shakespeare's plays, raise questions that haunt us whenever we meet them.

**Jaques** speech is here for comparison and reflection with Amiens song:

All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players,  
They have their exits and their entrances,  
And one man in his time plays many parts,  
His acts being seven ages. At first the infant  
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.  
Then, the whining school-boy with his satchel  
And shining morning face, creeping like snail  
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,  
Sighing like a furnace, with a woeful ballad  
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then, a soldier,  
Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,  
Jealous in honour, sudden, and quick in quarrel,  
Seeking the bubble reputation  
Even in the cannon's mouth. And then, the justice,  
In fair round belly, with good capon lin'd,  
With eyes severe, and beard of formal cut,  
Full of wise saws, and modern instances,  
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts  
Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon,  
With spectacles on nose, and pouch on side,  
His youthful hose well sav'd, a world too wide  
For his shrunk shank, and his big manly voice,  
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes  
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,  
That ends this strange eventful history,  
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,  
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

**Amiens song:**

Blow, blow, thou winter wind,

Thou art not so unkind  
As man's ingratitude  
Thy tooth is not so keen,  
Because thou are not seen,  
Although thy breath be rude  
Heigh-ho, sing heigh-ho, unto the green holly  
Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly,  
Then heigh-ho the holly,  
This life is most jolly.

Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky,  
That dost not bite so nigh  
As benefits forgot.  
Though the waters warp  
Thy sting is not so sharp,  
As friend remember'd not.  
Heigh-ho, sing heigh-ho, unto the green holly,  
Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly,  
Then heigh-ho the holly,  
This life is most jolly.

For the present writer what is so interesting about this song sung by Amiens is the repeated references to ingratitude. Shakespeare makes several other such references to his dislike of ingratitude in his various plays, so much so, that it strains belief that he was not speaking for himself. This is asserted here because there is no apparent, let alone an obvious, cause for this dislike in Shakespeare's text of this play. Furthermore there is the reference in this song, to 'benefits forgot,' of 'a friend not remembered' and the repetition in both stanzas of 'most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly'. For this song to follow directly on Jaques speech, filled with his negative observations on our life from birth to death, is in considerable contrast with the last scene of this play where most of the characters dance together in the ceremony that sees them married. Here, again, it seems that these pessimistic signs may perhaps reflect something in the author's mind at the time he wrote the play.

## *Twelfth Night*

In Act 1. Sc.V. Line 46, Feste is talking to the Countess Olivia: This speech includes, for its time, an unusual use of the word sin, and its implications by Shakespeare are exceptional:

### **Feste:**

Anything that's mended is but patched: virtue that transgresses is but patched with sin, and sin that emends is but patched with virtue. If this simple syllogism will serve, so: if it will not, what remedy? As there is no true cuckold but calamity, so beauty's a flower. The lady bade take away the fool, therefore I say again, take her away.

The 1975 Arden edition notes (on page 23, notes 48 this use of syllogism is to prove that) '*no man is either absolutely good or bad, but of motley morality*'.

This speech by the clown, Feste (cited above), is particularly interesting in that it seems to have provided a rare use of the word *sin* in Shakespeare's writings. This witty usage displays a notable flippancy of one of the most profoundly important words used in texts employed by the Christian Church over hundreds of years. The Oxford English Dictionary reprinted with corrections 1991 volume XV, page 504 records: sin as an act which is regarded as a transgression of the divine law and an offence against God; a violation (esp. wilful or deliberate) of some religious or moral principle.

This seems to be a rare example of one of Shakespeare's character's, Feste, who is the Countess Olivia's clown, revealing irritation and exasperation with the Church tormenting generations of people concerning the church's obsession with sin, and proselytizing the church's claims of terrible punishments by God after their death of all those who have sinned. The claim by Feste, when in discussion with the Countess Olivia, relates to the concept that no man is either absolutely good or bad, but that his morality is always only 'motley'. This would seem to reinforce Feste's syllogism by this apparent challenge to the Church's concept of saintliness.

But this discussion of sin in the play *Twelfth Night*, appears to be discussion with its interludes of Feste's light heartedness. It belongs well in this Comedy with its songs, of people falling in love, others suffering rejections of love, while poor Malvolio, the Countess Olivia's steward, is tormented by faked love letters written by another member of the household of the Countess Olivia, which ends with Malvolio being locked up on the Countess Olivia's property and treated as though he had become a madman.

The other minor themes in this play include a rescue from drowning at sea of a pretty young woman, Viola, who is, for most of this play, dressed up and pretending to be a young man, then calling herself, Cesario, while she serves as a member of the household of the Duke of Orsino. There her job is to woo the Countess Olivier on behalf of the Duke.

The whole play is a delight with several minor subplots that add to the excitement and amusement. Sir Toby Belch, who is almost habitually drunk, together with his pathetic stooge, Sir Andrew Aguecheek, who hopes to woo the Countess Olivia, while he is temporarily a guest of Sir Toby Belch in her fine house, in which these guests and some of the servants enjoy several hilarious and often drunken fooleries.

The Countess's waiting-gentlewoman, Maria, who also connives against Malvolio, by her writing love letters to him purporting to have been written by the Countess, eventually marries Sir Toby Belch near the end of this play.

The Comedy ends with the hasty marriage of the Countess Olivia with the twin brother (thought to have been drowned) of Viola, who now no longer has to pretend to be a young man, Cesario, as she marries in equal haste the Duke Orsino whose servant she had been for presumably a relatively short time since her rescue from shipwreck.

This Comedy can end with an uncertain and possibly sad and perhaps an even ruined future for the Steward of Countess Olivia, in the person of Malvolio. This situation can also end with the position of the Countess's clown, Feste, leaving his position as the



clown to the Countess when he closes the play with his well known song whose first stanza is:

When that I was and a little tiny boy,  
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,  
A foolish thing was but a toy,  
For the rain it raineth every day.

This uncertainty about the future of both the Clown and of Malvolio, who are both employed by the Countess can be avoided. Many playgoers might consider that the happiest, and most successful endings of this play would result if Malvolio accepted that he has been made to look very foolish, but, at the same time, by his adopting a smile of forgiveness towards his former tormentors as he delivers his last words of: 'I'll be reveng'd on the whole pack of you'. Then the Fool, Feste, who was a major tormentor of Malvolio, sings his song that closes the play, when he too gives no suggestion that he has any plans to leave the employ of the Countess. Thus the whole play could end on a happy note with the three marriages being the Countess marrying the shipwrecked brother of Viola (who is only seen in the last moments of the play), while his sister Viola, who was also shipwrecked at the same time marries Orsino, the Duke of Illyria, and with the marriage of Sir Toby Belch with Maria, the Countess's waiting-gentlewoman, adding another joyful event at the end of this play. By both Malvolio and Feste remaining in her service a very much happier ending of this play is created for the audience, and most especially it gives the audience the sense of joy that Feste's last song emphasises with its last stanza that reflects the fun that has been an integral part of most of this play.

A great while ago the world began,  
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,  
But that's all one, our play is done,  
And we'll strive to please you every day.

This uncertainty about the future of both the clown and of Malvolio who are both employed by the Countess can be avoided. Many playgoers might consider that the happiest, and most successful endings of this play would result if Malvolio accepted that he has been made to look very foolish, but, at the same time by his adopting a smile of forgiveness towards his former tormentors as he delivers his last words of: '*I'll be reveng'd on the whole pack of you.*' Then the Fool, Feste, who was a major tormentor of Malvolio sings his song that closes the play, when he too gives no suggestion that he has any plans to leave the employ of the Countess. Thus the whole play can end on a happy note, with the three marriages being the Countess marrying the shipwrecked brother of Viola (who is only seen in the last moments of the play), while his sister, Viola, who was also shipwrecked at the same time marries Orsino, the Duke of Illyria, and with the marriage of Sir Toby Belch with Maria the Countess's waiting gentle woman, adding another joyful event at the end of this play. By both Malvolio and Feste remaining in her service a very much happier ending of the play is created for the audience, and most especially it gives the audience a sense of joy that Feste's last song emphasises with its last stanza that reflects the fun that has been an integral part of most of this play.

A great while ago the world began,

With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,  
But that's all one, our play is done,  
And we'll strive to please you every day.

### *The Merry Wives of Windsor*

This Comedy by Shakespeare is the one play that totally defeats the writer of this book. One suspects that maybe it can be produced with such hilarity that one is still laughing as one leaves the theatre after **Act V, Scene V**. But it seems unlikely that has been the privilege afforded to many theatregoers. The fat man never seems to have been so witty nor so funny as he is when he is on the boards with Prince Hal and Doll Tearsheet. Neither does he have the opportunity to challenge the great except when Shakespeare gives him those very ripe opportunities when he is on stage with Prince Hal and Mistress Quickly. There are scenes in the Windsor play when he seems almost pathetic; a situation in which we have never seen him in his other appearances. Where are the moments when he seems so brilliant and so endearing, not only to us but, more importantly, to several of those with whom he shares the stage under a variety of locations? Where are the women who love him in spite of everything, and when they imagine that he really loves them? The Sir John we know has never known what it is to love anybody. Sir John as we know him is found dallying and looking for a chance of gain among those who find his cowardice highly entertaining.

### *Alls Well that Ends Well*

This relatively late play is tentatively thought to have been written between the dates of 1603-1604 (Arden Shakespeare 1959, Ed. G.K. Hunter, **page xxv, line 5**). It has not always been received by scholars with much enthusiasm; and some of the characters have been severely criticised ; for example, Helena's use of the 'bed trick' has been described as 'being odiously manipulative' ( as reported by Tony Tanner, in *Prefaces to Shakespeare 2010, , page 265*). However, others (including Coleridge) have commented on Helena's part as being 'Shakespeare's loveliest character', while Wilson Knight refers to her as ' the supreme development of Shakespeare's conception of feminine love'. Scholarly commentary on Shakespeare's plays tells us that a great deal of the scholarship is very helpful to the common reader, such as the writer of this book, because the scholars have spent years in studying the world that Shakespeare lived in, and what he read in the books available to him, and much of that is reflected in the reviews of scholars.

What it emphasises is that nowhere in his plays does Shakespeare proselytize his own opinions, but he gives his hundreds of speaking characters opportunities to talk about themselves and about others, and he has had them act out all manner of things that his characters experience in the astonishing wide range of the world that Shakespeare created.

This play reminds us, to some extent, of the four Romances plays written in 1608-1611. The politically and socially inferior character of Helena in *All's Well* opens with her as a young, poor orphan, who has been protected by the Countess of Rossillion. Helena

reminds us of another young virgin, Marina, in *Pericles*, with whom she shares a special skill of healing very ill older men; and she also reminds us of her social vulnerability, something that they both share. Helena in *Alls Well* uses her exceptional, almost magical skills, in curing the King of France who had been dying of a fistula. Helena's techniques suggest to us perhaps something of the great skills of acupuncture. And, like Marina, who is protected in the brothel when she was sold by pirates, but soon helped to escape from it by a rich nobleman, so we see that Helena has been protected by the Countess of Rossillion. Both these young virgins at the very end of their plays, in which they have such important parts, marry the rich, important man with whom they are in love.

Helena is an intelligent and cultivated young woman, just as is Marina in *Pericles*. Helena has confessed to the King and to her Countess protector, who has seen to her education, that she is so much in love with Bertram whom she would like to marry ; but she recognises that she is too far below the high social station of Bertram, the son of her Countess protector. This young Bertram, who considers that Helena is socially far too below him to even consider marrying, expresses no interest in this young girl. Bertram resists the King's persuasions that he should marry Helena until the King becomes so angry with Bertram that this young man agrees reluctantly to marry her. Immediately, before even consummating their marriage Bertram goes off to Florence to fight as a soldier; thus abandoning Helena.

The key events that follow involve Helena leaving France and following her husband without his knowing, and she spreads rumours about her own death. Then Helena in disguise travels to the war zone where her husband is fighting. There she negotiates with great courage and difficulty with local women to help her achieve two crucial objectives, that Bertram had told her would be the only conditions on which he would ever agree to consummate their marriage, after which he would live with her as her husband. One insistence is that Helena obtain the family ring that he wears on his hand and the second objective is that she becomes pregnant by him and bears his child. By means of trickery helped by some poor women in Florence both these objectives are achieved.

Bertram unbeknown to his wife, Helena, returns to Paris, where he and the members of the Court there believe the rumours that Helena has died. However, by various secret ways both the family ring that used to be worn by Bertram is now in Helena's possession, and the child, to be born to Helena by a trick that meant that the woman Bertram had made pregnant in Italy was his own married wife, and not a local girl as he believed. These achievements are revealed to the Court in Paris in the presence of the King , and of course in the presence of Helena's witnesses from Florence. This immediately leads Bertram to reunite with the Helena whom he had married. Bertram now shows he loves his wife and that he wishes to live with her and his family at the Court.

Associated with this very happy ending, the King of France supports the poor young woman from Florence, who had helped Helena so greatly to win honourably her objectives in Italy, so that Helen was able to rescue her marriage with her husband Bertram. One curiosity of these scenes is that Bertram, up until this juncture, had shown himself to be a thoroughly unprincipled and unpleasant man. Furthermore, it is curious that Helena would forgive his vicious unkindness to her, and to more than one poor local virgin in Florence, whom he had intended to ruthlessly seduce.

The language of this relatively short play, that was probably written only three or four years after Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet*, is powerful, often beautiful but can be obscure. There is certainly not much in this play to laugh at and, in that sense, it is not typical of comedies. However, the play has the other characteristic of the comedies, in that it begins happily with the complete cure of the King's very severe disease of a fistula, by the young orphan girl, Helena, and it ends very happily with Helena, after many travails, marrying the young Count Bertram, the son of her protector, Bertram's mother, the Countess of Rossillion.

Here is a key to the early development of this play that preceded the events that have been described in the first two pages of this play:

The Steward, servant to the Countess, overheard Helena talking to herself about her hopeless love for Bertram, the young son of the Countess. The Steward reports to the Countess what she has overheard Helena saying. The Countess asks her Steward to keep what she has heard strictly to herself, for the Countess is very fond of Helena. In fact the Countess has adopted Helena as her daughter and is very concerned for her. Further discussion between the Countess and Helena follows whereby Helena then confesses her love for Bertram and reveals her passion, especially in the four lines in italics of the stanza below:

**Hel**

Here on my knee, before high heaven and you,  
That before you, and next unto high heaven,  
I love your son.  
My friends were poor, but honest; so's my love.  
Be not offended, for it hurts not him  
That he is lov'd of me ; I follow him not  
By any token of presumptuous suit,  
*Nor would I love in vain, strive against hope;  
Yet in this captious and intemperate sieve  
I still pour in the waters of my love  
And lack not to lose still.* Thus, Indian-like,  
Religious in mine error, I adore  
The sun that looks upon his worshipper  
But knows of him no more.

Helena then reveals her plan to travel to Paris from the Countess's Palace in Rossillion in order to try to cure the awful disease of a fistula from which the King of France is dying. The Countess gives Helena her blessing for this venture and its success.

The King is persuaded eventually by the very old Lord Lafue at the Court who lets Helena approach the King's bed. Helena looks so very young that the King considers it highly unlikely that such a young woman could cure him where so many grand and very experienced doctors have failed..

Helena explains that her father was the very successful Dr Gerard Narbon whom the King remembers. The King remains sceptical but eventually he considers allowing Helena to use what her father taught her about curing diseases. Then the King of

France allows her to try to cure his fistula, but she asks him to grant her the husband she will choose, when she cures him. The King agrees to grant Helena whatever young man she wants to be her husband if she is successful in the cure.

She applies her cure and the King completely recovers. The King then agrees to give her Bertram, son of Count Rossillion as her husband. Bertram then begins to refuse Helena on grounds of her poverty and lack of any title. The King promises to make Helena both rich and titled and eventually Bertram reluctantly agrees and they are married.

Bertram then abandons her, refuses to consummate the marriage, and then he goes off to fight against the Florentines in Italy, with some of his friends and acquaintances, leaving his wife, Helena, alone but with Bertram's mother trying to console her over the appalling behaviour of Bertram. Then Helena, in disguise follows Bertram and the other young French men to Florence where they are fighting.

The Countess, Helena and Two French Lords gather at the Count's palace where the Countess reads from the Clown:

This is not well, rash and unbridled boy,  
To fly the favours of so good a king,

To pluck his indignation on thy head  
By the misprizing of a maid too virtuous  
For contempt of empire.

After some long discussion Helena, now left entirely alone in the Rossillion palace quotes from her husband Bertram his cruel adieu:

“Till I have no wife I have nothing in France”

Helena continues her soliloquy with only the audience to hear it. She ends it with the decision that she will now disappear and in doing so she will create rumours of her early death:

Whence honour but of danger winds a scar,  
As oft it loses all; I will be gone ;  
My being here it is that holds the hence.  
Shall I stay here to do't? No, no, although  
The air of paradise did fan the house  
And angels offic'd all. I will be gone,  
That pitiful rumour may report my flight  
To consulate thine ear. Come, night; end day;  
For with the dark, poor thief, I'll steal away.

The Countess now speaks to her steward about her son Bertram and her daughter-in-law, Helena:

Which of them both  
Is dearest to me I have no skill in sense

To make distinction. Provide this messenger.  
My heart is heavy and mine age is weak;  
Grief would have tears and sorrow bids me speak.

This ends Scene 4 of Act 1. The scene now moves to near Florence which is near to the French men who are fighting with the Florentines.

Bertram is planning to seduce Diana , a young Florentine virgin, with all manner of promises . However, his promises are discussed with the disguised Helena who warns the young girls against Bertram. Now the small group of Florentine girls have discussed with Helena how they can use disguise to both acquire the family ring from the hand of Bertram, and how they can trick Bertram into making love to his real wife Helena, and thus make her pregnant with Bertram's child. In this way, if they succeed, Helena will protect the Florentine girls from being seduced by Bertram, while Helena can obtain the two objectives that Bertram has sworn will lead him to live with his legal wife Helena and their first child. These plots are all successful but, unknown to Bertram, who believes he has seduced Diana, the disguise 'bed trick' has been successful, and he has not sexually enjoyed Diana but, unbeknown to him, he has made his own wife, Helena, pregnant when she was disguised to look like Diana.

It is not long before Bertram has made his way back to France, where it is widely believed in Court circles in France that Helena has died. Bertram returns to his home. Later Diana with Helena and some of her Florentine friends arrive in Rossillion. There Diana meets the King and tells the King about the ring that belonged to Bertram and how she came to have been given it by Bertram. Later Helena meets the King again, then the shabby behaviour of Bertram is exposed. Bertram, now recognising how awful has been his behaviour towards Helena, repents on learning that it was his own wife, Helena, with whom he made love in Florence. Evidence is brought forward by witnesses of this. Bertrand is made aware that he has made Helena pregnant and now makes a full promise to her, in the King's and others' presence, of his full commitment to their marriage.

The King promises to provide a rich dowry to the young Florentine girl who supported Helena so bravely, and the King will help find this Florentine girl a husband in his Court. As the Epilogue makes clear all ends happily for them all

This summary has omitted the subplots that are linked to the character Parolles a follower of Bertram. He has an important part throughout this play. We first meet him when he is dressed flamboyantly and is somewhat exhibitionist. He pretends to be a bold and dashing soldier when he joins Bertram and his fellow soldiers who go off to fight in Florence when Bertram abandons Helena whom he has just married. There Parolles who follows Bertram brags about his courage only to be shown up as a frightful coward. Parolles is revealed as very unpleasant and ruthless and being of low social standing in contrast to Bertram who is an even more unpleasant and despicable character from very high birth. These two men are in great contrast with the two women, the Countess of Rossillion and Helena, the poor orphan girl, both of whom are strong and noble in their behaviour and thoughts for others. These four characters, together with the King of France, make a great contrast with the highly unpleasant two characters of rich and poor in the persons of Bertram and Perolles.

## *Measure for Measure*

Measure for Measure is a complex and mature play with many different groups of actors who have notably different but skilfully linked roles. The **first Scene of Act I** opens with Vincentio, the Duke and governor of Vienna, discussing with Escalus, an ancient Lord of Vienna, how he needs to stand down from governing Vienna for a time, and that he is thinking that he should invest a young man, Lord Angelo, who is his Deputy, with the full responsibility for governing Vienna during his own necessary absence. Escalus gives his opinion to the Duke with full support by saying that:

If any in Vienna be of worth  
To undergo such ample grace and honour,  
It is Lord Angelo.'

The interview of Lord Angelo with The Duke and Lord Escalus passes off quickly; the Duke making clear that Lord Escalus is to be Lord Angelo's second in command of the governance of Vienna in the absence of The Duke, which must now begin in great haste.

**Act 1 Sc 2** opens with the Duke having left Vienna and Lord Angelo having already taken up all responsibilities for the governance of Vienna.

The main themes that emerge in this play are:

1. It soon appears that Lord Angelo, who has temporally replaced the Duke, and has become the governor of Vienna in the Duke's absence, is a corrupt magistrate. The Duke's departure from Vienna was in a great haste for undisclosed destinations and undisclosed reasons. In his temporary tender of Duke's office from very early in the play Lord Angelo begins, surprisingly to reveal his tendencies for sexual corruption. He had jilted a young woman , Marina, early in their courtship when he had promised to marry her. Now in his early stewardship of Vienna he endeavours to seduce Isabella a novice Nun who is pleading with him to forgive her brother who had promised to marry a young woman that had become pregnant by him, and the marriage is all arranged. Alas, Lord Angelo has set up draconian rules against any man who makes an unmarried girl pregnant under any circumstances.
2. The Duke of Vienna who has departed in haste now reappears disguised throughout most the play as a friar until the last scene of the play where he allows himself to be exposed as the Duke. During the great part of the play the Duke uses his friar's disguise to study the behaviour of some of the other characters.
3. The young man, Claudio, brother of the Nun Isabella, remains under immediate threat of death imposed by Lord Angelo, the new governor of Vienna . As the play progresses by the efforts of the friar (in the person of the Duke of Vienna in disguise) and the sympathetic Provost of the Prison working with the Friar. The actions of the Provost are very responsible.

4. Mariana, the jilted girl of Lord Angelo is persuaded by the Duke (in disguise) to act as a substitute bed-mate when she pretends that she is Isabella and allows the Lord Angelo to make love to her under that pretence.

5. Claudio, the sister of the Nun, Isabella, suffers great hardship under prolonged threats of hanging by the Lord Angelo despite his sister's attempts to dissuade Angelo from forcing this execution.

6. One of the lesser but important characters is Lucio, described as a 'Fantastic', who is a very entertaining wit throughout the play, and who makes strenuous efforts to rescue the young man, Claudio, from being executed by laws imposed by Angelo, despite all the efforts and pleading by the Nun Isabella, whom Lucio helps and encourages in her debates with Angelo. Lucio has several other roles throughout the play including his teasing witty slanders about the absent Duke of Vienna, and his running jokes and bawdy with which he entertains the audience.

7. One of the great moments in this fine play is the very moving appeal by Mariana to the Duke of Vienna (now fully restored from his days disguised as a friar) to support her by not executing her newly wedded husband in the person of Angelo. Mariana begins her plea to the restored Duke in the following words;

**Mariana:**

O my most gracious lord  
I hope you will not mock me with a husband  
(*whom the Duke had just condemned to death*)

**Duke**

It is your husband mock'd you with a husband.  
Consenting to the safeguard of your honour,  
I thought your marriage fit: else imputation,  
For that he knew you, might reproach your life,  
And choke your good to come. For his possessions,  
Although by confiscation they are ours,  
We do instate and widow you with all,  
To buy you a better husband.

**Mariana**

O my dear lord,  
I crave no other, nor no better man.

**Duke**

Never crave him ; we are definitive.

**Mariana**

Gentle my liege---

**Duke.**

You do but lose your labour.  
Away with him to death.



**Mariana** (*kneeling*)

O my good lord—sweet Isabel, take my part;  
Lend me your knees, and all my life to come  
I'll lend you all my life to do you service.

**Duke**

Against all sense you do importune her.  
Should she kneel down in mercy of this fact,  
Her brother's ghost, his paved bed would break,  
And take her hence in horror.

**Mariana**

Isabel!  
Sweet Isabel, do yet but know by me:  
Hold up your hands, say nothing: I'll speak all.  
They say best men are moulded out of faults,  
And, for the most, become much more the better  
For being a little bad. So may my husband.  
O Isabel! Will you not lend a knee?

**Duke.**

He dies for Claudio's death.

**Isabel**

Most bounteous sir:  
Look, if it please you, on this man condemn'd  
As if my brother liv'd. I partly think  
A due sincerity govern'd his deeds  
Till he did look on me. Since it is so,  
Let him not die. My brother had but justice,  
In that he did the thing for which he died:  
For Angelo,  
His act did not o'ertake his bad intent  
That perish'd by the way. Thoughts are no subjects;  
Intents, but merely thoughts.

**Mariana**

Merely, my lord.

The last 81 lines of this last Act V, Sc. 1 of *Measure for Measure* are dominated by the Duke who quickly reveals that Claudio in disguise is not dead and is soon restored to his beloved grieving fiancée, Juliet; then the Duke restores to Mariana her former suitor, Angelo, after their rapid marriage. Finally, the most extraordinary event of the play occurs in the last six lines when the Duke asks the novice Nun, Isabella, to marry him.

After an appropriate pause in the theatre, while the amazed Isabella (and the surprised audience) have had some time to reflect on this wholly unexpected invitation from the Duke, Isabella joins the Duke, and all leave the stage together.

The earlier part of this play with its stunningly good debates between Isabella, helped by the witty support of Lucio, against their powerful adversary, Angelo, has been extensively discussed in Chapter 2 of this book.

## Chapter 9

### *Introduction to Shakespeare's four Romance plays 1608-1611, and their links to the play King Henry VIII, 1612*

Shakespeare was 43 years old in 1608 and had written 33 plays. By then he seems to have decided to write a group of plays that were going to be very different from his earlier dramas. Over the next five years he wrote five great plays, although some scholars have not regarded all of them as great works.

What sets Shakespeare's four Romance plays: *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*, apart from his penultimate play, *Henry VIII*, is partly what also separates them from his earlier 33 plays. The important roles in the Romance plays are those that are associated with magic and fairytales linked with overcoming the power of evil revealed by the behaviour of some of his men and women characters. Another distinguishing factor is the role of mankind being the plaything of Fortune or of the classical gods of the ancient world. Yet another notable feature of the Romance plays is his creation of one leading woman of sexual innocence in every one of these Romances: Marina in *Pericles*; Imogen in *Cymbeline*; Perdita in *The Winter's Tale*, and Miranda in *The Tempest*. Their chastity is such that Frank Kermode (in his *Shakespeare's Language*, Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 2000) referred to them as 'virgin paragons', and their being 'magical and nowadays virtually unplayable romance heroines'. However, the high quality of the productions of all these plays, that are now available on the BBC DVD *The Shakespeare Collection* of the 37 plays, indicates that, with talented directors and very good acting, all these Romances stand out by their language, dramatic power and, strange as it may seem, for their human interest. Kermode's 'virgin paragons' played and spoken by skilled actresses can make these roles convincing enough that we can find them acceptably real. The first of the four Romance plays, usually regarded as *Pericles*, is notably dependent on a few supernatural scenes, (unique in Shakespeare) of bringing Thaisa back to life after she had been drowned over several days. There are also magical scenes. These remind us in some ways of the life threatening dangers and ultimate escape into happiness, that characterise Mozart's and Schikaneder's opera, *The Magic Flute*. Examples, in *The Magic Flute* (1791), are where magic works to rescue those under threatening harm, as in the escape of Tamino from the huge dragon in the first scene of Act 1; and later the escape in subsequent Acts by Pamina and Papageno from the wicked Monstrato; and later still, of Papageno, Tamino and Pamina surviving the mortally dangerous trials set up by Sarastro. Throughout Shakespeare's four Romances, men of strong characters, such as *Pericles*, *Posthumus*, *Camillo*, *Polixenes*, and *Gonzalo*, *Ferdinand* and *Prospero* who, like Tamino in the *Magic Flute*, behave scrupulously and are ultimately rewarded, usually after much difficulty and danger, by escaping or by being rescued later, when they find happiness at the end of the play as, for example, do Tamino and Pamina in Mozart's opera, *The Magic Flute*.

The editor of the Arden *Pericles*, Hoeniger, remarks on what he sees as 'the only two realistic dramatic scenes' in *Pericles*. He singles out one where, on the beach following his first shipwreck, *Pericles* meets three fishermen who help him in ways that enable him to rebuild his life; and another where *Marina* escapes from being compelled to become a whore in a brothel, to which she has been abducted. However, the BBC DVD collection of these plays, recorded in the late 1970's and early 1980's, provides many more realistic scenes that demonstrate what great plays these Romances are. Even the scenes with *Antiochus* and his daughter, who have incestuously produced children (explicitly revealed in **Act 1, Scene 1, lines 65-72**), are played with realism in *Pericles*, as are the episodes at *Simonides* court; and the storm at sea with *Thaisa*, by then she is the wife of *Pericles*, are presented realistically. The supernatural scenes in bringing *Thaisa* back to life, after she had died and been washed up on the beach in her coffin, are made to appear realistic, just as traditional fairy stories play upon our imagination by causing us to suspend sufficient disbelief to make them acceptably real. In this way Shakespeare's supernatural and fairy story imaginings can work ineluctably upon our imaginations given good direction and acting, and they are also accessible in the same way as is just reading these plays as fairytales.

In the play *Pericles*, our imaginations are worked on by Shakespeare's imagined realities, of which only the bringing back to life the drowned body of *Thaisa* can be categorised as supernatural. *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale*, are not 'dominated' in any way by the supernatural, as some scholars have suggested. The supernatural in *Cymbeline* involves only one short appearance of the Roman God, *Jupiter*, with his magical book that only reappears for a moment in the last minutes of the play. There is also a scene where a magic potion permits *Imogen* to fall into a deep sleep that mimics death, and from which she fully recovers.

However, the supernatural has two very important roles in *The Winter's Tale*. *King Leontes* is persuaded to consult the oracle of *Apollo* at his shrine in Greece. There *Apollo* confirms *Hermione's* innocence from adultery of which she had been accused by her husband, *King Leontes*, and shows that *Leontes* is wrong in his all evil judgments and accusations against his wife, *Hermione*. The second supernatural event is the discovery that *Hermione*, who is thought to have died as a result of *Leontes* cruel and evil accusations against her, has turned into a statue, and much later reappears, and is presented as having been restored to life. *Perdita*, who was lost by being abandoned as a baby, was found by a peasant man who brought her up as his daughter. Years later, fortunate circumstances lead to her being re-discovered as a lovely young woman, who had been abandoned as a baby, and who would have been princess in *Leontes* Court. *Perdita* plays a significant role in **Act 4, Scene 4**. But there is nothing supernatural about *Perdita* or her life. It was fortunate that she survived from being deliberately abandoned as a baby, but that was in no way supernatural. The play *Cymbeline* is rich in fortunate encounters, lucky escapes, happy coincidences and other fairytale events that balance the cruelties, brutalities, wicked deceits and evil behaviour of some of the other characters in this play. Thus, in some ways, these first three of the four Romances Plays are life-like except that there is some exaggeration in the way that Fortune and Evil play their dramatic roles in fulfilling their author's intentions. This realistic behaviour associated with ambitions and kindness, and in other ways by which human good and evil can be presented dramatically, is supported by Shakespeare's remarkable language associated with men and women playing their appointed roles.

The last of these Romances is *The Tempest*, where the fairy-tale and magical powers given to Prospero are employed in two ways. One is the use of his magic staff, the other is his ability to call up a fairytale-like character, Ariel, who has the form of an airy spirit, and who can fly, and being invisible to all except Prospero, for whom he will undertake magical tasks. As with all these Romance plays there is a chaste virgin, and in *The Tempest* it is Miranda, daughter (age about 18) of Prospero, who has been brought up from being a very young girl, by her father; they together having been stranded on a remote island by Antonio, the wicked brother of Prospero.

These four Romances were an entirely new kind of tragicomedy created by Shakespeare in about four years, and completed in 1611. That was less than six years before his death. All four Romances are essentially comedies, in that they all end happily for the good characters who, throughout the plays, have been people free from evil behaviour. Some of those who have behaved badly and have followed evil thoughts are forgiven. Many of the good are shown as having suffered considerably in the earlier part of their lives. One aspect of the goodness of behaviour and thought, that is emphasised by Shakespeare's characters in these Romances, is that it could perhaps be viewed as an analogue of Christian saintliness, although there are no overt pointers to that, and there is no evidence of Shakespeare having any attachment to Christian dogma. By the same token the sufferings might suggest Job was in their author's mind, but that too is not supported by any suggestion in his texts.

Magical influences have engaged our minds since ancient times, and even today people 'touch wood', avoid 'walking under ladders', and 'throw salt' over their shoulder, in order to be protected from the malign supernatural. In less sophisticated societies (if that is a justified description in this context) offerings are still made to supernatural beings or spirits believed to inhabit some local mountains or other proscribed sites. The Christian culture taught that sins committed in life result in horrific punishments after death by the unseen, mystical, Judaic-Christian God. Except murder, the other sins, such as greed, avarice, envy, blasphemy, fornication and adultery, are all part of the ordinary behaviour of many if not most people. Since at least medieval times right up to the present such threats from the Roman clergy have been, and continue to be, used by the Roman Church to instil fear of punishment after death into the population in order to encourage people to conform to Christian morals, and to follow instructions from Bishops and other clergy.

Scholars suggest that *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale* and *the Tempest* were all written by Shakespeare between about 1608 and 1611 (he died in 1616, aged 52). It is clear why these four plays were labelled Romances to distinguish them from the comedies, tragedies, Greek and Roman plays and from the history plays (most of the history plays are tragic in their focus on violence and death in battle). When we recall the violence, cruelty, tragic events and unhappiness in the plays of *Romeo & Juliet*, *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *Othello*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus*, *Henry VI* (i, ii, iii), *Richard III*, *Richard II*, *Henry IV* (i) & (ii), *Henry V*, one cannot but suspect that when Shakespeare, approached the end of his life, he may have desired to write something that dealt with very different, more benign behaviour in human life that reflects, perhaps, more closely what people would have liked to experience, and which they would like to believe would characterise normal life. These Romances present men and women who, while in a world that is violent, evil and barbarous, can nevertheless bring out courageous and honourable men and women.

Shakespeare shows that women can be chaste, considerate and kind despite finding themselves in cruel, threatening circumstances, as well as their being faced with what many would think of as evil temptations. Of course his characters also show realistically how people might have to suffer and be made sorrowful as a part of their passage through life.

This brings us to reflect on Shakespeare's important and penultimate play, King Henry VIII, where the life of Katherine of Aragon, Henry's wife and queen, was, in its latter part, made miserable by the King. He imposed on her enforced penury and anxiety for her life in lonely isolation from the Court, exacerbated by the lord Chancellor of England, Cardinal Wolsey. Both these men were greedy, evil, ruthless and brutal. In this way, Shakespeare links the four Romance plays, that have women with strong characters such as: Marina, Imogen, Perdita, Paulina, and Miranda, all of whom have similar virtues as Henry VIII's Queen Katherine in the play of Henry VIII. In this play, Shakespeare does not employ the supernatural nor magic, instead he brings back onto the stage normal life with the real politics of *'power into will, will into appetite and appetite an universal wolf'*. The author shows how Queen Katherine reveals a generosity of spirit, a bountiful forgiveness and good will towards her husband, the King, and she even expresses her sympathetic understanding of Wolsey, on hearing of his death. Then, as she herself approaches her own early death, in a much reduced state of considerable impoverishment, imposed on her by the King, she is much concerned that those in power should make proper provision for the impoverished lives of her servants when, as she recognises, she is shortly to be dead. In the play King Henry VIII what Shakespeare's characters show is that people, exemplified by Katherine, keep themselves free from greed, lust and brutality in an otherwise brutal, evil and avaricious world. This play may have been intended by Shakespeare as a rounding off of his life as a poet and dramatist who knew his poems and plays would be read and performed in many countries for as long as we exist: he gave us this assurance in his Sonnet 18:

So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,  
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

And this prediction he repeated in Julius Caesar, (Arden edition, T.S. Dorsch, 1955):  
**Act 3, Scene 1, lines 111-113** where Cassius asks rhetorically of Brutus:

How many ages hence  
Shall this our lofty scene be acted over,  
In states unborn, and accents yet unknown?

Having written his great play, Henry VIII, Shakespeare very soon assisted John Fletcher in writing parts of the tragicomedy, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, in 1613-1614, which was Shakespeare's last play; which is not discussed in this book. Shakespeare died two years later in 1616 age 52.

Shakespeare's purpose in writing these four Romances and his penultimate play King Henry VIII was, we may suppose, as always, to entertain his audiences. It is obvious, from their very different characteristics, that from before 1608 he wanted to write plays that were going to be notably different from the 33 plays he had already written. As summarised in the foregoing pages (and as discussed later in Chapters 9 to 13) these

Romances were an experiment, and one can see how they evolved over the four years beginning with *Pericles* and ending with *The Tempest*. One of the notable features that Shakespeare may have intended by these four Romance plays was his concern with his characters revealing moral purposes linked to examples of good and the struggle against evil, that the Romance plays, and the last of these linked plays, *King Henry VIII* (Chapter 14) dated as 1612, all display. There are some obvious features in the Romance plays that many commentators have noted, such as the happy endings associated with families being drawn together after long separations; the associated theme of the older characters going home at the end of the play; both of which, it has been suggested, may have some deliberate correspondence with Shakespeare being reunited with his wife, Anne Hathaway, at their Stratford home in the last years of his life. Some have derided this last suggestion on the basis of what they read as a snub to his wife expressed in his will, the significance of which may, of course, not have been how it appears to us today.

All the good characters are free from lust, and in *The Tempest* sexual lust only once appears when Caliban attempted a rape on Miranda, something he did not repeat. But there are also some scenes of evil behaviour in *The Tempest* by those who have attempted to kill others for personal gain. The Romance plays seem to have been designed almost as a study of good and evil, and a study of how individual men and women respond to temptations. There is something of the medieval miracle plays in these Romances, and there are notable fairy tales in all four of them with miraculous events aiding the rescue of the good, kind characters from great danger, while those who follow an evil path in life are punished by bringing about their own unhappiness. Those that have led a good life are shown to be forgiving towards those who have been evil. Some might see in this the influence of Christian moral philosophy, but others might draw our attention to the fact that, in the first three Romances, it is the gods of the ancient world of Greece and Rome who play significant roles in helping the good characters against the evil persons, who are a threat to the good. It would, be typical of Shakespeare for him to have drawn equally on both Christian morality as much as on the morality of the ancient world of Greece and Rome, that would reflect his tendency to employ his 'negative capability'. Moreover, especially but not exclusively, in *The Tempest*, he makes wide use of the kind of magical powers that one finds in fairy tales.

Notably, in *The Tempest*, the last of these four Romances, we do not see any of the gods from the ancient world. Prospero had been the Duke of Milan, but had been deposed in an evil act by his wicked brother, Antonio, before Prospero was stranded on the island with his very young daughter, Miranda. Prospero had then acquired powers that are associated with a fairy-tale magic staff that he carries. The first use we see him make of his these magic powers is in the opening scene of the play. Here he raised a great storm at sea where the boat carrying his wicked brother and others are driven onto the rocks at the coast of the island where he, Prospero, has been stranded for years in exile. Then, by using his magic powers, Prospero, assisted by his sprite Ariel, ensures that all hands on this vessel are saved and all come ashore safely on Prospero's island. He continues to call up the help of the magical spirit, Ariel, who only responds to Prospero. All this is reminiscent not of the Christian god, nor of any of the gods of ancient Rome and Greece, but its closest resemblance is to fairy stories. Thus we can see the evolution of these four plays from supernatural events in the first play, *Pericles*, then the magical interventions associated with the ancient gods in *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale*, together with some fairy tale elements, and finally, in *The Tempest*, we

are shown a play built around fairy-tales with an associated magic staff and helped by his airy sprite, Ariel, but with no involvement of the Ancient gods.

Another aspect of these four Romance plays is the magical discovery of lost family members re-united after years, or magical rescue from great dangers, threats to the life of a young virgin being sold to a brothel, for example, Marina in *Pericles*, from where she is helped to escape by a rich man whom later she marries. Some of these events belong to some of Shakespeare's characters who have a high regard for the concept of feminine chastity. That is particularly interesting in that chastity finds an important place in his late poem *The Phoenix and Turtle*, written in 1601. Shakespeare's writings in the Romances show, by comparison with his other plays, what Eric Partridge, in his study of bawdy (*Shakespeare's Bawdy*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1990), described as belonging to a period of 'sex-nausea' of which *The Tempest* was 'by far the purest of the Romances'.

What can we make of these five late plays that, in their structure, form and their objectives, represent a dramatic departure from the earlier plays? These invite comparison with the sudden appearance of the exceptional qualities of the late string quartets of Beethoven, the last operas of Verdi, and even the late poems of Gerard Manly Hopkins; as well as the different music (and libretto) of Mozart's & Schikaneder's last opera, *The Magic Flute*; and also the late sculptures of Bernini and some extraordinary late works of Michelangelo.

What other ideas and opinions are discernible from Shakespeare's characters in these four Romances and in the later, linked play of *Henry VIII*? Early in the play, *Pericles*, we are shown a nightmarish picture of a local King Antiochus and his beautiful daughter whom he has taken incestuously as his wife. Antiochus has another foul habit of drawing young men to his palace in order to entice their affections for his daughter but with his intention of murdering these young men for his amusement. Perhaps from his early life in the country town of Stratford on Avon, or elsewhere, Shakespeare had seen the effects of incest, and how much there may have been in late Tudor times?

The detailed scene in the brothel, to which the comely young virgin, Marina, lost daughter of *Pericles*, is taken, to be sold by pirates, may perhaps have been derived from experiences in Shakespeare's bachelor-type of life for many long years in London lodgings, requiring perhaps visits to brothels that might have engendered his revulsion from sexual lust. But the main ideas that emerge from this play are those that reinforce the moral concept that behaving with goodness, kindness and decency will be rewarded by happiness and security, but not necessarily without any periods of time when one suffers and is unhappy (this very much reminds us of Shakespeare's negative capability). This theme is shown especially in the ultimate happy and miraculous reunion of *Pericles* himself with his wife, Thaisa, who is brought back to life by supernatural forces from her having been dead. Another notable feature is the importance of marriage that finds support throughout his plays.

To digress, this may be thought analogous perhaps with Christ's restoration to life of Lazarus (cf. Tyndale's *New Testament*, Ed. David Daniell, Yale University, 1989, pp 149-151). This translation into such beautiful English by Tyndale was printed in 1534, that being 30 years before Shakespeare was born. Appositely both these great writers belong to the last part of the Tudor epoch. Shakespeare, very likely knew this superb



version of the N.T. into English, translated by Tyndale under such dreadfully difficult conditions. Tyndale never knew that his translations of the Bible were incorporated into the first complete English translation of the Bible by Myles Coverdale in Cologne. Tyndale's work ended with his execution, long before he had time to translate all of the O.T. Splendid as are the Psalms in the 1611 King James version, let us reflect, how even greater they might have been had Tyndale been permitted to live to translate the Psalms, when they would have formed the basis and guide for those who were to be engaged in 1603 (i.e. 69 years after Tyndale's version was printed) as translators of the 1611 'Authorized' version of the Bible.

But to return from our digression back to Pericles, in this case, it seems to have been the Goddess Diana who played the key role, she being the Roman Goddess of women in childbirth. It was in giving birth to her daughter, Marina, on board the ship with Pericles in that terrible storm that led to the death of Thaisa in giving birth to her daughter Marina. The body of Thaisa was then dropped overboard in a coffin that was subsequently found washed up on a beach, from where she was taken to the house of Cerimon, a lord of Ephesus. There she was miraculously brought back to life by the supernatural powers of Cerimon, aided we may suppose, by the Roman Goddess, Diana. There is also another happy scene where the lost daughter of Pericles, Marina, is able to miraculously restore the health of her new found father, Pericles, whom she had not met since she was a baby. Thus, this Goddess, Diana, was the eventual guardian of both Thaisa, and then her grown-up daughter, Marina, also using her intervention to help her father, Pericles, Prince of Tyre. One might question if Shakespeare's inclusion of the miraculous gods of Ancient Rome and Greece in these late plays might have been encouraged by his recognising, that miraculous deities, including Christ, are allegorical, and thus allow some comparison with fairy tales. On the other hand, one reason why Shakespeare may have chosen to engage these ancient gods and goddesses, rather than the Christian God, may have been that the authorities of the Christian Church might have been put into fearful wax if Shakespeare had openly mixed the living powers of the Christian God with what were regarded in England as Greek and Roman deities.

When Shakespeare was writing the dramatic poetry and prose for the tragedies and history plays it had to match the violent actions and the thoughts of those involved in blood and brutal murder, and of those possessing most cruel ambitions. There was, through those first 17 years of his writing, from when he began aged, about 26 in, say, 1590, with Henry VI parts 1 to 3, until he finished Timon of Athens in 1607 aged 43, an astonishing record of English writing, and it had included much lyrical dramatic verse that was easy to read and to understand by those familiar with the English texts of that epoch. Having achieved all that, perhaps Shakespeare decided that it was then time to set his masterful dramas in '*pastures new*', with different dramatic poetry, but not less in its power and beauty. Some of it is more difficult to read, and it is not easy to know whether he was writing in haste for possibly a variety of reasons, or did he wish to narrow the differences between his prose and verse?

The pace of accomplishment over those years did not diminish significantly. But, there is one possible indicator that might be investigated: why did he choose to write four plays all using such similar themes and similar characters that he had not used through all four Romance plays and into the example of Henry VIII's Katherine? There, in Henry VIII he completely omitted all the magic and fairy-tale events that

characterise the four Romances. There is no other group of five Shakespeare plays, that show such similarity to each other. What could have been his motives and influences for this scheme? Was it his debt of honour to his wife whom he may have left for years living chastely in their Stratford home. Such speculations can only remain without any certainty. Shakespeare seems to have dedicated his working life to the theatre, poetry and to writing the greatest collection of superb plays ever written and performed in London. It seems that he may have left his wife stranded in Stratford on Avon together with their children seldom seeing their father, but, surely it is far more likely he paid servants to help care for his family while he worked in London.

### **Ideas and opinions that Shakespeare's characters revealed in the four Romance plays and in King Henry VIII**

One of the most obvious opinions Shakespeare's characters reveal in these Romance plays is admiration of chastity in women. Equally, courage and patience in adversity by both men and women are shown to us as admirable. Loyalty and honourable behaviour like kindness, tenderness and compassion shown by both men and women, are admired. Chaste behaviour in married men is not examined in these plays, and his silence on this subject suggests that Shakespeare's experience of London life would seem to indicate that Shakespeare recognised that masculine chastity was as rare as honesty among thieves.

Perhaps he had too many memories of London prostitutes in that lonely London apartment he occupied for so many years; where perhaps he revolted from lust without love. Evil behaviour is manifestly exposed as being highly undesirable, but it seems to have been recognised by Shakespeare as having a natural presence in humankind. Overall, Hamlet's observation, in **Act 2 Scene 2 Lines 249-251** appears to show us the ever present struggle in which, perhaps, we all fail, which is quoted by Hamlet: 'there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so.' What he means seems to be that we know goodness just as we know badness. It is a question of avoiding them and of practising generosity just as we should try to understand greatness in that rare and rich quality of creativity in the arts.

One may therefore take Shakespeare's characters to have indicated to us that both good and bad exist potentially, and where the mind leads to choosing one path rather than the other, that path grants an entry permit. Presumably, most of us travel on both paths for different lengths of time and frequency during our lives. Their definition of identification of good or bad being based on the act of 'thinking', means that while humankind are capable of complex thought, and of taking decisions linked to judgements, we can also respond carelessly to temptations. Nevertheless, we are probably usually aware of the struggle between moral purpose and our responses to Fortune and Strumpets. Thus, although our fates may appear to be entirely our own responsibility, that cannot be so because we cannot foresee the role of Fortune, nor can we anticipate with certainty our responses to Strumpets. We need to recall Hamlet's discussion with his two former school fellows, in the persons of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Hamlet told them that Fortune is a Strumpet. And it is undeniable that women have similar experiences of being tested by all kinds of temptation, whether in the form of Fortune and, or by, the equally powerful temptation of sexual desires for which the word Strumpet may serve metaphorically. Hamlet's metaphoric use of Fortune and of Strumpet may have been chosen by him in recognition of feminine

sexual unfaithfulness and masculine insensitivities to Fortune's wealth, and Strumpet's temptations and pleasures, all equally capable of cheating or disappointing. From his own experiences Shakespeare seems to have found sexual lust repellent. Goodness and generosity are what Shakespeare seems to have found the most gratifying gifts in life, and he was hurt by ingratitude. The greatest rewards of all are to be found in the products of creative imaginations. It seems that Shakespeare wanted to draw our attention to this, as the prompting of his character Prospero referred to in his references to the importance of books and creative and imaginative thinking over 400 years ago.

### **Similarities between All's Well that Ends Well & the Four Romances**

There are some strong similarities between the four Romance plays and All's Well That Ends Well. This play was written in an earlier period from the Romances, according to the editor, G.K. Hunter, in 1603-1604, Arden Edition 1959, who also suggested that All's Well is a twin with Measure for Measure. However, the writer of this book finds the similarities with the Romance plays at least as strong as those in Measure for Measure. One example is the similarity between Helena in All's Well where she is totally rejected by her husband, Bertrand, and left almost stranded. That compares with Cymbeline, where Imogen's husband is totally rejected by her parents and he has to flee from England. These two married women can also be compared closely with Marina, who is rejected by her guardian, Dionyza, who later orders her servant, Leonine, to kill Marina; but Marina is saved by pirates who take her to Mytilene and sell her to a brothel. From there Marina is saved by a rich man, Lysimachus. Another example is found in the Winter's Tale where Hermione, Queen to Leontes, is unjustly imprisoned and threatened with death by her husband, King Leontes. Years later she is found alive. Similarly, her baby daughter, Perdita, was also ordered to be killed by her father, King Leontes, but happily she too was rescued and brought up by an old shepherd. Years later the old shepherd revealed to Miranda that she is a Princess and daughter of Leontes. Another example is to be found in Miranda, daughter of Prospero in The Tempest. Her father, Prospero with his young daughter were abandoned in the Mediterranean by Prospero's wicked brother Antonio. Prospero and Miranda reached a remote, small island where they were trapped for about 15 years, after which they were able to return to Milan where Miranda was happily married. Thus, every one of these Romance plays has this similar pattern of an abandoned or trapped young woman who eventually finds happiness and safety after a long difficult time. Two of these young women Miranda and Imogen were threatened with rape and of the other two, Marina almost killed by Leonine, but was saved by Pirates who then sold her to a brothel, and Imogen was also threatened with death by Cloten

Alls Well and all the Romances have one or more evil and vicious man character. The worst example is Antiochus in Pericles, who must rank as the most evil and vicious of Shakespeare's characters. King Cymbeline, Cloten and Iachimo all in the play Cymbeline, Antonio in The Tempest, and King Leontes in The Winter's Tale are all evil characters, some very evil, but most were finally redeemed and forgiven.



## Chapter 10

### *Pericles*

The purposes and opinions of some of Shakespeare's characters are discussed in this Chapter that provides the text of some of the magical, fairy-tale and a few unusual miraculous events in *Pericles*.

The editor of the Arden *Pericles*, F.D. Hoeniger, 1963, reported a current general view that some time after 1607 the play *Travailes* was written by people other than Shakespeare. Then Shakespeare became interested and assumed responsibility for the last three of the five Acts of the play we know as *Pericles*. However, there appears to be no clear proof of this. Some think that Shakespeare might have rewritten and or restructured the play (e.g. Coleridge, see Arden *Pericles* Introduction by Hoeniger 1963, page liii.). This leaves open the question of 'why did Heminges and Condell not include *Pericles* in the 1<sup>st</sup> Folio?' We do not know and it seems likely we never shall.

Thaisa, the young wife of *Pericles*, dies at sea giving birth to her daughter Marina on the boat carrying *Pericles* and herself to Tyre. Her dead body is then dropped over board in a coffin into a stormy sea. The coffin was swept up onto a beach at Ephesus where it was found and carried to the house of Lord Cerimon who, discovering from papers in the coffin that she was the queen of *Pericles*, Cerimon then uses his benign supernatural powers to bring the dead body of Thaisa back to life. She then continues to live in Ephesus. Meanwhile the boat that had carried her and *Pericles* changed course for the nearer port of Tharsus where *Pericles* went ashore with the nurse Lychorida and his newborn baby daughter, Marina, who had survived the storm at sea. They are welcomed by Cleon and his wife, Dionyza. After a year in Tharsus *Pericles* left his baby daughter there with her nurse where they were under the protection of Cleon and his wife. *Pericles* then departed for Tyre where he had been born, and where he had been Prince and traveled to several Mediterranean countries.

Here is the miraculous scene where Lord Cerimon brings Queen Thaisa back to life from her death and burial at sea in a coffin that floated onto the Ephesus beach, **Act 3, Scene 2, 89-114** (*Enter a servant with napkins and fire so that Cerimon can work his miraculous powers to bring Thaisa back to life. She lies dead in her now opened coffin*):

#### **Cerimon**

Well said, well said; the fire and clothes.  
The still and woeful music that we have,  
Cause it to sound, beseech you.

*(Music)*

The viol once more; how thou usurp'st, thou block!  
The music there!

*(Music)*

I pray you, give her air.

Gentlemen, this queen will live.  
Nature awakes a warm breath out of her.  
She hath not been entranc'd above five hours ;  
See, how she 'gins to blow into life's flower again!

**1<sup>st</sup> Gent**

The heavens through you, increase our wonder,  
And set up your fame forever.

**Cerimon**

She is alive!  
Behold her eyelids, cases to those  
Heavenly jewels which Pericles hath lost,  
Begin to part their fringes of bright gold.  
The diamonds of a most praised water  
Doth appear to make the world twice rich. Live  
And make us weep to hear your fate, fair creature,  
Rare as you seem to be.  
(*She moves*)

**Thaisa**

O dear Diana,  
Where am I? Where's my lord? What world is this?

**2<sup>nd</sup> Gent**

Is not this strange?

**1<sup>st</sup> Gent**

Most rare.

**Cerimon**

Hush, my gentle neighbours!  
Lend me your hands; to the next chamber bear her ;  
Get linen: this matter must be look'd to,  
For her relapse is mortal. Come, come ;  
And Aesculapius guide us!  
(*Everyone exits carrying Thaisa away*)

And now, Marina and the brothel scenes **Act 4, Scene 2, 38-90**: (*Years later when Marina, a young, comely woman, living in Tharsus escaped from an attempted murder of her by Leonine, acting on instructions of Dionyza, wife to Cleon, who was then governor of Tharsus. Marina made her narrow escape with the help of pirates who then abducted her with intent to sell her to a brothel in Mytilene (a port on the Greek Island of Lesbos in the Aegean Sea).*)

**Boult** (a pander's servant)

Come your ways, my masters; you say she's a virgin?

**1<sup>st</sup> Pirate**

O, sir, we doubt it not.

**Boult**

Master, I have gone through for this piece you see.  
If you like her, so; if not, I have lost my earnest.

**Bawd** (from the brothel)

Boult, has she any qualities?

**Boult**

She has a good face, speaks well, and has excellent good clothes; there's no farther necessity of qualities can make her be refus'd.

**Bawd**

What's her price Boult?

**Boult**

I cannot be bated one doit of a thousand pieces.

**Pander**

Well, follow me, my masters; you shall have your money presently.  
Wife, take her in, instruct her what she has to do, that she may not be raw in her entertainment.

*(Pander and Pirates leave)*

Boult take you the marks of her, the colour of her hair, complexion, height, her age, with warrant of her virginity, and cry "He that will give the most shall have her first." Such a maidenhead were no cheap thing, if men were as they have been . Get this done as I command you.

**Boult**

Performance shall follow.

**Marina**

Alack that Leonine was so slack, so slow.  
He should have struck, not spoke ; or that these pirates  
Not enough barbarous, had not o'erboard  
Thrown me for to seek my mother!

**Bawd**

Why lament you, pretty one.

**Marina**

That I am pretty

**Bawd**

Come, the gods have done their part in you.

**Marina**

I accuse them not.

**Bawd**

You are light into my hands, where you are like to live.

**Marina**

The more my fault  
To 'scape his hands where I was like to die.

**Bawd**

Ay, and you shall live in pleasure.

**Marina**

No

**Bawd**

Yes, indeed shall you, and taste gentlemen of all fashions.  
You shall fare well ; you shall have the difference of all  
Complexions. What do you stop your ears?

**Marina**

Are you a woman?

**Bawd**

What would you have me be, and I be not a woman?

**Marina**

An honest woman, or not a woman.

**Bawd**

Marry, whip thee, gosling ; I think I shall have something to do  
with you. Come, you're a young foolish sapling, and must be bow'd  
as I would have you.

**Marina**

The gods defend me!

**Bawd**

If it please the gods to defend you by men, then men must comfort you,  
men stir you up. Boul't's return'd.  
Now, sir, hast thou cried her through the market?

And to **Act IV, Scene 4, Line 90** .....**Act IV, Sc. 5, 3-65**

**Bawd**

Fie, fie upon her! she's able to freeze the god Priapus, and undo  
a whole generation. We must either get her ravish'd or be rid of her.

.....

**Boul't**

Faith, I must ravish her, or she'll disfurnish us of all our cavalleria,  
And make our swearers priests.

**Pander**



Now, the pox upon her green-sickness for me!

**Bawd**

Faith, there's no way to be rid on't but by the way to the pox. Here Comes the Lord Lysimachus, disguised.

.....

**Lysim**

Now my pretty one, how long have you been at this trade?

**Marina**

What trade, sir?

**Lysim**

Why, I cannot name't but I shall offend.

**Marina**

I cannot be offended with my trade. Please you name it.

**Lysim**

How long have you been of this profession?

**Marina**

E'er since I can remember

**Lysim**

Did you go to't so young? Were you a gamester at five or at seven?

**Marina**

Earlier too, sir, if now I be one.

**Lysim**

Why the house you dwell in proclaims you to be a creature of sale.

**Marina**

Do you know this house to be a place of such resort, and will come into't? I hear say you're of honourable parts and are the governor of this place.

.....

And in **Act IV, Scene 6, Line 94** .....

**Marina**

For me,  
That am a maid, though most ungentle fortune  
Have placed me in this sty, where, since I came,  
Diseases have been sold dearer than physic---  
That the gods  
Would set me free from this unhallow'd place,  
Though they did change me to the meanest bird  
That flies I'th' purer air.

**Lysim**

I did not think  
Thou couldst have spoke so well ; ne'er dreamt thou  
couldst.  
Had I brought hither a corrupted mind,  
Thy speech had alter'd it. Hold, here's gold for thee.  
Preserver in that clear way thou goest,  
And the gods strength thee!

**Marina**

The good gods preserve you!

**Lysim**

For me, be you thoughten  
That I came with no ill intent; for to me  
The very doors and windows savour vilely.  
Fare thee well. Thou art a piece of virtue, and  
I doubt not but thy training hath been noble.  
Hold, here's more gold for thee.  
A curse upon him, die he like a thief,  
That robs thee of they goodness! If thou dost  
Hear from me, it shall be for thy good.  
*(Enter Boul)*

**Boult**

I beseech your honour, one piece for me.

**Lysim**

Avaunt thou damned door-keeper! Your house,  
But for this virgin that doth prop it,  
Would sink and overwhelm you. Away!  
*(Exit Lysin)*

**Boult**

How's this? We must take another course with you. If your  
peevish chastity, which is not worth a breakfast in the cheapest  
country under the cope, shall undo a whole household, let me be gelded  
like a spaniel. Come your ways.

**Marina**

Whither would you have me?

**Act 4, Scene 6, Line 130....**

**Boult**

I must have your maidenhead taken off, or the common hangmen shall  
execute it. Come your ways. We'll have no more gentlemen driven away.  
Come your ways, I say.

.....

**Act 4, Scene 6, Line 180 .....**

**Marina**

Here's gold for thee.  
Proclaim that I can sing, weave, sew, and dance,  
With other virtues, which I'll keep from boast ;  
And will undertake all these to teach.  
I doubt not but this populous city will  
Yield many scholars.

**Boult**

But can you teach all this you speak of?

**Marina**

Prove that I cannot , take me home again,  
And prostitute me to the basest groom  
That doth frequent your house.

**Act 4, Scene 6, 190.....**

**Boult**

Well, I will see what I can do for thee ; if I can  
Place thee, I will.

**Marina**

But amongst honest women.

**Boult**

Faith, my acquaintance lies little amongst them.  
.....  
I'll do for thee what I can ; come your ways.

**Act 5, Enter Gower the Chorus**

**Marina**

Thus the brothel 'scapes, and chances  
Into an honest house, our story says.  
She sings like one immortal, and she dances  
As goddess-like to her admired lays.  
Deep clerks she dumbs, and with her neele composes  
Nature's own shape, of bud, bird, branch, or berry,  
That even her art sisters the natural roses ;  
Her inkle, silk, twin with the rubied cherry:  
That pupils lacks she none of noble race,  
Who pour their bounty on her ; and her gain  
She gives the cursed bawd. Here we her place,  
And her father turn our thoughts again,  
Where we left him on the sea . We there him lost,  
Whence , driven before the winds, he is arriv'd  
Here where his daughter dwells; and on this coast  
Suppose him now at anchor.

From this situation we will see the next miraculous and supernatural event, where Marina is brought to the ship in the hope that she will be able to cure her father, who has become ill with grave mental distress, and profound depression so severe that he cannot even speak. Marina does not recognise her father, whom she has not seen for years, and her father does not recognise his now adult daughter. From this affliction Marina miraculously cures him: **Act 5 Scene 1, Line 21** (*On board Pericles' ship anchored off Mytilene. Pericles is in a pavilion on deck reclining on a couch unkempt and clad in sackcloth. Enter Lord Helicanus and two sailors on from Pericles' Tyrian vessel*):

**Lysim**

I am the governor of this place you lie before.

**Helican**

Sir,  
Our vessel is of Tyre, in it is the king ;  
A man who for this three months hath not spoken  
To any one, nor taken sustenance  
But to prorogue his grief.

**Act V, Scene 1; Line 26 ...**

..... The main grief springs from the loss  
Of a beloved daughter and a wife.

**Lysim**

May we not see him?

**Heli**

You may ;  
But bootless is your sight ; he will not speak  
To any.

**Lysim**

Yet let me obtain my wish.

**Heli**

Behold him.  
This was a goodly person,  
Till disaster that, one mortal night  
Drove him to this.

**Lysim**

Sir king, all hail! the gods preserve you!  
Hail, royal sir!

**Helic**

It is in vain ; he will not speak to you.

**1<sup>st</sup> Lord**

Sir,

We have a maid in Mytilene, I durst wager,  
Would win some words of him.

**Lysim.**

'Tis well bethought.  
She, questionless, with her sweet harmony  
And other chosen attractions, would allure,  
And make a batt'ry through his deafen'd ports,  
Which now are midway stopp'd.  
She is all happy as the fairest of all,  
And with her fellow maids is now upon  
The leavy shelter that abuts against  
The island's side.

**Helicon**

Sure, all effectless ; yet nothing we'll omit  
That bears recovery's name. But, since your kindness  
We have stretch'd thus far, let us beseech you  
That for our gold we may provision have,  
Wherein we are not destitute for want,  
But weary for the staleness.

.....

**Act V, Scene 1, Line 64 ...**

**Lysim**

O, here's the lady that I sent for.  
Welcome one! Is't not a goodly presence?

**Helicon**

She's a gallant lady.

.....

**Act V, Scene 1, Line 73 ...**

**Marina**

Sir, I will use  
My utmost skill in his recovery, provided  
That none but I and my companion maid  
Be suffer'd to come near him.

**Lysim**

Come, let us leave her ;  
And the gods make her prosperous! *(they withdraw)*

*(Marina sings.)*

**Lysim**

Mark'd he your music?

**Marina**

No nor looked on us.

**Lysim**

See, she will speak to him.

**Marina**

Hail, sir! my lord, lend ear.

**Pericles**

Hum, ha!

*(Pericles pushes Marina away)*

**Marina**

I am a maid,  
My lord, that ne'er before invited eyes,  
But have been gaz'd on like a comet; she speaks  
My lord, that, may be, hath endured a grief  
Might equal yours, if both were justly weigh'd.  
Though wayward fortune did malign my state,  
My derivation was from ancestors  
Who stood equivalent with mighty kings;  
But time hath rooted out my parentage,  
And to the world and awkward casualties  
Bound me to servitude. (Aside) I will desist;  
But there is something glows upon my cheek,  
And whispers in mine ear "Go not till he speak".

**Pericles**

My fortunes---parentage---good parentage---  
To equal mine---was it not thus? what say you?

**Marina**

I said my lord, if you did know my parentage,  
You would not do me violence.

**Pericles**

I do think so? Pray you, turn your eyes upon me.  
You are like something that--What country woman?  
Here these shores?

**Marina**

No, nor of any shores;  
Yet I was mortally brought forth, and am  
No other than I appear.

**Pericles**

I am great with woe  
And shall deliver weeping. My dearest wife  
Was like this maid, and such a one  
My daughter might have been: my queen's square brows;  
Her stature to an inch ; as wand-like straight;

As silver-voic'd; her eyes as jewel-like  
And cas'd as richly; in pace another Juno;  
Who starves the ears she feeds, and makes them hungry  
The more she gives them speech. Where do you live?

**Marina**

Where I am but a stranger; from the deck  
You may discern the place.

**Pericles**

Where were you bred?  
And how achiev'd you these endowments which  
You make more rich to owe?

**Marina**

If I should tell my history, 'twould seem  
Like lies, disdain'd in the reporting.

**Pericles**

Prithee, speak;  
Falseness cannot come from thee, for thou look'st  
Modest as justice, and thou seem'st a palace  
For the crown'd Truth to dwell in. I will believe thee,  
And make my senses credit thy relation  
To points that seem impossible ; for thou look'st  
Like one I lov'd indeed. What were thy friends?  
Did'st thou not say when I did push thee back,  
Which was when I perciev'd thee, that thou cam'st  
From good descending?

**Marina**

So indeed I did.

**Pericles**

Report thy parentage. I think thou said'st  
Thou had'st been toss'd from wrong to injury,  
And that thou thought'st thy griefs might equal mine,  
If both were open'd

**Marina**

Some such thing I said,  
And said no more but what my thoughts  
Did warrant me was likely.

**Pericles**

Tell thy story;  
If time consider'd prove the thousandth part  
Of my indurance, thou art a man, and I  
Have suffer'd like a girl ; yet thou dost look  
Like Patience gazing on kings' graves, and smiling

Extremity out of act. What were they friends?  
How lost thou them? Thy name, my most, my most kind virgin?  
Recount, I do beseech you. Come, sit by me.

**Marina**

My name is Marina.

**Pericles**

O I am mock'd,  
And thou by some incensed god sent hither  
To make the world to laugh at me.

**Marina**

Patience, good sir,  
Or here I'll cease.

**Pericles**

Nay, I'll be patient.  
Thou little know'st how thou dost startle me,  
To call thyself Marina.

**Marina**

The name  
Was given me by one that had some power,  
My father, and a king.

**Pericles**

How a king's daughter?  
And call'd Marina?

**Marina**

You said you would believe me;  
But, not to be a troubler of your peace,  
I will end here.

**Pericles**

But are you flesh and blood?  
Have you a working pulse, and are no fairy  
Motion? Well, speak on. Where were you born,  
And wherefore call'd Marina?

**Marina**

Call'd Marina  
For I was born at sea.

**Pericles**

At sea! what mother?

**Marina**

My mother was the daughter of a king ;



Who died the minute I was born,  
As my good nurse Lychorida hath oft  
Deliver'd weeping.

**Pericles**

O, stop there a little!  
This is the rarest dream that e'er dull'd sleep  
Did mock sad fools withal ; this cannot be  
My daughter, buried; well; where were you bred?  
I'll hear you more, to th' bottom of your story,  
And never interrupt you.

**Marina**

You scorn; believe me, 'twere best I did give o'er.

**Pericles**

I will believe you by the syllable  
Of what you shall deliver. Yet give me leave:  
How came you to these parts? where were you bred?

**Marina**

The king my father did in Tharsus leave me,  
Till cruel Cleon, with his wicked wife,  
Did seek to murder me ; and having woo'd  
A villain to attempt it, who having drawn to do't,  
A crew of pirates came and rescu'd me;  
Brought to Mytilene. But good sir,  
Wither will you have me? Why do you weep?  
It may be you think me an imposter: no good faith;  
I am daughter to King Pericles,  
If good King Pericles be.

**Pericles**

Ho, Helicanus!

**Helicanus**

Calls my lord?

**Pericles**

Thou are a grave and noble counsellor,  
Most wise in general. Tell me, if though can'st,  
What this maid is, or what is like to be,  
That thus makes me weep?

**Helicanus**

I know not ;  
But here's a regent, sit of Mytilene,  
Speaks nobly of her.

**Lysim**

She never would tell  
Her parentage; being demanded that,  
She would sit still and weep.

**Act V, Scene 1, Line 203 ...**

**Marina**

First, sir, I pray, what is your title?

**Pericles**

I am Pericles of Tyre: but tell me now  
My drown'd queen's name  
.....

**Marina**

Is it no more to be your daughter than  
To say my mother's name was Thaisa?  
Thaisa was my mother, who did end  
The minute I began.

**Pericles**

Now blessing on thee! rise; thou art my child.  
Give me fresh garments. Mine own Helicanus,  
She is not dead at Tharsus, as she should have been,  
By savage Cleon; she shall tell the all  
When thou shalt kneel, and justify in knowledge  
She is thy very princess. Who is this?

**Helicanus**

Sir, 'tis the governor of Mytilene,  
Who, hearing of your melancholy state,  
Did come to see you.

**Pericles**

I embrace you.  
Give me my robes; I am wild in my beholding.  
O heavens bless my girl! But hark, what music?  
Tell Helicanus, my Marina, tell him  
O'er point by point, for yet he seems to doubt,  
How sure you are my daughter. (Music) But what  
Music?

**Helicanus**

My lord, I hear none.

**Pericles**

None?  
The music of the spheres! List my Marina.

**Lysim**

It is not good to cross him; give him way.

**Pericles**

Rarest sounds! Do ye not hear?

**Lysim**

Music, my Lord? I hear.

**Pericles**

Most heavenly music  
It nips me unto list'ning, and thick slumber  
Hangs upon mine eyes; let me rest.

**Lysim**

A pillow for his head. So leave him all.

.....

This **Scene 1 of Act 5** ends with Pericles having a dream wherein he has a vision of the goddess Diana, who advises him not to proceed to Tharsus to revenge himself against the wicked Cleon, who tried to murder his daughter Marina. Instead, the goddess tells him to go to Ephesus where he can find his wife, Thaisa, who is still living. Pericles last saw her dead on their boat, that he cast into the sea in a coffin and was then found upon the beach of Ephesus. Her dead body was recovered and miraculously brought back to life.

In the brief **Scene 2** we see Thaisa now the High Priestess at Diana's Temple. Pericles together with Lysimachus, Helicanus and, of course, with his daughter, Marina, and others, return by boat to Ephesus where Pericles and is reunited with his long-lost and once dead wife. Thaisa has never seen her daughter, Thaisa, because she died giving birth to Marina. They now meet. Marina has grown into a comely young woman who is promised to marry Prince Lysmachus. With this happy reunion the play ends.



## Chapter 11

### *Cymbeline*

This second play of the four Romances was included in the 1<sup>st</sup> Folio. Like the first Romance play, *Pericles*, *Cymbeline* also has a large number of plots. Scholars think it was written in 1611, but the precise date has yet to be determined. There are seven principal themes that constitute this play:

- (i) The objection by the English King and Queen to Postumus Leonatus as an acceptable husband, recently married to King Cymbeline's only daughter, Imogen. The King, now re-married with his second wife, who secretly objects to Postumus Leonatus because she wished her son, Cloten, from a former husband, to be married to Imogen. Postumus is driven from King Cymbeline's court and goes to live in Italy.
- (ii) In Italy Postumus is drawn into a bet with an Italian man, Iachimo, who wagers that he can sexually seduce Imogen while Postumus is away in Italy. Iachimo travels to the English court and on his return to Italy he claims to have seduced Imogen even though he has not.
- (iii) By Iachimo's trickery Postumus is initially persuaded to believe that Iachimo has seduced his wife Imogen. Postumus then plans have his wife Imogen killed by his servant Pisanio in England.
- (iv) Cloten, son of the Queen of England by former husband, desirous of marrying Imogen, finally realises that his suit is hopeless, and he plans to kill her in Wales to where she has fled. His plan fails and he himself is killed by a man he supposes is a peasant.
- (v) An almost unrelated, but important plot, that is exposed at the very end of the play, involves Belarius, now an old man, who was a fine soldier who fought on the side of Cymbeline against the Roman army, but who was forced into secret exile by Cymbeline's misjudgement of him many years ago. This old soldier had later abducted King Cloten's two very young sons and brought them up as his own, without ever telling them of their origins.
- (vi) When the Roman army attacks England again, late in Cymbeline's reign, Belarius and the king's two abducted sons, together with Postumus Leonatus, conduct themselves brilliantly and courageously during this war against the Romans, who are defeated by this English army.
- (vii) Then, in the final **Scene V of Act V**, all these characters, excepting only Cloten, who has been killed, and his mother the Queen of England, who has died, are brought together at the end of the war that has been won by the triumphant English army.

In this last, very dramatic scene all these themes are brought to light and all are resolved happily for the good characters, and the evil characters are all forgiven. The most important results are the bringing together in a new understanding of all the connected events. They include the re-uniting of the loving couple of Imogen and Postumus, and reuniting the two abducted sons with their true father, King Cymbeline, while Belarius,

is forgiven and honoured by the King, who now realises how badly he had treated Belarius. There are several less important themes, crucial to the play, that include the involvements of Pisanio, servant to Postumus, and the roles of Imogen, Cloten and Guiderius and others that have been omitted from this summary.

Jupiter, a god of ancient Rome, arrives in the last Scene of the play and gives a tablet to Postumus that is read to the final assembly of all the main characters in the last and very important Scene.

The key themes that run through this whole play are the same that characterise all the four Romance plays: admiration for the chaste, and in this case a married woman, Imogen, who is presented as a good character throughout the play. The good characters that are strongly differentiated from the evil ones, who are few in number, namely: Cloten, his mother, Queen of England and second wife to Cymbeline, and Iachimo. In all the scenes before the last, when the truth of events is made clear, the evil characters, that include Cymbeline, reform in the final scene, when he had understood the historical events.

Unlike Pericles, that involves some supernatural events that have an important role in that play, as well as magical and fairy story events, Cymbeline does not include anything supernatural, but it does contain very few magical events such as the arrival of the Roman god Jupiter. The play is essentially realistic in all other respects, excepting only the magic poison that functions like a fairy tale, which causes Imogen to appear to have died from a poisonous drug but from which she makes a full recovery, as it had only put her into a very deep sleep.

This play is like no other play written by Shakespeare before Pericles either in its events or in the nature and behaviour of its characters, that in many ways resemble some of the good and bad characters of Pericles, but which in Cymbeline, are less evil than the worst of those in Pericles. Just as in Pericles and in most fairy tales the greatest dramatic moments are those where the good people have their rewards of happiness towards the very end of the play. In Pericles, the evil persons seem to be left with their disgrace and are overlooked at the end of the play where goodness triumphs. A similar pattern for the good persons is followed in Cymbeline, but in this play the evil are either killed, in the person of Cloten, and die like his mother, Queen of England, or others are forgiven in the last moments of the last scene. The last scene of Cymbeline is spectacular, as one by one, and there are quite a number of them; all the good persons are recognised and honoured for their goodness. Reflecting on these two plays suggests that Shakespeare's purposes in writing them must have been at least in part to review the good and evil behaviour of individuals from all ranks of society, but perhaps giving special attention to those from the higher social levels.

Shakespeare is nowhere sentimental, and it is not possible to find anywhere in his writings that goodness in behaviour on earth is necessarily rewarded by happiness. However, some of his evil characters in the Romance plays are forgiven. Moreover, no transcendental event, in the sense of anybody surpassing human experience, such as becoming immortal, or recovering from being dead after a long time is indicated by Shakespeare.

The characters both good and evil are written in the fairy-tale style and the development of themes follows them. Thus the evil tendencies and cunning behaviour the Cymbeline's queen and the ruthlessness of her husband King Cymbeline as well as the vicious, envious Queen's son, Cloten, are of this pattern, as is the wicked cheating liar Iachimo, who attempts to seduce the beautiful and noble princess, Imogen. The English King, Cymbeline, appears throughout the play as vicious, ruthless and cruel until the very last scene of **Act V, Sc 5** where he is brought round to kindness and forgiveness by the examples of such kind and noble behaviour of the good characters, many of whom Cymbeline had unjustly and cruelly punished up till then. The themes of the play, and the behaviour of the good persons who are rewarded in the last Scene are used by Shakespeare to great effect where they are associated with some very fine poetry that evolves in the text. The quality and power of the finest poetry in this play could be said to be some of the finest poetry in the Romance plays. Some examples are set out in following pages with their relevance to the evolving themes and characters of this fine play; **Act 1 Sc. 11 lines 14-32:**

**Imo**

Dissembling courtesy! How fine this tyrant  
Can tickle where she wounds! My dearest husband,  
I something fear my father's wrath, but nothing  
( Always reserv'd my holy duty) what  
His rage can do to me. You must be gone,  
And I shall here abide the hourly shot  
Of angry eyes: not comforted to live,  
But that there is this jewel in the world  
That I may see again.

**Post.**

My queen, my mistress:  
O lady, weep no more, lest I give cause  
To be suspected of more tenderness  
Than doth become a man. I will remain  
The loyal'st husband that did e'er plight troth.  
My residence in Rome, at one Philario's,  
Who to my father was a friend , to me  
Known but by letter ; thither write, my queen,  
And with mine eyes I'll drink the words you send,  
Though ink be made of gall.

Shortly after this Posthumus has to flee from the English court and travel to Rome not knowing when he may be able to return to England.

We have moved on now to **Act II. Sc.II. Line 10.** Iachimo who had boasted to Posthumus, after they had become known to each other in Rome , that he, Iachimo, could seduce Imogen, the wife of Posthumus, who had to remain behind in the English Court. Posthumus finds this wager distasteful, but is persuaded to accept the boastful bet from Iachimo who then leaves Rome for the English Court. There he is quickly accepted in England. He attempts to talk Imogen to let him share her bed who is horrified by this suggestion. Iachimo then prepares to hide himself in a large empty trunk that night as it is located in Imogen's bedroom. In the late night Iachimo quietly

open's the trunk and getting out of it he then examines the notable contents that he records. Then seeing that Imogen still sleeps deeply he quietly kisses her and then gently examines her body. First he carefully takes off her beautiful bracelet and he sees a mole on her left breast, cinque-spotted like a cowslip, and notes this down before returning quietly to the trunk and locking the inside catch. Later Iachimo escapes from the trunk and leaves the Court to make his way back to Rome. There he presents his evidence of having seen the mole on her breast and he also shows Posthumus the bracelet that he had given her when they married. This was evidence enough to prove to Posthumus that Iachimo had successfully seduced the English princess, Imogen. Posthumus, now stunned and horrified, plans to have his wife assassinated in England; **Act II. Sc. II. 10-45** (*Imogen's bedchamber: A trunk in one part of it. Imogen is asleep*):

**Iach.**

The crickets sing, and man's o'er labour sense  
Repairs itself by rest. Our Tarquin thus  
Did softly press the rushes, ere he waken'd  
The chastity he wounded. Cytherea,  
How bravely thou becom'st thy bed! fresh lily .  
And whiter than the sheets! That I might touch  
But kiss, one kiss! Rubies unparagon'd,  
How dearly they do't: 'tis her breathing that  
Perfumes the chamber thus: the flame o' th' taper  
Bows toward her, and would under-peep her lids,  
To see th' enclosed lights, now canopied  
Under these windows, white and azure lac'd  
With blue of heaven's own tinct. But my design.  
To note the chamber: I will write all down:  
Such, and such pictures: there the windows, such  
The adornment of her bed ; the arras, figures,  
Why, such, and such ; and the contents o' th' story.  
About ten thousand meaner moveables  
Would testify, t' enrich mine inventory.  
O sleep, thou ape of death, did dull upon her,  
And be her sense but as a monument,  
Thus in a chapel lying . Come off, come off ;  
*( taking off her bracelet )*  
As slippery as the Gordian knot was hard .  
'Tis mine, and this will witness outwardly,  
As strongly as the conscience does within,  
To th' madding of her lord . On her left breast  
A mole cinque-spotted: like the crimson drops  
I th' bottom of a cowslip. Here's a voucher,  
Stronger than ever law could make ; this secret  
Will force him think I have pick'd the lock, and ta'en  
The treasure of her honour . No more: to what end?  
Why should I write this down, that's riveted,  
Screw'd to my memory?



Now to, **Act II. Sc. IV**; back in Rome, Iachimo, with his stolen treasures from the sleeping Imogen, and with Iachimo's notes taken in her bedchamber of the details of its furniture, were used to convince Posthumus that he had been in Imogen's bedchamber. He shows Posthumus the bracelet stolen from her arm while Imogen lay sleeping. Posthumus was quickly convinced by all these details that Iachimo had been to bed with his wife. **Act II. Sc IV. 154-186** (*Posthumus alone, in a state of shock and convinced by the evidence of Iachimo having seduced Imogen, begins to fume and rage in his soliloquy*):

**Post.**

Is there no way for men to be , but women  
 Must be half-workers? We are all bastards ,  
 And that most venerable man, which I  
 Did call my father, was I know not where  
 When I was stamp'd. Some coiner with his tools  
 Made me a counterfeit: yet my mother seem'd  
 The Dian of that time: so doth my wife  
 The nonpareil of this. O vengeance, vengeance!  
 Me of my lawful pleasure she restrain'd,  
 And pray'd me oft forbearance: did it with  
 A prudence so rosy, the sweet view on't  
 Might well have warm'd old Saturn ; that I thought her  
 As chaste as unsumm'd snow. O, all the devils!  
 This yellow Iachimo, in an hour, was't not?  
 Or less; at first? Perchance he spoke not, but  
 Like a full-acorn'd boar, a German one,  
 Cried "O" and mounted ; found no opposition  
 But what he look'd for should oppose and she  
 Should from encounter guard could I find out  
 The woman's part in me—for there's no motion  
 That tends to vice in man, but I affirm  
 It is the woman's part: be it lying , note it,  
 The woman's: flattering hers; deceiving , hers:  
 Ambitions, covertings, change of prides , distain,  
 Nice longing, slanders, mutability ;  
 All faults that name, nay, that hell knows, why, hers  
 In part, or all: but rather all. For even to vice  
 They are not constant, but are changing still ;  
 One vice, but of a minute old, for one  
 Not half so old as that. I'll write against them,  
 Detest them, curse them: yet 'tis greater skill  
 In a true hate, to pray they have their will:  
 The very devils cannot plague them better.

**Act III. Sc. IV**, (*Pisanio, who is a most loyal servant of Posthumous*)

**Postumus** (*addressing Pissanio*)

Please you read ;  
 And you shall find me (wretched man) a thing  
 The most distained of fortune.

Thy mistress, Pisanio, hath played the strumpet in my bed: the testimonies here lie bleeding in me. I speak not out of weak surmises, but from proof as strong as my grief, and certain as I expect my revenge. That part thou, Pisanio, must act for me.....

Pisanio realises immediately that this letter is based on entirely false information that must have been given to his master, Posthumus.

**Pis.**

What shall I need to draw my sword? The paper  
Hath cut her throat already. No, 'tis slander,  
Who's sharper edge is sharper than the sword, whose tongue  
Outvenoms all the worms of Nile, whose breath  
Rides on the posting winds, and doth belie  
All corners of the world.....

**Imo.**

False to his bed? What is it to be false?  
To lie in watch there, and to think on him?  
To weep 'twixt clock and clock? If sheep charge  
Nature,  
To break it with a fearful dream of him,  
And cry myself awake? That's false to's bed, is it?

**Pis.**

Alas, good lady!

**Imo.**

I false? Thy conscience witness: Iachimo,  
Thou didst accuse him of incontinency ;  
Thou then look'dst like a villain: now, methinks,  
Thy favour's good enough. Some jay of Italy  
(Whose mother was her painting) hath betray'd him:  
Poor I am stale, a garment out of fashion,  
And, for I am richer than to hang by th' walls  
I must be ripp'd: ---to pieces with me!---O,  
Men's vows are women's traitors! All good seeming,  
By thy revolt, O husband, shall be thought  
Put on for villainy ; not born where't grows,  
But worn a bait for ladies.

Pisanio refuses to kill Imogen and he persuades her against killing herself, and after further scenes she is persuaded to dress up disguised as a young man and to call herself Fidele who becomes the close friend of the two sons of Belarius, Guiderius and Arviragus who take great care of 'him' not realising Fidele is a young woman and princess, Imogen. Later Imogen takes the medicine that she was given by Pisano and it makes her fall into a very deep sleep. When Guiderius and Arviragus return to their cave they find Imogen in boy's clothes and they assume she has died. They prepare to

bury him later, but now they sing an elegy to him, supposing him dead. Here are the first two stanzas:

Fear no more the heat o' the sun,  
Nor the furious winter's rages,  
Thou thy worldly task hast done,  
Home are gone and ta'en thy wages.  
Golden lads and girls all must  
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

Fear no more the frown o' th' great,  
Thou art past the tyrant's stroke,  
Care no more to clothe and eat,  
To thee the reed is as the oak:  
The sceptre, learning physic, must  
All follow this and come to dust

Among the many powerful scenes that occur at the very end of the play in **Act V. Sc V.** one is the discovery and realisation by Posthumus of the complete dedication, loyalty and love for him by his wife Imogen. Posthumus had been so badly deceived by Iachimo, who had claimed that he had tried to surprised Imogen . Now Posthumus suddenly realised that he has been so grossly deceived by the totally false claims of Iachimo. Posthumus now faced by Imogen realises the truth of Imogen and her great love and support for him; **Act V. Sc V. lines 261- 263:**

**Imogen**

Why did you throw your wedded lady from you?  
Think that you are upon a rock, and now  
Throw me again.  
(*She embracing him*)

**Post.**

Hang there like fruit, my soul,  
Till the tree die.

This is one example of the beautiful verse with which Shakespeare endowed some of his characters in Cymbeline, his second Romance play.



## *Chapter 12*

### *The Winter's Tale*

There is evidence that suggests Shakespeare finished writing the *Winter's Tale* in 1611 (see J.H.P. Pafford's Arden Edition, page xxii reprinted 1996). This penultimate play of the four Romances, *The Winter's Tale*, seems to suggest that there is a steady decrease in violence beginning with *Pericles*, the first and most violent of these four Romance Plays. Even that play has nowhere anything like the degree of violence that we see in the Tragedies and History Plays.

*The Winter's Tale* shows the least magic and miraculous events of all the four Romances. If one considers that the statue of Hermione that walks and speaks normally in the last **Scene III of Act V** because she has been secretly kept alive by Paulina all those years, then there really is nothing supernatural or even magical in this play of *The Winter's Tale*. The only candidate for fairytale in this play would be the distant involvement of the Greek God Apollo and his secret Oracle.

The play as a whole is most like a fairytale without magic and without the supernatural. It is rich in happy events such as the rescue of Perdita, a baby Princess and her growing up with a shepherd in countryside, happy gatherings that are enlightened by Autolycus who is the wandering rogue who entertains the rural gatherings of mainly young people.

There are only two aggressive and unhappy scenes: one is centred on the excessive jealousy of Leontes, King of Sicilia who in the opening scenes of the play, reveals his unreasonable jealous aggression. His imagining the adultery of his wife with Polixenes, King of Bohemia, is ridiculous, cruel and her supposed death are presented with great skill. But at the end of the play all ends happily with the understanding of the jealousy having been a gross misjudgement on the part of King Leontes, and his wife is shown as either miraculously brought back to life or as having been secretly guarded and kept in health by Paulina for many years.

#### **The *Winter's Tale* and its links to the *Tempest* and *King Henry VIII***

This play of *The Winter's Tale* is another step towards the peace and loving kindness that progressively appear in these four Romances, and which come to full expression in the behaviour of Katherine in the great penultimate play, *King Henry VIII*, which is not classified as being a Romance play. This penultimate play reveals the supreme example of the sweetness and kind consideration for others exemplified by Shakespeare's presentation of Henry VIII's queen, Katherine of Aragon, her rejection by Henry, her exile to the country and her early death. The behaviour of Henry VIII in Shakespeare's penultimate play shows up the great contrast of the noble behaviour of Katherine in comparison with the cruelty of Henry VIII, Wolsey and others. These qualities of Katherine are shown as a most powerful, convincing and unsentimental example of her character and behaviour where she is brutally rejected by the King whose behaviour belongs with the long tradition of rulers as being yet another example of:

Power into will, will into appetite,  
And appetite, an universal wolf,  
So doubly seconded with will and power  
Must make performe an universal prey  
And last eat up himself.

The contrast with Katherine of Aragon is her path through life that scrupulously avoided unnecessary misery and unhappiness for others.

But we must pause to consider the last of the four Romance plays, *The Tempest*. That was written before the penultimate play of King Henry VIII. *The Tempest* shows us the general pattern of the four Romance plays with the loving kindness but also with the cruel reality that is always there in our society where there exists those who seek so ruthlessly for:

The power into will, will into appetite  
And appetite an universal wolf.

*The Tempest* reminds us that despite the loving kindness that we see in *The Winter's Tale* and in the earlier three Romance Plays, that this world of ours is, in reality, always besmirched and often dragged down by those who seek power over us. Furthermore, Prospero is shown as being well aware of these realities, and Shakespeare made sure we would not forget the presence of Caliban, King Alonso of Naples, Antonio the evil doer against his brother Prospero, and of the foolish and un-tutored Trinculo and Stephano, all of whom he reviews gently in front of us, perhaps lest we forget, or in case we become tainted by sentimentality towards those who despise everything, and where every effort is made to disappoint or to ruin any greatness that others have created. Equally, Shakespeare in the four Romances and in the penultimate Henry VIII play may have wished to discourage his audiences and readers into such sentimental habits as thinking that the good tend to be rewarded or that it is only the evil-doers who tend to suffer.

### **The greatness of some of the poetry in its verse observations and intensity in *The Winter's Tale***

If we look at Shakespeare's text of *The Winters Tale* we can see not only how **Act 1 Sc 2, 182.....** was already in the mind of Leontes, King of Sicilia, who has seen his wife Hermione with their invited guest Polixenes, King of Bohemia, walk in animated conversation together in the grounds of the palace. Already it is evident that in the mind of Leontes, his guest, Polixenes, and Hermione, the wife of Leontes, have already become to the eye of Leontes lovers, and are openly displaying their sexual affections as they walk in the gardens together. This is a nonsense and untrue, but we are shown early in the play how the intense sexual jealousy of the host King Leontes has been deeply aroused by the completely innocent friendship between Leontes' guest, Polixenes, and Leontes' wife Hermione. This suspicious jealousy is the basis of the first part of the play. It rapidly develops to the stage where their guest, Polixenes, is forced to flee his host's palace and return to his home. Nothing will calm the unfounded sexual jealousy suffered by Leontes:

**Leon**

Go to, go to! Leontes is obsessed with his sexual fantasy that he recalls below:  
' How she holds up the neb, the bill to him!  
And arms her with the boldness of a wife  
To her allowing husband'

Then as the guest and his wife walk away together quite unaware of the torment of sexual jealousy rapidly growing in the mind of Leontes this speech reveals the intensity of his sexual jealousy that is a total fiction in his mind.

Inch-thick, knee-deep; o'er head and ears a fork'd one.  
Go, play, boy, play: thy mother plays, and I  
Play too; but so surpris'd a part, whose issue  
Will hiss me to my grave: contempt and clamour  
Will be my knell. Go, play, boy, play. There have been,  
(Or I am much deceiv'd) cuckolds ere now,  
And many a man there is (even at this present,  
Now, while I speak this) holds his wife by th'arm,  
That little thinks she has been sluic'd in's absence  
And his fish pond fish'd by his next neighbour, by  
Sir Smile, his neighbour: nay, there's comfort in't,  
Whiles other men have gates, and those gates open'd  
As mine, against their will. Should all despair  
That have revolted wives, the tenth of mankind  
Would hang themselves. Physic for't there's none;  
It is a bawdy planet, that will strike  
Where 'tis predominant ; and tis powerful, think it,  
From east, west, north, and south ; be it concluded,  
No barricade for a belly. Know't,  
It will let in and out the enemy,  
With bag and baggage: many thousand on's  
Have the disease, and feel't not. How now, boy?

Already by **Act II, Sc I , 82** the King Leontes is obsessed to the very edge of madness:

**Leon**

You have mistook, my lady,  
Polixenes for Leontes . O thou thing--  
Which I'll not call a creature of thy place,  
Lest barbarism, making me the precedent,  
Should a like language use to all degrees,  
And mannerly distinguishment leave out  
Betwixt the prince and beggar. I have said  
She's an adulteress ; I have said with whom:  
More ; she's a traitor, and Camillo is  
A federary with her, and one that knows,  
What she should shame to know herself  
But with her most vile principal, that she's  
A bed-swerver, even as bad as those

That vulgars give bold'st titles ; ay, and privy  
To this their escape.

**Herm**

No, by my life,  
Privy to none of this. How will this grieve you,  
When you shall come to clearer knowledge, that  
You thus have publish'd me! Gentle my lord,  
You scarce can right me thoroughly, then to say  
You did mistake.

This exchange of accusation and denial continues for some time with no evidence of any kind being found that would prove any adultery by Hermione. Nevertheless Hermione is sent to prison by the king Leontes. Later king Leontes is persuaded to send to Delphos to seek from Apollo's priest if Hermione is guilty of adultery or not. The reply from Delphos brought to Leontes and his Court is that:

'Hermione is chaste ; Polixines is blameless ; Camillo a true subject; Leontes a jealous tyrant ; his innocent babe truly begotten ; and the king shall live without an heir, if that which is lost be not found.'

Hermione faints at the news that the King Leontes refuses to accept the message from Apollo's oracle in Delphos. She is reported dead soon after. The King Leontes soon accepts the validity of the message from Apollo in Delphos and acknowledges his gross errors.

This brings us to **Act IV** where we learn that the babe born to Hermione and now known to have been the daughter of Leontes and Hermione, was taken on directives from Leontes to have been taken from the palace and left alone in wild countryside. This girl baby is found by a shepherd who brings her up as his own daughter, whom he calls Perdita, and who was found with precious stones and jewels in her baby's clothes. Perdita becomes a shepherdess.

There is a sheep-shearing celebration which involves Perdita at the great annual festival. There is a discussion involving Perdita concerning Nature's way of breeding sheep and of flowers.

**Per**

I'll not put  
The dibble in earth to set one slip of them ;  
No more than, were I painted, I would wish  
This youth should say 'twere well, and only therefore  
Desire to breed by me. Here's flowers for you:  
Hot lavender, mints, savory, marjoram,  
The marigold, that goes to bed wi' th' sun  
And with him rises, weeping; these are flowers  
Of middle summer, and I think they are given  
To men of middle age. Y' are very welcome.

**Cam**



I should leave grazing, were I of your flock,  
And only live by grazing.

**Per**

Out, alas!  
You'd be so lean that blasts of January  
Would blow you through and through. Now, my fair'st  
Friend, (to Florizel)  
I would I had some flowers o' th' spring, that might  
Become your time of day ; and yours, and yours,  
( To Mopsa and the other girls)  
That wear upon your virgin branches yet  
Your maidenheads growing: O Proserpina  
For the flowers now that, frighted, thou let's fall  
From Dis's wagon! daffodils,  
That come before the swallow dares and take  
The winds of March with beauty ; violets, dim,  
But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes  
Or Cytherea's breath ; pale primroses,  
That die unmarried, ere they can behold  
Bright Phoebus in his strength (a malady  
Most incident to maids) ; bold oxlips and  
The crown imperial; lilies of all kinds,  
The flower-de-luce being one. O, these I lack  
To make you garlands of ; and my sweet friend,  
To strew him o'er and o'er!

A notable character of this countryside is a travelling rogue, Autolycus, who sells charms and various items of interest girls and women and items that young men might buy for their girls. He is a cunning thief who likes to cheat the people to whom he sells his wares, **Act IV, Sc. IV, 219-232** (*Enter Autolycus, singing*):

Lawn as white as driven snow,  
Cypress black as e'er was crow,  
Gloves as sweet as damask roses,  
Masks for faces and for noses:  
Bugle-bracelet, necklace amber,  
Perfume for a lady's chamber:  
Golden quoifs and stomachers  
For my lads to give their dears:  
Pins, and poking-sticks of steel,  
What maids lack from head to heel:  
Come buy of me, come! come buy! come buy!  
Buy, lads, or else your lasses cry.  
Come buy.

There is a well developed scene associated with the peasants dancing and buying the trinkets from Autolycus, and the disguised presence of Polixenes, King of Bohemia and his son Prince Florizel, who has fallen in love with Perdita the supposed daughter of the shepherd, but really the lost daughter of King Leontes and his Queen, Hermione, in

Sicilia. Polixenes, is astounded by his son Prince Florizel wanting to marry the Shepherd's daughter, Perdita. Polixenes is strongly opposed to what he supposes is the shepherd's daughter. But even Perdita is unaware that she is not really the daughter of a shepherd, but she is a Princess, daughter of Leontes, who believes his baby daughter that he rejected is long dead. Polixenes refuses to accept Perdita as his daughter-in-law if his son, Prince Florizel is foolish enough to marry a shepherd's daughter. This situation was foreseen by Perdita who had alerted Prince Florizel to this likely outcome when his father got to hear of Florizel's plan to marry her. She replies to Prince Florizel whose father's criticism of his son and of herself in response to King Polixenes who threaten's her with:

**Pol.**

I will devise a death as cruel for thee  
As thou art tender to' t.

**Per.**

Even here, undone,  
I was not much afear'd ; for once or twice  
I was about to speak, and tell him plainly,  
The selfsame sun that shines upon his court  
Hides not his visage from our cottage, but  
Looks on alike. Will't please you, sir, be gone?  
I told you what would come of this: this dream of mine---  
Being now awake, I'll queen it no inch father,  
But milk my ewes, and weep.

The old shepherd who tells us he is 83 and thinks he is shortly to die and wants to be rid of this problem. However Prince Florizel does not weaken but intends to marry Perdita despite all resistance from his father. A long discussion follows that even involves Autolycus.

However, the old shepherd knows that his adopted daughter, Perdita, is a princess because it was this old shepherd who found her when she was an abandoned baby in her basket of swaddling clothes where there was hidden jewels and a written note explaining who she really is, and that this baby Princess was deliberately abandoned on order of King Lorentes all those years ago when she was found by chance of the old shepherd finding her and taking care of her since. The shepherd had kept his knowledge a complete secret of the baby being a princess who had been rejected by the King Leontes.

Two fairy tales now dominate the three scenes of **Act V** that bring the play to a happy ending. The first is the way in which the Perdita and Prince Florizel reach the Court of King Leontes where they are welcomed and their marriage accepted by all. The second fairy tale that also takes place in Leontes Court is the appearance of the supposedly long dead Queen of Leontes who now walks and speaks of her delight at the sight of her adult daughter whom she only knew as a baby before it was taken from her on orders of her husband King Leontes.

## *Chapter 13*

### *The Tempest*

This chapter opens with Prospero, the former Duke of Milan telling us of his Art and of its significance. This last of the four Romance plays open with a sailing-boat, carrying the King of Naples, the Duke of Milan and a group of their staff and servants being battered by a storm in the Mediterranean. The crew are working desperately to save the vessel that seems to be in great danger of foundering on the rocky coast of this island. After this first scene is over Miranda tells her father (in **Act 1, Scene 2**) that she saw people trying to get ashore desperately struggling against the tempestuous waves. Miranda is about 18 years old and has been stranded on this island with her father since she was about three. She is aware that her father, Prospero, has great magical powers and she suspects, correctly, that he may have caused the tempest to drive this boat with the crew and passengers up onto the rocks.

#### **Act 1, Scene 2, lines 1-13**

**Mir.**

If by your Art, my dearest father, you have  
Put the wild waters in this roar, allay them.  
The sky, it seems, would pour down stinking pitch,  
But that the seas, mounting to th'welkin's cheek,  
Dashes the fire out. O, I have suffered  
With those that I saw suffer! A brave vessel,  
(Who had, no doubt, some noble creature in her)  
Dash all to pieces. O, the cry did knock  
Against my very heart! Poor souls, they perish'd!  
Had I been any god of power, I would  
Have sunk the sea within the earth, or ere  
It should the good ship so have swallow'd, and  
The fraughting souls within her.

**Pros.**

Be collected:  
No more amazement: tell your piteous heart  
There's no harm done.

These opening lines of **Act 1, Scene 2**, tell us quite a lot about these two leading characters: Firstly, that Prospero has magic powers that can even cause tempests to blow, and secondly, that Miranda has a soft and considerate heart for those in trouble. Furthermore it tells us that Prospero knows that no harm has been done to those who sailed in this vessel. That in itself suggests that it was probably he who caused the tempest as Miranda suspected. Prospero goes on to confirm that all hands are safe, revealed in the following lines **Act 1 Scene 2, lines 29-32**:

I have with such provision in mine Art  
So safely ordered, that there is no soul-  
No, not so much perdition as an hair  
Betid to any creature in the vessel  
Which thou heard'st cry, which thou saw'st sink.

Shakespeare has his created character, Prospero, tell Miranda about their early life; and by getting her to remember what she can of her earliest years, Prospero begins to tell her how they both came to be stranded on this island where they have lived since she was a toddler. Prospero tells Miranda of his life before they came to this island, how he was Duke of Milan, and how his wicked brother, Antonio, with the help of Alfonso, the king of Naples, stole from her father his Dukedom of Milan, and then abducted him and his daughter from Italy to this remote island where they have been stranded. By this means Shakespeare gives us, his audience, the information we need in order to follow the story of the play as it unfolds.

When one of his characters makes an adventitious comment, that can sometimes indicate that Shakespeare wants to tell us something that especially interests him. One such occurs where, in **Act 1 Scene 2, Line 73**, Prospero is telling Miranda about his life before he came to this island. He tells her that he was:

..... being so reputed  
In dignity, and for the liberal Arts  
Without a parallel; those being all my study,  
The government I cast upon my brother,

It may be significant that Shakespeare wishes us to know about the intellectual and cultural life of Prospero before he was stranded on this island; secondly, it may be the only reference to the study of the liberal Arts in Shakespeare's plays. It may relate to the very different knowledge and understanding compared with the other characters we shall meet, such as Caliban, as the extreme example, and Trinculo and Sebastian, not being very different in some respects from Caliban. The implication is greater than that, for it carries further the distinction between the minds possessed by some learned, cultivated people, from the minds of many of those who are occupied by the management and administration of State, and, or, the making of riches, in addition to the minds of some less educated people. It is an exceptional observation to find in Shakespeare, and it distinguishes this play from the other Romances to the extent of *The Tempest* drawing our attention to the distinction of Nature and of Art. The storm may represent Nature with its power over humankind, Art may also be represented by what Prospero speaks of as his powers based on his great learning and studies in the liberal Arts, indicated by his great library. This justifies his use of influence over some less educated persons and those of uneducated minds. This derives from his possession of Art that gives him understanding of others and of Nature.

One of the reasons that *The Tempest* is read and seen on the stage so frequently maybe is that it possesses some observations by Prospero that perhaps are the closest writing we have of Will Shakespeare telling us what he thinks. Many of us, I suspect, consider that perhaps his writing of *The Tempest* was intended by him to be his last play; but maybe he realised that he could now risk writing his play about Henry VIII. King James was not a Tudor, so he did not feel deeply about the miseries and appalling

brutal mistakes of the late Tudors, especially those perpetrated by the late Queen Elizabeth's father, Henry VIII. Shakespeare wrote Henry VIII because he wanted to close the long history of English monarchs with Henry VIII. And of course Shakespeare saw the wonderful possibilities of the characterisation of the King, of Wolsey, and their great contrasts with Cranmer, and most of all perhaps with Katherine of Aragon. How could Shakespeare resist this dramatic potential, especially the scene when the future Queen Elizabeth, just born, could be brought on stage with speeches from this King Henry VIII and Cranmer?

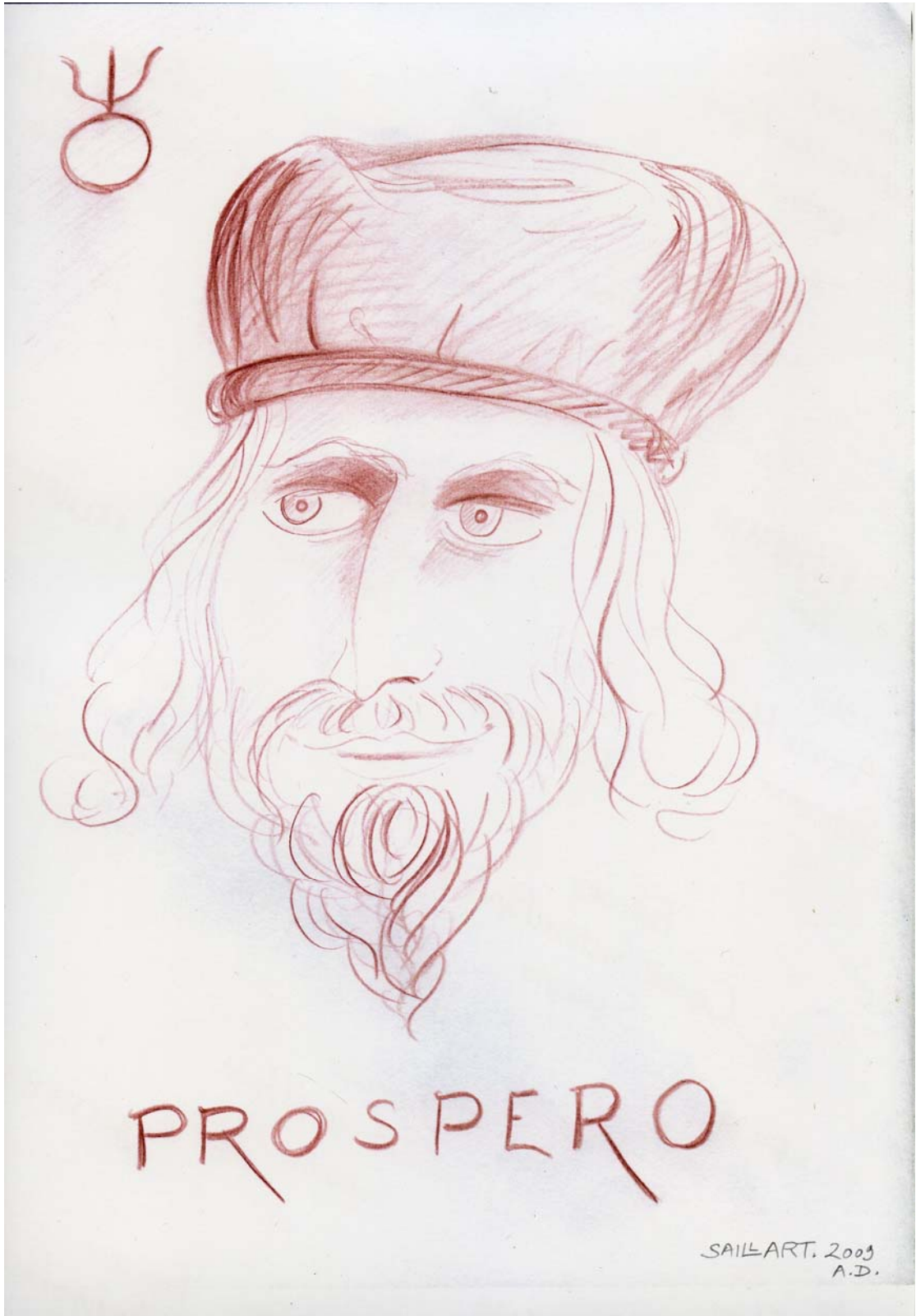
It seems likely that Shakespeare had thought that *The Tempest* would be his last play, and then later realised that a play on Henry VIII, would give closure on his four Romances, and on his Tudor plays after Katherine's early death. Can we be surprised that he chose to create a literary character, a scholar and quiet man, Prospero, whose life had focused on what he had wished to read and to write in his library in Milan? Will Shakespeare had such a brilliant creative mind who wrote superb dramatic and other poetry, and equally great prose for the theatre. He clearly had an understanding of people, public affairs, and of governance.

Prospero and his daughter Miranda have an extended discussion in **Act 1 Scene 2** that takes place after Prospero's storm abated. Prospero tells Miranda how it came about that he was driven away from being the Duke of Milan by his wicked brother, Antonio, who then usurped his Dukedom. Then Prospero tells Miranda how he and Miranda were put in a small boat and left abandoned in the Mediterranean Sea by Antonio and his wicked helpers. By chance, Prospero and Miranda landed on this island where we now find them after about 15 years.

Prospero, is in discussion with his magic sprite, Ariel, who is invisible to all but Prospero, who saved Ariel from a malignant witch Sycorax who had come to the island before Prospero and Miranda arrived there. Sycorax was pregnant at the time and gave birth to a child who grew up into a primitive and ugly man called Caliban (the name is an anagram of Canibal). Prospero looked after him kindly, and his daughter, Miranda, taught Caliban how to speak. Caliban, who has evil tendencies, tried once to rape Miranda, since when Prospero controls him with his magic powers, and treats him as a servant.

In **Act 1, Scene 2, lines 377-383**, Ariel sings and plays—producing all this music invisibly thus conveying Prospero's magic powers:

Come unto these yellow sands  
And then take hands  
Courtsied when you have and kiss'd  
The wild waves whist  
Foot it feately here and there,  
And sweet sprites bear  
The burden, Hark, hark  
Bow-wow  
The watch dogs bark  
Bow-wow  
Hark, hark! I hear  
A strain of chanticleer  
Cry: Cock a diddle dow



Ferdinand ( son of the King of Naples) who escaped from the storm-tossed boat finds his way through the forest to the cave that Prospero calls his cell.

**Ferdinand**

Where should this music be? i' th' air or the 'arth?  
It sounds no more: and sure it waits upon  
Some god o' th' island. Sitting on a bank,  
Weeping again the King my father's wrack,  
This music crept by me upon the waters,  
Allaying both their fury and my passion  
With its sweet air: thence have I follow'd it,  
Or it hath drawn me rather. But 'tis gone.  
No, it begins again.

**Ariel** (*begins to sing again*):

Full fathom five thy father lies ;  
Of his bones are coral made ;  
Those are pearls that were his eyes:  
Nothing of him that doth fade,  
But doth suffer a sea-change  
Into something rich and strange.  
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell

Ding-dong  
Hark! Now I hear them,----Ding-dong, bell

**Ferd.**

The ditty does remember my drown'd father.  
This is no mortal business, nor no sound  
That the earth owes:--I hear it now above me.

**Prosp.**

The fringed curtains of thine eye advance,  
And say what thou seest yond.

**Miran**

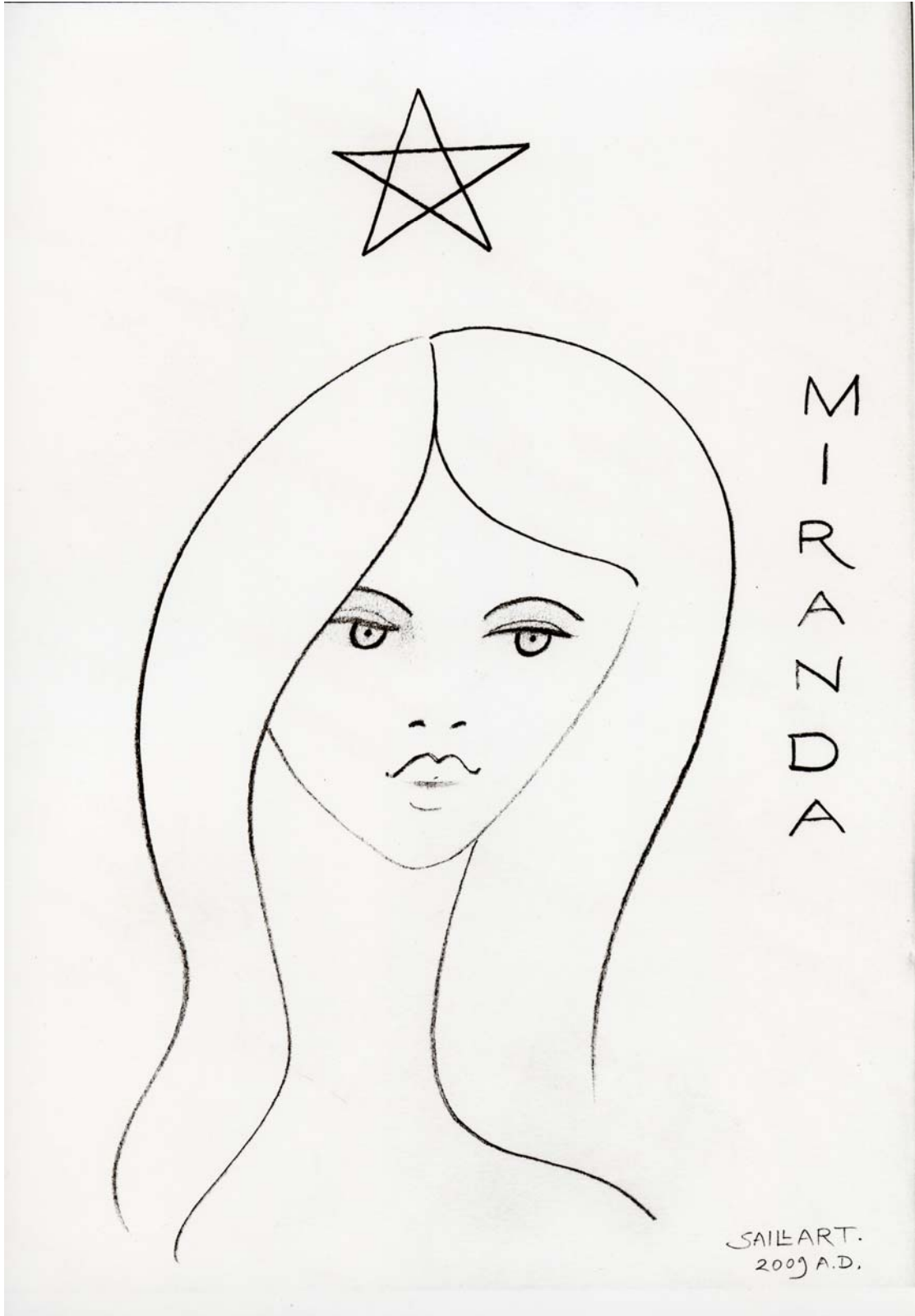
What is't? a spirit?

*(Miranda thinks him a spirit, not having seen any man but her father)*

Lord, how it looks about! Believe me, sir,  
It carries a brave form . But, 'tis a spirit.

**Pros**

No, wench ; it eats and sleeps and hath such senses  
As we have such. This gallant that thou seest  
Was in the wrack; and, but he's something stain'd  
With grief (that's beauty's canker) thou mightst call Him





A goodly person: he hath lost his fellows,  
And strays about to find 'em.

**Mir.**

I might call him  
A thing divine; for nothing natural  
I ever saw so noble

**Pros** (*Aside*)

It goes on, I see,  
As my soul prompts it. Spirit, fine spirit! I'll free thee  
Within two days for this.

**Fer**

Most sure the goddess  
On whom these airs attend! Vouchsafe my prayer  
May know if you remain upon this island ;  
And that you will some good instruction give  
How I may bear me here: my prime request,  
Which I do last pronounce, is, O you wonder!  
If you be maid or no?

**Mir.**

No wonder, sir;  
But certainly a maid.

**Fer.**

My language! heavens!  
I am the best of them that speak this speech,  
Were I but where 'tis spoken.

**Pros.**

How? the best?  
What wert thou, if the King of Naples heard thee?

**Fer.**

A single thing, as I am now, that wonders  
To hear thee speak of Naples. He does hear me;  
And that he does I weep: myself am Naples,  
Who with mine eyes, never since at ebb, beheld  
The King my father wrack'd.

**Mir.**

Alack for mercy!

**Fer.**

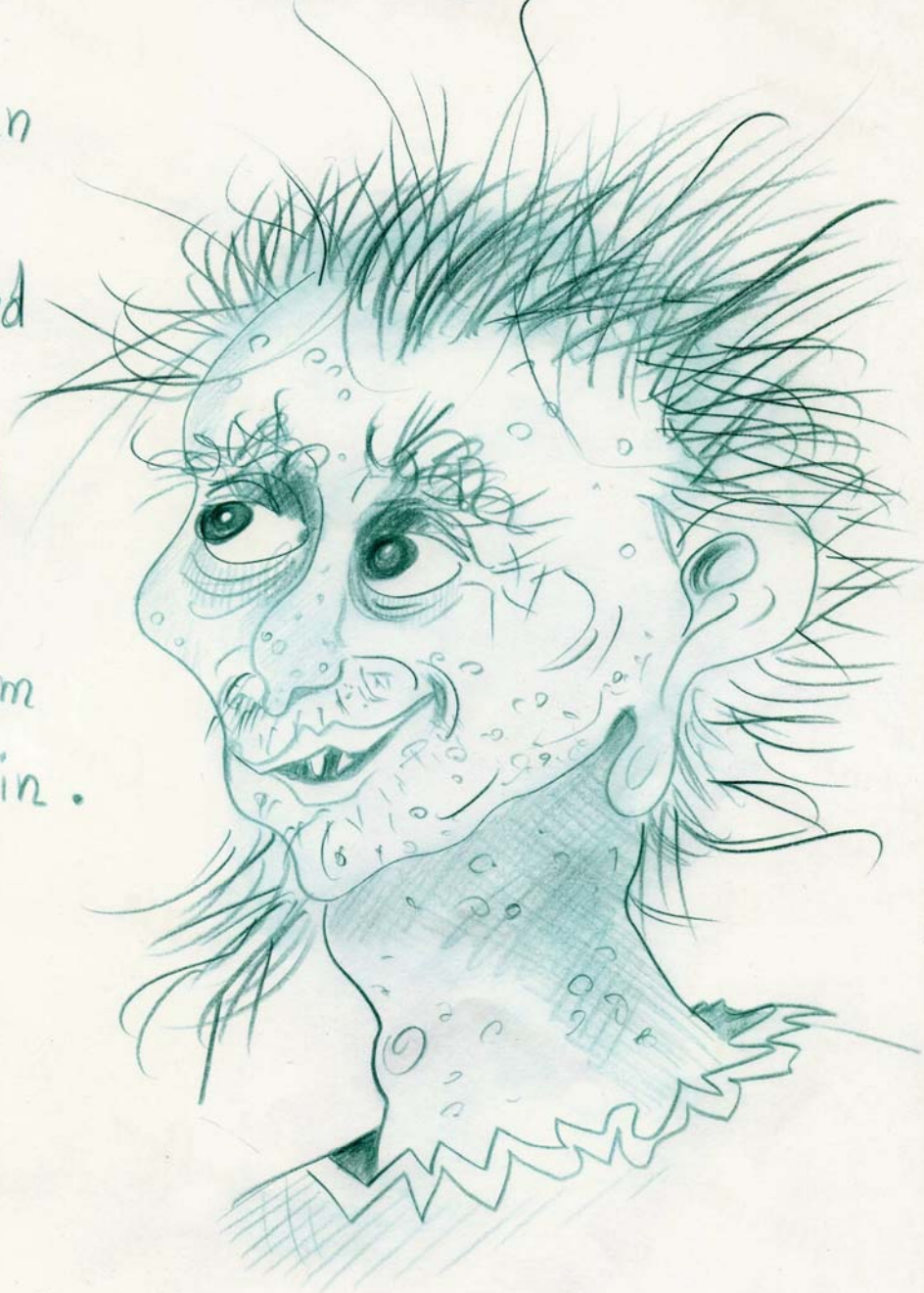
Yes, faith, and all his lords; the Duke of Milan  
And his brave son being twain.

**Pros.** (*Aside*)

The Duke of Milan

# CALIBAN

When  
I  
waked  
I  
cried  
to  
dream  
again.



SAILART. 2009 A.D.

And his more braver daughter could control thee,  
If now 'twere fit to do't. At first sight  
They have chang'd eyes. Delicate Ariel,  
I'll set thee free for this. (To Fir) A word, good sir;  
I fear you have done yourself some wrong: a word.

**Mir.**

Why speaks my father so ungently? This  
Is the third man that e'er I saw; the first  
That e'er I sigh'd for: pity move my father  
To be inclin'd my way!

**Fr.**

O, if a virgin,  
And your affection not gone forth, I'll make you  
The Queen of Naples.

We digress here to recall some lines from Marlow, used later by Shakespeare. It is prompted here by the observation made by Prospero of Ferdinand and Miranda at their first meeting.

We notice that Prospero observed of the two young people that: '*At the first sight they have changed eyes*' (that is glossed as '*fallen in love*'). It seems likely that many in his audience at this play, *The Tempest*, would have remembered those lines first used by Marlow in his poem *Hero and Leander* OUP, 1962, (*The Works of Christopher Marlow*, Ed. C.F. Tucker Brooke, page 496, line 176) so after Marlow's early death, his line was re-used by Shakespeare who wished his audience to remember the greatness of Marlow, and his 'great line'; thus Shakespeare employed it in his own play *As You Like It*- presented in his own charming, sweet way, as shown here below:

**Marlow, Hero and Leander:**

*'Who ever loved that loved not at first sight?'*

**Shakespeare AYLI Act 3, Scene 5 lines 81-82:**

**Phebe:**

*Dear Shepherd, now I find thy saw of might,  
Who ever loved that loved not at first sight?*

What we have witnessed here is the obvious desire of Prospero to see to it that his daughter, Miranda, and the young Prince Ferdinand of Naples, develop affections for each other. With the help of his own influential powers Prospero will not find this difficult, especially with the aide of his magic sprite, Ariel.

**Mir.**

There's nothing ill can dwell in such a temple:  
If the ill spirit have so fait a house,  
Good things will strive to dwell with 't.



**Pros.**

Follow me.  
Speak not you for him: he's a traitor. Come;

I'll manacle thy neck and feet together:  
Sea-water shalt thou drink; their food shall be  
The fresh-brook mussels, withered roots with husks  
Wherein the acorn cradled. Follow.

**Fer.**

No;  
I will resist such entertaining till  
Mine enemy has more pow'r.  
*(He draws his sword and is charmed from moving by Prospero's magic powers.)*

And in **Act 1, Scene 2, line 469:**

**Mir.**

O dear father,  
Make not too rash a trial of him, for  
He's gentle, and not fearful.

**Pros.**

What! I say  
My foot my tutor? Put thy sword up, traitor;  
Who mak'st a show, but dar'st not to strike, thy conscience  
Is so possess'd with guilt: come from thy ward;  
For I can disarm thee with this stick  
And make thy weapon drop.

**Mir.**

Beseech you father.

**Pros.**

Hence! Hang not on my garments.

**Mir.**

Sir, have pity;  
I'll be his surety.

**Pros.**

Silence! One word more  
Shall make me chide thee, if not hate thee. What!  
An advocate for an imposter! hush!  
Thou think'st there is no more shapes as he,  
Having but seen him and Caliban: foolish wench!  
To th' most of men this is a Caliban,  
And they to him are angels.

TRINCULO



SAILART. 2003  
A.D.

**Mir.**

My affections  
Are then most humble; I have no ambition  
To see a goodlier man.

**Pros.**

Come on; obey:  
Thy nerves, are in their infancy again,  
And have no vigour in them.

**Fer.**

So they are:  
My spirits, as in a dream, are all bound up.  
My father's loss, the weakness which I feel,  
The wrack of all my friends, nor this man's threats,  
To whom I am subdued, are but light to me,  
Might I but through my prison once a day  
Behold this maid: all corners else o' th' earth  
Let liberty make use of; space enough  
Have I in such a prison.

**Pros.** (*Aside*)

It works  
(*To Fer*)  
Come on.  
(*To Ariel*)  
Thou has done well, fine Ariel! Follow me;  
Hark what thou else shalt do me.

**Mir.**

Be of comfort;  
My father's of a better nature, sit,  
Than he appears by speech: this is unwonted  
Which now came from him.

**Pros.**

Thou shalt be free  
As mountain winds: but then exactly do  
All points of my command.

**Ariel.**

To th' syllable.

**Pros.**

Come, fellow. Speak not for him.  
(*Exeunt*)

**End of Act 1 Scene 2.**

This is followed by **Act 2 Scene 1** in another part of the island where Alonso, Sebastian, Antonio, Gonzalo and others have escaped from the boat when swamped by the tempestuous sea, while another group from the boat also escaped, but the two groups are unaware of each other's lucky survival.

**Gon.**

Beseech you, sir, be merry, you have cause, (*to Alfonso King of Naples*)  
So have we all, of joy; for our escape  
Is much beyond our loss. Our hint of woe

**Alon.**

Prithee, peace.

**Seb.** (*Aside to Ant*)

He receives comfort like cold porridge.

These passengers from the boat continue to discuss their predicament as they walk through the forest hoping to find others who escaped the boat, and any others who might be living on the island. The oldest, who escaped from the boat being, Alonso, king of Naples and his councillor, Gonzalo, who is a good man, are both tired.

Ariel having discovered these refugees from the boat uses his magic to cause Alonso and Gonzalo to sleep. The younger two, Antonio and Sebastian, now plot to kill the two older men, now asleep. Ariel realises this, so he sings magically in the ear of Gonzalo to wake him (but the others cannot hear or see Ariel because of his magic powers). On being waked by Ariel, Gonzalo sees Antonio and Sebastian with drawn swords. Gonzalo alerts Alfonso, and the two evil men, Antonio and Sebastian, put down their swords to hide their intent.

Then in **Act 2, Scene 2, lines 1-14** in another part of the island Caliban is alone with a load of firewood. He reflects on his present life on this island where he feels the indignity of his position as servant:

**Cal.**

All the infections that the sun sucks up  
From bogs, fens, flats, on Prosper fall, and make him  
By inch-meal a disease! His spirits hear me,  
And yet I needs must curse. But they'll nor pinch,  
Fright me with urchin-shows, pitch me i' th' mire,  
Nor lead me, like a firebrand, in the dark  
Out of my way, unless he bid 'em: but  
For every trifle are they set upon me;  
Sometimes like apes, that mow and chatter at me,  
And after bite me; then like hedgehogs, which  
Lie tumbling in my barefoot way, and mount  
Their pricks at my footfall; sometimes am I  
All wound with adders, who with cloven tongues  
Do hiss me into madness.



Now Trinculo, a servant, who escaped drowning from the boat, appears and sees what he thinks is an animal with two feet lying under the waterproof. Trinculo gets under the waterproof joining Caliban to escape the rain. Trinculo's feet also project out from under the waterproof but in the opposite direction, making it appear there is an animal having two sets of two feet pointing in opposite directions from under the cover.

Stephano, another servant, who escaped from the boat, arrives at this scene and investigates the animal under the waterproof, only to discover that his friend Trinculo is already there with a strange, primitive sort of man, Caliban, also under the waterproof, whom Stephano calls *Monster*. Stephano is a bit drunk from drinking too much wine that he found in casks washed up on the shore from the boat. He now gives some wine to both Caliban and Trinculo, both of whom become affected by it. So in **Act 2, Scene 2, lines 178-187** Caliban sings:

Farewell, master; farewell!  
No more dams I'll make for fish  
Nor fetch in firing  
At requiring  
Nor scrape trenchering, nor wash dish:  
'Ban, 'Ban, Cacaliban  
Has a new master:--get a new man

Caliban stops singing and says:

Freedom, high-day High-day, freedom! Freedom,  
High-day, freedom!

In **Act 3, Scene 1, from line 37** there is an important scene is that between Ferdinand and Miranda where they express their newly discovered loving affections for each other.

**Fer.**

Admired Miranda!  
Indeed the top of admiration! worth  
What's dearest to the world! Full many a lady  
I have ey'd with best regard, and many a time  
The harmony of their tongues hath into bondage  
Brought my too diligent ear: for several virtues  
Have I lik'd several women; never any  
With so full a soul, but some defect in her  
Did quarrel with the noblest grace she ow'd,  
And put it to the foil: but you, O you,  
So perfect and so peerless, are created  
Of every creature's best!

**Mir.**

I do not know  
One of my sex; no woman's face remember,  
Save, from my glass, mine own, nor have I seen  
More than I may call men than you, good friend,

And my dear father: how features are abroad,  
I am skillless of; but, by my modesty,  
The jewell of my dower, I would not wish  
Any companion in the world but you:  
Nor can imagination form a shape,  
Besides yourself, to like of. But I prattle  
Something too wildly, and my father's precepts  
I therein do forget.

**Fer.**

I am, in my condition,  
A prince, Miranda; I do think, a King ;  
I would not so!---and would no more endure  
This wooden slavery than to suffer  
The flesh-fly blow my mouth. Hear my soul speak:  
The very instant that I saw you, did  
My heart fly to your service; there resides,  
To make me slave to it; and for your sake  
Am I this patient log-man.

**Mir.**

Do you love me?

**Fer.**

O heaven, O earth, bear witness to this sound,  
And crown what I profess with kind event,  
If I speak true! If hollowly, invert  
What best is boded me to mischief, I  
Beyond all limit of what else I' th'world,  
Do love, prize, honour you.

**Mir.**

I am a fool  
To weep at what I am glad of.

**Pros.**

Fair encounter  
Of two most rare affections! Heavens rain grace  
On that which breeds between 'em.

By **Act 3, Scene 2, beginning line 40**, Caliban has become confident that he now has a friend in Stephano, and to a lesser extent has a friend in Trinculo. Caliban talks to Stephano and Trinculo with the invisible Ariel watching and listening:

**Cal.**

As I told thee before, I am subject to a tyrant, a scorcerer, that by his cunning  
Hath cheated me of the island.

**Ariel.**

Thou liest.

**Cal.**

“Thou liest,” thou jesting monkey, thou!

.....

I say by scorcery he got this isle;  
From me he got it. If thy greatness will  
Revenge it on him---

.....

Thou shalt be lord of it, and I'll serve thee.

.....'tis a custom with him

I' th' afternoon to sleep: there thou mayst brain him,

Having first seized his books; or with a log

Batter his skull, or paunch him with a stake,

Or cut his wezand with thy knife. Remember

First to possess his books; for without them

He's but a sot, as I am, nor hath not

One spirit to command: they all do hate him

As rootedly as I. Burn but his books.

.....

And that most deeply to consider is

The beauty of his daughter; he himself

Calls her a nonpareil: I never saw a woman,

But only Sycorax my dam and she;

But she as far surpasseth Sycorax

As great'st does least.

**Step.**

Is it so brave a lass?

**Cal.**

Ay, lord; she will become my bed, I warrant,

And bring thee forth brave brood.

**Step.**

Monster, I will kill this man: his daughter and I will be king and queen,

---save our graces!--and Trinculo and thyself shall be viceroys. Dost

thou like the plot, Trinculo?

**Trin.**

Excellent.

.....

**Step.**

Come on, Trinculo, let us sing.

*Flout 'em and cout 'em,  
And scout 'em and flout 'em;  
Thought is free*

In Act 3, Scene 2, lines 132-141, Caliban asks Stephano if he is afraid of anything in this island.

**Steph.**

No, monster, not I

**Cal.**

Be not afeard; this isle is full of noises,  
Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight, and  
Hurt not,  
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments  
Will hum about mine ears; and sometimes voices,  
That, if I then had wak'd after a long sleep,  
Will make me sleep again: and then, in dreaming,  
The clouds methought would open, and show  
Riches  
Ready to drop upon me; that, when I wak'd  
I cried to dream again.

**Steph.**

This will prove a brave kingdom to me, where I  
Shall have my music for nothing.

**Cal.**

When Prospero is destroyed.

**Act 4, Scene 1**, opens with Prospero, Ferdinand and Miranda together in front of Prospero's cave. There is A Masque. Soft music plays and the first of three spirits Iris, then Juno and finally Ceres enters the stage and sing a marriage blessing. Later several Nymphs enter dancing gracefully followed by young men called Reapers who join the others in graceful dancing. It is notable that none of the people directly associated with the boat and the storm, nor Caliban are present at the Masque, except for Prospero who caused the storm, and Ariel who assisted Prospero. The Masque ends suddenly with all, Nymphs and Reapers suddenly vanishing with what the stage direction calls a 'confused noise'.

**Pros.**

I had forgot that foul conspiracy  
Of the beast Caliban and his confederates  
Against my life: the minute of their plot  
Is almost come (speaking to the spirits) he says: Well done! Avoid;  
No more!

**Fer.**

This is strange: your father's in some passion  
That works him strongly.

**Mir.**

Never till this day  
Saw I him touch'd with anger, so distemper'd

**Pros.**

You do look, my son, in a mov'd sort,  
As if you were dismay'd: be cheerful, sir.  
Our revels now are ended. These our actors  
As I told you, were all spirits, and  
Are melted into air, into thin air:  
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,  
The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,  
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,  
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,  
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,  
Leave not a wrack behind. We are such stuff  
As dreams are made on; and our little life  
Is rounded with a sleep. Sir, I am vex'd;  
Bear with my weakness; my old brain is troubled:  
Be not disturb'd with my infirmity:  
If you be pleas'd, retire into my cell,  
And there repose: a turn or two I'll walk,  
To still my beating mind.

**Fer & Mir.**

We wish your peace.  
(*Exeunt*)

**Pros.**

Come with a thought. I thank thee. Ariel: come.

**Ariel**

Thy thoughts I cleave to. What's thy pleasure?

**Pros.**

Spirit,  
We must prepare to meet with Caliban.

**Ariel**

Ay, my commander: when I presented Ceres,  
I thought to have told thee of it; but I fear'd  
Lest I might anger thee.

**Pros.**

Say again, where did'st thou leave these varlets?

**Ariel.**

I told you, sir, they were red hot with drinking;  
So full of valour that they smote the air  
For breathing in their faces; beat the ground  
For kissing of their feet;

.....

Then in **Act 4, Scene 1, line 262:**

**Ariel.**

Hark, they roar!

**Pros.**

Let them be hunted soundly. At this hour  
Lies at my mercy all mine enemies:  
Shortly shall all my labours end, and thou  
Shalt have the air at freedom: for a little  
Follow, and do me service.  
(*Exeunt*)

**Act 5, Scene 1, line 1** begins:

**Pros.**

Now does my project gather to a head:  
My charms crack not; my spirits obey; and time  
Goes upright with his carriage. How's the day?

**Ariel.**

On the sixth hour; at which time, my lord,  
You said our work should cease.

**Pros.**

I did say so,  
When first I raised the tempest, Say, my spirit,  
How fares the King and's followers?

**Ariel**

Confined together  
In the same fashion as you gave in charge,  
Just as you left them; all prisoners, sir,  
In the line-grove which weather-fends your cell;  
They cannot budge till your release. ....

And then in **Act 5, Scene 1, line 21**:

**Pros.**

Hast thou, which art but air, a touch, a feeling  
Of their afflictions, and shall not myself,  
One of their kind, that relish all as sharply  
Passion as they, be kindlier mov'd than thou art?

**Act 5, Sc 1, 28**

.....  
In virtue than in vengeance: they being penitent,  
The sole drift of my purpose doth extend  
Nor a frown further. Go release them, Ariel:  
My charms I'll break, their senses I'll restore,  
And they shall be themselves.

**Ariel**

I'll fetch them, sir.

And on, **Act 5, Sc 1, line 41**

**Pros**

.....I have bedimm'd  
The noontide sun, call'd forth the mutinous winds,  
And twixt the green sea and the azure'd vault  
Set roaring war: to the dread rattling thunder  
Have I given fire, .....

**Act 5, Sc 1 line 50.....**

But this rough magic  
I here abjure; and, when I have bedimm'd  
Some heavenly music, --which even now I do --  
To work mine end upon their senses, that  
This airy charm is for, I'll break my staff,  
Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,  
And deeper than did ever plummet sound  
I'll drown my book.  
*(Solemn music)*

Now enter Ariel, then Alonso, Gonzalo, Sebastian, Antonio and others, and Prospero speaks: Firstly praising that honourable and good man, Gonzalo. He castigates the evil men who perpetrated the seizing of his title and stranding him on the island, viz., Alfonso, Antonio and Sebastian. He pardons all. Those supposed dead in the storm are reunited with their parents. Prospero is re-instated as the Duke of Milan .

Then Prospero seeing Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo in their stolen apparel forgives them too. Ariel is released and everyone who wishes now prepares to return by their boat, now restored so that those from Italy can return safely.

**Act 5, Scene 1, lines 290-297** (*Prospero speaking to Alonso; King of Naples; who has just noticed Caliban , whom Prospero has forgiven*):

**Pros.**

He is as disproportion'd in his manners  
As in his shape. Go, sirrah, to my cell;  
Take with you your companions, as you look  
To have my pardon, trim it handsomely.

**Cal.**

Ay, that I will; and I'll be wise hereafter,  
And seek for grace. What a thrice-double ass  
Was I, to take this drunkard for a god,  
And worship this dull fool!

This 5<sup>th</sup> Act then closes with a brief speech by Prospero who also gives the Epilogue.





## Chapter 14

### *Commentary on The Tempest and its important links with King Henry VIII*

It seems quite likely, as several people have suggested, that this play may have originally been intended by Shakespeare to be his last. The *Tempest* is an important play both because it is the link between the Four Romance plays and the great penultimate play *King Henry VIII*, that differs profoundly in some important ways from the Romances, and it differs so much from the other History plays. The *Tempest* is a good play in its own right because it draws together the ideas that have been developed in the Romance plays. It shares with the first three the issues related to good and evil as witnessed by human behaviour. Like the other Romances there is an important character in the person of Miranda, a chaste young woman whose chastity, like that of those chaste young women in the other Romance plays, does not appear to the writer of this book in any way ridiculous or unbelievable, as Kermode found they do (Frank Kermode, *Shakespeare's Language*, The Penguin Press, 2000, pp. 258). Kermode refers to them as 'virgin paragons, the magical and nowadays virtually unplayable romance heroines'. It is disturbing to find oneself at odds with such a distinguished Shakespearian scholar, as was the late Frank Kermode. This difference of opinion is provoked by the BBC DVD version of the Romance plays that are so well acted and produced that the chaste women appear very real; but it is perhaps, after all, only a question of taste, and we can remember a Latin expression that was widely used and that Shakespeare must have known well: *De gustibus non est disputandum*.

Miranda is a charming, young, chaste woman in the *Tempest*, one of whose roles in the play is partly as a foil to her father, Prospero. She falls in love with Ferdinand and that generates some fine poetry from them both. Caliban objects to Miranda's presence on the island even though she taught him to speak, and he now resents using the language she taught him. Because of her beauty and charm, Caliban knows he will never be acceptable to her, especially as he attempted unsuccessfully a rape on her. There is no mature or older woman in this play, unlike all the other Romances, where they have a significant role.

One of the consequences of Gonzalo, walking across the island in the forest with the others, all of whom escaped from the ship wreck, was that he recited a scheme for organising civilised urban and rural life that had been published by Montaigne. This scheme is so impractical and unworkable that maybe Shakespeare was ridiculing this unrealistic scheme through his character Gonzalo.

Caliban, who was born on the island before Prospero and Miranda arrived there, is presented as a rough, peasant-like man who is ugly and appears almost clumsy in his movements. He works as a servant bringing wood and giving similar services to Prospero. He is very resentful and envious of the presence of Prospero and Miranda in

what he regards as his island, and this torments Caliban. With the arrival of the servants from the shipwreck he teams up with two of them, Stephano and Trinculo. Later Caliban suggests to Stephano, that they murder Prospero brutally and that they should take Miranda as a concubine from whom to breed children to people the island.

Caliban reveals a good knowledge of the resources of the island whose geography he knows well. His songs tend to be crude. However, he has some good speeches. There is no aspect of Caliban that could be described as attractive, his functions seem to be to reveal some vulgarity and coarseness, and to act as a friend to Stephano and Trinculo, sharing their evil, brutal and resentful intentions. They become a focus of evil behaviour, but only in that respect are they, like Antonio, the usurping Duke of Milan, the wicked brother of Prospero, and Alonso the King of Naples, who assisted Antonio in removing Prospero from Milan. In this way the evil doers belong to both the nobility and the lowest social order on the island. Evil, is thus shown not to be limited in its infection of any one group in society.

These two servants who escaped from the storm-driven boat onto the island, Stephano and Trinculo, are both shown as easily misled into evil. They needed little encouragement to agree enthusiastically to murder Prospero and put Miranda into a slave-like concubinage, even though they had never seen Miranda at that stage of the play. For much of the play they range from being mildly to very drunk.

By contrast, the two charming and attractive young people, Miranda and Ferdinand, are presented as considerate of others and respectful of Prospero. They are educated and civilised persons much in love with each other, and speak beautiful, fine poetry. It is worth noting that Caliban has been given two fine speeches. The behaviour of Stephano and Trinculo suggests that they lack any quality of fineness, especially when they have been drinking the wine that Stephano found in casks washed up on the beach from the boat. Ugly behaviour belongs with evil and seems to be a message one might take from their behaviour. It is a simplified picture of the world in several respects, but it is very much a feature of Romance plays.

#### **The role of the Masque in Act 4**

This involves spirits, Nymphs and Reapers singing and dancing gracefully. It seems perhaps to be designed to entertain a selected audience. As an entertainment it suggests an audience who have leisure and familiarity with high culture perhaps. The songs are about flowers of the seasons, and of harvests, and there is a song for a marriage blessing that is most apposite to the affectionate couple, Miranda and Ferdinand. There may be hidden messages in this Masque intended for the rich people for whom it seems to have been written, but no messages seem to have been decoded.

It is left till last the characteristic of all Shakespeare's four Romances, namely the magic and fairytales that play quite an important part in them all. Only in the first Romance play, *Pericles*, is there a small role for the supernatural. But magic runs all through *The Tempest* because Prospero uses it throughout the play by employing his magic sprite, Ariel, to keep him informed of what the other characters are doing and especially to report to Prospero on the behaviour and location of the evildoers. Ariel being invisible, and being able to fly anywhere, is able to speak to the passengers who escaped safely from the stranded boat, but he remains invisible to all except Prospero. In addition,

Prospero has his magic staff, and it was with this that he caused the tempest, and brought the boat to be stranded at his island. Throughout the play there is a strong fairytale quality. The finale discloses that all are forgiven, and all ends happily to a large extent, as the evil doers do not succeed. Thus all is put right at the end. This Chapter is far more like a fairytale than one sees in the play *Pericles*, where the resurrection to life of Thaisa, after being dead for several days in the sea, is something that can only be categorised as supernatural.

The overall impression is that in these plays, as in all his works, Shakespeare wished to provide entertainments. He gives purpose to the stories and to the behaviour of his characters. Anger, aggression and violence are least in evidence in *The Tempest* that tends to be a gentle and generally peaceful play. High quality dramatic poetry is given to the good characters in *The Tempest*, and this contrasts with the lower quality verse given to the evil doers, with the notable exception of Caliban, for whom Shakespeare seems to hold a special sympathy, and for whom he wrote some outstanding dramatic poetry.

We can also note the absence from *The Tempest* of any reference to deities: no Judaic-Christian God, and no gods from the ancient world of Greece and Rome. This is an important difference from the other three Romance plays. But their absence is also noted in the penultimate play *King Henry VIII*, and that, in some ways, emphasises the link between the Romances and the great play *Henry VIII*.

**The issues of good and evil find so much debate in Shakespeare's plays; but the concept of sin which is punished by the Christian God when we die, is omitted from all Shakespeare plays.**

These Romance plays are concerned with good and evil in human behaviour, and the association of goodness with human happiness. There is in these plays a complete absence of the notion and the punishment of sin, which is based on the concept of breaking a divine law. There is no question that Shakespeare's characters are concerned and involved with good and evil, but the concept of sin, that meant it can only be forgiven by priests or by God, is something we do not find in Shakespeare. Perhaps we should recognise that Shakespeare's eschewing of pedagogy of his own views and opinions may have been provoked and sustained throughout his professional career by more than one intellectual purpose. When we look at the suffering from the persecutions of the Saints such as St. Katherine, St. Barbara, St. Agnes and St. Margaret, all of whom shared the same fate, with varying details, and enjoyed enormous popularity in the late medieval period, we can see a comparison with the sufferings of some in the fairytale stories. Today it is perhaps much easier to understand how Shakespeare could very likely have rebelled intellectually, and thus rejected the obsession of the Christian Church with the concept of sin. For generations that Church insisted that after our death all of us have to face a terrifying trial of all our sins committed during our lives. This, perhaps was one of the most powerful aspects of Christian dogma, for it troubled men and women throughout their lives. Their Almighty God who was going to send most of us, when we died, to long years of suffering in purgatory, and some of us, perhaps many, or was it even most?, would be sent on our death to be burned in an everlasting hell fire with more than just the imaginable pain that could be inflicted upon us. Many would find the likelihood of a man, as intelligent and as perceptive of man's various attitudes, as was William

Shakespeare, believing such obvious fantasy is now very difficult to accept. However, Shakespeare was cautious never to reveal in his writings of 37 plays with his hundreds of created speaking characters, his sacrilegious disbelief in the Church's concept of sin. This would explain how he could be so concerned throughout his plays with the issues of good and evil in human behaviour, without ever dealing with the concept of sin, and it being measured by an almighty God. However, his silence almost throughout his 37 plays over the issue of sin, its judgements and its punishments, while not surprising us today, could not have passed without notice among his audiences and readers of the last four centuries. Let us give thanks for his humanity, linked to his perceptions, and for his silent views over these Christian beliefs, that may well have comforted some in his audiences, and some of his readers, in the centuries that have past, when the power of the Church, and its insistence on the punishment of our sins, led to so many people going in such a fear of their death during their lives.

### **The Romance Plays and their lead into the play King Henry VIII**

One of the most notable features of the four Romance plays is the way Shakespeare shows that those whose behaviour is not evil may come to enjoy happiness in their lives. Many who have committed some evil acts are shown to be forgiven so that they can move towards a happy life. The joyous endings of these plays are like so many fairytales that end in happiness. We can recall that these four Romance plays precede the great, penultimate play King Henry VIII written in 1612, four years before Shakespeare died. That play does not show the death of either Wolsey or of King Henry VIII, the most cruel and evil characters in this play. Katherine hears from her servant, Griffiths, a detailed report of the circumstances and conditions of Wolsey's death; it is notable (**Act 4 Scene 2, lines 5-43**) that shortly before she dies Katherine explains to Griffiths that she forgives Wolsey. Those 39 lines that she spoke would have carried some significance for Shakespeare's audiences and readers in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Furthermore, we are not shown Katherine's death, nor do we hear details of it. We do see her and hear her speeches as her death approaches (**Act 4, Scene 2, lines 69-173**) which brings Act 4 to an end. After this we never see her nor is there any reference made to her again. Her life in this play presents such an example of loving kindness and concern for others in a weaker and poorer state than herself. Following, as it does, the Romance plays, that seems to leave us, Shakespeare's audiences and readers, in no doubt about the greatness and goodness of Katherine.

**Act V:** The last act of this play, shows King Henry VIII in a benign and protective manner towards Cranmer, his Archbishop of Canterbury. **Scene 4 of Act 5** brings the play to an end with Henry's new queen, Anne Bollen, whom he had married secretly in 1533, having just given birth to a baby girl who is to become the Queen Elizabeth of England, and its greatest monarch, as Cranmer foresees in his speech at the christening that takes place in the Court with Henry present. Shakespeare does not show us the vicious and untrue accusations of adultery, made only 3 years later against Anne, by those wishing to please King Henry, who, already bored by his Queen Anne, he wanted her executed for adultery she had never committed, as he now wished to marry Jane Seymour. Shakespeare in this play leaves us, the audience, in the same benign mood as the King enjoyed at the Christening of his daughter, Elizabeth, with the speech of his Archbishop of Canterbury. This play seems to be designed to end in a mood of great happiness for all, and with a sense of forgiveness, and of forgetting completely the king's

treatment of his loving queen Katherine whom he had treated so disgracefully and so cruelly.

To what extent that means that the happy ending had been designed to be politically astute we do not know. Certainly, it recognises the themes in the Romance plays of forgiveness of evil and cruelty that are followed by a happy ending. But it is clear that Shakespeare had moved on from the Romance Plays in writing his play King Henry VIII, where the fairy story structure was not present. Instead, now we are taken back into the real world of power, monarchical politics and authority, that even included executions of queens when the King wanted to be rid of her for another. To some extent Shakespeare may have used the fact that many in his audience and his readers would know the history of this King's cruel, ruthlessly destructive and murderous habits against members of his Court and beyond. King Henry VIII had another 11 years from the execution of Anne Bollen, before he died in 1547, years in which appalling cruelties were ordered.

Shakespeare must have known that the world could recognise what a great play this is. The last scene ends in 1536 with the Christening and speeches about the baby that would grow to become the Queen Elizabeth. The well known history of this King and what evil he committed in the period after this Christening were omitted from the play. Shakespeare could be confident that he left us unable to forget Queen Katherine, whose early, unhappy, lonely and impoverished death in January 1536 the audience had followed in the first 4 Acts. Equally, audience and readers will have noticed that there had been no mention of Katherine in any of the four scenes of the last Act.

Furthermore, Cranmer in March 1556 (which was 9 years after King Henry VIII died) was to suffer the appalling, cruel end of being burnt at the stake in a street in Oxford by orders of the Catholic, Queen Mary, Henry's daughter. The Catholic Church was to be gravely disappointed at Cranmer's execution that they had so much wanted; for this kind and, perhaps by now, somewhat confused Archbishop, as his life ended by his having to enter that fire to be burnt alive, had called out his rejection of the Catholic dogma. The Church had fully expected his recantation from his being a Protestant. Instead they heard and watched him die in the Protestant faith. And when his dead body, only partly consumed by the fire, was opened in that street, it was reported that there was no sign that the fire had damaged his heart. Shakespeare, had he wished, could have referred to many of these events of high drama, but he omitted all of them. He decided to end his play before these new horrors had been perpetrated, knowing that much of this history would be known to a significant part of his audience and to his readers of his own time and in the coming centuries.

Many, but not all, of the ideas in the Romance plays he set aside when he wrote this play King Henry VIII. One great difference in this play was the realities of living under monarchical government which brought his audiences and readers back to the realities of *power into will and will into appetite and appetite an universal wolf*. The reader may here judge the significance of very good speeches by Cranmer, and the King. This play shows us, at the beginning of the third millennium, just as it showed the Jacobean audience in 1612, that this world cannot be presented honestly as a Romance. The monarchical government that Shakespeare knew was, in some respects, like most known forms of democratic parliamentary government that we know today. The same authorities that desire to control other people's lives for monetary gain and for power,

result in our lives becoming ordered, controlled, even dominated by those who have gained their power over us. We have to live with that as did those in Jacobean London and in the rural areas. But as Prospero realised, that despite everything we encounter in our lives, the world of Art can grant us a different and highly rewarding reality that only the exceptional imaginations linked to great creativity can reveal. This can be illustrated by taking a random choice from the wide fields of Art that have survived e.g; Shakespeare's plays, Mozart's opera, The Magic Flute, York Minster or Durham Cathedral, and Franz Schubert's String Quintet. There are thousands of such choices available from what is now largely a relic of the disappeared creative European Civilization whose living activity is fast fading into decay; but it leaves us with those great treasures. Today perhaps the greatest and most successful of the living actors and actresses, and those who direct them in great plays, keep alive the great creativity in the performing Arts of all kinds of theatre and of music. So too at the bountiful museums and the great libraries open to all. The enormous number and range of people who visit museums, theatres and musical events is a manifestation of the people's needs today for the great works of creative imaginations in words, song, dance and paint, the exquisite and powerful form and ornament in architecture, sculpture, celature, while music and theatre remain with us as the great performing arts that have survived.

**Act V, Scene IV: The key of Shakespeare's last Act of King Henry VIII**

But to return to the way that Shakespeare so very carefully closed the last act of his great play King Henry V111 with the gentle scene of the christening of the new born baby as Elizabeth in 1533, where Cranmer holds this baby in his arms as he delivers his astonishing and powerful address to the King, with trumpets sounding and the Lord Mayor of London present, and with Garter King-at-Arms, Duke and Duchess of Norfolk, Duke of Suffolk and many others.

**Garter:**

Heaven, from thy endless goodness, send prosperous life, long and ever happy, to the high and mighty princess of England, Elizabeth.

Then after a few brief speeches:

**Cranmer.**

Let me speak sir,  
 For heaven now bids me; and the words I utter,  
 Let none think flattery, for they'll find 'em truth.  
 This royal infant (heaven still move about her)  
 Though in cradle, yet now promises  
 Upon the land a thousand, thousand blessings,  
 Which time shall bring to ripeness: she shall be  
 (But few now living can behold that goodness)  
 A pattern to all princes living with her,  
 And all that shall succeed: Saba was never  
 More covetous of wisdom and fair virtue  
 Than this pure soul shall be. ....  
 .....

**The King:**

Thou speakest wonders.

**Cranm.**

She shall be, to the happiness of England,  
An aged princess ; many days shall see her,  
And yet no day without a deed to crown it.  
Would I had known no more ; but she must die,  
She must, the saints must have her, yet a virgin,  
A most unspotted lily shall she pass  
To the ground, and all the world shall mourn her.

**King**

O lord archbishop,  
Thou hast made me now a man ; never before  
This happy child did I get anything.  
This oracle of comfort hath so pleased me,  
That when I am in heaven I shall desire  
To see what this child does, and praise my maker.  
I thank ye all. To you my good lord mayor,  
And your good brethren, I am much beholding:  
I have surpris'd much honour by your presence,  
And ye shall find me thankful. Lead the way lords,  
Ye must all see the queen, and she must thank ye,  
She will be sick else. This day, no man, think  
' Has business at his house ; for all shall say stay:  
This little one shall make it Holy-day.

Shakespeare in omitting a miserable scene of the death of Katherine of Aragon, and omitting any reference to her after her death, matters that her contemporaries would have recognised, ensured that this play could be shown in public ; and in these ways both Katherine's goodness and Henry's evils would be remembered for ever. But his play has had much wider and deeper implications by its other omissions, discussed in this chapter, that have reverberated since its first performance. And that has strengthened its importance and enhanced his four Romance plays, as well as his play King Henry VIII.





## *Chapter 15*

### *An introduction to the 10 History Plays*

Of the 37 plays that Shakespeare left us, 10 are classified by scholars as his History Plays, all of which were published in the First Folio of 1623. They deal with aspects of the history of England, Wales and Scotland, and to various extents with France.

Shakespeare's 10 history plays and why he stopped writing them for 14 years after Henry V was written about 1598, and long before he wrote his last play Henry VIII in 1612 (having helped John Fletcher with his play 'The Two Noble Kinsmen' in 1612-1613, which is not included in this book.)

King Henry IV parts i and ii both have major contributions from Falstaff. They were both written about 1597. As a consequence of his major roles in both these plays they could almost be classified as comedies. Whereas the King Henry VI parts i, ii, & iii (1590) and King Henry V (in 1598) could be called tragedies because of the major contribution of wars with much wounding and loss of life. However, all these six plays are considered here as History Plays, and the very late Henry VIII play makes a total of seven Henry plays. If one looks at the table of the ten history of England plays that Shakespeare wrote we can see that all except the last of these history plays, namely King Henry VIII, were written between about 1590 and 1598. Probably the most popular of these history plays were Henry IV parts i & ii, written in 1597, which featured Sir John Falstaff, and Henry V, in 1598, also seems to have been a popular play. Shakespeare wrote no more plays about England's history for 14 years after his success with his Henry V in 1598. Then he wrote a highly successful number of plays of great variety beginning with the comedy Much Ado About Nothing in 1598, followed by the brilliant Roman play of Julius Caesar in 1599. This was followed by the two successful, but very different, comedies of As You Like It and then Twelfth Night in that same year. They were to be followed immediately by the play, Hamlet, which has entranced and engaged the world since it first appeared on the stage about 1600-1601, (Harold Jenkins, Hamlet, Ed., The Arden Shakespeare, 1982).

Attention is drawn to this period of his work partly because it is exceptional, and partly because it may explain why Shakespeare gave up writing his successful history of England plays, just in that period of his professional life when his next history of England play, Henry VIII, might have been expected from him now that he was rising onto the crest of his professional achievements, whose apogee was Hamlet. His temptation to write the history of Henry VIII might have been difficult for him to resist. Those great historical characters, the King himself, his Queen Katherine, Wolsey, Cranmer, all were important in Henry VIII's court, where the international and domestic political events of the Reformation associated with King Henry VIII, would have been a great temptation to form the basis of his play. But, and it was a very real but, Henry VIII was the father of Queen Elizabeth who was born in 1533, and now on her throne, childless and notably now beyond child bearing age. This would have been

obvious to Shakespeare who was far too careful a man to have risked so grossly offending the Queen by writing a play about her father.

It is also obvious that the Queen would not wish her father, King Henry VIII, to be exposed as a tyrannical ruler. The Queen would not want people to be reminded of her father's brutality and excesses in tearing down and selling off the monasteries that had provided shelter and food to the poor and ordinary travellers in difficult times. Certainly she would not have wished her father to be ridiculed or lampooned on the stage for his cruelties, nor for his various excesses, as many would see them, in the consequences of his Reformation of the Church, bearing in mind what a religious power and social influence the Church remained in those times.

Since the death of King Henry VIII in 1547 the stability of the realm and monarchy had survived two very short reigns. First, the son of Henry VIII, in the person of King Edward VI 1547-1553, who kept the monarchy and country Protestant; he was followed by Queen Mary, eldest daughter of Henry VIII 1553-1558, who was a Catholic, and who turned England back into Catholicism, causing some turmoil among the Protestant community with numerous executions. Queen Elizabeth, who reigned 1558-1603, was the youngest daughter of Henry VIII. She returned the country to her Protestant faith, and worked for increasing stability in the face of threats from Catholic Spain. But she created unease by executing the recusant Catholics in England. Now, during 1590-1600 the Queen, and the people were becoming jittery for the future stability of England, under a childless, ageing Queen Elizabeth who could not have many years to live. Provocative plays re-opening memories of Henry VIII's reign of violence and destruction of the monasteries and their loss of support for the poor of those times, but most of all the domestic and international strife associated with Henry's Reformation of the Church, were seen by the leading Protestant members of the Court, and among the people, as highly undesirable, and as something to be avoided. There was a growing concern to find a peaceful Protestant replacement of the Queen when she died, which would obviously be in the next few years. One cannot help but suspect that William Shakespeare might well have been instructed not to produce any plays about the House of Tudor, that had begun with Henry VII in 1485; bearing in mind that King Henry VII, was Queen Elizabeth's grandfather and father of Henry VIII. The Queen was to die in 1603, age 70, when James VI of Scotland, and a Protestant, was offered and accepted the English throne where he maintained the Protestant State.

Such a clear signal emanating from authorities to Shakespeare, whose actors had said, in such a public place as the Globe Theatre, more than was needed to be said about the politics of the Houses of York and Lancaster in his history plays written in the years of 1590 to 1598. This was now an unsuitable territory for any playwright to enter, no matter how great his skill or his brilliantly entertaining invention, and especially his success in creating hilarious scenes where least expected. It would have been more than a caution, it would have been a clear signal to the playwright that he should not write any more plays about members of the House of Tudor.

However, it was known that her majesty had more than an eye for a witty man whose conversation was said to be engagingly intelligent, whose interest in and knowledge of music was considerable, and who had an easy ability *to set a table on a roar*. One might even imagine the Queen's wistful sigh, as she discussed the matter with her Secretary of State, about the very real dangers of good theatre, which the Queen enjoyed, but whose

content was subject to her subjection, and of her subject's full respect for the Queen's wishes. We can see an analogue in recent England compared with easy availability of DVDs, and videos of violent films, where buildings and motorcars are torched, and ordinary people attacked by excited youths and a variety of other thugs to similar violence on the streets of England's cities in 2011-2013.

There is another factor that might have led Shakespeare to having delayed his writing of the play *Henry VIII*. This drama with its respect and recognition of the fine qualities of Queen Katherine, who was a daughter of the King of Spain, could have created a stir had it been played on the London stage during Queen Elizabeth's reign. For it might have led, in the minds of some at, or near, the Court, to think that this play looked suspiciously like sympathy with the Catholic recusants who were hunted down and some executed in Elizabeth's reign. But Katherine of Aragon was a devout Catholic and England's most hated and feared European country was Spain during Elizabeth's reign. Moreover, some at, or near, the Court could have remembered Shakespeare's obscure poem *The Phoenix and Turtle* that might have seemed to some that it indicated sympathy with the executed recusants. That interpretation of this poem ( see Shakespeare's Poems, The Arden Shakespeare, Duncan-Jones, K., & Woudhuysen, Eds., 2007, pp 91-94 ) that was discussed hundreds of years later by the Comtesse de Chambrun in 1935, and later still by Finnis and Martin in 2002, where the suffering and brutal execution of Catholics at Tyburn in 1601, being the last years of the Elizabeth's reign, was exposed. The wary, cautious and prudent William Shakespeare might have thought he had risked enough by publishing that poem, and thus decided to wait for some years to pass after Elizabeth had died before he wrote his play *Henry VIII*.

In the event, Shakespeare wrote his great play *King Henry VIII* about 1612. That was 65 years after *King Henry VIII* died and 9 years after Queen Elizabeth had died in 1603. Shakespeare died in 1616 aged 52, perhaps aware that his time was running out, and one suspects that he had long wished to write a play based on *King Henry VIII*, so he was willing to restrict it to a small part of Henry's reign, in order to avoid problems over too many criticisms of that King's appalling brutalities.

### **Shakespeare's first plays and a table of all his history of England plays**

The first history plays were among the earliest plays that are found to have been written by Shakespeare. The earliest of the histories were the three separate, but closely linked plays of *Henry VI*, known as *Henry VI* parts one, two and three. All are thought to have been written during or soon after 1590. Nine of the ten history plays are regarded as having been written between 1590 to 1598. The tenth play, *Henry VIII*, was written later in 1612, and, as one might therefore expect, it is very different from Shakespeare's earlier history plays.

The ways in which Shakespeare used the chronicles and other historical data is discussed by scholars, e.g., by Andrew Cairncross in his editing of the three parts of *Henry VI* in the Arden Series of these plays, and by Tony Tanner in his *Prefaces to Shakespeare* (Harvard University Press, 2010). Both these and other scholars have provided a great deal of information, interpretation, and discussion concerning the relations between the history of these periods and Shakespeare's use of what was known about the history at the time of his writing these plays and later. This book attempts to

comment on the purposes of the characters in these ten plays from the point of view of their entertaining Shakespeare's audiences and his readers.

Before we begin to think about the purposes of the actors, and, most importantly, what they said on the stage, we need to look briefly at the broad background to the history covered by the plays; when they were written with the relative dates, as well as the political allegiances of the reigns of the kings involved in these plays. We need this broad view of the wider aspects of the stage for which these characters were created. Apart from the purpose of entertaining his audiences and readers, Shakespeare had to explain the ambitions and behaviour of the characters during the period from 1199 to 1485, when the foreign and civil wars, that are the main focus of nine of the plays, occurred. Furthermore, we are interested to know how these historical events appeared to Shakespeare and his contemporaries in the 1590s, when these plays were written, for they had had an influence on their society and its governance, and they were of concern to their present rulers and the population.

Written Sequence	King's Reign	
Earliest 3 hist plays	Henry VI pt i, ii, iii.	1422-1461 & 1470-71
4 <sup>th</sup>	Richard III	1483-1485
5 <sup>th</sup>	Richard II	1377-1399
6 <sup>th</sup>	King John	1199-1216
7 <sup>th</sup> & 8 <sup>th</sup>	Henry IV pt i, ii	1399-1413
9 <sup>th</sup>	Henry V	1413-1422
10 <sup>th</sup>	Henry VIII	1509-1547

Now let us look at the political affiliations associated with the history plays, and make comparison with the date of the play's composition and with the historical sequence of the monarch's reigns.

#### House of Plantagenet

King John	Play written 1596	King reigned 1199-1216
Richard II	Play written 1595	King reigned 1377-1399

#### House of Lancaster

Henry IV	Plays pt. i, ii, written 1597.	King reigned 1399-1413.
Henry V	Play written 1598	King reigned 1413-1422.
Henry VI pt i, ii, iii	Plays written 1590	King reigned 1422-61 & 1470-71.

#### House of York

Edward IV	No play	King reigned 1471- 1483
Edward V	No play	King reigned 1483

*(The very last part of the reign of Edward IV and the very brief reign of his son Edward V were used to dramatic effect in Shakespeare's play Richard III)*

Richard III	Play written 1592	King reigned 1483-1485
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#### House of Tudor

Henry VII	No play	King reigned 1485-1509
Henry VIII	Play written in 1612 **	King reigned 1509- 1547
King Edward VI	No play	King reigned 1547- 1553
Queen Mary	No play	Queen reigned 1553-1558
Queen Elizabeth	Eight outstanding plays	Queen reigned 1558- 1603

#### House of Stewart

King James 1 <sup>st</sup> of England & 6 <sup>th</sup> of Scotland **	No Play	King reigned 1603-1625
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*(\*\* Shakespeare's play Henry VIII was written in 1612 during King James' reign, and 1613-1614 saw the publication of Shakespeare's last play, The Two Noble Kinsmen, written by Shakespeare and Fletcher. It is worth noting in this context that The First Folio of Shakespeare's plays was published in 1623 and the Authorized version of The Bible in 1610. Shakespeare died at his home in Stratford on Avon in 1616 when he was 52, leaving a wife Anne and two daughters, Susannah, and Judith. His son, Hamnet, died in 1596.)*

Queen Elizabeth would not have wanted to open those old political and battlefield scores that Henry VII put an end to, by closing down political rule by the Houses of Lancaster and of York. That meant not stirring memories of the old regimes that belonged to the Roman Catholic Church, culture, rule and dogma. Furthermore, look what great drama he could and did mine from the lives and times of Henry VIII, when he came to write that play.

It is also noted that Shakespeare did not write his play Henry VIII until 1612, that was nine years after Elizabeth had died, and 65 years after Henry VIII's death. Moreover, it was a magnificent way to close his sequence of history plays dealing with the long series of civil wars that had only come to an end with Henry VII's triumph on the battlefield over King Richard III at Market Bosworth in 1485. This means that Shakespeare's play Henry VIII is his only history play not directly involved with any foreign or civil wars.

Shakespeare wrote powerful speeches and dramatic scenes for this play of Henry VIII involving four historical characters of very different and contrasting personality. How well he used them, and revealed their very different degrees of good and evil. The King and his Cardinal Wolsey were an example nonpareil of power, will and evil:

Power into will, will into appetite  
And appetite, an universal wolf  
So doubly seconded with will and power

whereas his Queen Katherine of Aragon, and Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, reveal their qualities of integrity and goodness, that Cranmer retained to his execution in 1556, age 67, as did Katherine to her death in 1536, age 51.

Whatever was the precise date that Shakespeare wrote the three parts of Henry VI, there seems to be agreement among scholars that they were written in 1590 or shortly after. It is also suggested that among the first plays that he wrote, and which belong to what is now regarded as the Shakespeare canon, includes two comedies: *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, that seem to be roughly contemporaneous with the three parts of Henry VI ( cf. *Viewing Notes of the BBC: The Shakespeare Collection of 37 DVDs; and The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare* Edited by Michael Dobson & Stanley Wells, O.U.P. 2001).

The writing of two comedies and three blood-letting and highly dramatic History plays, King Henry VI pts i, ii, iii, that were based around the history of England's wars with France, and the civil wars in England and its British neighbours, would appear to have been a brilliant way to start a career of play writing for the theatres in London about 1590; and so it proved. With the range of drama in these five why his choice of Henry VI as his first play? One possibility is that it might have been a commission for this young man who had perhaps already been noticed for his ability to write impressive dramatic verse, to create character parts for other writers, and, of course, the ability to write quickly when required. But the choice may have been his own, based on his reading of Edward Hall's *Union of the two noble and illustrious families of Lancaster and York, 1548*; and Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicle of England, Scotland and Ireland, 1587*. Dobson & Wells (in their *OUP Companion, 2005 reprint*) have pointed out that Holinshed's work with others, published in 1587, would have been a source of much historical information that the young Shakespeare would have found useful. They report that scholars have demonstrated Shakespeare had depended heavily on Holinshed's Chronicles (1587). Furthermore, they draw attention to the way Shakespeare expands the roles played by women. For example, the way he makes Queen Margaret in Henry VI live much longer than history allows. The adolescent boy actor plays Queen Margaret who ages gradually throughout all three parts of Henry VI. In the performance of the *War of the Roses* at Stratford in the 1963, where Peggy Ashcroft played the part of Queen Margaret in all three parts of Henry VI and Richard III; she not only seemed to age physically, but she also made her French accented voice seem to age with her through the trilogy.

Henry VI i opens with the obsequies for the recent death of English King Henry V in France. The mourning pageantry with black cloths draped in Westminster Abbey sets the scene. The opening speech is made in Westminster Abbey, by the Duke of Bedford, Uncle to the King and Regent of France.

**Bed:**

Hung be the heavens with black, yield day to night!  
Comets, importing change of times and states,  
Brandish your crystal tresses in the sky,  
And with them scourge the bad revolting stars,  
That have consented unto Henry's death---  
Henry the Fifth, too famous to live long!  
England ne'er lost a king of so much worth.

**Glous**

England ne'er had a king until his time.  
Virtue he had, deserving to command:  
His brandish'd sword did blind men with his beams:  
His arms spread wider than a dragon's wings:  
His sparkling eyes, replete with wrathful fire,  
More dazzled and drove back his enemies  
Than mid-day sun fierce bent against their faces.  
What should I say? His deeds exceed all speech:  
He ne'er lift up his hand but conquered.

The speeches from the noble lords continue in this vein and length contributing to the encomium. The Duke of Bedford's second speech ends when a messenger brings terrible news to England, in **Act 1, Scene 1, lines 52-64**:

**Bed:**

Henry the Fifth, thy ghost I invoke:  
Prosper this realm, keep it from civil broils,  
A far more glorious star thy soul will make  
Than Julius Caesar or bright-----

**Messeng .**

My honourable lords, health to you all!  
Sad tidings bring I to you out of France,  
Of loss, of slaughter, and discomfiture:  
Guienne, Champagne, Rheims, Rouen, Orleans,  
Paris, Guysors, Poitiers, are all quite lost.

**Bed.**

What say'st thou, man! Before dead Henry's corse  
Speak softly, or the loss of those great towns  
Will make him burst his lead and rise from death.

These opening speeches from the nobility portend the events that are to characterise this play of Henry VI part i. We shall hear and see how England will fight again in France in attempts to restore the lands and towns lost to the French so quickly after Henry V's early death from a fever in France. And, as Bedford foresaw, there is to be much civil strife in England.

The noble lords now examine the messenger who brings them such doleful news from France. The Duke of Exeter inquires if the cause of such losses in France result from treachery. The messenger put him right on this, in **Act 1, Scene 1, line 69**:

**Messenger:**

No treachery, but want of men and money.  
Amongst the soldiers this is muttered---  
That here you maintain several factions:  
And whilst a field should be dispatch'd and fought,  
You are disputing of your generals;

.....  
Awake, awake, English nobility!  
Let not sloth dim your honours new-begot.  
Cropp'd are the flower-de-luces in your arms;  
Of England's coat one half is cut away.

And in **Act 1, Scene 1 lines 82:**

**Exe.**

Were our tears wanting to this funeral,  
These tidings would call forth her flowing tides.

We shall hear many such lamentations for the wars against France to recover the lost lands that had been won by Henry V, just as we shall hear woeful news of the many civil broils that England will suffer in parts 2 and 3 of Henry VI. Andrew Cairncross, who edited all three plays of the Arden Henry VI, provided very helpful summaries of the principal themes that run through these plays. We need to be aware of how untimely was the early death of Henry V in France in 1422 when he was only 37. He might have ruled France, England, Scotland and Wales united, perhaps? The King of France was soon to die, so soon after Henry V, who, had Henry lived, it is he who would have been king of France and of England, with what enormous differences to western European history one can only speculate. Some may dream of a western Europe with France and England united, together with Wales and Scotland, and then begin to wonder about the impact of the leading Franco-English-Scottish-Welsh families with their different gene pools and differently developing cultures who might have ruled France, England, Scotland and Wales united, perhaps? That opens the question: had that union survived and flourished, would there have been no 1914 war and thus no 1939 war in Europe? Here are matters to ponder over, as we in England and Scotland sip our champagne and other French wines, dreaming of what might have been created in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Moreover, what of North America where the early 17<sup>th</sup> century would have been so very different.

Andrew Cairncross points out that the theme of Part I of Henry VI is the loss of France with the giving away of two remaining provinces Maine and Anjou and the ruin of England by the loss of France and the outbreak of civil war in England. The execution of Joan la Pucelle by the English, followed by the marriage of the English child king is widely regarded as a turning point causing continuing problems for England. The play does not end in a peace treaty, instead it ends in a downfall of England to be followed by another civil war. The presence of a child king Henry VI exacerbated the weakness of the English throne and its leadership, as well as the political divisions within England.

This first part of the play Henry VI brings to our early attention what is happening in France after the death of English King Henry V. Two important women come to our stage in France. First, Joan la Pucelle, or Joan of Aire, who is shown quickly coming to lead the French soldiery against the English in France where England lacked sufficient experienced senior soldiers, and lacking funds to meet the costs of what was needed for what amounted to a foreign invading army. Joan was not to last long and once captured by the English she was quickly put to death. The other important French woman was Margaret of Anjou, daughter of Reignier, Duke of Anjou. The promise and commitment to marry the child king, Henry VI, son of Henry V, to a daughter of the



Armagnac family was broken. Instead of that marriage, the Earl of Suffolk arranged the marriage of the boy king to Margaret, which created serious political problems, not only with the French Armagnac family, but also with the English Yorkist family, who had negotiated for the daughter of the Anjou family to marry Henry, and who now were angry with Suffolk who, behind the scenes, and to gain influence for himself, had arranged for Margaret to marry Henry. From this arrangement the fates pity England's future. The great warrior King Henry V was prematurely taken from them and was replaced, alas, by Queen Margaret and a weak young boy king who, as he grew to manhood, valued and proselytized Christian dogma and the honourable traditions of decency and truth in public behaviour. But he lacked the strengths and spirit of a valiant, warrior man who commanded his nobles, and alas many English nobles did so little to merit that title. There were, of course exceptions. There was the great Lord Talbot who did his utmost, showing great courage, judgement and daring in the field, as the traditional great warrior fighting both for his king and for his country, and being prepared to die for them. In this way did the English army in France partly recover its position. But of the lands already retaken by the French it was not possible to recover them partly because of the poor political dealing by the English. But, by Talbot's efforts was la Pucelle captured and that allowed an almost honourable retreat by the English from France.

### **Political warfare in the time of King Henry VI**

This is perhaps the point at which to quote some well known lines from Shakespeare's play, Henry V, that was written about 1598, being about eight years after he wrote the three plays of **Henry VI, pt. i, ii, iii**. The play, Henry V, is now over when that play's Chorus comes onto the empty stage and delivers to the audience the last four and half lines of this poem which is a regular Shakespearian sonnet of 14 lines:

Henry the Sixth, in infant bands crown'd King  
Of France and England, did this king succeed;  
Whose state so many had the managing,  
That they lost France and made his England bleed:  
Which oft our stage hath shown.....

Shakespeare found his sources in the Chronicles of Holinshed, Hall and others for the historical characters, their behaviour and the wide ranging and individual events, but his ambition was to create entertainments, and scholars have pointed out the extent to which Shakespeare would change the order of some historical events and the order of individual achievements and other matters where he needed to build his dramatic flow and the excitement in the leading characters (Tony Tanner, 2010; Cairncross, 1965 and 1969: Arden Shakespeare, Methuen & Co Ltd). The links between the historical reports and the text of the Henry VI plays have been put together so well by Tony Tanner that this book does not address these issues, instead it is concerned to seek out the purposes of the characters, and the themes that influence them. Cairncross points out in his Arden introduction that, whereas Shakespeare's contemporaries enjoyed his Henry VI parts i, ii, iii plays that, together with Richard III, made up the first of the two tetralogies of the history plays, that these plays gradually lost popularity and support from the critics, including Coleridge, in the early decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He pointed out that it would be another 100 years, in about the 1930's, before these four plays began to recover the interest and appreciation by audiences. Shakespeare's

second tetralogy of history plays began with Richard II that was followed by Henry IV parts i & ii and finished with Henry V.

One of the political issues that makes its appearance in the first play of the second tetralogy, is the animosity between the Church and the State. In the first part of the series, Henry VI, the Bishop of Winchester, later to become a Cardinal, is shown at enmity with the Duke of Gloucester (aka Duke Humphrey). Animosity between Church and State re-appears also in one of the plays in the first tetralogy where in King Henry IV part ii the Archbishop of York is opposed to King Henry and supports the rebellion. In doing so he is tricked into a laying down of arms for a conference on the field and taken away to be executed for his treason. It is notable that Shakespeare while showing us this treachery by senior members of the Church in these political broils keeps them short and greatly restricts their appearance in just one of the history plays in each tetralogy.

### **The problems and their long and similar history concerning governance of the people**

Unfortunately, the same fighting for power and authority today is present in 'western' and many other countries where there are too many politicians who want to govern the people; as a consequence they struggle with balancing their personal ambitions. It is like the nobility of the Middle Ages continued into the present. It must have started long before the Middle Ages, beginning when urbanisation began to create large groups of people with organised agriculture that required some form of governance. Today's politicians, like the nobles of the Middle Ages, and long before that, are a major problem for the State and for the population. The dangers to the State have long been from those who are unqualified or otherwise unsuitable to be ambitious in politics. Look in any parliament and you will find them in their numbers. They want power and authority for themselves, and for the opportunities it gives them for enriching themselves, and for being important. It is not because they desire to help the State, nor, for example, because they want to see their country have first rate education designed for all children at their various levels of ability and aptitude. No! It is for themselves. That is partly why there are so many different political parties in European parliaments today. No parliament needs many political parties. Ideally there would be none. Debate should be by individuals who have been elected to represent their constituents to speak their minds where they find they have something to contribute to the discussion. That is not to say that all politicians are unqualified or otherwise unsuitable to be members of parliament. We are mightily fortunate for those members of parliament who are more ambitious for the State than they are for themselves. Just as in the middle ages, and in the reign of Henry VI, for example, there were great men like Talbot who fought courageously for his king and for his country; he died doing so for lacking sufficient numbers of supporting soldiers and senior officers.

This splendid speech by King Henry V on the subject of ceremony offers reflections on aspects of those who are qualified and suitable to be politically ambitious.

### **Henry V Act 4, Scene 1, lines 236-290:**

Upon the King! Let us our lives, our souls,  
Our debts, our careful wives,  
Our children, and our sins lay on the king!

We must bear all. O hard condition!  
 Twin-born with greatness, subject to the breath  
 Of every fool, whose sense more can feel  
 Than his own wringing. What infinite heart's ease  
 Must kings neglect that private men enjoy!  
 And what have kings that privates have not too,  
 Save ceremony, save general ceremony?  
 And what art thou, thou idol ceremony?  
 What kind of god art thou, that suffer'st more  
 Of mortal griefs than do they worshipers?  
 What are the rents? What are the comings-in?  
 O ceremony, show me but thy worth!  
 What is the soul of adoration?  
 Art thou aught else but place, degree, and form,  
 Creating awe and fear in other men?  
 Wherein thou are less happy, being fear'd,  
 Than they in fearing.  
 What drink'st thou oft, instead of homage sweet,  
 But poisoned flattery? O be sick, great greatness,  
 And bid they ceremony give the cure!  
 Think'st thou the fiery fever will go out  
 With titles blown from adulation?  
 Will it give place to flexure and low-bending?  
 Canst thou when thou command'st the beggars knee,  
 Command the health of it? No, thou proud dream,  
 That play'st so subtly with a king's repose;  
 I am a king that find thee; and the ball,  
 The sword, the mace, then crown imperial,  
 The intertissued robe of gold and pearl,  
 The farced title running 'fore the king,  
 The throne he sits on, not the tide of pomp  
 That beats upon the high shore of this world,  
 No, not all these, thrice gorgeous ceremony,  
 Not all these, laid in bed majestical,  
 Can sleep so soundly as the wretched slave,  
 Who with body fill'd and vacant mind  
 Get him to rest, cramm'd with distressful bread;  
 Never sees horrid night, the child of hell,  
 But, like a lackey, from the rise to set  
 Sweats in the eye of Phoebus, and all night  
 Sleeps in Elisium; next day after dawn,  
 Doth rise and help Hyperion to his horse,  
 And follows so the ever-running year  
 With profitable labour to his grave;  
 And, but for ceremony, such a wretch,  
 Winding up days with toil and nights with sleep,  
 Had the fore-hand and vantage of a king.  
 The slave, a member of the country's peace,  
 Enjoys it; but in gross brain little wots  
 What watch the king keeps to maintain the peace,

Whose hours the peasant best advantages.

And now let's read Talbot's last speech as mortally wounded and holding his young son John in his arms, he sits dying before his enemies, led by La Pucelle, storm in looking for him. He speaks with a clear echo of King Richard II when he had become aware that his rule and life were closing in on him, but unlike Talbot, Richard was not a great warrior.

Now the English remnant on the battlefield, **Act VI Scene 7, line 18** :

**Talbot:**

Thou antic Death, which laugh'st us here to scorn,  
Anon, from thy insulting tyranny,  
Coupled in bonds of perpetuity,  
Two Talbots winged through the lither sky,  
In thy despite shall scape mortality.  
O thou whose wounds become hard-favour'd Death,  
Speak to thy father ere thou yield thy breath!  
Brave Death by speaking, whether he will or no;  
Imagine him a Frenchman and thy foe.  
Poor boy! He smiles, methinks, as who should say,  
Had Death been French, then Death had died to-day,  
Come, come, and lay him in his father's arms:  
My spirit can no longer bear these harms.  
Soldiers, adieu! I have what I would have,  
Now my old arms are young John Talbot's grave

This is followed by a scene in London where the sniping and competition among the great and important are everywhere seeking advantage while English soldiers die on the battlefield in France for lack of support, **Act 5 Scene 1 line 28** (*Enter The Archbishop of Winchester, great uncle to the King. He is wearing a Cardinals habit*):

**Exeter**

What! Is my Lord Winchester install'd,  
And called unto a cardinal's degree?  
Then I perceive that will be verified  
Henry the Fifth did sometime prophesy:  
'If once he come to be a cardinal,  
He'll make his cap co-equal with the crown.'

**K. Hen**

My Lords, Ambassadors, your several suits  
Have been consider'd and debated on.

## ***King Henry VIII***

This great play emerges from Shakespeare's imagined realities enriched by a great variety of created characters in diverse scenes. A large part of the violent and cruel history of this king could have been a significant part of Shakespeare's play, but he must

have deliberately and carefully omitted those parts. After all those violent parts of England's history had been shown in various plays that Shakespeare has written for the stage. There is little told about King Henry VIII's early reign, and there is nothing told about his last years. However, there is some considerable discussion about the play Henry VIII in Chapter 14, of this book. We are now going to be shown, and we can read, other aspects of this period of England's history.

### **Act 1, The Prologue:**

I come no more to make you laugh; things now  
That bear a weighty and serious brow,  
Sad, high, and working, full of state and woe ;  
Such noble scenes as draw the eye to flow  
We are now present. Those that can pity, here  
May (if they think it well) let fall a tear,  
The subject will deserve it. Such as give  
Their money out of hope they may believe,  
May here find truth too. Those that come to see  
Only a show or two, and so agree  
The play may pass, if they be still and willing,  
I'll undertake may see away their shilling.  
Richly in two short hours. Only they  
That come to hear a merry bawdy play,  
A noise of targets, or to see a fellow  
In a long motley coat guarded with yellow,  
Will be deceiv'd: for gentle hearers, know  
To rank our chosen truth with such a show  
As fool and fight is, beside forfeiting  
Our own brains and the opinion that we bring  
To make that only true we now intend,  
Will leave us never an understanding friend.  
Therefore, for goodness sake, and as you are known  
The first and happiest hearers of the town,  
Be sad, as we should make ye. Think ye see  
The very persons of our noble story  
As they were living: think you see them great,  
And follow'd with the general throng, and sweat  
Of thousand friends; then in a moment, see  
How soon this mightiness meets misery:  
And if you can be merry then I'll say  
A man may weep upon his wedding day.

**Act 1, London .** Into a room in the court, enter the Duke of Norfolk at one door. At the other the Duke of Buckingham and the Lord Abergavenny. They make conversation that turns to their suspicions that Cardinal Wolsey is making serious trouble for some. But then the Duke of Norfolk turns to the Duke of Buckingham and offers him a serious warning against the ill intentions of the Cardinal against Buckingham.

**Act 1, Scene 2**, In the council Chamber. The king is leaning on the Cardinal's shoulder. The queen admits to the King that she has many people who try to beg her help. Where these people are honest the Queen tries to help them, but when the King or the Cardinal are opposed, the Queen abandons her efforts when she sees the impossibility of moving the King or the Cardinal in their crooked schemes. The surveyor of the Duke of Buckingham has been inventing lies from the Cardinal's intention to make life very difficult for Buckingham. The King is persuaded by Wolsey and accepts the obvious lies of evidence against his employer Buckingham..

It is soon obvious that Wolsey will convince the King that the Duke of Buckingham should be executed on the false evidence of his Surveyor and Wolsey's evidence.

Now the play moves on to the question of how the King can marry Anne Bullen and divorce his wife, a woman of integrity with whom he is now bored, and because the King wants a son. Cardinal Wolsey sees his way to advance himself even more into the King's preferences by working to make the King able to marry Anne Bollen.

**Act 2, Scene 6, Black-Friars**, trumpets, sennet and cornets, enter Vergers, two scribes in the habit of doctors; after them the Archbishop of Canterbury alone, then other Bishops and officials including two Cardinals who sit as Judges. There are many other officials.

**Wol.**

Whilst our commission from Rome is read,  
Let silence be commanded.

**King.**

What's the need?  
It hath already publically been read,  
And on all sides th'authority allow'd,  
You may then spare the time.

**Wol.**

Be't so; proceed.

**Scribe.**

Say, Henry King of England, come into the court.

**Crier**

Henry, King of England, &c.

**Scribe**

Say, Katherine Queen of England, come into the Court.

**Crier.**

Katherine Queen of England, &c.

The Queen makes no answer, rises out of her chair, goes about the court, comes to the King, and kneels at his feet, and then speaks:

**Kath.**

Sir, I desire you do me right and justice,  
And to bestow your pity on me; for  
I am a poor woman, and a stranger,  
Born out of your dominions: having here  
No judge indifferent, nor no more assurance  
Of equal friendship and proceeding. Alas sir,  
In what have I offended you? What cause  
Hath my behaviour given to your displeasure,  
That thus you should proceed to put me off,  
And take your grace from me.? Heavens witness,  
I have been to you a true and humble wife,  
At all times to your will conformable,  
Even in fear to kindle your dislike,  
Yea, subject to your countenance, glad or sorry  
As I saw it inclin'd. When was the hour

I ever contradicted your desire  
Or made it not mine too.? Or which your friends  
Have I not strove to love, although I knew  
He were mine enemy.? What friend of mine,  
That had to him deriv'd your anger, did I  
Continue in my liking.? Nay, gave notice  
He was from thence discharg'd.? Sir, call to mind  
That I have been your wife in this obedience  
Upward of twenty years, and have been blest  
With many children by you. If in the course  
And process of this time you can report,  
And prove it too, against my honour aught,  
By bond to wedlock, or my love and duty  
Against your sacred person; in God's name  
Turn me away, and let the foul'st contempt  
Shut door upon me, and so give me up  
To the sharp'st kind of justice. Please you, sir,  
The king your father was reputed for  
A prince most prudent, of an excellent  
And unmatched wit and judgement: Ferdinand  
My father, King of Spain, was reckon'd one  
The wisest prince that there had reign'd by many  
A year before. It is not to be question'd  
That they had gather'd a wise council to them  
Of every realm, that did debate this business,  
Who deem'd our marriage lawful: wherefore I  
Humbly  
Beseech you sir, to spare me till I may  
Be by my friends in Spain advis'd, whose counsel  
I will implore. If not, I th' name of God  
Your pleasure be fulfill'd.

Wolsey and a supporter then make cunning speeches

**Kath**

Lord Cardinal,  
To you I speak.

**Wol.**

Your pleasure, madam.

**Kath.**

Sir,  
I am about to weep; but thinking that  
We are a queen (or long have dream'd so) certain  
The daughter of a king, my drops of tears  
I'll turn to sparks of fire.

**Wol.**

Be patient yet.

**Kath.**

I will when you are humble; nay before,  
Or God will punish me. I do believe  
(Induc'd by potent circumstances) that  
You are my enemy, and make my challenge  
You shall not be my judge. For it is you  
Have blown this coal between my lord and me  
Which God's dew quench, therefore I say again  
I utterly abhor; yea, from my soul  
Refuse you for my judge, whom yet once more  
I hold my most malicious foe, and think not  
At all a friend to truth.

This wonderfully constructed debate in which Queen Katherine is so clearly in the right, supported and maintained by the brilliant and exquisite dramatic poetry that Katherine so skilfully employs. It continues between Wolsey and Katherine until Katherine loses patience with Wolsey.

**Kath.**

My lord, my lord,  
I am a simple woman, much too weak  
T'oppose your cunning. Y'are meek and humble-  
mouth'd, you sign your place and calling, in full seeming,  
With meekness and humility: but your heart  
Is crammi'd with arrogancy, spleen and pride,  
You have by fortune, and his highness' favours,  
Gone slightly o'er low steps, and now are mounted  
Where powers are your retainers, and your words  
(Domestics to you) serve your will as't please  
Yourself pronounce their office. I must tell you,  
You tender more your person's honour than  
Your high profession spiritual ; that again



I do refuse you for my judge, and here  
Before you all, appeal unto the Pope,  
To bring my whole cause 'fore his holiness  
And to be judg'd by him.

She curtsies to the King, and offers to depart. The King then says 'Call her again'. The Queen hesitates and then speaks:

**Kath.**

What need you note it? pray you keep your way,  
When you are call'd return. Now the Lord help,  
They vex me past my patience. Pray you pass on;  
I will not tarry; no, nor ever more  
Upon this business my appearance make  
In any of their courts.

*(Exit Queen, and her attendants)*

**King.**

Go thy ways Kate;  
That man i th' world who shall report he has  
A better wife, let him in naught be trusted,  
For speaking false in that; thou are alone  
(If they rare qualities, sweet gentleness  
Thy meekness saintlike, wife-like government,  
Obeying in commanding, and thy parts  
Soverign and pious else, could speak thee out)  
The queen of earthly queens; she's noble born,  
And like her true nobility she has  
Carried herself towards me.

## Act II Scene IV

**King** *(Aside)*

I may perceive  
These cardinals trifle with me: I abhor  
This dilatory sloth and tricks of Rome.  
My learn'd and well-beloved servant Cranmer  
Prithee return; with thy approach, I know  
My comfort comes along.--Break up the court;  
I say set on.

*(Exeunt, in manner as they enter'd.)*

**Act III Scene 1**, A room in the Queen's apartments, enter the Queen and her women as at work:

**Kath.**

Take thy lute wench, my soul grows sad with troubles  
Sing, and disperse'em if thou canst: leave working.

*SONG*

Orpheus with his lute made trees,  
And the mountain tops that freeze  
Bow themselves when he did sing:  
To his music plants and flowers  
Ever sprung, as sun and showers  
There had made a lasting spring.

Every thing that heard him play,  
Even the billows of the sea,  
Hung their heads and then lay by:  
In such music is such art,  
Killing care and grief at heart  
Fall asleep, or hearing die

The extended debate between Katherine and the two Cardinals, Wolsey and Campeus is clearly won by the honesty of Katherine and her interlectual skills, integrity and unwavering courage against these two cunning and deceitful Cardinals. Katherine recognising the impossibility of her getting the two Cardinals to speak or behave with honesty decides to close their meeting. Softening her argument to obtain some closure she draws their debate to an end with these words that carry her recognition of the appalling quality of these awful great men with whom she must deal.

**Kath.**

Do what ye will, my lords; and pray forgive me;  
If I have us'd myself unmannerly,  
You know I am a woman, lacking wit  
To make a seely answer to such persons.  
Pray do my service to his majesty;  
He had my heart yet, and shall have my prayers  
While I shall have my life. Come reverend fathers,  
Bestow your counsels on me; she now begs  
That little thought when she set footing here  
She should have bought her dignities so dear.  
*(Exeunt)*

**Act III Scene II**, A room at court, enter the Duke of Norfolk, Duke of Suffolk, Lord Surrey, and Lord Chamberlain. This assembly is gathered to know the discovery of Wolsey having been grossly misusing his powers and influences against the King's best interests. Before long Wolsey and his assistant, Cromwell, enter. It is clear that Wolsey is becoming anxious. Now the King enters angry at the ways Wolsey has been assuming to his own enormous sums of riches that strictly belong to the King. Wolsey realises that he has been discovered. The King with his nobles leave smiling and whispering. It is clear that there is much rejoicing in Wolsey having been found out grossly misusing the King's riches.

Now re-enter the Dukes of Norfolk & Suffolk, the Earl of Surrey and the Lord Chamberlain.

**Nor.**

Hear the king's pleasure Cardinal, who commands you

To render up the great seal presently  
Into our hands, and to confine yourself  
To Asher-house; my Lord of Winchester's  
Till you hear further from his highness.

Wolsey tries to recover his position and power and the King's good opinion of him, all to no effect. Then eventually Wolsey is left alone on the stage where he reflects in this great speech:

**Wol.**

So farewell to the little good you bear me.  
Farewell? a long farewell to all my greatness.  
His is the state of man; to-morrow blossoms,  
And bears his blushing honours thick upon him:  
The third day comes a frost, a killing frost,  
And when he thinks, good easy man, full surely  
His greatness is a-ripening, nips his root,  
And then he falls as I do. I have ventur'd  
Like little wanton boys that swim on bladders,  
This many summers in a sea of glory,  
But far beyond my depth: my high-blown pride  
At length broke under me, and now has left me,  
Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate ye ;  
I feel my heart new open'd. O how wretched  
Is that poor man that hangs on princes' favours!  
There is betwixt that smile we would aspire to,  
That sweet aspect of princes, and their ruin,  
More pangs and fears than wars or women have;  
And when he falls, he falls like Lucifer,  
Never to hope again.

*Enter Cromwell, standing amazed:*

**Wol**

Why, how now Cromwell?

**Crom.**

I have no power to speak, sir.

**Wol.**

What amaz'd  
At my misfortunes? Can they Spirit wonder  
A great man should decline? Nay, and you weep  
I am fallen indeed.

**Crom.**

How does your grace?

**Wol.**

Why well;

Never so truly happy, my good Cromwell;  
I know myself now, and I feel within me  
A peace above all earthly dignities,  
A still and quiet conscience. The king has cur'd me,  
I humbly thank his grace; and from these shoulders,  
These ruin'd pillars, out of pity taken  
A load would sink a navy, too much honour.  
O 'tis a burden Cromwell, 'tis a burden  
Too heavy for a man that hopes for heaven.

**Crom.**

I am glad your grace has made that right use of it.

**Wol.**

I hope I have: I am able now, methinks,  
(Out of a fortitude of soul I feel)  
To endure more miseries, and greater far  
Than my weak-hearted enemies dare offer.  
What news abroad?

**Crom.**

The heaviest and the worst  
Is your displeasure with the king.

**Wol.**

God bless him.

Wolsey and Cromwell continue this discussion where soon Wolsey admits to Cromwell, when talking about Lady Anne Bollen, **Wolsey** says:

There was the weight that pulled me down.  
O Cromwell,  
The king has gone beyond me: all my glories  
In that one woman I have lost for ever.  
No sun shall ever usher forth mine honours,  
Or gild again the noble troops that waited  
Upon my smiles. Go get thee from me Cromwell,  
I am a poor fall'n man, unworthy now  
To be thy lord and master. Seek the king  
(That sun I pray may never set) I have told him  
What, and how true thou art; he will advance thee:  
Some little memory of me will stir him.  
(I know his noble nature) not to let  
Thy hopeful service perish too. Good Cromwell  
Neglect him not; make use now, and provide  
For thine own future safety.

**Act IV Scene 1**

It is clear that Shakespeare now intended two important theatrical arrangements: first in Act IV, we are shown the great qualities of Katherine, including her deep concerns for her women servants and, her concerns for her poor men servants. She goes to considerable lengths to do all that she possibly can to try to secure their livelihoods when she died; as she is well aware that she does not have long to live, and at the end of Act IV she has already taken to her bed in a weak condition . Shakespeare makes clear in Act IV her nobility, kindness and consideration for others. She dies in Act V, but the death is not seen on stage and is not referred to, but the implication is that she is no longer alive. In Act V there is no mention whatsoever of Katherine's name. Shakespeare quietly implies that her soul was too great, too fine, to be trammelled any more. She stands greater than her tormentors, greater in every way, except in her present poverty.

Here in her very last lines of Act IV we find the weak, unwell, Queen Katherine to whom Lord Capuchius, who is an Ambassador sent to Queen Katherine, from the Emperor Charles V, who is concerned about her impoverished, lonely, abandoned condition. Shakespeare is not missing a trick by bringing this very emotional, heart-rending scene before us. It is a signal of the enormous difference in the character, the integrity and civilized behaviour, and concern for others by this now weak and dying Queen Katherine whose father was King of Spain. Here are her last words:

**Kath.**

I thank you honest lord. Remember me  
In all humility unto his highness:  
Say his long trouble now is passing  
Out of this world. Tell him in death I bless'd him,  
For so I will; mine eyes grow dim. Farewell  
My lord. Griffith farewell. Nay patience,  
You must not leave me yet. I must to bed,  
Call in more women . When I am dead, good wench,  
Let me be us'd with honour; strew me over  
With maiden flowers, that all the world may know  
I was a chaste wife to my grave: embalm me,  
Then lay me forth; although unqueened, yet like  
A queen, and daughter to a king inter me.  
I can not more.  
*(Exeunt leading Katherine)*

**Act V, Scene I,** In some ways, in the last act we are seeing a man of dignity and self-control in very difficult circumstances in the person of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer. What has gone is the cruel, ruthless, greedy Cardinal Wolsey, but other monsters have come on the scene, none perhaps as far up the scale of evil as the Cardinal Wolsey.

The king has recognised that Cranmer is a man of integrity and a genuine, religious man. We are no longer dealing with an evil, greedy, unspeakable manipulator for his own advantage, such as was Cardinal Wolsey. But the removal of Wolsey opened up the shop for a replacement by a similar rogue, and it was quickly filled by Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, who gathered around him many clerics with the same greedy and opportunistic tendencies. The outstanding exception was Cranmer, Archbishop of

Canterbury. Gardiner was planning that England should be rid of Cranmer. But Gardiner underestimated the King, who wanted a sound, good, clean Archbishop who would set the example from Canterbury. Gardiner underestimated the King's affections, and even respect, for Cranmer, and in any case the King did not see any need for roughs and toughs in his Bishops, now that Katherine was dead and his new Queen was bearing him children. Of course that was not to last and, in any case, this was a play and Shakespeare was going to use this dramatic work to carry some of his ideas that, some seem to us now in 2013 rather more like religious and philosophical messages. They were convenient for Will's last great play that he intended to leave for the world when he was quite possibly aware that he might not be on this Earth for very much longer. Did he smile, thinking of what he was leaving for people to understand when he was gone? Who knows? Did he realise that it might be hundreds of years before most men and women began to fully recognise what an extraordinary message he was going to leave behind concerning our life, and more important for this play, concerning a message for our death (cf. pp. 172-173 and 190-191).

## *King John*

After so much of Shakespeare's brilliant language in his other History Plays, discussed in this *Introduction to the History Plays of Chapter 15*, we have turned to his history play of King John that was written in 1596. This play was written about the middle of his first nine history plays, with his tenth history play being written very much later after Queen Elizabeth had died. This connection is discussed at the beginning of Chapter 15.

The play opens in The Court of England where the Chatillon, the French ambassador from France to King John., is present with Queen Eleanor mother of King John, The earl of Salisbury, King John and the Earl of Pembroke. The purpose is that the French are laying demands to Ireland, Poitiers, Anjou, Touraine, Maine, to discuss the claim of Arthur Plantagenet to these properties.

The battles involve the French led by King Philip and the English led by King John and supported by the Bastard, Philip, but soon to be Richard Coeur-de-lion, who grows in stature throughout the play. Prince Arthur who is Duke of Brittany, and only a young boy, but one of courage and judgement, whose mother, Constance, is an important political figure. Cardinal Pandulph is another important politician acting between the French and English as the Pope's legate. There is very little physical excitement in this play, certainly nothing to compare with most of the other English History plays of Shakespeare. Equally, Shakespeare's language and his dramatic poetry are not of the same power. However, there are some fine expressions of Shakespeare's dramatic poetry that are cited in this book. The play is not popular and is not often played on the stage. In some ways the language of the drama seldom rises about the level of poetry that we find in Titus Andronicus, a play that is a much more violent and brutal than anything we find in King John, where we do find a few poetic dramatic speeches of beauty and fineness, at a level not found in Titus Andronicus.

The play, King John, is relatively inactive in comparison with most of Shakespeare's History plays. Like many of the history of England plays King John is set partly in England and party in France. There is relatively little active warfare in the King John play, where nearly all of it is talk, and only small parts are filled with active battles.

Very early in the play Philip, who is also known as ‘the Bastard,’ even after he is made Sir Richard Coeur-de-lion by King John, following him being revealed by his mother as a bastard, after she admits that she, after much resistance, had submitted to being seduced by King Richard Coeur-de Lion. King John then made him a knight, called Sir Richard. This character has an important role in this play that is widely recognised by many of the other characters.

The play, very like Titus Andronicus, has no sense of humour, no fun and no laughter, and not much affection between individuals acting their parts. Of course, there are exceptions, e.g. Constance, mother of Arthur, Duke of Brittany, nephew to the king. Being a history play it is nearly all about politics among the English and French, and between the military and political French and English people, and one Spanish woman, who has a political role in the play. In addition there is a considerable role for the Cardinal Pandulph the Pope’s legate.

There are some powerful speeches that carry the stamp of Shakespeare, such as this speech by Constance concerning the death of her young son, Arthur.

**Const.**

Grief fills the room up of my absent child,  
Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me,  
Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,  
Remembers me of all his gracious parts,  
Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form;  
Then have I reason to be fond of grief?  
Fare you well: had you such a loss as I  
I could give better comfort than you do.  
I will not keep this form upon my head,  
When there is such disorder in my wit.  
O Lord! my boy, my Arthur, my fair son!  
My life, my joy, my food, my all the world!  
My widow-comfort, and my sorrows cure!

**K. Phil.**

I fear some outrage, and I’ll follow her.

And now here is a short passage spoken by Cardinal Pandulph

**Pand.**

O, sir, when he shall hear of your approach,  
If that young Arthur be not gone already,  
Even at the news he dies; and then the hearts  
Of all his people shall revolt from him,  
And kiss the lips of unacquainted change,  
And pick strong matter of revolt and wrath  
Out of the bloody fingers’ ends of John.  
Methinks I see this hurly all on foot:  
And, O, what better matter breeds fro you  
Than I have nam’d!

Here, in the last lines of the play, we have Shakespeare's perfect choice of the ending: as he selected the Bastard to give us his voice to close with these words:

**Bast.**

O let us pay the time but needful woe,  
Since it hath been beforehand with our griefs.  
This England never did, nor never shall,  
Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror,  
But when it first did help to wound itself.  
Now these her princes are come home again  
Came the three corners of the world in arms  
And we shall shock them! Nought shall make us rue.



## *Chapter 16*

### *The 10 Tragedies*

See page 2 listing of 10 tragedies.

#### *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*

Romeo and Juliet is one of Shakespeare's earliest plays thought to have been written in 1594. It is sometimes classified by scholars as a comedy, for example by Tony Tanner in his compendious study of Shakespeare's plays 1992-1996. In this book the play is classified as a tragedy on the basis that it traces the violent hooligan-led fights that cause the death of two young men and later lead to the suicides of Romeo and Juliet. The cause of all these deaths being the violent dispute between two local families of the Montagues and Capulets. The Arden Shakespeare Published by Methuen in 1980 entitles the play on the first page of its text as *The Most Excellent and Lamentable Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*.

The text opens with a Prologue spoken by Chorus with this statement:

Two households both alike in dignity  
(In fair Verona, where we lay our scene)  
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,  
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.  
From forth the fatal loins of these two foes  
A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life,  
Whose misadventur'd piteous overthrows  
Doth with their death bury their parents strife.  
The fearful passage of their death-marked love  
And the continuance of their parents' rage,  
Which, but their children's end, nought could remove,  
Is now the two hours ' traffic of our stage ;  
The which, if you with patient ears attend,  
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.  
(*Chorus exits*).

This introductory chorus speech, brief though it be, sums up the principal elements of the origin and tragic end of this play. However, there are many parts of this story to be acted out between the beginning and end of this tragedy. We witness their sudden discovery of their affection for each other in beautiful language.

The fight between the members of the two warring families in Verona, the Montagues and Capulets, is followed by the threat of severe punishment by the Prince of Verona against any such further violent riots engendered by these families. After this, the play quickly settles down to discuss such matters as to whether Juliet, the 13 years old

daughter of Capulet family, is of a suitable age for being married. Soon we move to a scene between Romeo and his friend Mercutio. It opens quietly with a discussion about dreams before the lively and courageous character, Mercutio, launches into his exhilarating and fantasy account of Queen Mab.

**Romeo.**

I dreamt a dream tonight.

**Mer.**

And so did I.

**Romeo.**

Well what was yours?

**Mer.**

That dreamers often lie.

**Romeo.**

In bed asleep, while they do dream things true.

**Mer.**

O then I see Queen Mab hath been with you .  
She is the fairies midwife, and she comes  
In shape no bigger than an agate stone  
On the forefinger of an alderman,  
Drawn with a team of little atomi  
Over men's noses as they lie asleep.  
Her chariot is an empty hazelnut  
Made by the joiner squirrel or old grub,  
Time out o' mind the fairie's coachmakers ;  
Her waggon-spokes made of long spinners' legs,  
The cover of the winge of grasshoppers,  
Her traces of the smallest spider web,  
Her collars of the moonshine's watery beams,  
Her whip of cricket's bone, the lash of film,  
Her waggoner a small grey-coated gnat,  
Not half so big a round little worm  
Prick'd from the lazy finger of a maid ;  
And in this state she gallops night by night  
Through lovers' brains, and then they dream of love ;  
O'er courtiers' knees, that dream on curtsies straight ;  
O'er lawyers' fingers who straight dream on fees  
O'er ladies' lips, who straight on kisses dream,  
Which oft the angry Mab with blisters plagues  
Because their breaths with sweetmeats tainted are.  
Sometime she gallops o'er a courtier's nose  
And then dreams he of smelling out a suit ;  
And sometime comes she with a tithe-pig's tail,  
Tickling a parson's nose as a lies asleep ;  
Then dreams he of another benefice.

Sometime she driveth o'er a soldier's neck  
And then dreams he of cutting foreign throats,  
Of breaches, ambuscados, Spanish blades,  
Of healths five fathom deep ; and then anon  
Drums in his ear, at which he starts and wakes,  
And being thus frighted swears a prayer or two  
And sleeps again. This is that very Mab  
That plaits the manes of horses in the night  
And bakes the elf-locks in foul sluttish hairs,  
Which, once untangled, much misfortune bodes.  
This is the hag, when maids lie on their backs,  
That presses them and learns them first to bear,  
Making them women of good carriage.  
This is she---

**Romeo.**

Peace, peace, Mercutio, peace.  
Thou talks of nothing.

**Mer.**

True, I talk of dreams,  
Which are the children of an idle brain,  
Begot of nothing but vain fantasy,  
Which is as thin of substance as the air  
And more inconstant than the wind, who woos  
Even now the frozen bosom of the north  
And, being anger'd puffs away from thence  
Turning his side to the dew-dropping south.

The performance by Mercutio of this great Queen Mab speech given by John McEneary in the production directed by Franco Zeffirelli may never be excelled. Essentially it makes fun of folk-tales and of locally important figures and makes teasing observations of love and lovers. The language is rich in wit and truly inventive observations of fairies and rural life.

The first hint we have of Romeo's attraction to Juliet, the young daughter of the Capulet family, is when he gate crashes their big family party one evening in the house of the leading Capulet family. When Romeo asks one of their servants of the Capulet family who is Juliet, he denies knowing her name.

**Rom.** (*Talking to himself*):

O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright.  
It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night  
As a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear----  
Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear.

.....

Did my heart love till now? Forswear it, sight.  
For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night.

As the great Capulet house party continues Romeo finds ways to speak to Juliet, whom he has never seen before this evening. Juliet suspects that he may be a member of the dreaded enemy Montague family. Romeo tells her that he is a Montague. Juliet warns him that he is in great danger and that if he is recognised her relatives will murder him. To which Romeo with the haste and passion of youth replies:

**Rom.**

I have night's cloak to hide me from their eyes,  
And but thou love me, let them find me here.  
My life were better ended by their hate  
Than death prorogued, wanting of thy love.

Sometime later that evening Juliet, with the imprudence of youthful impatience, confesses to Romeo that she loves him. Later still that evening she is even more imprudent, when as they are together on the balcony of Juliet's home as she tells Romeo that:

**Juliet.**

My bounty is as boundless as the sea,  
My love as deep: the more I give to thee  
The more I have, for both are infinite.  
I hear some noise within. Dear love, adieu.

The very next day Romeo after having Juliet's agreement, visits Friar Laurence and asks him to marry them that day. After getting over his great surprise the Friar agrees to marry them secretly. The family nurse for Juliet is a witness of this secret marriage by Friar Laurence.

Later that day there is a squabble in the public square and, in the process of a sword fight between Tybalt (the leading young man of the Capulet family), who is so very aggressive, and Mercutio who is a jesting clown. These young men of Verona have insulting names for each other: Tybalt of the Capulet family is called the King of Cats and he calls Mercutio Rat Catcher. These young men draw their rapiers against each other and in a skirmish, where Romeo is trying to calm down this sword fight, Tybalt stabs Mercutio under Romeo's arm where it cannot be seen by Mercutio. Mercutio is gravely wounded by Tybalt who then runs away with all his gang of Capulets leaving Mercutio dying from Tybalt's sword, that deeply penetrated Mercutio's chest. Romeo is horrified at the killing of his close friend Mercutio so Romeo challenges Tybalt, and in this fight Tybalt is killed. Romeo is then persuaded by his family friends to flee into hiding. The Prince of Verona is furious at this continuing fighting in the streets. As a consequence the Prince exiles Romeo from living in Verona and warns that should Romeo ever be seen again in Verona from the dawning of the next day Romeo would be executed.

Juliet who secretly married Romeo earlier that day is horrified at the death of her kinsman by her new husband Romeo, and she is shocked for the danger in which Romeo has landed himself. Juliet's family of Capulet have no knowledge of their daughter's marriage with Romeo, a Montague. Worse still the heads of the Capulet family are planning to marry their daughter Juliet to another man of high social standing. That evening Romeo hides in Juliet's bedroom and the next morning after

their first night together Romeo wakes knowing he is under threat of death from the Prince of Verona. There is a dramatic scene where Romeo reminds Juliet that he must leave before the sun rises, for if he is found in Verona he will be executed. This scene engenders some fine and beautiful language from these young lovers:

**Nurse.** (*Speaking to Juliet*):

Will you speak well of him that killed your cousin?

**Juliet.**

Shall I speak ill of him that is my husband?  
Ah, poor my lord, what tongue shall sloth thy name  
When I thy three-hours wife have mangled it?  
But wherefore, villain, didst thou kill my cousin?  
That villain would have killed my husband.  
Back, foolish tears, back to your native spring,  
Your tributary drops belong to woe  
Which you mistaking offer up to joy.  
My husband lives, that Tybalt would have slain my husband.  
All this is comfort. Wherefore weep I then?  
Some word was there, worsen than Tybalt's death,  
That murder'd me. I would forget it fain,  
But O, it presses on my memory  
Like damned guilty deeds to sinners' minds  
Tybalt is dead and Romeo-----banished.  
That 'banished', that one word 'banished',  
Hath slain ten thousand Tybalts: Tybalt's death  
Was woe enough, if it had ended there .

.....

.....Nurse, I'll to my wedding bed,  
And death, not Romeo take my maidenhead.

**Nurse.**

Hie to your chamber. I'll find Romeo  
To comfort you. I wot not where he is.  
Hark ye, your Romeo will be here at night .  
I'll to him. He is hid at Laurence's cell.

**Juliet**

O find him, give him this ring to my true knight  
And bid him come to take his last farewell.

**Romeo**

There is no world without Verona walls  
But purgatory, torture, hell itself ;  
The world's exile is death. Then 'banished'  
Is death, mitermed. Calling death 'banished'.

.....

A long discussion between Friar Laurence and Romeo continues until long after Juliet's nurse arrives in the dark to meet them. There is another discussion between them which the Friar ends by telling Romeo to go to his young wife, Juliet, but in the early morning, Romeo must leave to abide in Mantua some distance from Verona.

Meanwhile the Capulet family, knowing nothing of the wedding of Juliet with Romeo, have been arranging the wedding for Juliet with the young nobleman who is a relative of the Prince of Verona.

The following morning Romeo in Juliet's bedroom in the Capulet house is woken by the sounds of the skylark singing, he gets ready to leave the nuptial bed when Juliet wakes and speaks to Romeo with some distress in her voice.

**Juliet**

Wilt thou be gone? It is not yet near day.  
It was the nightingale and not the lark  
That pierc'd the fearful hollow of thine ear.  
Nightly she sings on yond pomegranate tree.  
Believe me, love, it was the nightingale.

**Romeo.**

It was the lark, the herald of the morn,  
No nightingale. Look, love, what envious streaks  
Do lace the severing clouds in yonder east.  
Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day  
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops .  
I must be gone and live, or stay and die.

**Juliet**

Yond light is not daylight, I know it, .  
It is some meteor that the sun exhales  
To be to thee this night a torch bearer  
And light thee on thy way to Mantua.  
Therefore stay yet: thou need'st not be gone.

**Romeo.**

Let me be ta'en, let me be put to death,  
I am content, so thou will have it so.  
I'll say yon grey is not the morning's eye,  
'Tis but the pale reflex of Cynthia's brow.

.....

**Juliet**

It is, it is. Hie hence, begone, away  
It is the lark that sings so out of tune,  
Straining harsh discords and unpleasing sharps.

.....

O now be-gone, more light and light it grows.

**Romeo**

More light and light: more dark and dark our woes;

At this point Juliet's nurse arrives in haste urging the need for Romeo to leave. Shakespeare creates a dramatic scene at this stage when Juliet's mother finds her daughter, Juliet, awake and out of bed.

Lady Capulet surprised asks 'Ho, daughter, are you up'? What follows concerns the weeping of Juliet, who gives the impression that she weeps for her cousin Tybalt's death. A long passage follows where Juliet is told she must marry the young nobleman, Paris. Juliet tried to refuse this marriage that her parents want (her parents having no knowledge of her existing marriage to the now banished Romeo, who is a Montague).

The mother and father of Juliet are determined that Juliet should marry the County Paris next Wednesday. Juliet protests she does not want to marry him who is a relative of the Prince of Verona. Juliet goes to consult Friar Laurence who married her and Romeo. Juliet tells Friar Laurence of the plans of her parents. After some discussions with the Friar he suddenly remembers that he can solve this problem.

He tells her to go home now and be merry and agree to your parents plans for you to marry the County Paris next Wednesday. Make sure you sleep alone and without your nurse in your chamber having agreed to marry Paris on Wednesday. Take this vial when you are in bed and drink its contents. This will put you into a very long sleep that will appear as if you had died in the night. Your body will be cold and it will seem that your heart has stopped beating. Your family believing you have died will take your body to the ancient vault where all your dead ancestors are entombed. The friar will make sure that he will inform Romeo of what he has done and Romeo will come that night to take you with him back to Mantua. Juliet thanks the Friar and goes home

Juliet's body is placed in the tomb and that night Romeo comes secretly to her tomb where he believes she is dead, because Romeo only received part of the message from the Friar. Romeo then finds the County Paris has gone to see the supposed dead body of Juliet. Romeo fights with Paris and kills him. Then Romeo thinking Juliet to be dead swallows the deadly poison that he bought for this purpose when he heard in Mantua that Juliet had died.

Shortly after Romeo died Juliet awakes from her drugged sleep, given her by Friar Laurence, who showed her the dead body of Romeo. She then took Romeo's dagger stabbed herself in the heart and falls dead.

The final stage of the play is the reconciliation in the presence of the Prince of Verona of the Capulet and Montague families in the persons of the two senior members.

### **Shakespeare purpose**

The purpose carried through many of Shakespeare's characters in this play seem to be linked to the demonstration of good and evil. Tybalt is obviously an evil character of excessive aggression against others; and we can see the same trend in senior members of the two rival families of Capulet and Montague who cause such bloodshed and havoc by their encouraging aggression. In contrast, the character, Mercutio, who adopts something of a clown, presents a magical interlude that holds everyone in thrall.

The two young lovers Romeo and Juliet having a young loving friendship with each other make up a great contrast. It is notable that this play devotes quite a considerable time to loving friendship that includes such characters as Friar Laurence, Mercutio, Benvolio and the two lovers, Romeo and Juliet. There is no sexual lust. This is an important point, because as we move on through Shakespeare's writing career the hatred of sexual lust without love is increasingly expressed by his characters in many of Shakespeare's plays. It reaches an epitome in some plays, being notably prominent in Hamlet, and one can say that of some of his sonnets.

### *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*

Before Shakespeare began writing his play Julius Caesar in 1599 he had already written 18 plays. In 1599 he then wrote two comedies and the tragedy, Julius Caesar. It is clear that in 1599 he was in full career. One can gather from what the scholars have written that it would seem that Shakespeare made good use of the published histories of Rome.

The play opens with some of the former friends and old enemies, patriots and men with grievancies getting together to discuss what they must do to control the ambitions of Julius Caesar. Some of these Romans who wanted to retain a more democratic government in Rome was something Caesar seemed likely not to accept. The decision was therefore taken by this group of Romans to assassinate Caesar before politics in Rome were to become controlled by him. A more democratic government in Rome was what these other men wanted. This group included Casius, Brutus, Flavius, Trebonius and Cinna who planned to carry out an assassination of Caesar at a meeting in the Senate in 44 BC.

The historical period in which this play is set is the latter part of the collapse of the Roman Republic about 44 BC. It was then not long before the great Roman Empire was established in about 31 BC.

#### **Brief summary of the play**

The play shows that, following this violent killing of Caesar in the Senate, the leading senators opposed to the killing of Caesar persuaded Antony and others to discuss how this killing of Caesar should be presented to the Roman public. It was also agreed that Brutus, the chosen leader of the democratic party, was to speak first to be followed by Antony, the leader of the pro-Caesar group of Senators. At the huge assembly of the Roman crowd Brutus gave a good speech explaining why it had been necessary to kill the grossly over ambitious Caesar. The speech by Antony that followed was brilliant in its aim to arouse the Roman public against the rebels who had been led by Brutus. This powerful, persuasive and moving speech by Antony, who showed the bloody mantle of the corpse of Caesar to the enormous crowd, mostly ordinary Roman plebians, caused this crowd, as Antony fully intended, to become so roused to anger that Brutus and his political friends had to flee for their lives. From this point a civil war emerged and Brutus, his friends and allies fled from Rome before they gathered as an army to fight the pro-Caesar army led by Antony.



What amounts to be the second part of the play takes us to the site of this civil war on the Plains of Philippi in Eastern Macedonia . It was here, where the leaders of those who had followed Antony and his army (who had supported Caesar) now fought the final battle against those who supported Brutus and his colleagues who wanted to preserve some degree of democracy. At first it seemed as though Brutus and his colleagues would win, but mainly through their errors of judgement it became obvious that Antony and his army would triumph. This resulted partly because too many of the leaders of the democratic party were either killed, taken prisoner, or committed suicide when they realised they were going to lose this battle.

### **The beginning of the play and its notable speeches**

The play opens with a large group of tradesmen, including carpenters, cobblers, and others who are stopped in the streets of Rome by some Tribunes, who demand to know from these commoners of working men why they are dressed for leisure and not for their working trades. The tradesmen are questioned by the Tribunes to explain why they are not at work as it is not a public holiday. Marullus asks them if they knew that Pompey had recently been killed.. Marcus Antonius castigates them in the streets for their neglect of respect to Pompey, reminding them of what a great and important man he was for the Romans, **Act I, Sc I, 32:**

**Mar.**

Wherefore rejoice? What conquest brings he home?  
What tribunes follow him to Rome,  
To grace in captive bonds his chariot wheels?  
You blocks of stones, you worse than senseless things!  
O you hard hearts, you cruel men of Rome,  
Knew you not Pompey? Many a time and oft  
Have you climbed up to walls and battlements,  
To towers and windows, yea, to chimney-tops,  
Your infants in your arms, and there sat  
The livelong day, with patient expectation,  
To see great Pompey pass the streets of Rome:  
And when you saw his chariot but appear,  
Have you not made an universal shout,  
That Tiber trembled underneath her banks  
To hear the replication of your sounds  
.....  
And do you now put on your best attire?  
And do you now cull out a holiday?  
And do you now strew flowers in his way?  
That comes in triumph over Pompey's blood?  
Be gone!  
Run to your houses, fall upon your knees,  
Pray to the gods to intermit the plague  
That needs must light on this ingratitude.

These extracts of the speeches from **Act 1 Scene 1** are indicative of the early scenes of the play. They reveal the deep concerns of the Tribunes and Senators in Rome at this time. The political scene is moving away from more democratic politics towards a state

where great soldiers with their success around the Empire are thought to be getting far to big and dangerous for their boots, this threatens the Senate who want to see a much more democratic leadership in Rome. The commoners are thought to be easily swayed by public speeches. The play moves towards the first great passionate events so closely associated with Caesar who has a body of supportive senators and other influential men. His opponents in the Senate are thinking how they can stop Caesar being crowned king in the Senate. In **Act 1 Scene 2** we see a meeting between Cassius and Brutus.

**Bru.**

What means this shouting? I do fear the people  
Choose Caesar for their king.

**Cas.**

Ah, do you fear it?  
Then must I think you would not have it so.

**Bru.**

I would not, Cassius ; yet I love him well.  
.....  
Another general shout?  
I do believe that these applauses are  
For some new honours that are heap'd on Caesar.

And in **Act 1, Sc 2, 132**

**Cas .**

Why, man, he doth best ride the narrow world  
Like a Colossus, and we petty men  
Walk under his huge legs, and peep about  
To find ourselves dishonourable graves.  
Men at some time are master of their fates:  
The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,  
But in ourselves, that we are underlings.

In **Act 1 Sc. 2 , 189**, the following speeches reveal the pompous, over confident Caesar and the deep concerns of the other Senators who fear Caesar:

**Caesar**

Let me have men about me that are fat,  
Sleek-headed men, and such as sleep a-nights.  
.....

And in **Act 1, Sc 2, 197**

I do not know the man I should avoid  
So soon as that spare Cassius, he reads much,  
He is a great observer, and he looks  
Quite through the deeds of men. He loves no  
plays,  
As though dost, Antony ; he hears no music.

Seldom he smiles, and smiles in a such a sort  
As if he mock'd himself, and scorn'd his spirit  
That could be mov'd to smile at any thing .  
Such men as he be never at heart's ease  
Whiles they behold a greater then themselves,  
And therefore they are very dangerous.

**Bru.**

Ay, Casca, Tell us what hath chanc'd today,  
That Caesar looks so sad.

And from **Act 1, Sc, 2 215:**

**Casca .**

Why, you were with him, were you not?

**Brutus.**

I should not then ask Casca what had chanc'd.

**Casca**

Why, there was a crown offer'd him ; and, being  
Offer'd him, he put it by with the back of his hand,  
Thus; and then the people fell a-shouting .

**Brut.**

What was the second noise for?

**Casca**

Why for that too.

**Cas.**

They shouted thrice: what was the last cry for?

**Casca.**

Why, for' that too .

**Bru**

Was the crown offer'd him thrice?

**Casca.**

Ay, marry, was't. and he put it by thrice, every  
time gentler than other ; and at every putting-by  
mine honest neighbours shouted.

**Cas.**

Who offered him the crown?

**Casca**

Why, Antony.

**Bru.**

Tell us the manner of it, gentle Casca .

Then in **Act 1, Sc 2, 230:**

**Casca.**

I can as well be hang'd as tell the manner of it:  
It was mere foolery ; I did not mark it. I saw Mark Antony offer him a crown ;  
yet it was not a crown neither, 'twas one of those coronets; and,  
As I told you, he put it by once; but for all that, to my thinking, he would fain  
have had it . Then he offered it to him again ; then he put it by again ;  
But to my thinking he was very loath to lay his fingers off it. And then he offered  
it the third time. He put the third time by ;and still as he refus'd it  
The rabblement hooted, and clapped their chopt hands, and threw up their  
Sweaty night-caps, and utter'd such a deal of stinking breath because Caesar  
refus'd the crown, that it had almost, choked Caesar ; for he swounded, and fell  
down at it. And for my own part, I durst not laugh, for fear of opening my lips  
and receiving the bad air.

.....

**Act 1, Sc 2, 275**

**Cas.**

Did Cicero say anything?

**Casca.**

Ay. He spoke Greek.

**Cas.**

To what effect?

**Casca.**

Nay and I tell you that, I'll never look you I' th' face. ....  
It was Greek to me.

An important exchange passed between Casca and Brutus, whereby they realise that Julius Caesar has become a serious danger to democratic Rome and its people. Both of these men suspect Caesar wishes to be crowned king of Rome. The result was the plot by several of his former friends to assassinate Caesar in the Senate where he would have been crowned king. These men who, in the event, stabbed him to a bloody death had been his friends, for they wished for a more democratic form of government.

As Caesar is stabbed by Brutus, Caesar speaks his last words as he falls:

**Caesar.**

*Et tu Brute?*—Then fall Caesar!

As Caesar falls dead from their many stabbing wounds, Shakespeare has Cinna say (**Act 3, Sc.1, 78**):

**Cinna.**

Liberty, Freedom, Tyranny is dead!  
Run hence, proclaim, cry it about the streets,

**Casca .**

Some to the common pulpits, and cry out  
Liberty, freedom, and enfranchisement!

**Brutus:**

People and Senators, be not affrighted  
Fly not ; stand still; ambitions's debt is paid

**Casca.**

Ay, every man away,  
Brutus shall lead, and we will grace his heels  
With the most boldest and best hearts of Rome.

We now have a number of great speeches concerning the manner and cause of Caesar's assassination (**Act 3, Sc. 1, 148**):

**Ant.**

O mighty Caesar! doest thou lie so low?  
Are all conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils,  
Shrunk to this little measure? Fare the well.  
I know not, gentlemen, what you intend,  
Who else must be let blood, who else is rank:  
If I myself, there is no hour so fit  
As Caesar's death's hour; nor no instrument  
Of half that worth as those your swords, made rich  
With the most noble blood of all this world .  
Now while your purpled hands do reek and smoke,  
Fulfil your pleasure. Live a thousand years,  
I shall not find myself so apt to die;  
No place will please me so, no ean of death,  
As here by Caesar, and by you cut off,  
The choice and master spirits of this age.

**Bru.**

O Antony, beg not your death of us.  
Though now we must appear bloody and cruel,  
As by our hands and this our present act  
You see we do, yet see you but our hands  
And this the bleeding business they have done.  
Our hearts you see not ; they are pitiful ;  
And pit to the general wrong of Rome---  
As fire drives out fire, so pity pity---  
Has done this deed on Caesar. For your part,  
To your swords have leaden points, Mark Antony:  
Our arms in strength of malice, and our hearts  
Of brothers' temper, do not receive you in

With all kind love, good thoughts, and reverence.

**Cas.**

Your voice shall be as strong as any man's  
In the disposing of new dignities.

**Bru.**

Only be patient till we have appeas'd  
The multitude, beside themselves with fear,  
And then we will deliver you the cause  
Why I, that did love Caesar when I struck him,  
Have thus proceeded.

**Ant.**

I doubt not of your wisdom.  
Let each man render me his bloody hand ;  
First, Marcus Brutus, will I shake with you ;  
Next, Caius Cassius, do I take your hand ;  
Now Decius Brutus, yours, now yours, Matellus ;  
Yours Cinna ; and, my valiant Casca, yours ;  
Though last, not least in love, yours, good Trebonius .  
Gentlemen all--alas what shall I say?  
My credit now stands on such slippery ground,  
That one of two bad ways you must conceit me,  
Either a coward, or a flatterer.  
That I did love thee, Caesar, O, 'tis true!  
If then the spirit look upon us now,  
Shall not it grieve thee dearer than thy death,  
To see thy Antony making his peace,  
Shaking the bloody fingers of thy foes,  
Most noble, in the presence of thy corse.

These speeches continue for some time; then we hear a speech from Marc Antony that makes it obvious that Antony intends to make the situation of those who were involved in the Caesar's assassination very difficult, and it is now clear that Antony intends to arouse deep anger in the Roman people against those who killed Caesar, **Act 111, Scene 1 254:**

**Ant.**

O pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth,  
That I am meek and gentle with these butchers.  
Thou art the ruins of the noblest man  
That ever lived in the tide of times.  
Woe to the hand that shed this costly blood!  
Over thy wounds now do I prophesy  
(Which dumb mouths do ope their ruby lips,  
To beg the voice and utterance of my tongue),  
A curse shall light upon the limbs of men ;  
Domestic fury and fierce civil strife  
Shall cumber all the parts of Italy ;

Blood and destruction shall be so in use,  
And dreadful objects so familiar,  
That mothers shall but smile when they behold  
Their infants quartered with the hands of war,  
All pity chok'd with custom of fell deeds ;  
And Caesar's spirit, ranging for revenge,  
With Ate by his side come hot from hell,  
Shall in these confines with a monarch's voice  
Cry havoc and let slip the dogs of war,  
That this foul deed shall smell above the earth  
With carrion men, groaning for burial.

Then **Act 111, Sc. 11**, set in the Forum in Rome begins with Brutus going into the pulpit, Cassius remains below with the Plebians.

**Plebians** (*calling out*):

We will be satisfied: let us be satisfied.

**Bru.**

Then follow me, and give me audience, friends.  
Cassius, go you into the other street,  
And part the numbers.  
Those that will hear me speak, let 'em stay here ;  
Those that will follow Cassius, go with him ;  
And public reasons shall be rendered  
Of Caesar's death.

**1<sup>st</sup> Pleb.**

I will hear Brutus speak.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Pleb.**

I will Cassius, and compare their reasons,  
When severally, we hear them rendered.  
(*Exit Cassius with some of the Plebians.*)

**3<sup>rd</sup> Pleb.**

The noble Brutus is ascended: silence!

**Bru.**

Be patient to the last.  
Romans, countrymen, and lovers, hear me for my  
cause and be silent, that you may hear. Believe me  
for mine honour, and have respect for mine honour,  
that you may believe. Censure me in your wisdom,  
and awake your senses, that you may the better  
judge. If there be any in this assembly, and dear  
friend of Caesar's, to him I say that Brutus' love to  
Caesar was no less than his. If then the friend  
Demand why Brutus rose against Caesar, this is my  
answer: Not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved

Rome more. Had you rather Caesar were living, and die all slaves, than that Caesar were dead, to live all free men? As Caesar loved me, I weep for him; as he was fortunate, I rejoice at it, as he was valiant, I honour him; but, as he was ambitious, I slew him. There is tears, for his love; joy, for his fortune; honour for his valour; and death for his ambition. Who is here so base, that would be a bondman? If And speak ; for him I have offended. Who is here so rude, that would not be a Roman? If any, speak; for I have him offended . Who so vile, that will not love his country? If any, speak for him have I offended. I pause for a reply.

**All.**

None, Brutus, none.

**Bru.**

Then none have I offended. I have done no more to Caesar. Than you shall do to Brutus. The question of his death is usurpr'd in the Capitol ; his glory not extenuated, wherein he was worthy ; nor his offenses enforc'd, for which he suffered death.

*Enter Marc Antony (and others) with Caesar's body*

**Bru.**

Here comes his body, mourned by Marc Antony, who, though he has no hand in his death, shall receive the benefit of his dying, a place in the commonwealth, as which of you shall not? With this I depart that, as I slew my best lover for the good of Rome, I have the same dagger for myself, when it shall please my country to need my death.

**All.**

Live, Brutus,! Live! Live!  
This Caesar was a tyrant.

**1 Pleb**

Nay; that's certain.

**3 Pleb**

We are blest that Rome is rid of him.

**2 Pleb**

Peace! Let us hear what Marc Antony can say.

**Ant.**

Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears ;  
I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.  
The evil that men do lives after them,



The good is oft interred with their bones ;  
 So let it be with Caesar. The noble Brutus  
 Hath told you Caesar was ambitious.  
 If it were so, it was a grievous fault,  
 And grievously hath Ceasar answer'd it.  
 Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest,  
 (For Brutus is an honourable man,  
 So are they all, all honourable men)  
 Come I to speak in Caesar's funeral.  
 He was my friend, faithful and just to me;  
 But Brutus says he was ambitious,  
 And Brutus is an honourable man.  
 He hath brought many captives home to Rome,  
 Whose ransomes did the general coffers fill:  
 Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?  
 When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept ;  
 Ambition should be made of sterner stuff:  
 Yet Brutus says he was ambitious,  
 And Brutus is an honourable man.  
 You all did see that on the Lupercal  
 I thrice presented him a kingly crown,  
 Which he did thrice refuse. Was this ambition?  
 Yet Brutus says he was ambitious,  
 And sure he is an honourable man.  
 I speak not to disapprove what Brutus spoke'  
 But I am here to speak what I do know,  
 You all did love him once, not without cause ;  
 What cause withholds you then to mourn for him?  
 O judgment, thou art fled to brutish beasts,  
 And men have lost their reason. Bear with me .  
 My heart is in the coffin with Caesar,  
 And I must pause till it come back to me.

Marc Antony continues with this speech for some time in which he tells the crowd that he will read them Caesar's will. After this he showed them the mantle that covered Caesar's bloody corpse, and then then he tells them of the blood soaked holes in Caesar's blood stained mantle. Marc Antony continues his speech in this same vein stirring up the huge crowd against Brutus and all those who were involved in assassinating Caesar. Then he reads out a list of the great benefits Caesar left to the plebians of Rome in his will.

**Act IV, Sc; I** takes place in a room in Antony's house in Rome. There, following the public speeches, now over, Marc Antony and his two closest companions, namely Octavious and Lepidus, plan which of the democratic part they intend shall be killed.

Later in this scene there is a falling out between former friends Brutus and Cassius, because Cassius failed to send Brutus the gold that Brutus needed to pay his army in their fight against Marc Antony and his supporters:

**Cassius**

Revenge yourselves on Cassius  
For Cassius is aweary of the world  
Hated by one he loves; brav'd by his brother  
Checked like a bondman; all his faults observ'd  
.....

**Bru.**

Sheathe your dagger.  
Be angry when you will, it shall have scope ;  
Do what you will, dishonour shall be humour.  
O Cassius, you are yoked with a lamb  
That carries anger as the flint bears fire,  
Who much enforced, shows a hasty spark  
And strait is cold again.  
.....

**Bru**

When I spoke that, I was ill-tempered too.

**Cass.**

Do you confess so much? Give me your hand.

**Bru.**

And my heart too.

**Cass**

O Brutus!

**Bru.**

What's the matter?

**Cass.**

Have you not love enough to bear with me,  
When that rash humour which my mother gave me  
Makes me forgetful?

**Bru**

Yes, Cassius; and from henceforth  
When you are over-earnest with your Brutus,  
He'll think your mother chides, and leave you so.  
.....

**Cass.**

I did not think you could have been so angry.

**Bru..**

O Cassius, I am sick of many griefs.

**Cass.**

Of your philosophy you make no use

If you give place to accidental evils.

**Bru.**

No man bears sorrow better. Portia is dead.

**Cass**

Ha! Portia!

**Bru.**

She is dead.

**Cass**

How scap'd I killing, when I crossed you so?  
O insupportable and touching loss.  
Upon what sickness.?

**Bru.**

Impatient of my absence,  
And grief that young Octavius with Mark Antony  
Have made themselves so strong ; for with her death  
The tidings came. With this she fell distract,  
And her attendants absent, swallowed fire.

**Cass.**

And died so?

**Bru**

Even so

**Cass.**

O ye immortal gods!  
(Bru calls a boy for a wine and tapers and he arrives)  
.....

**Bru.**

Speak no more of her. Give me a bowl of wine.  
In this I bury all unkindness, Cassius.

**Cass.**

My heart is thirsty for that noble pledge.  
Fill, Lucius, till the wine o'erswell the cup.  
I cannot drink too much of Brutus' love

The last hours of this battle came to an end with the finding of the body of Brutus who had driven his sword deep into his abdomen to commit suicide. The war clearly over, the victor in the person of Antony gave a fine speech in honour of Brutus, recognising the honourable motives that had driven Brutus to do what he believed he should do.

And then in **Act V, Scene 5, 68:**

**Ant.**

This was the noblest Roman, of them all.  
All the conspirators save only he  
Did that they did in envy of great Caesar ;  
He only, in a general honest thought  
And common good to all, made one of them .  
His life was gentle, and the elements  
So mix'd in him, that Nature might stand up  
And say to all the world, "This was a man!"

The play then ends with the good speech by Octavius Caesar:

**Oct.**

According to his virtue let us use him,  
With all respect, and rites of burial .  
Within my tent his bones to-night shall lie,  
Most like a soldier, order'd honourably,  
So call the field to rest, and let's away,  
To part the glories of this happy day.

### **A brief reflection on the roles of Brutus and Cassius**

One feature of these two political warriors is that it appears that so many of the tactics proposed by Cassius, who, after all, was the prime agent in getting Brutus to involve himself in the plot to assassinate Caesar, were rejected from the start by Brutus, who pushed through his own military tactics. Yet so many schemes in military attack that Brutus proposed, he forced on Cassius, and they failed. One cannot but suspect that Shakespeare might have purposely built this into his play. One wonders if Shakespeare wanted to show us Brutus as an overwhelming hero who had great skill of persuading men, but lacked the perspicacity and analytical skills for commanding successful military tactics in the field.

## ***Hamlet***

See Part 1, Chapter 3 for Hamlet; discussion and other data.

Scholars seem to be agreed that Hamlet was most likely written between the middle of 1599 and the end of 1602 ( this dating is discussed by Harold Jenkins in his Arden Edition of 1982). That means that it followed closely after Shakespeare's play Julius Caesar. Scholars tell us that Hamlet is Shakespeare's most widely read of all his plays, and that it has drawn the greatest amount of discussion. It is his longest play. Eight of the ten major players are violently killed. Ophelia is drowned in what seems to have been a suicide, but it is not made clear whether her drowning was suicide or accidental. The ghost of King Hamlet, who was the father of Prince Hamlet, was killed by Claudius, his father's younger brother, and thus Prince Hamlet's uncle, before the play begins.

There is relatively little music in this long play, and it is sung only by Ophelia when she is in a deeply distressed state of mind following the murder of her father, Polonius, by Prince Hamlet, who never speaks to Ophelia about that.

List of principal speaking actors

- The ghost of Prince Hamlet's father (who was King Hamlet).
- Polonius, councillor to the state of Denmark, (killed by Prince Hamlet ).
- King Claudius (killed by Prince Hamlet at end of play ).
- Prince Hamlet ( killed by Laertes)
- Rosencrantz courtier, school fellow of Hamlet killed in England by a device prepared by Hamlet after he discovered that Rosencrantz was part of a plot intended to have Prince Hamlet killed in England.
- Guildenstern courtier, schoolfellow of Hamlet, killed in England by a device prepared by Hamlet after he discovered that Guildenstern was part of a plot to have Prince Hamlet killed in England.
- Ophelia, daughter of Polonius, sister of Laertes, drowned by suicide or accident.
- Laertes, courtier, son of Polonius and brother of Ophelia (killed by Prince Hamlet).

### **Hamlet as a Tragic Play and a further discussion of the role of Hamlet**

The play Hamlet has a brilliant opening where two soldiers are changing the night watch on the battlements of Elsinore Castle in Denmark close to the sea. Two sentinel soldiers are being relieved by two other soldiers on this bitterly cold night. Francisco and another are leaving to be replaced by Barnardo and Marcellus with a friend, Horatio, who has been invited to join them as he is a scholar, and the watch have been seeing mysterious ghost-like appearances after midnight recently, and they think Horatio might be able to identify the ghostly appearance.

The ghost appears and the two sentinels agree to report what they saw to the other two members of the night watch, while Horatio suggests they should report what they saw to Prince Hamlet, as the ghost looks like Hamlet's father who died recently. They agree to keep secret about what they have seen until they have reported to Hamlet.

Already the audience, and readers, do more than suspect that 'something is rotten in the state of Denmark'. From thereon we soon become aware that Prince Hamlet is becoming suspicious that something evil is associated with his uncle, the new King of Denmark, very recently married with Hamlet's recently widowed mother. The ghost, in a later meeting with Hamlet on the battlements of Elsinore Castle, tells Hamlet that it was King Claudius, who had killed Hamlet's father, and that his father's ghost goes on to make Hamlet promise to take revenge and kill King Claudius, but he warns Hamlet not to harm his mother, whose behaviour greatly disappoints and horrifies the ghost of the murdered King of Denmark.

There can be no doubt that Hamlet is a tragic play where there are ten principal major speaking characters of which eight are killed. Of the other two, namely the ghost of the father of Prince Hamlet, who is a speaking actor of importance; and it is only Horatio of the principal speaking actors, who is alive at the very end of this play. This list omits

the grave digger who prepares the grave for Ophelia, but he should be noted as he provides an exceptional role of amusing graveyard banter that he shares to some extent with Hamlet. This graveyard scene provides the only really humorous part of the play.

Much of the play turns into a complex pattern created by the hesitation of Prince Hamlet to kill King Claudius, after the ghost of Hamlet's father had made his son, Prince Hamlet, promise to kill Claudius. One complication is the loving friendship between Hamlet and Ophelia, the young daughter of the Councillor for the State of Denmark. Early in the play the friendship between Ophelia and Hamlet begins to be strongly discouraged by her father, Polonius, and also by her brother, Laertes, on the grounds that Hamlet, being next in line to be King of Denmark, means that the Court might have to choose a wife from another royal or a very important family, and it might not be politic for the Prince to marry a commoner. Ophelia was thus forced by her family to avoid meeting Hamlet alone, and she was told that she should not accept personal letters from the Prince Hamlet. These severe instructions Ophelia obeyed, and thus was no longer able to have personal meetings with him. Hamlet reacted badly to this, and he began to be unkind and cold towards Ophelia. This may have also resulted from the stress he began to suffer, now that he had an obligation to kill King Claudius. It later emerges that Hamlet's mother is much in love with her new husband, whom she had only very recently married, so very soon after the murder of King Hamlet by Claudius. However, the murder of King Hamlet had been disguised, and it was given out in the Court of Denmark that King Hamlet had been killed by a poisonous serpent. All this was revealed to Prince Hamlet by the ghost of his father. Prince Hamlet was very disturbed by this appalling and startling news, and he began to behave as though he was mentally disturbed, although it is made clear to the audience that Hamlet is only pretending to be mad. It is never made clear why Hamlet began this pretence to be going mad.

An important scene in this early part of the play is the arrival of a group of actors who were making one of their visits to entertain the Danish Court in Elsinore Castle. Hamlet was responsible for organising the actors and choosing the play for them to act. While the courtiers were gathering around the stage in preparation to watch the play that was going to be performed, Hamlet insisted on sitting next to Ophelia, there he began to tease her with a stream of dirty jokes that were very inappropriate in this assembly and were upsetting Ophelia.

Before this meeting of the Courtiers to watch this play, Hamlet had asked his friend, Horatio, to agree to sit near to where King Claudius and his new wife, Gertrude, Hamlet's mother, were going to sit to watch the play. Hamlet had asked Horatio to watch the King very closely during the murder scene of the play, to see if the King was embarrassed by it. Hamlet had explained to Horatio that he had arranged for the chief actor to perform the murder scene where a King is murdered by having a deadly poison poured into his ears by one of the Courtiers. This scene mimics the murder of Hamlet's father whose ghost had told Prince Hamlet, when they had met on the battlements at night, how it was that Claudius had murdered Hamlet's father by using a deadly poison poured into his ear, when Hamlet's father was asleep one afternoon. Hamlet had called this short play, *The Mouse Trap*, that he had invented to trap the guilty conscience of the King Claudius. Then during the murder scene, that Hamlet had added to the play, the King Claudius became frantic and shouted for the play to be

stopped. The King was very angry and he took his wife away from the scene and from the crowd of Courtiers who had been watching the play.

The King was furious and shaken, and the Queen, Hamlet's mother, understandably perturbed. She sent a messenger to ask Hamlet to visit her in her bedroom. Hamlet arrived at her bedroom. Unbeknown to Hamlet and the Queen, his mother, Polonius had hidden himself behind a large curtain in the Queen's bedroom. He intended to listen to what Hamlet would tell the Queen.

Enter Hamlet into Queen Gertrude's bedroom where the following exchange takes place:

**Ham.**  
Now mother, what's the matter?

**Queen.**  
Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.

**Ham.**  
Mother, you have my father much offended.

**Queen**  
Come, come; you answer with an idle tongue.

**Ham.**  
Go, go you question with a wicked tongue

**Queen.**  
Why, how now Hamlet?

**Ham.**  
What's the matter now?

**Queen.**  
Have you forgot me?

**Ham.**  
You are the Queen, your husband's brother's wife,  
And, would it were not so, you are my mother.  
.....

There is then a noise from behind the arras: **Polonius** calls out 'What ho! Help'!

**Ham.**  
How now? A rat! Dead for a ducat, dead.  
(*Hamlet thrusts his rapier through the arras*)

**Pol..**  
O, I am slain.

**Queen.**

Oh me, what hast thou done?

**Ham**

Nay, I know not.

Is it the King?

*(Hamlet Lifts up the arras and discovers Polonius, dead)*

**Queen;**

O what a rash and bloody deed is this!

**Ham.**

A bloody deed. Almost as bad, good mother,  
As kill a king and marry with his brother.

**Queen..**

As kill a king?

**Ham.**

Ay, lady, it was my word.---- Hamlet then adds:  
Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell.  
I took thee for thy better.

The long, very powerful interchange of dramatic poetry between Hamlet and his mother and other important scenes in the play Hamlet are discussed in Part 1, Chapter 3, of this book.

Hamlet had thought it was King Claudius who had been hiding behind the curtain and had drawn his sword and stabbed the curtain where it was moving. In doing so his sword killed Polonius instead who was hiding there. This was a terrible accident from many points of view. But of course it was regarded in the Court as yet another example of Hamlet's suffering from his madness.

Ophelia was greatly affected when she learned of Hamlet killing her father, Polonius, and she became almost hysterical, and after a dramatic and painful scene where Ophelia is so deeply grieved and distressed she sings grotesque and bawdy songs before leaving the room. *Enter Ophelia*

**Oph.**

Where is the beauteous Majesty of Denmark?

**Queen**

How now, Ophelia?

**Oph** (*sings*)

*How should I your true love know*

*From another one?*

*By his cockle hat and staff*

*And his sandal shoon*



**Queen**

Alas, sweet lady, what imports this song?

**Oph.**

Say you? Nay pray you mark  
*(sings)*  
*He is dead and gone, lady,*  
*He is dead and gone,*  
*At his head a grass-green turf,*  
*At his heels a stone.*  
*O ho!*

**Queen.**

Nay, but Ophelia—

**Oph**

Pray you mark.  
*(sings)*  
*White his shroud as the mountain snow--*

*Enter : The King.*

**Queen**

Alas, look here, my lord.

**Oph. (sings)**

*Larded with sweet flowers*  
*Which bewept to the grave did not go*  
*With true love showers*

**King**

Pretty Ophelia---

**Oph**

Indeed, without an oath, I'll make an end on't .  
*By Gis and by Saint Charity,*  
*Alack and fie for shame,*  
*Young men will do 't if they come to it----*  
*By Cock, they are to blame.*  
*Quoth she, 'Before you tumbled me,*  
*You promis'd me to wed.'*

He answers,  
*'So would I a done, by yonder sun,*  
*And thou hadst not come to my bed.'*

.....

**King**

O Gertrude, Gertrude,  
When sorrows come, they come not single spies,  
But in battalions. First her father slain;

Next your son gone.

While all this was happening the King then arranged very quickly for Hamlet to be taken by boat to England with both Rosencrantz and Guildenstern carrying instructions from the King of Denmark to have Hamlet executed in England. However, Hamlet is highly suspicious of the plan of King Claudius to send him to England, and Hamlet had searched for and found the letter written by the King Claudius for the King of England asking the English King to have Hamlet executed. While Rosencrantz and Guildenstern were asleep Hamlet had replaced the letter with the names of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to be executed in place of Hamlet's own name, written by the King Claudius. While on board, the vessel taking them all to England was involved in a fight with a boat of pirates. Hamlet escaped by jumping onto the pirates boat. There he persuaded the pirates to take him back to Denmark where they would be rewarded.

Hamlet then back from England gets in touch with his friend, Horatio, where Hamlet and Horatio observe, by accident the burial of Ophelia . This is a most dramatic scene where Ophelia's brother, Laertes gets into the grave to hold the wrapped body of his dead sister. From that position he curses Hamlet for killing their father. Laertes's expressions of love from inside the open grave for his sister are so powerful that Hamlet is drawn to express his love for Ophelia, and in some ways this is reinforced by Queen Gertrude, the wife of King Claudius, who makes a short speech saying that how much she regrets this death of Ophelia and adding:

**Queen:**

Sweets to the sweet. Farewell  
I had hop'd thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife:  
I thought thy bride-bed to have deck'd, sweet maid,  
And not have strew'd thy grave.

This scene is disturbed by Laertes violently attacking Hamlet who resists his attack. It is here that Hamlet speaks not only to Laertes but all those gathered around the grave:

**Ham.**

What is he whose grief  
Bears such an emphasis, whose phrase of sorrow  
Conjures the wand'ring stars that makes them stand  
Like wonder-wounded hearers? This is I,  
Hamlet the Dane.  
.....

**Ham.**

I loved Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers  
Could not, with all their quantity of love,  
Make up my sum.....  
.....

Much later in discussion with Horatio, who fears that King Claudius will find a way of killing Hamlet, Hamlet replies to Horatio with:

.....

**Ham.**

Not a whit. We defy augury. There is a special providence  
in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come;  
if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now,  
yet it will come. The readiness is all . Since no man,  
of aught he leaves, knows aught, what is't to leave  
betimes? Let be.

To some considerable extent this tragic play revolves around the evil that men do and how this evil causes so much misery. The unhappiness that Hamlet had created for Ophelia is one of the most unpleasant theatrical scenes in English theatre. In some ways the suffering of Ophelia can be compared with the suffering in a later play, *King Lear*, (written about 1605 ) where *King Lear*'s youngest daughter, Cordelia, undergoes much suffering before she is brutally killed just before the end of the play. In the play Hamlet most of the evil is done by Claudius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. The death of Ophelia is directly linked to her profound shock at learning that her father, Polonius, had been murdered by Prince Hamlet, with whom she had been in love, and whom she believed loved her. This all resulted in Ophelia drowning herself either accidentally or more likely, it seems, deliberately.

The shock to Prince Hamlet when he suddenly sees Ophelia being put into her grave, caused Hamlet to reveal publicly his love that he had felt for this young woman. We are never told why Prince Hamlet had tormented Ophelia with such ruthless cruelty. That Hamlet felt sexual desire for her was clearly revealed in the Mousetrap scene, where Prince Hamlet displays his desires that he laces with quite unacceptable bawdy remarks to this young woman in a crowded scene just before the opening of his Mousetrap play began . Hamlet's bawdy in that scene is so crude at this large gathering of Denmark's courtiers that it embarrassed Ophelia, especially as it was in full sight and hearing of that large audience of members of the Court of Denmark, and in the presence of both the King and Queen, particularly as the Queen is Prince Hamlet's mother.

Another example of Prince Hamlet's exceptionally unkind and cruel behaviour is when Hamlet mistook the movements and noises behind the curtain in his mother's bedroom as being the king who was hiding there, when, in fact, it was Polonius that Hamlet was stabbing with his sword, and not the king who Hamlet thought he was killing. It was a terrifying shock to his mother Queen Gertrude, who witnessed this appalling act by her son. Hamlet expressed little more than perfunctory regret to his mother for his killing of Polonius. However there is never any expression of regret made by Hamlet to Ophelia for his murder of her father.

Shakespeare shows us the great distress felt by Ophelia from the killing of her father, but she makes no reference to the fact that it was Hamlet who killed him. It is impossible for us to be certain if Shakespeare intended Hamlet to ignore the feelings of Ophelia. This can hardly have been an oversight by the author. It is difficult to judge the degree of evil in Hamlet. Two of his courtiers, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who were his former friendly acquaintances, agreed to help King Claudius to have Hamlet taken on a boat to England in order to have Hamlet executed there. There is nothing one can say in the defence of the behaviour of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, any more than one can condone the behaviour of Hamlet.

Later, just before the play ends, there is a organised competitive sword fight between Hamlet and Laertes, arranged by King Claudius, in which Laertes, in collusion with the King, has used a poisonous sword with which to kill Hamlet. Claudius has also arranged there to be a poisoned chalice of wine to be given to Hamlet in case Laertes fails to kill him. In error, during a pause in the sword fight, the Queen, Hamlet's mother, drinks from this poisonous chalice and dies soon after from the poison. Her death also finds Hamlet unable to express any regrets for his mother's death, all he can find to say on his own deathbed are the unchilverous words of '*Wretched Queen, adieu*'; although Hamlet does express regret for his killing Laertes in their sword fight.

There is apparent lack of concern by Hamlet for the unnecessary, unkind, cruel treatment of three harmless, leading characters: Polonius, Ophelia and Queen Gertrude. Why create the great sadness and suffering that we are shown in the brutal misery for Ophelia and for Gertrude, who are so tortured in the play by Hamlet? There are very few scenes of joy and happiness anywhere in this play, except in the very early encounters of Hamlet and Ophelia. Laughter plays a very small part and is mostly concentrated in the graveyard scene with the grave digger, who is humorous before the corpse of Ophelia is carried to the graveside.

Audiences are attracted to watching this long play by its great characters, and the fascinating story-lines of the drama that holds our curiosity and our other emotions. Some of the details of this play by Shakespeare, especially its great dramatic poetry and prose, have been set out in Chapter 3 of this book.

Was this, his longest play, not carefully proof read? Is the cruelty and repeated unkindness of Hamlet towards Ophelia, her father, Polonius, and towards Hamlet's mother, Gertrude, a result from the gross omission to have had proofs of this very long and complex play, very carefully read? These three characters are the three people most close to Hamlet: Ophelia, to whom he is attracted, and probably loved, Polonius who might have become his father-in-law, and Gertrude was his mother. Only Horatio, his closest friend, is omitted from this list of targets who are treated so cruelly. There are a number of places in the text which suggest that there may have been important omissions of careful proof reading. But, if the anomalous unkindness, that appears several times at an almost ruthless level, was not caused by lack of careful proof reading of this text, then the cruelty shown by Hamlet towards Ophelia in particular, and towards Polonius, Ophelia's father, as well as to Hamlet's mother, Gertrude, would all together seem to suggest that this play may have been written by Shakespeare when he was in a cruel and brutal humour. That would not seem to match any of his other beautifully crafted tragic masterpieces. But further, the anomalous cruelty and unkindness are at war with so much of his very beautiful verse and superb prose in his play Hamlet. One wonders if Shakespeare intended the extremely cruel scenes to significantly highten the dramatic level in this part of the play.

However, there are two other great tragic plays, written soon after Hamlet in 1600. The plays are Othello in 1604, with the brutal misery of Desdemona wife of Othello who murdered her, and King Lear in 1605 where the King treats his youngest daughter, Cordelia, with dreadful unkindness, and only recognises his appalling behaviour on his own deathbed. We cannot omit observing that the most sensitive targets were these three beautiful, intelligent women listed here in order of play writing: Ophelia in Hamlet 1600, Desdemona in Othello in 1604 and Cordelia in Lear in 1605.

It may, of course, be argued, that Shakespeare wanted to remind us just how cruel life is at times, and how selectively cruel some people with power can be. One thinks of the several wives of King Henry VIII who were executed, and Katherine of Aragon whom even King Henry VIII did not dare to have executed, but he made very sure she was driven from his court and left in great neglect.

The fact that Shakespeare seems to have lived a lonely life during his years of play writing in London, except when he had to leave London to escape the plague, might suggest that his emotional life may possibly have been unusual. On the other hand he may have been experimenting with tragic plays, as he experimented with his later four Romance plays and his King Henry VIII. After all, his play Macbeth was as ruthlessly cruel in having the whole family of Macduff 'exterminated', except for the escape of Macduff himself.

## *Othello*

Shakespeare's play Othello is said by the scholars to have been written in 1604. It is set in Italy and Cyprus. There is a great difference between the two principal characters that he created for his play, and what a range of very different behaviour he demanded from each of them. The play is a very cruel struggle between these two men. One of whom is evil from his first to his last spoken lines, he was a subtle judge of certain kinds of men and unfortunately he was a ruthless manipulator of men and women; Shakespeare gave him the name of Iago. The other man Shakespeare called Othello, seems to have been a poor judge of women, perhaps because he may have had little experience of them, and secondly he seems to have been an equally poor judge of ruthless men.

This play opens with Iago in a temper because Michael Cassio has been appointed to be Othello's lieutenant, while he, Iago, who claims that he is far more experienced has been appointed only to be his ancient, the lowest rank of any officer. Shakespeare seems to be alerting us from the opening lines that there is going to be trouble from Iago.

Confirmation that there will be other difficulties are soon evident when we see Roderigo, a Venetian gentleman talking late one evening in a Venetian street with Iago, who encourages Roderigo to wake up a rich Venetian, Brabantio, who is a Senator and the father of a very attractive young lady, Desdemona, whom Roderigo has tried to woo without success, partly at least because of her father's strong opposition to Roderigo. On this evening Iago encourages Roderigo to very loud shouting outside her family house, intending to wake up Brabantio and his family, to tell them that his daughter, Desdemona, has run away to live with Othello; who is making love to Desdemona. Brabantio soon discovers that a man called Othello, has married his daughter, Desdemona, and that they are now living together. Brabantio collects his family and others, including Roderigo, to find Othello, who is a very distinguished officer, and who has been engaged by the Venetian Senate to help them fight off a Turkish fleet approaching Cyprus. The Venetians have discovered that about 30 warlike Turkish vessels are aiming to attack Cyprus. The Duke of Venice is holding an emergency

meeting that very night, and he has engaged Othello to discuss the plans, and for Othello to lead the vessels from Venice to drive away the Turks from their approaching attack on Cyprus.

There is a complication because Brabantio, the rich Venetian senator, does not like the look of Othello, who is a Moor with a dark skin. However, Brabantio knows nothing of Othello nor is he aware of his distinguished and valiant career as a successful military and naval warrior. A great tempest has built up near Cyprus and it is later revealed that this has destroyed the 30 Turkish ships, but that the Venetian ships approaching from a very different direction have been able to dock safely in a Cyprus sea-port.

Meanwhile, having discovered that Desdemona is already married to Othello, Roderigo is very put down until Iago persuades him that this marriage of Othello with Desdemona cannot possibly last, because Othello is so much older than Desdemona, and that means she will soon be bored with him. Iago persuades Roderigo to continue to woo her. And Iago insists that Roderigo needs to keep plenty of money on him in order that he can give jewels and other gifts to Desdemona; but, in effect, it is Iago who takes Roderigo's money on the understanding that he will see to it that Roderigo's gifts will be given to Desdemona. But Iago intends to keep Roderigo's money and gifts for himself.

**Act II Sc.1** is set in a Sea-port in Cyprus. Desdemona, Iago, Emilia and Roderigo all arrive in the Sea-port in Cyprus, their various ships having safely navigated their way to Cyprus partly avoiding the great storm. Desdemona expresses her gratitude to Cassio for bringing their ship safely into the port. She asks about her husband, Othello, who is in charge of another important Venetian ship carrying soldiers. But they learn that this ship has not yet come through the storm. At this point there are cries of "A sail, A sail".

The trumpet, that is customarily used to announce Othello's arrival, is greeted enthusiastically by Cassio, and Desdemona who prepare to meet him:

**Cas.**

Lo where he comes!

**Oth.**

O my fair warrior!

**Des.**

My dear Othello!

**Oth.**

It gives me wonder great as my content  
To see you here before me; O my soul's joy,  
If after every tempest come such calmness,  
May the winds blow, till they have waken'd death,  
And let the labouring bark climb hills of seas,  
Olympus high, and duck again as low  
As hell's from heaven. If it were now to die,  
'Twere now to be most happy, for I fear  
My soul hath her contentment so absolute,

That not another comfort, like to this  
Succeeds in unknown fate.

**Des.**

The heavens forbid  
But that our loves and comforts should increase,  
Even as our days do grow.

**Oth.**

Amen to that, sweet powers!  
I cannot speak enough of this content,  
It stops me here, it is too much of joy:  
And this, and this, the greatest discord be (they kiss.  
That e'er our hearts shall make!

**Iago.** (*Aside*)

O, you are well tun'd now,  
But I'll set down the pegs that make this music,  
As honest as I am.

**Oth.**

Come let us to the castle.  
News, friends, our wars are done, the Turks are drown'd  
How do our old acquaintance of the isle?  
Honey, you shall be well desir'd in Cyprus ;  
I have found great love amongst them: O my sweet,  
I prattle our of fashion, and I dote  
In mine own comforts: I prithee, good Iago,  
Go to the bay, and disembark my coffers ;  
Bring thou the master to the citadel ;  
He is a good one, and his worthiness  
Does challenge much respect; come Desdemona,  
Once more well met at Cyprus.  
(*Exit everybody but Iago and Roderigo*)

**Iago.**

Do thou meet me presently at the harbour: come  
hither. If thou be'st valiant--as, they say, base men  
being in love have a nobility in their natures  
more than is native to them---list me; the lieutenant  
to-night watches on the court of guard: first, I will  
tell thee this, Desdemona is directly in love with him.

**Rod.**

With him? why, 'tis not possible.  
Roderigo is decidedly put out by this news that Desdemona is in love with Cassio,  
Othello's lieutenant.

In **Act II Sc 1 page 61**, Roderigo finds that hard to believe that Desdemona is in love  
with Cassio. Then Iago, who knows that Cassio cannot control himself when he drinks

alcohol, will see to it that Cassio drinks too much, and that night he makes sure that Cassio gets into a fight near to where Othello has his bedroom. Othello depends on Iago for learning who caused all the trouble and Iago makes sure that he convinces Othello that it was all the fault of Cassio who was so drunk and violent. Othello sacks Cassio from being his lieutenant and Othello thanks Iago for all his help in this matter.

Then the following day Iago keeps advising Cassio to ask Desdemona to persuade Othello to forgive him and to reinstate him as his lieutenant. At the same time Iago is hinting every day to Othello that Cassio is in love with Othello's wife, Desdemona. Gradually Iago builds up the belief in Othello's mind that Cassio is making love to Desdemona. It is not long before Othello is becoming convinced that Cassio has cuckolded him by his making love to Desdemona. Iago builds up an increasing amount of faked evidence day by day, and soon Othello is convinced.

### **The handkerchief trick.**

In **Act III, Sc, IV**, Iago arranges for his wife, Emilia, to take the special handkerchief that Othello gave to Desdemona when they married. By accident Emilia comes into possession of a much treasured handkerchief that Othello gave to his wife Desdemona. By accident she dropped it and Emilia found it and treasured it. Her husband, Iago asked Emilia to give it to him, she refused but Iago snatched it from Emilia. Iago then arranged to have it dropped in Cassio's bedroom who gave it to his whore Bianca. This handkerchief Iago tells Othello was in possession of Desdemona who gave it to Cassio, who gave it to Bianca who is Cassio's whore. (see **Act IV, Sc;I, 171**. Othello falls into a terrible rage over what he takes to be clear evidence of Desdemona also being Cassio's whore.

**Iago**

Nay, you must forget.

**Oth**

And let her rot, and perish, and be damned to-night,  
For she shall not live ; no, my heart is turned to stone ;  
I strike it, and it hurts my hand: O, the world has not  
a sweeter creature, she might lie by an emperor's  
side, and command him tasks.

**Iago**

Nay, that's not your way .

**Oth.**

Hang her, I do but say what she is: so delicate with  
her needle, an admirable musician, O, she will sing  
the savageness out of a bear; of so high and plenteous  
wit and invention.

**Iago.**

She's the worst for all this.

**Oth.**



A thousand thousand times: and then of so gentle a condition!

**Iago.**

Ay, too gentle.

**Oth**

Ay, that's certain, but yet the pity of it, Iago:  
O Iago, the pity of it, Iago.

.....  
I will chop her into messes.....Cuckold me!

.....

**Iago.**

And for Cassio, let me be his undertaker: you shall  
Hear more by midnight.

**Oth.**

Excellent good.  
(A trumpet within)  
What trumpet is that same?

**Iago**

Something from Venice, sure ; 'tis Lodovico,  
Come from the duke, and see, your wife is with him.

**Lod.**

God save the worthy general!

**Oth.**

With all my heart, sir

**Lod.**

The duke and senators of Venice greet you.  
(*Gives him a letter*)

**Oth.**

I kiss the instrument of their pleasures .  
(*Opens the letter and reads*)

**Des.**

And what's the news, good cousin Lodovico?

**Iago**

I am very glad to see you, signor .....  
Welcome to Cyprus.

**Lod**

I thank you ; how does Lieutenant Cassio?

**Iago**

Lives, sir.

**Des.**

Cousin, there's fall'n between him and my lord  
An unkind breach, but you shall make all well.

**Oth.**

Are you sure of that?

**Des.**

My lord?

**Oth.** (*Reads*)

“ This fail you not to do, as you will .... ”

**Lod.**

He did not call, he's busy in the paper:  
Is there division between thy lord and Cassio?

**Des.**

A most unhappy one ; I would do much  
To atone them, for the love I bear to Cassio .

**Oth.**

Fire and brimstone!

**Des**

My lord?

**Oth.**

Are you wise?

**Des.**

What, is he angry?

**Lod.**

May be the letter mov'd him ;  
For as I think, they do command him home,  
Deputing Cassio in his government.

**Des.**

By my troth, I am glad on't.

**Oth**

Indeed!

**Des.**

My lord?

**Oth**  
I am glad to see you mad.

**Des.**  
How, sweet Othello?

**Oth**  
Devil.  
(*Striking her*).

**Des**  
I have not deserv'd this

**Lod.**  
My lord, this would not be believ'd in Venice,  
Though I should swear I saw't: 'tis very much,  
Make her amends, she weeps.

**Oth.**  
O devil, devil!  
If that earth could teem with women's tears,  
Each drop she falls would prove a crocodile:  
Out of my sight!

**Des.**  
I will not stay to offend you.

**Lod.**  
Truly, an obedient lady:  
I do beseech your lordship, call her back.

**Oth.**  
Mistress!

**Des.**  
My lord?

**Oth .**  
What would you with her, sir?

**Lod.**  
Who, I, my lord?

**Oth.**  
Ay, you did wish that I would make her turn:  
Sir, she can turn and turn, and yet go on,  
And turn again, and turn, and yet go on,  
And turn again, and she can weep, sir, weep ;  
And she's obedient, as you say, obedient ;  
Very obedient. Proceed you in your tears.

Concerning this,, ----O well-painted passion!—  
I am commanded here:....get you away,  
I'll send for you anon....Sir, I obey the mandate,  
And will return to Venice: .....Hence, avaunt!  
(*Exit Desdemona*).  
Cassio shall have my place ; and, sir, to-night,  
I do entreat that we may sup together,  
You are welcome, sir, to Cyprus .....Goats and monkeys!  
(*Exit*)

**Lod.**

Is this the noble Moor, whom our full senate  
Call all in all sufficient? This the noble nature,  
Whom passion could not shake? whose solid virtue  
The shot of accident, nor dart of chance,  
Could neither graze, nor pierce?

**Iago.**

He is much chang'd

**Lod.**

Are his wits safe? is he not light of brain?

**Iago**

He's that he is ; I may not breathe my censure  
What if he might be, if, as he might, he is not  
I would to heaven he were!

**Lod.**

What strike his wife?

**Iago**

Faith, that was not so well; yet would I knew  
That stroke would prove the worst!

**Lod**

Is it his use?  
Or did the letters work upon his blood,  
And new create this fault?

**Iago.**

Alas, Alas!  
It is not honesty in me to speak  
What I have seen and known; you shall observe him,  
And his own courses will denote him so,  
That I may save my speech: do but do after,  
And mark how he continues.

**Lod.**

I am sorry that I am deceiv'd in him.

*(Exeunt)*

Act IV Sc. II ; A room in the castle: Enter Othello and Emilia:

Oth.

You have seen nothing, then?

Emil.

Nor ever heard, nor ever did suspect.

Oth.

Yes, and you have seen Cassio and she together.

Emil.

But then I saw no harm, and then I heard  
Each syllable that breath made up between 'em.

Oth.

What, did they never whisper?

Emil .

Never, my lord.

Oth.

Nor send you out o' the way?

Emil

Never.

Oth.

To fetch her fan, her mask, her gloves, nor nothing?

Emil.

Never, my lord.

Oth.

That's strange.

Emil.

I durst, my lord, to wager she is honest,  
Lay down my soul at stake: if you think other,  
Remove your thought, it doth abuse your bosom ;  
If any wretch ha' put this in your head,  
Let heaven requite it with the serpent's curse,  
For if she be not honest, chaste, the purest of her sex  
Is foul as slander.

Oth.

Bid her come hither, go.

*(Exit Emilia)*

She says enough, yet she's a simple bawd  
That cannot say as much: this is a subtle whore,  
A closet, lock and key, of villainous secrets,  
And yet she'll kneel and pray, I ha' seen her do't.

*Enter Desdemona & Emilia.*

**Des.**  
My lord, what is your will?

**Oth.**  
Pray, chuck, come hither.

**Des.**  
What is your pleasure?

**Oth.**  
Let me see your eyes, .....  
Look in my face.

**Des.**  
What horrible fancy's this?

**Oth.** (*To Emilia*)  
Some of your function, mistress,  
Leave procreants alone, and shut the door,  
Cough, or cry hem, if anybody come ;  
Your mystery: nay, dispatch.  
(*Exit Emilia*)

**Des.**  
Upon my knees, what does your speech import?  
I understand the fury in your words,  
But not the words.

**Oth.**  
Why, what art thou?

**Des**  
Your wife, my lord, your true and loyal wife.

**Oth.**  
Come, swear it, damn thyself,  
Lest, being like one of heaven, the devils themselves  
Should fear to seize thee, therefore be double-damn'd,  
Swear thou art honest.

**Des.**  
Heaven doth truly know it.

**Oth.**  
Heaven truly knows, that thou are false as hell.

**Des.**  
To whom, my lord? with whom? how am I false?

**Oth.**  
O Desdemona, away! away! away!

**Des.**  
Alas the heavy day, why do you weep?  
Am I the occasion of those tears, my lord?  
If haply you my father do suspect  
An instrument of this your calling back,

**Oth**  
Let not your blame on me ; if you have lost him,  
Why, I have lost him too.

**Des.**  
I hope my noble lord esteemes me honest.  
By heaven, you do me wrong:  
.....

**Oth**  
Are you not a strumpet?

**Des**  
No, as I am a Christian:  
If to preserve this vessel for my lord  
From any hated foul unlawful touch,  
Be not a strumpet, I am none.

**Oth.**  
What, not a whore?

**Des.**  
No, as I shall be sav'd.

*Enter Emilia*

**Oth.**  
Is't possible?

**Des.**  
O heaven, forgiveness.

**Oth.**  
I cry you mercy,  
I took you for that cunning whore of Venice

That married with Othello: you, mistress,  
That have the office opposite to Saint Peter,  
And keeps the gates of hell, ay, you, you, you!  
I pray you turn the key, and keep our council.  
Alas what does this gentleman conceive?  
How do you madam, what's the matter with my lord?

**Des.**

With who?

**Emil.**

Why, with my lord, madam.

**Des.**

Who is thy lord?

**Emil.**

He that is yours, sweet lady.

**Des.**

I ha' none, do not talk to me, Emilia,  
I cannot weep; nor answer have I none,  
But what should go by water: prithee, to-night  
Lay on my bed our wedding sheets; remember,  
And call thy husband hither.

**Emil**

Here is a change indeed!  
(*Exi*)

**Act V, Sc II;** Desdemona in bed asleep, *enter Othello with a light:*

**Oth.**

It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul,  
Let me no name it to you, you chaste stars:  
It is the cause, yet I'll not shed her blood,  
Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow,  
And smooth, as monumental alabaster ;  
Yet she must die, else she'll betray more men.  
Put out the light, and then put out the light:  
.....  
.....  
That can thy light relume: when I have pluck'd the  
Rose,  
I cannot give it vital growth again,  
It must needs wither ; I'll smell it on the tree  
(*Kisses her*).  
A balmy breath, that doth almost persuade  
Justice herself to break her sword: once more:  
Be thus when thou art dead, and I will kill thee,



And love thee after:once more, and this the last,  
So sweet was ne'er so fatal ; I must weep,  
But they are cruel tears ; this sorrow's heavenly,  
It strikes when it does love: she wakes.

**Des.**

Who's there? Othello?

**Oth**

Ay, Desdemona

**Des.**

Will you come to bed, my lord?

**Oth.**

Have you pray'd to-night, Desdemona,

**Des.**

Ay, my lord

**Oth.**

If you bethink yourself of any crime,  
Unreconcil'd as yet to heaven and grace,  
Solicit for it straight.

**Des.**

Alas, my lord, what may you mean by that?

**Oth.**

Well, do it, and be brief, I will walk by,  
I would not kill thy unprepared spirit,  
No, heaven forfend, I would not kill thy soul.

**Des.**

Talk you of killing?

**Oth.**

Ay, I do.

**Des.**

Then heaven  
Have mercy on me!

**Oth.**

Amen with all my heart!

**Des.**

If you say so, I hope you will not kill me.

**Oth.**

Hum!

**Des.**

And yet I fear you, for you are fatal then,  
When your eyes roll so: why I should fear I know not,  
Since guiltiness I know not, but yet I feel I fear.

**Oth.**

Think on thy sins.

**Des**

They are loves I bear to you.

**Oth.**

And for that thou diest.

**Des.**

That deaths unnatural, that kills for loving  
.....

**Oth.**

Down, strumpet!

**Des.**

Kill me to-morrow, let me live tonight .  
.....

**Oth.**

'Tis too late.

**Des.**

O Lord, Lord, Lord!

**Emil.** (*Within*)

My lord, my lord! what, ho, my lord, my lord!

**Oth.**

What voice is this? Not dead? not quite dead?  
I that am cruel, am yet merciful,  
I would not have thee linger in thy pain,....  
So, so.

**Emil.** (*Within*)

What ho, my lord, my lord!

**Oth**

Who's there?

**Emil.** (*Within*)

O good my lord, I'd speak a word with you!

**Oth.**

Yes, 'tis Emilia, by and by: she's dead:  
'Tis like she comes to speak of Cassio's death ;  
.....

**Emil**

Good my lord!

**Oth**

I had forgot thee: O come in, Emilia  
Soft, by and by: let me the curtains draw.  
Where art thou?  
(*Unlocks the door*)

*Enter Emilia*

**Emil.**

O, my good lord, yonder.....  
.....

**Des.**

O, falsely, falsely murder'd!

**Emil.**

O Lord, what cry is that?

**Oth.**

That? what?

**Emil.**

Out and alas! it is my lady's voice ;  
Help, help, ho, help! O lady, speak again,  
Sweet Desdemona, O sweet mistress, speak!

**Des.**

A guiltless death I die.

**Emil.**

O, who has done this deed,

**Des.**

Nobody, I myself, farewell.  
Commend me to my kind lord, O farewell! (**she dies**)

**Oth.**

Why, how should she be murder'd?

**Emil**

Alas who knows?

**Oth.**

You heard her say, herself, it was not I.

**Emil.**

She said so, I must needs report a truth.

**Oth.**

She's like a liar gone to burning hell,  
'Twas I that killed kill'd her.

**Emil.**

O, the more angel she,  
And you the blacker devil!

**Oth.**

She turned to folly, and she was a whore.

**Emil.**

Thou dost belie her, and thou art a devil.

**Oth**

She was false as water.

**Emil**

Thou as rash as fire,  
To say that she was false: O, she was heavenly true!

**Oth**

Cassio did top her, ask thy husband else ;  
O, I were damn'd beneath all depth in hell,  
But that I did proceed, upon just grounds,  
To this extremity; they husband knew it all.

**Emil.**

My husband?

**Oth**

Thy husband

**Emil**

That she was false to wedlock?

**Oth.**

Ay, with Cassio, nay, had she been true,  
If heaven would make me such another world,  
Of one entire and perfect chrysolite,  
I'd not have sold her for it.

**Emil.**

My husband?

**Oth**

Ay, 'twas he that told me first,  
An honest man he is, and hates the slime  
That sticks on filthy deeds.

**Emil.**

My husband

**Oth.**

What needs this iteration? woman, I say thy husband.

**Emil.**

O mistress, villany hath made mocks with love!  
My husband say that she was false!

**Oth.**

He, woman ;  
I say thy husband: dost understand the word?  
My friend, thy husband, honest, honest Iago .

**Emil.**

If he say so, may his pernicious soul  
Rot hold a grain a day! he lies to the heart,  
She was too fond of her most filthy bargain.

**Oth.**

Ha!

**Email.**

Do thy worst,  
This deed of thine is no more worthy heaven  
Than thou wast worthy her.

**Oth**

Peace, you were best.

**Emil.**

Thou has not half the power to do me harm  
As I have to be hurt: O gull, O dolt,  
As ignorant as dirt; thou has done a deed ....  
I care not for thy sword, I'll make thee known,  
Though I lost twenty lives: help, help, O help!  
The Moor has killed my mistress, murder, murder!

*Enter Montano, Gratiano, Iago, and others.*

**Mon.**

What is the matter? How now, general?

**Emil.**

O, are you come, Iago? You have done well,  
That men must lay their murders on your neck.

**All.**

What is the matter?

**Emil.**

Disprove this villain, if thou be'st a man ;  
He says thou told him that his wife was false,  
I know thou didst not, thou art not such a villain:  
Speak, for all my heart is full.

**Iago.**

I told him what I thought, and told him no more  
Than what he found himself was apt and true.

**Emil.**

But did you ever tell him she was false?

**Iago.**

I did.

**Emil**

Not, thou art not such a villain:  
Speak, for all my heart is full.

**Iago.**

I told him what I thought, and rold him no more  
Than what he found himself was apt and true.

**Emil.**

But did you ever tell him she was false?

**Iago.**

I did.

**Emil.**

You told a lie, an odious damned lie;  
Upon my soul, a lie, a wicked lie!  
She false with Cassio ; did you say with Cassio?

**Iago.**

With Cassio, mistress, go to, charm your tongue.

**Emil.**

I will not charm my tongue, I am bound to speak:  
My mistress here lies murder'd in her bed.

**All.**

O heavens forefend!

**Emil.**

And your reports have set the murder on.

**Oth.**

Nay, stare not, masters, it is true indeed.

**Gra.**

'Tis a strange truth.

**Mon.**

O monstrous act!

**Emil.**

Villainy, villainy, villainy!  
I think upon't I think I smell't: O Villainy!  
I thought so then: I'll kill myself for grief:  
O villainy, villainy!

**Iago.**

What are you mad, I charge you get you home.

**Emil.**

Good gentlemen, let me have leave to speak,  
'Tis proper I obey him, but not now:  
Perchance, Iago, I will ne'er go home.

**Oth.**

O! O! O!  
*(Falling on the bed)*

**Emil.**

Nay, lay thee down, and roar,  
For thou has kill'd the sweetest innocent  
That e'er did lift up eye.

**Oth.** *(Rising)*

O, she was foul:  
I scarce did know you, uncle, there lies your niece,  
Whose breath indeed these hands have newly stopp'd ;  
I know this act shows terrible and grim.

**Gra.**

Poor Desdemona, I am glad thy father's dead ;  
Thy match was mortal to him, and pure grief  
Shore his old head atwain: did he live now,  
This sight would make him do a desperate turn,  
Yea, curse his better angel from his side,

And fall to reprobation.

**Oth.**

Tis pitiful, but yet Iago knows  
That she with Cassio hath committed ; Cassio confess'd it,  
And she did gratify his amorous works,  
With the recognizance and pledge of love,  
Which I first gave her ; an antique token  
My father gave my mother.

**Emil.**

O God, O heavenly God!

**Iago.**

Zounds, hold your peace.

**Emil.**

'Twill out, it will: I hold my peace sir no,  
I'll be in speaking, liberal as the air,  
Let heaven and men and devils, let 'em all,  
All, all cry shame against me, yet I'll speak.

**Iago.**

Be wise, and get you home.

**Emil.**

I will not

*Iago offers to stab Emilia*

**Gra.**

Fie,  
Your sword upon a woman?

**Emil.**

O thou dull Moor, that hankerchief thou speak'st on,  
I found by fortune, and I did give my husband;  
For often with a solemn earnestness  
More than indeed belong'g to such a trifle,  
He begged of me to steal it.

**Iago.**

Villanous whore!

**Emil.**

She gave it Cassio? No, alas I found it,  
And I did give it my husband.

**Iago.**

Filth, thou liest.



**Emil.**

By heaven I do not, I do not gentlemen:  
O murderous coxcomb! what should such a fool  
Do with so good a woman?

**Oth.**

Are there no stones in heaven  
But what serves for the thunder? Precious villain!  
(*He runs at Iago. Iago stabs Emilia*).

**Gra.**

The woman falls, sure he has killed his wife.

**Emil.**

Ay, ay, O lay me by my mistress' side  
(*Exit Iago*)

**Gra**

He's gone, but his wife kill'd

**Mon**

'Tis a notorious villain ; take you this weapon,  
Which I have here recover'd from the Moor:  
Come, guard the door without, let him not pass,  
But kill him rather ; I'll after that same villain,  
For 'tis a damned slave.

*Exeunt Montano and Gratiano*

**Oth.**

I am not valiant neither,  
But every puny whisper gets my sword  
But why should honour outlive honesty?  
Let it go all.

.....

*Enter Lodovico, Montano, Officers with Iago, prisoner, and Cassio in a chair.*

**Lod**

Where is this rash and most unfortunate man?

**Oth**

That's he that was Othello ; here I am

**Lod.**

Where is this viper? bring the villain forth.

**Oth**

I look downwards towards his feet, but that's a fable,

If that thou be'st a devil, I cannot kill thee.  
(*Wounds Iago*)

**Lod**  
Wring his sword from him

**Iago**  
I bleed, sir, but not kill'd.

**Oth**  
I am not sorry neither, I 'ld have thee live,  
For in my sense 'tis happiness to die.

**Lod**  
O thou Othello, that wert once so good,  
Fall'n in practice of a damned slave,  
What should be said to thee?

**Oth**  
Why anything,  
An honourable murderer, if you will:  
For nought did I in hate, but all in honour.

**Lod**  
This wretch hath part confess'd his villainy:  
Did you and he consent in Cassio's death?  
Ay.

**Cas**  
Dear general, I did never give you cause.

**Oth**  
I do believe it, and I ask your pardon ;  
Will you, I pray, demand that demi-devil  
Why he hath thus ensnar'd my soul and body?

**Iago**  
What, not to pray?

**Gra**  
Torments will ope your lips.

**Oth**  
Well, thou dost best.

**Lod.**  
Sir, you should understand what hath befall'n,  
.....  
The death of Cassio; to be undertook by Roderigo

**Oth**

O Villain

**Cas.**

Most heathenish, and most gross!

.....

**Oth**

O the pernicious caitiff!  
How came you, Cassio by a handkerchief  
That was my wife's?

**Cas.**

I found it in my chamber,  
And he himself confess'd it even now  
That there he dropp'd it, for a special purpose,  
Which wrought to his desire.

**Oth**

O fool, fool fool!

**Lod.**

You must forsake this room, and go with us,  
Your power and your command is taken off,  
And Cassio rules in Cyprus.

.....

**Oth.**

Soft you, a word or two:  
I have done the state some service, and they know't  
No more of that.

.....

Othello then takes a deeply hidden weapon and stabs himself . He then falls on Desdemona and his last words are:

I kiss'd thee ere I kill'd thee, no way but this,  
Killing myself, to die upon a kiss.

A summary of purpose would identify Iago only as a very evil man lacking any sympathy or decency. Othello is a much more complex character, whose great weakness was his inability to recognise cruel, evil men and women. Despite all his obvious strengths and experiences he lacked the ability to recognise what a devoted and loving wife he possessed. His misfortune was his inability to judge people who were close to him, and especially those who set out to deceive him. This is a relatively simple play. However, this kind of cruelty to others is something that obviously interested Shakespeare, partly, it would seem, because of his interest in cruelty and evil behaviour, especially in cases of men making women suffer, and usually in women who are young, attractive and loveable (see the last 3 pages of this book in the Conclusions).

## *King Lear*

King Lear is a tragedy about a very old king who chooses to retire from his public duties and to hand over all his powers and lands to his three daughters, Goneril, Regan and Cordelia ; the king having no sons. Unfortunately King Lear seems to have lost so much judgement in handing over his powers and authority. He failed to recognise the aggressive, ruthless character of his two older daughters, and to have equally failed to recognise the fine qualities of his youngest daughter, Cordelia. Lear desires to be praised and adored by his three adult daughters ; the consequences of which led to the various developing strands of this complex tragedy. The two older daughters, Goneril and Regan, are largely responsible for much of this tragedy, in so far as they begin to mistreat abominably the old king, their father, who himself creates havoc by his faulty judgements and unreasonable behaviour. The youngest daughter, Cordelia, is the target of very unkind and foolish behaviour by her father, King Lear, who suddenly disowns her. Shortly after that the King of France, shocked by the behaviour of King Lear, proposes marriage to Cordelia. This leads to Lear refusing Cordelia any dowry and so antagonising the young King of France. Cordelia is then married to the King of France and leaves England to live with him. One of the most tragic characters in this play is the old and very loyal Earl of Gloucester who is treated treacherously by his bastard son, Edmund, and brutally mistreated by the Duke of Cornwall, son-in-law to King Lear and husband to Regan, who is a daughter of Lear. Together with Edmund and Regan, the Duke of Cornwall tears out the eyes of the Duke of Gloucester and stamps on them. Much later in the play Lear's youngest daughter, Cordelia, is reconciled with her father, King Lear, when Cordelia returns to England with an army from France to support King Lear against the brutalities and political ambitions of Edmund and Lear's two elder daughters. Towards the very end of the play Edmund is responsible for having Cordelia killed. This killing of both King Lear's Fool and his daughter Cordelia are completely unnecessary brutalities. The play closes with Lear dying in sorrow at the murder of his youngest daughter, Cordelia, to whom he is now reconciled, whose dead body Lear holds in his arms as he dies. From this summary it will be obvious that a large number of violent brutalities ending in death are committed, and there are several characters who carry out appalling brutalities, some even worse than those in Shakespeare's earlier play, Othello.

The Introduction to the Arden edition of King Lear by Kenneth Muir (1972) explains the complications of the various earlier editions, and the reasons for choosing the 1605 text. This editor pointed out that Coleridge called King Lear 'the most tremendous effort of Shakespeare as a poet.' Lamb thought the storm scenes are the most difficult to perform. R.W. Chambers, not altogether fancifully, thinks that Gloucester, guided by Edgar, is climbing the mountain of Purgatory.' The Editor of the Arden Edition points out that Keats has described for us in unforgettable lines his own sensations about the play, cited below:

Once again the fierce dispute  
Betwixt damnation and impation'd clay  
Must I burn through:---

In Keats' letter No. 32, page 70, Forman Ed, OUP 1952, he declared that:

‘The excellence of every art is its intensity, capable of making all disagreeables evaporate, from their being in close relationship with Beauty and Truth. Examine King Lear, and you will find this exemplified throughout’.

R.W. Chambers added that:

‘We begin to see the world as Keats saw it---not so Much as a Vale of Tears as a Vale of Soul-Making, and by Edgar tearing off his clothes he identifies himself with unaccommodated man, the poor, bare, forked animal’.

In one sense this is the central moment of the play --- a dramatic answer to the Psalmist’s question: ‘What is man that Thou art mindful of him’? Stripped of his proud array, stripped of everything except his basic necessities, man’s life is cheap as beast’s . But this is only an interim report on the human condition: it is not the answer provided by this play as a whole.

Lear returns to the subject of justice and authority in his next long speech. ‘A dog’s obeyed in office’ This speech continues the analysis of authority begun in Measure for Measure (see comments in this book, Chapter 2). It has been observed that Lear’s diatribes on sex and gold resemble the invective of the disillusioned Timon. Shakespeare’s similar invective is to be found against gold and sex in his discussion and his metaphoric use of ‘Fortune and Strumpets’. It has been observed of Lear that the old Lear died in the storm, and the new Lear is born in a scene of the disillusioned Timon.

Shakespeare chose an ancient and relatively remote time and place for this play which is littered with so many unnecessary brutalities. To have located this play in more recent times might have stired up old scores still remembered from records of the earlier Tudor days. Furthermore the play is set in remote times, where it comes to an end on the English Channel coast, there England was resolving associated political problems, where kinder, gentler and more civil leaders were left after the battle to rebuild this part of Albion. That seems to have been a good way to leave English audiences with his political men leaving the theatre with a sense of a safe and well governed England, where political brutalities had been settled, and where relations in Shakespeare’s time between southern England and northern France would be relatively calm.

We see Cordelia and Kent uncontaminated by the evil around them; we see Lear and Gloucester painfully learning wisdom; we see Albany holding a moral stature, and Edgar change from a credulous fool to a brave and saintly champion. To cite Keats again:

‘And is it really thus? Or has it happened to me? Does not the Fool by his very levity give a finishing touch to the pathos. The Fool’s words are merely the simplest translation of poetry as high as Lear’s.’

‘I thought the King had more affected the Duke of Albany than Cornwall’ ; That was a correct judgement at the beginning when it was sounded and it seems to be reinstated in the closing moments of the play.

**Act 1, Sc. 1, 143.**

**Kent**

Let it fall rather, though the fork invade  
The region of my heart: be Kent unmannerly,  
when Lear is mad? What would'st thou do old man?  
When power to flattery bows? To plainness  
honours bound  
When majesty falls to folly Reserve thy state ;  
And, in thy best consideration, check  
This hideous rashness: answer my life my judgment,  
Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least ;  
Nor are those empty-hearted whose low sounds  
Reverb no hollowness.

**Act 1. Sc.1. 179**

**Kent**

Fare the well King ; sith thus thou wilt appear,  
Freedom lives hence, and banishment is here.  
(*To Cordelia*)  
The Gods to their shelter take the Maid,  
That justly think'st and hast most rightly said!

**Act 1, Sc 1 249**

**France.**

Fairest Cordelia, that thou art most rich, being poor:  
Most choice, forsaken ; and most lov'd, despis'd!  
Thee and thy virtues here I seize upon:  
Be it lawful I take up what's cast away.  
Gods, gods! 'tis strange that from their coldest neglect  
My love should kindle to inflame respect .  
Thy dowerless daughter, King, thrown to my chance,  
Is queen of us, of ours, and our fair France:  
Not all the dukes of waterish Burgundy  
Can buy this unprized maid of me.  
Bid them farewell, Cordelia, though unkind  
Thou lovest here, a better where to find .

**Act 1, Sc. II. , *The Earl of Gloucester's Castle:***

**Edm.**

Thou, Nature, art my goddess: to thy law  
My services are bound. Wherefore should I  
Stand in the plague of custom, and permit  
The curiosity of nations to deprive me,  
For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines  
Lag of a brother? Why bastard? Wherefore base?  
When my dimensions are as well compact  
My mind as generous, and my shape as true  
As honest madam's issue? Why brand they us  
With base? with baseness? bastardy, base? base?

Who in the lusty stealth of nature take  
More composition and fierce quality  
Than doth, within a dull, stale, tired bed,  
Go to th' creating a whole tribe of fops,  
Got 'tween asleep and wake? Well then,  
Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land:  
Our father's love is to the bastard Edmund  
As to th' legitimate. Fine word, 'legitimate'!  
Well, my legitimate, if this letter speed,  
And my invention thrive, Edmund the base  
Shall top th' legitimate---: I grow, I prosper ;  
Now, gods stand up for bastards!

*Enter Gloucester*

**Glou.**

Kent banish'd thus! And Fance in choler parted!  
And the King gone to-night surprise'd his power!  
Confined to exhibition! All this done  
Upon the gad!---Edmund, how now! What news?

Edmund now gives his father, the Duke of Gloucester, his vicious and evil letter supposedly written by his brother, Edgar, but actually written by Edmund, and suggesting they both should now kill their father, the Duke of Gloucester, and then the two brothers would split his lands and fortune between them. This whole scheme, being in reality something Edgar would never do, and the letter being designed to grossly mislead their father, Gloucester, in such a way that Gloucester would be completely misled, and so their father will disown his older son Edgar.

One immediate consequence of this filthy trick by Edmund was to cause the older son, Edgar, to have to flee from their family castle home. The consequences that follow are set out in Edmund's soliloquy here below.

**Act 1, Sc II, 115**, Edmund's speech reads so very much as Shakespeare might have written it for himself as for Edmund:

**Edm.**

This is the excellent foppery of the world, that, when we are sick in fortune, often the surfeits of our own behaviour, we make guilty of our own disasters the sun, the moon, and stars ; as if we were villains on necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion, knaves, thieves, and treachers by spherical predominance, drunkards, liars, and adulterers by an enforce'd obedience of planetary influence; and all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting on. An admirable evasion of whoremaster man, to lay his goatish disposition to the charge of a star! My father compounded with my mother under the dragon's tail, and my nativity was under Ursa major; so that it follows I am rough and lecherous. Fut! I should have been that I am had the maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my bastardizing. Edger---

**Act II. Sc IV**, *The Duke of Gloucester's sons estimated by Nature and by Man.*

One understands Edmund's sour view of Nature and, of course, one can sympathize with him ; but he forgets the other words, yes! words remember'd near the end of this play, and cited here, immediately below, in an appropriate context for all time by his brother, Edgar:

'Men must endure their going hence, even as their coming hither: Ripeness is all' (see **Lear Act V, II, 9:** ).

Nature can be terribly cruel with her gifts ; just as she can so generously endow some with her ; but they can be gifts from strumpets, as Edmund would discover, or they may be so cruelly mis-shapen, or worse perhaps, they can be denied of so much by Nature when, like Fortune, she is not in the giving vein.

The King's Fool sees the cruelty of the King's two older daughters and he is saddened by the cruel mess the King has brought upon himself by his foolishness and by these two older daughters behaviour towards their old father. The Fool is very fond of Cordelia and is greatly saddened when she leaves England.

**Act II, Sc IV, 45.**

**Fool.**

Winter's not gone yet, if the wild-geese fly that way.  
Fathers that wear rags  
Do make their children blind,  
But fathers that bear bags  
Shall see their children kind.  
Fortune, that arrant whore,  
Ne'er turns the key to th' poor  
But for all this thou shalt have as many doloures for  
Thy daughters as thou canst tell in a year.

**Act III Sc II** (*another part of the Heath*). Lear now away from his daughter's castle feels the cruel weather, as he feels his daughters' rebellion, all of which raise his anger over their contempt .

**Lear**

Blow, winds and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!  
Your cataracts and hurricanoes spout  
Till you have drench'd our steeples, drown'd the cocks!  
You sulph'rous and thought-executing fires,  
Vaunt-couriers of oak-cleaving thunderbolts,  
Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder,  
Strike flat the thick rotundity o'the world!  
Crack Nature's moulds, all germens spill at once  
That makes ingrateful man.

**Fool**

O Nuncle, court holy-water in a dry house is better  
Than this rain-water out o'door . Good Nuncle, in



Ask thy daughters' blessings ; here's a night pities  
Neither wise men nor Fools.

**Lear**

Rumble thy bellyful! Spit, fire! spout, rain!  
Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire are my daughters:  
I tax you not, you elements, with kindness ;  
I never gave you kingdom, call'd you children,  
You owe me no subscription: then let fall  
Your horrible pleasure ; here I stand, your slave,  
A poor, infirm, weak, and despis'd old man.  
But yet I call you servile ministers  
That will with two pernicious daughters join  
Your high-engender'd barrels 'gainst a head  
So old and white as this, O, ho! tis foul.

**Act III, Sc II, 25**

**Fool**

He that has a house to put's head in has a good  
head-piece.

The cod-piece that will house  
Before the head has any,  
The head and he shall louse  
So beggers marry many

The man that makes his toe  
What he his heart should make,  
Shall of a corn cry woe,  
And turn his sleep to wake.

For there was never yet a fair woman but she made  
Mouths in a glass.

**Lear.**

My wits begin to turn.  
Come on my boy. How dost, my boy? Art cold?  
I am cold myself. Where is this straw, my fellow?  
The art of our necessities is strange,  
And can make vile things precious. Come, your hovel.  
Poor Fool and knave, I have one part in my heart  
That's sorry yet for thee.  
He that has a little tiny wit,  
With a hey, ho, the wind and the rain,  
Must make content with his fortunes fit  
Though the rain it rainith every day.

True, boy. Come bring us to this hovel.

*(Exeunt Lear and Kent)*

The Fool trying to entertain Lear and to perhaps trying to raise his spirits:

**Act III, Sc. II, 79**

**Fool**

This is a brave night to cool a courtesan  
I'll speak a prophecy ere I go:  
When priests are more in word than matter;  
When brewers mar their malt with water;  
When nobles are the tailors tutors  
When heretics burn'd, but wenches' suitors ;  
When ever case in law is right ;  
No squire in debt, not no poor knight ;  
When slanders do not live in tongues ;  
Nor cut-purses come not to throngs  
When usurers tell their gold I' th' field;  
And bawds and whores do churches build;  
Then shall the realm of Albion  
Come to great confusion:  
Then comes the time; who lives to see't,  
That going shall be us'd with feet.  
This prophecy Merlin shall make; for I live before  
His time.

One of Shakespeare's recurrent themes in his plays is ingratitude, and of course it is a matter that pains those who suffer this meanness and unkindness.

**Act III, Sc IV, 13**

**Lear**

The body's delicate ; this tempest in my mind  
Doth from my senses take all feeling else  
Save what beats there--- filial ingratitude!  
Is it not as this mouth should tear this hand  
For lifting food to't? But I will punish home ;  
No; I shall weep no more. In such a night  
To shut me out? Pour on ; I will endure,  
In such a night as this? O Regan, Goneril!  
Your old kind father, whose frank heart gave all, --  
O! that way madness lies ; let me shun that ;  
No more of that.

Kent with persistent concern for the foolish King Lear repeatedly tries to get Lear out of the rain and tempest into some kind of drier shelter. Lear shows concern for his Fool suffering the stormy weather.

**Kent**

Good my Lord, enter here .  
Prithee, go in thyself ; seek thine own ease:

The tempest will not give me leave to ponder  
On things would hurt me more. But I'll go in .  
(*To the Fool*)  
In boy; go first. You houseless poverty,—  
Nay, get thee in. I'll pray, and then I'll sleep.

**Act III, SC IV 28**

(*Fool goes in*).

Poor naked wretches, whereso'er you are,  
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,  
How should your houseless heads and unfed sides,  
Your loop'd and window'd reggedness, defend you  
From seasons such as these. Take physic, Pomp ;  
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,  
Nay, show the Heavens more just.

**Edg.** (*Within*.)

Fathom and half fathom and half!  
Poor Tom!

(*The Fool runs out from the hovel*).

**Fool**

Come not in here, Nuncle ; here's a spirit .  
Help me! help me!

**Kent**

Give me thy hand . Who's there?

**Fool**

A spirit, a spirit: he says his name's poor Tom.

**Kent**

What art thou that dust grumble there in the straw?  
Come forth .

**Act III, Sc. IV. 43, enter EDGAR disguised as a madman:**

**Edg.**

Away! The foul fiend follows me! Through the sharp  
Hawthorn blow the cold winds. Humh! go to thy bed  
And warm thee.

**Lear**

Did thou give all to thy daughters?  
And art thou come to this?

**Act III, Sc. IV, 50** ,Edgar in a state of concern for Lear and still feeling compelled to act out his madness, perhaps in the uncertainty of his situation, bearing in mind Edmund had traduced Edgar wildly, and Edgar does not know how he, Edgar, is viewed:

**Edg.**

Who gives any thing to poor Tom? Whom the foul  
Fiend hath led through fire and through flame,  
Through ford and worlpool o'er bog and quadmire ;  
That had laid knives under his pillow and halters in  
his pew ; set ratsbane by his porridge ; made him  
proud of heart, to ride on a bay trotting horse over  
four-inch bridges, to course his own shadow for a  
traitor. Bless thy five wits! Tom's a cold. O! do de,  
do de, do de. Bless thee from whirlwinds, star-  
blasting, and taking! Do poor Tom some charity,  
whom the foul fiend vexes. There could I have him  
now, and there, and there again, and there.  
*(Storm still).*

**Lear.**

What! Has his daughters brought him to this pass?  
Couldst thou save nothing? Would'st thou give 'em all?

**Fool.**

Nay, he reserv'd a blanket, else we had been all  
Sham'd.

**Lear**

Now all the plagues that in the pendulous air  
Hang fated o'er men's faults light on thy daughters!

**Kent**

He hath no daughters, Sir.

**Lear**

Death, traitor! nothing could have subdu'd nature  
To such lowness but his unkind daughters.  
Is it the fashion that discarded fathers  
Should have thus little mercy on their flesh?  
Judicious punishment! t'was this flesh begot  
Those pelican daughters.

*Enter Edgar*

**Edg.**

Child Roland to the dark tower came,  
His word was still: Fie, foh, and fum,  
I smell the blood of a British man

This next scene is the result of the terrible blinding of the Duke of Gloucester by the Duke of Cornwall assisted by his wife Regan and some of their servants. They pull out both his eyes and then the Duke of Cornwall stamps on them. With Gloucester's face is now mutilated and in that blind state he is driven from his home out onto the wild heath where a great storm is raging.

**Act III, Scene V, a room in Gloucester's Castle, enter Cornwall and Edmund:**

**Corn.**

I will have my revenge ere I depart his house.

**Edm.**

How, my lord, I may be censured, that nature thus gives way to loyalty, something fears me to think of.

**Corn.**

I now perceive it was not altogether your brother's evil disposition made him seek his death ; but a provoking merit, set a- work by a reproveable badness in himself.

**Edm.**

How malicious is my fortune, that I must repent to be just!  
This is the letter he spoke of, which approves him an intelligent Party to the advantages of France. O Heavens! that this treason were not I the detector!

**Corn.**

Go with me to the Duchess.

**Edm.**

If the matter of this paper be certain,  
you have mighty business in hand.

**Corn.**

True or false, it hath made thee Earl of Gloucester. Seek out where thy father is, that he may be ready for our apprehension.

.....

**Act III Scene VII, A room in Gloucester's castle. Enter Cornwall, Regan, Goneril, Edmund and servants.**

**Corn. (To Goneril)**

Post speedily to my Lord your husband ; show him this letter: the army of France is landed. Seek out the traitor Gloucester.  
*(Exeunt some of the servants ).*

**Reg.**

Hand him instantly .

**Gon.**

Pluck out his eyes.

**Corn.**  
Leave him to my displeasure .....  
*(Enter Oswald)*  
How now where is the King?

**Osw.**  
My Lord of Gloucester hath convey'd him hence.....

**Corn.**  
Edmund farewell.  
*(Exeunt Goneril, Edmund, and Oswald)*  
Go seek the traitor Gloucester,  
Pinion him like a thief, bring him before us.  
*(Exeunt other servants)*  
.....  
*(Re-enter Servants, with Gloucester prisoner)*

**Reg.**  
Ingrateful fox! tis he.

**Corn.**  
Bind fast his corky arms.

**Glou.**  
What means your Graces? Good my friends, consider  
You are my guests: do me no foul play, friends.

**Corn.**  
Bind him, I say.  
*(Servants bind him)*

**Reg.**  
Hard, hard. O filthy traitor!

**Glou.**  
Unmerciful lady as you are, I'm none.

**Corn.**  
To this chair bind him. Villain, thou shalt find--  
*(Regan plucks his beard)*

**Glou.**  
By the kind Gods, 'tis most ignobly done  
To pluck me by the beard.

**Reg.**  
So white, and such a traitor!  
.....

**Corn.**  
See't shalt thou never. Fellows, hold the chair.  
Upon these eyes of thine I'll set my foot.

**Glou.**  
He that will think to live till he be old,  
Give me some help! O cruel! O you Gods!

**Reg.**  
One side will mock another ; th'other too.

**Corn.**  
If you see vengeance, ----

**First Serv.**  
Hold your hand, my Lord.  
I have serv'd you ever since I was a child,  
But better service have I never done you  
Than now to bid you hold.

**Reg.**  
How now you dog!

**First Serv.**  
If you did wear a beard upon your chin  
I'd shake it on this quarrel

**Reg.**  
What do you mean?

**Corn.**  
My villain!  
*(They draw and fight.)*

**First Serv**  
Nay then, come on, and take the chance of anger.

**Reg.**  
Give me thy sword. A peasant stand up thus!  
*(Takes a sword and runs at him behind)*

**First Serv.**  
O! I am slain. My Lord, you have one eye left  
To see some mischief on him. Oh!  
*(Dies)*

**Corn.**  
Lest it see more, prevent it. Out, vile jelly!  
Where is thy lustre now?

**Glou**

All dark and comfortless. Where's my son Edmund?  
Edmund, enkindle all the sparks of nature  
To quit this horid act .

**Reg.**

Out, treacherous villain!  
Thou call'st on him that hates thee it was he  
That made the overture of thy treasons to us,  
Who is too good to pity thee.

**Glou .**

O my follies! Then Edgar was abus'd.  
Kind Gods, forgive me that, and prosper him!

**Reg.**

Go thrust him out at gates, and let him smell  
His way to Dover.  
*(Exit one with Gloucester)*  
.....

**Second Serv.**

I'll never care what wickedness I do  
If this man comes to good.

**Third Serv.**

If she live long,  
And in the end meet old course of death,  
Women will turn monsters.

**Sec Serv.**

Lets follow the old Earl, and get the Bedlam  
To lead him where he would: his roguish madness  
Allows itself to any thing.

**Third Serv.**

Go thou ; I'll fetch some flax and whites of eggs  
To apply to his bleeding face. Now heaven help him  
*(Exuent severally).*

**Act IV Sc I, Enter Edgar:**

**Edg.**

Yet better thus, and known to be contemn'd  
Than, still contemn'd and flatter'd, to be worst.  
The lowest and most dejected thing of Fortune  
Stands still in Esperance, lives not in fear:  
The lamentable change is from the best ;  
The worst returns to laughter. Welcome then,



Thou unsubstantial air that I embrace:  
Owes nothing to thy blasts. But who comes here?

*Enter Gloucester led by an old man:*

My father, poorly led? World, world, O world!  
But that thy strange mutations make us hate thee,  
Life would not yield to age.

**Old Man**

O my good Lord!  
I have been your tenant, and your father's tenant,  
There four score years.

**Glou.**

Away, get thee away: good friend, be gone:  
Thy comforts can do me no good at all ;  
Thee they may hurt.

**Old Man.**

You cannot see thy way.

**Glou.**

I have no way, and therefore want no eyes ;  
I stumbled when I saw. Full oft 'tis seen.  
Our means secure us, and our mere defects  
Prove our commodities. Oh! dear son Edgar,  
The food of thy abused father's wrath ;  
Might I but live to see thee in my touch,  
I'd say I had my eyes again.

.....

As flies to wanton boys, are we too th' Gods ;  
They kill us for their sport.

.....

**Old Man**

Alack, sir! he is mad .

**Glou.**

'Tis the times' plague, when madmen lead the blind.  
Do as I bid thee, or rather do thy pleasure ;  
Above the rest, be gone.

**Edg. (Aside)**

And yet I must . Bless thy sweet eyes,  
they Bleed.

**Glou.**

Know'st thou the way to Dover?

Edg.

Both style and gate, horse-way and foot-path. Poor Tom hath been scar'd our of his good wits: bless thee, Good's man son, from the foul fiend! Five fiends have been in poor Tom at once ; as Obdicut, of lust ; Hobberddance, prince of dumbness ; Mahu, of stealing; Modo, of murder ; Flibbertigibbet, of mopping and mowing ; who since possesses chambermaids and waiting-women. So, bless theen master!

Glou.

Dost thou know Dover?

Egd.

Ay master .

Glou.

There is a cliff, whose high and bending head  
Looks fearfully in the confined deep ;  
Bring me to the very brim of it,  
And I'll repair the misery thou dost bear  
With something rich about me: from that place  
I shall no leading need .

Edg.

Give me thy arm:  
Poor Tom shall lead thee.  
(*Exuent*).

Act IV, Sc. II, I, *Before the Duke of Albany's Palace, Enter Goneril & Edmund:*

Gon.

Welcome, my Lord, I marvel our mild husband  
Not meet us on the way.  
(*Enter Oswald*)  
Now, where's your master?

Osw.

Madam within; but never man so chang'd  
I told him of the army that was landed ;  
He smiled at it: I told him you were coming  
His answer was 'The worse': of Gloucester's treachery,  
And of the loyal service of his son,  
When I inform'd him then he called me sot,  
And told me I had turn'd the wrong side out:  
The most he should dislike seems pleasant to him ;  
What like, offensive.

Gon. (*To Edmund*)

Then shall you go no further.

It is the cowish terror of his spirit.

.....

*(Giving a favour)*

Decline your head: this kiss, if it durst speak,  
Would stretch thy spirits up into the air.  
Conceive, and fare thee well.

**Edm.**

Yours in the ranks of death.

**Gon.**

My most dear Gloucester!

*(Exit Edmund.)*

Oh! The difference of man and man.  
To thee a woman's services are due:  
A fool usurps my bed.

**Osw.**

Madam, here comes my Lord.

*(Exits)*

*Enter Albany*

**Gon.**

I have been worth the whistle.

**Alb.**

O Goneril!

You are not worth the dust which the rude wind  
Blows in your face. I fear your disposition:  
That nature, which contemns it's origin,  
Cannot be border'd certain to itself ;  
She that herself will silver and disbranch  
From her material sap, perforce must wither  
And come to deadly use.

**Gon.**

No more: the text is foolish.

**Alb.**

Wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile ;  
Filths savour but themselves. What have you done?  
Tigers, not daughters, what have you performed?  
A father and a gracious aged man,  
Whose reverence even the head-lugg'd bear would lick,  
Most barbarous, most degenerate! have you madded.  
Could my good brother suffer you to do it?  
A man, a prince, by him so benefited!  
If that the heavens do not their visible spirits  
Send quickly down to tame these vile offences,

It will come.  
Humanity must perforce prey on itself,  
Like monsters of the deep.

**Gon.**

Milk-liver'd man!  
That bear'st a cheek for blows a head of wrongs!  
Who hast not in thy brows an eye discerning  
Thine honour from thy suffering ; that not know'st  
Fools do those villains pity who are punish'd  
Ere they have done their mischief. Where's thy drum ;  
France spreads his banners in our noiseless land,  
With plumed helm thy state begins to threat,  
Whil'st thou, a moral fool, sits still, and cries  
'Alack why does he so?'

**Alb.**

See thyself, devil!  
Proper deformity shows not in the fiend  
So horrid as in woman.  
.....  
A woman's shape doth shield thee.

**Gon.**

Mary, your manhood--mew!

*Enter a Messenger*

**Alb.**

What news?

**Mess.**

O! my good Lord, the Duke of Cornwall's dead;  
Slain by his servant, going to put out  
The other eye of Gloucester .

**Alb.**

Gloucester's eyes!  
.....

**Gon.**

One way I like this well ;  
But being a widow, and my Gloucester with her,  
May all the building in my fancy pluck  
Upon my hateful life: another way,  
The news is not so tart (Alowd) I'll read, and answer.  
(*Exit*)  
To thank thee for the love thou show'st the king,  
And to revenge thine eyes. Come hither, friend:  
Tell me what more thou know'st.

*(Exuent).*

*Act IV Sc. VI, in the country near Dover. Enter Gloucester and Edgar dressed as a peasant:*

**Glou.**  
When shall we come to the top (of that same hill)?

**Edg.**  
You do climb up it now ; look how we labour .

**Glou.**  
Methinks the ground is even.

**Edg.**  
Horrible steep:  
Hark! so you hear the sea?

**Glou.**  
No truly.

**Edg.**  
Why, then your other sense grow imperfect  
Why your eyes' anguish.

**Glou**  
So it may be, indeed.

Methinks thy voice is alter'd, and thou speak'st  
In better phrases and matter than thou didst.

**Edg.**  
You're much deciev'd ; in nothing am I chang'd  
But in my germents.

**Glou.**  
Methinks you'r better spoken.

**Edg.**  
Come, on, sir; here's the place: stand still. How fearful  
And dizzy 'tis to cast one's eyes so low!  
The crows and choughs that wind the midway air  
Show scarce so gross as beetles: half way down  
Hands one that gathers samphire, dreadful trade!  
Methinks he seems no bigger than his head.  
The fishermen, that walk upon the beach  
Appear like mice, and yonder tall anchoring bark  
Diminish'd to her cock, her cock a bouy  
Almost too small for sight . The murmerings surge,  
That on th'unnumber'd idle pebble chafes,

Cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more,  
Lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight  
Topple down, headlong.

**Glou.**  
Set me where you stand.

**Edg.**  
Give me your hand; you are now within a foot  
Of the extreme verge: for all beneath the moon  
Would I not leap upright.

**Glou.**  
Let go my hand.  
Here, friend, another purse; in it a jewel  
Well worth a poor man's taking; faires and Gods  
Prosper it ith thee! Go thou further off ;  
Bid me farewell, and let me hear thee going.

**Edg.**  
Now fare ye well, good sir.

**Glou**  
With all my heart.

**Edg.** (*Aside*)  
Why I do trifle thus with his despair?  
Is done to cure it?

**Glou.** (*Kneeling*)  
O you mighty gods!  
This world I do renounce, and in your sights  
Shake patiently my great addliction off:  
If I could bear it longer, and not fall  
To quarrel with your great opposeless wills,  
My snuff and loathed part of nature should  
Burn itself out. If Edgar live, O bless him!  
Now fellows; fare thee well .

**Edg.**  
Gone, sir: farewell.  
(*Gloucester throws himself forward and falls*)  
And yet I know not how conceit may rob  
The treasury of life when life itself  
Yields to the theft ; Had he been where he thought  
By this had thought been past. Alive or dead?  
Ho, you sir! friend! Hear you, sir! speak!  
Thus might he pass indeed ; yet he arrives.  
What are you, sir?

**Glou.**

Away, and let me die.  
Hadst thou been aught but gossamer, feathers, air,  
So many fathom down precipitating,  
Thou'dst shiver'd like an egg: but thou dost breathe,  
Hast heavy substance, bleed'st not, speak'st, art sound.  
Ten masts at each make not the altitude  
Which thou has perpendicularly fell:  
Thy life's a miracle. Speak again .

**Glou.**

But have I fall'n or no?

**Edg.**

From the dread summit of this chalky bourn.  
Look up a-height: the strill-gorg'd lark so far  
Cannot be seen or heard; do but look up.

**Glou.**

Alack! I have no eyes.

*Enter Lear, fantastically dressed with wild flowers.*

The safer sense will ne'er accommodate  
His master thus.

**Lear.**

No, they cannot touch me for coining: I am the  
King himself.

**Edg.**

O thy side-piercing sight!

**Lear.**

Nature's above art in that respect. There's your  
Press-money. That fellow handles his bob like a  
crow-keeper: draw me a clothier's yard . Look, look!  
A mouse. Peace, peace! this piece of toasted cheese  
will do't. There's my gauntlet ; I'll prove it on a  
giant. Bring up the brown bills. O! well flown bird ;  
I th' clout i' th clout: hewgh! Give the word .

**Edg.**

Sweet marjoram.

**Lear**

Pass

**Glou**

I know that voice

**Lear**

Ha! Goneril, with a white beard!

.....

**Glou.**

The trick of that voice I do well remembert:  
Is't not the king?

**Act IV Sc VI, 107**

**Lear**

Ay, every inch a king:  
When I do stare, see how the subject quakes .  
I pardon that man's life. What was thy cause?  
Adultery?  
Thou shalt not die: die for adultery! No:  
The wren goes to't, and the small gilded fly  
Does lecher in my sight.  
Let copulation thrive ; for Gloucester's bastard son  
Was kinder to his father than my daughters  
Got 'tween the lawful sheets. To't Luxury, pell-mell!  
For I lack soldiers. Beyond yond simp'ring dame,  
Whose face between her forks presages snow ;  
That minces virtue, and does shake the head  
To hear of pleasure's name.  
The fitchew nor thr soiled horse goes to't  
With a more riotous appetite  
Drawn from the waist they are Centaurs  
Though women all above:  
But to the girdle do the Gods inherit,  
Beneath is all the fiend's: there's hell, there's  
Darkness,  
There is the sulphurous pit ---burning, scalding,  
Stench, consumption, fie, fie, fie! Pah, pah!  
Give me an ounce of civit, good apothecary,  
To sweeten my imagination.  
There's monet for thee.

**Glou.**

O! let me kiss that hand.

**Lear**

Let me wipe it first; it smells of mortality.

**Glou.**

O ruin'd piece of Nature! This great world  
Shall so wear out to naught. Dost thou know me?

**Lear**



I remember thine eyes well enough. Dost thou  
Squinny at me?  
No, do thy worst, blind Cupid; I'll not love  
Read thou this challenge ; mark but the penning of it

**Glou.**  
Were all thy letters suns, I could not see.

**Edg. (*Aside*)**  
I would not take this from reports ; it is  
And my heart breaks at it.  
.....

**Lear**  
What! art mad? A man may see how this world  
goes with no eyes. Look with thine ears ; see how  
yond justice rails upon yond simple thief. Hark, in  
thine ear: change places, and handy-dandy, which  
is the justice, which is the thief? Thou has seen a  
farmers dog bark at a begger?

**Glou.**  
Ay, Sir.

**Lear**  
And the ceature run from the cur? There thou  
Might'st behold  
The great image of Authority:  
A dog's obey'd in office.  
Thou rascal beadle, hold thy bloody hand!  
Why does thou lash that whore? Strip thine own back ;  
Thou hotly lusts to use her in that kind  
For which thou whipp'st her . The usurer hangs  
The cozner.  
Through tatter'd clothes small vices do appear ;  
Robes and furred gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold,  
And strong lance of justice hurtles breaks ;  
Arm it in rags, a pigmy's straw does pierce it.  
None does offend, none, I say, none ; I'll able em:  
Take that of me, my friend, who have the power  
To seal th' accuser's lips. Get thee glass eyes ;  
And like a scurvy politician, seem  
To see the things thou dost not. Now, now, now,  
Now;  
Pull of my boots; harder, harder, so.

**Act IV, Sc VI, 180,**

**Lear**  
When we are born, we cry that we are come

To this great stage of fools. This' a good block!  
It were a delicate stragegem to shoe  
A troop of horse with felt ; I'll put't'in proof,  
And when I have stol'n upon these sons-in laws,  
Then kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill!

Then we have the wonderful scene after Cordelia has landed with her soldiers from France, to support her old father against her two sisters and Edmund the son of the Duke of Gloucestre. Cordelia, and the King's Fool are captured and killed.

*Act IV, Sc. VII , 44, A tent in the French Camp, enter Cordelia, Kent, Doctor, Gentleman and King Lear who is waking up:*

**Cor.**

How does my royal Lord? How fares your majesty?

**Lear**

You do me wrong to take me o' 'th' grave ;  
Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound  
Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears  
Do scald like molten lead.

**Cor.**

Sir, do you know me?

**Lear**

You are a spirit, I know; where did you die?

**Cor.**

Still, still far wide.

**Doct.**

He's scarce awake; let him alone awhile.

**Lear.**

Where have I been? Where am I? Fair daylight?  
I am mightily abus'd. I should e'en die with pity  
To see another thus. I know not what to say.  
I will not swear these are my hands: let's see ;  
I feel this pin prick. Would I were assur'd  
Of my condition.

**Cor.**

O! Look upon me, Sir,  
And hold your hand in benediction o'er me.  
No, Sir you must not kneel.

**Lear**

Pray do not mock me:  
I am a vey foolish fond old man,

Fourscore and upward, not an hour more or less ;  
And, to deal plainly,  
I fear I am not in my perfect mind.  
Methinks, I should know you and know this man ;  
Yet I am doubtful: for I am mainly ignorant  
What place this is, and all the skill I have  
Remembers not these garments; nor I know not  
Where I did lodge last night. Do not laugh at me  
For, as I am a man, I think this lady  
To be my child Cordelia.

**Cor**

And so I am, I am.

**Lear.**

Be your tears wet? Yes, faith I pray, weep not:  
If you have poison for me, I will drink it.  
I know you do not love me; for your sisters  
Have, as I remember, done me wrong:  
You have some cause, they have not.

**Cor**

No cause, no cause.

**Lear**

Am I in France?

**Kent**

In your own kingdom, Sir.

**Lear**

Do not abuse me.

**Doct**

Be comforted, good Madam ; the great rage  
You see, is killed in him: and yet it is danger  
To make him even o'er the timer her has lost.  
Desire him to go in; trouble him no more.  
Till further settling.

**Cor.**

Will your highness walk?

**Lear.**

You must bearwith me.  
Pray you now forgetand forgive: I am old and foolish.

.....

**Act V, Sc 1, 54-58,**

**Edm.** (*Soliloquy and alone he speaks*)

To both these sisters I have sworn my love  
Each jealous of the other, as the stung  
Are of the adder. Which of them shall I take?  
Both? None? Or neither?

**Act V Sc II, 8-11**

**Glou.**

No further, sir; a man may rot even here.

**Edg.**

What! in ill thoughts again? Men must endure  
Their going hence, even as their coming hither;  
Ripeness is all.

(see Lear V. ii, 9)

**Glou.**

And that's true too.  
(*Exeunt*)

An important scene near the end of the play is where Edgar in disguise challenges his bastard brother Edmund to a sword fight. They fight and Edmund falls and then dies but not before he acknowledges his cruel and appalling behaviour to his brother Edgar and to their father the Duke of Gloucester whose eyes were pulled out by the Duke of Cornwall who was later killed by a servant. In his dying moments Edmund regrets his appalling behaviour and sends a messenger so save Cordelia, King Lear and the King's Fool, all of whom were ordered by Edmund to be killed. Unfortunately the messenger to the prison arrives too late, for both Cordelia and the Fool have been killed. But King, still alive, finds daughter Cordelia and his Fool both killed. Before this Regan is dead, poisoned by her sister Goneril, and then Goneril took poison herself and died by her own hand once she had knew that Edmund was dead. These two older daughters of Lear, now dead, are brought onto the stage. Finally the King, who escaped being killed in the prison arrives back on the stage with his daughter Cordelia dead in his grieving arms.

**Act V Sc. III, 199, *Edgar, the victor over his wicked brother Edmund, reports what he has seen:***

**Edg.**

This would have seem'd a period  
To such as love not sorrow; but another,  
To amplify too much, would make much more,  
And top extremity.  
Whilst I was big in clamour came there in a man,  
Who, having seen me in my worst estate,  
Shunn'd my abhorr'd society; but then, finding  
Who 'twas that so endur'd; with his strong arms  
He fasten'd on my neck, and bellow'd out

As he'd burst heaven ; threw him on my father;  
Told the most piteous tale of Lear and him  
That ever ear receiv'd ; which in recounting  
His grief grew puissant, and the strings of life  
Began to crack: twice then the trumpets sounded,  
And there I felt him trane'd.

**Alb.**

But who was this?

**Edg.**

Kent, sir, the banish'd Kent; who in disguise  
Follow'd his enemy king, and did him service  
Improper for a slave.

*Enter a Gentleman, with a bloody knife,*

**Gent.**

Help, help! O, help!

**Edg.**

What kind of help?

**Alb.**

Speak, man.

**Edg.**

What means this bloody knife?

**Gent.**

'Tis hot, it smokes;  
It came even from the heart of---O! she's dead.

**Alb.**

Who dead? speak, man.

**Gent.**

Your lady, sir, your lady: and her sister  
By her poison'd; she confesses it.

**Edm.**

I was contracted to them both: all three  
Now marry in an instant.

**Edg.**

Here comes Kent.

*Enter Kent.*

**Alb.**

Produce the bodies, be they alive or dead ;  
*(Exit Gentleman)*  
This judgement of the heavens, that makes us tremble,  
Touches us not with pity.  
*(To Kent)*  
O! is this he?  
The time will not allow the compliment  
Which very manners urges.

**Kent**

I am come  
To bid my King and master aye good night;  
Is he not here?

**Alb.**

Great thing of is forgot!  
Speak Edmund, where's the King? and where's  
Cordelia?  
Seest thou this object, Kent?  
*(The bodies of Goneril and Regan are brought in)*

**Kent.**

Alack! why thus?

**Edm.**

Yet Edmund was belov'd:  
The one the other poison'd for my sake,  
And after slew herself.

**Alb.**

Even so, Cover their faces.

**Edm.**

I pant for life; some good I mean to do  
Despite of mine own nature. Quickly send,  
Be brief in it, to th'castle; for my writ  
Is on the life of Lear and on Cordelia.  
Nay, send in time.

**Alb**

Run, run! O, run

**Edg.**

To who, my Lord? Who has the office? send  
Thy token of reprieve.

**Edm.**

Well thought on: take my sword,  
Give it the captain.

**Edg.**

Haste thee, for thy life.  
(*Exit officer*)

**Edm.**

He hath the commission from my wife and me  
To hang Cordelia in the prison, and  
To lay the blame upon her own despair,  
That she fordid herself.

**Alb.**

The Gods defend her!  
Bear him hence awhile.  
(*Edmund is borne off.*)

*Re-enter Lear, with Cordelia dead in his arms, and Officer*

**Lear**

Howl, howl; howl! O! you are men of stones:  
Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so  
That Heaven's vault should crack. She's gone for ever.  
I know when one is dead, and when one lives;  
She's dead as earth. Lend me a looking-glass;  
If that her breath will mist or stain the stone,  
Why then she lives.

**Kent.**

Is this the promis'd end?

**Edg.**

Or image of that horror?

**Alb.**

Fall and cease.

**Lear.**

This feather stirs; she lives! if it be so,  
It is a chance which does redeem all sorrows  
That ever I have felt.

**Kent** (*Kneeling*)

O my good master!

**Lear**

Prithee, away.

**Edg.**

'Tis noble Kent, your friend.

**Lear**

A plague upon you, murderers, traiters all!  
I might have sav'd her; now she's gone for ever!  
Cordelia, Cordelia! stay a little. Ha!  
What is't thou say'st? Her voice was ever soft,  
Gentle and low, an excellent thing in woman.  
I kill'd the slave that was a-hanging thee.

**Offi.**

'Tis true, my lords, he did.

**Lear**

Did I not, fellow?  
I have seen the day, with my good biting falchion  
I would have made them skip: I am old now,  
And these same crosses spoil me. Who are you?  
Mine eyes are not o'th' best: I'll tell you straight.

**Kent**

If Fortune brag of two she lov'd and hated,  
One of them we behold.

**Lear**

This is a dull sight. Are you not Kent?

**Kent.**

The same ;  
Your servant Kent. Where is your servent Caius?

**Lear.**

He's a good fellow, I can tell you that ;  
He'll strike, and quickly too. He's dead and rotten.

**Kent**

No, my good Lord ; I am the very man, --

**Lear**

I'll see that straight.

.....

*Enter an Officer*

**Offi.**

Edmund is dead, my Lord.

**Alb.**

That's but a trifle here.

.....

**Lear.**

And my poor fool is hang'd. No, no, no life!



Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,  
And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,  
Never, never, never, never; never!  
Pray you, undo this button: thank you, Sir.  
Do you see this? Look on her lips, look, her lips,  
Look there, look there!

**Edg.**

He faints! My Lord, my Lord!

**Kent.**

Break, heart; I prithee, break!

**Edg.**

Look up, my Lord.

**Kent.**

Vex not his ghost: O! let him pass; he hates him  
That would upon the rack of this tough world  
Stretch him out longer.

**Edg.**

He is gone, indeed.

**Kent**

The wonder is he hath endur'd do long:  
He but usurp'd his life.

**Alb.**

Bear them from hence. Our present business  
Is general woe.

*(To Kent and Edgar)*

Friends of my  
Soul, you twain  
Rule in this realm, and the gor'd state sustain.

**Kent.**

I have a journey, sir, shortly to go;  
My master calls me, I must not say no.

**Edg.**

The weight of this sad time we must obey;  
Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say;  
The oldest have borne most: we that are young  
Shall never see so much, nor live so long.  
*(Exeunt, with a dead march)*

Thus ends this extraordinary and powerful play, it is one of the very greatest, and one of the most sympathetic, as it is also one of the cruellest and written in such beautiful

English language. It is worth noting the comments by John Keats on this play as quoted previously in this book.

## *Macbeth*

Macbeth is a very different tragedy from *King Lear*. However, both plays are rich in dramatic poetry, although the poetry is as different between the two plays as is the story line, the characterisation, the style and the language. Such extraordinary differences between these two tragedies point up the creative powers of William Shakespeare. We note that these two plays belong with the seven brilliant and powerful, but all such very different plays: *Julius Caesar* written in 1599, *Hamlet* in 1600, *Othello* in 1604, *Measure for Measure* in 1604, *King Lear* in 1605, and *Macbeth* in 1605 and *Anthony & Cleopatra* in 1606. They were all written within seven years. One begins to understand how it is that no other playwright has even approached such intellectual and brilliant creative literary achievements, and that Shakespeare's 37 plays, are all still to be seen performed on the stage and sold as DVDs.

Now to consider some aspects of the play, *Macbeth*: There are four principal actors in this play: *Macbeth* himself, *Banquo*, the close colleague and soldier, who with *Macbeth* visited the three witches (themselves grouped here together as one of the important actors), *Lady Macbeth*, plays a keen and cruel role as wife of *Macbeth*, and with her husband, who is the principal actor throughout this play. The other main characters are *Duncan* who is the King of Scotland at the opening of the play, he is killed very early in the play by *Macbeth*; *Macduff*, who, after fleeing to England, learns that his wife, all his children and all his servants were killed on instructions from *Macbeth*. But it is *Macduff* who kills *Macbeth* in the final course of a battle in the last stage of the play. *Malcolm* and *Donalbain* are sons of *Duncan*, king of Scotland, who have minor parts to play; *Fleance*, son of *Banquo*, also has a minor part and he also escapes murder by thugs hired by *Macbeth*, who killed *Banquo* on instructions from *Macbeth*. Another notable character, but only for a brief interval, is the porter who is woken in the night by loud knocking at the entrance to this Castle belonging to *Macbeth* after a great storm. His role is to suddenly release the tensions in this play by his brief, entertaining and very amusing bawdy, and before the horrible murder of *King Duncan* is discovered in all its soaking bloodiness.

The main focus of this play is the vicious ambition of *Macbeth* and his wife, *Lady Macbeth*, to become the king and queen of Scotland, by killing first *King Duncan*, and then anybody who stands in the way of *Macbeth's* rise to be king of Scotland. When *Macbeth* hesitates to pursue this ambition his wife both chides and then encourages him not to hesitate to do whatever violent brutality is necessary to achieve their ambitions.

Our second major consideration of this play is the extensive use by Shakespeare of his beautiful dramatic poetry. This poetry in *Macbeth* is as powerful, but perhaps not quite as varied as one finds in the previous tragedy, *King Lear*, partly perhaps because the issues that engage *Macbeth* are entirely centred on his ambition to be king, so they lack the variety of objectives found in the play *King Lear*. The lyricism of *Lear's* dramatic poetry is advanced by using his great creative imagination that can contemplate the human psyche and so covers a wider range than can *Macbeth*, whose focus is narrowed

by the limitation of his ambitions. Both plays show us the greed and haste in those who have ruthless ambition, and the will into appetite that has inspired some of the great dramatic verse employed by Shakespeare, not just in both *Macbeth* and *Lear*, but also in so many of his tragic and history plays, as well as in the four *Romance* plays, and certainly in the more mature comedies that he wrote.

The plays of Shakespeare, such as *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *Measure for Measure* and *Anthony & Cleopatra*, and many of his other plays, use great dramatic poetry to lift the human spirit of those in the theatre, and equally with those who, when they read the plays alone, find their imaginations lifted into realms of almost dizzy heights of excitement, joy, wonder, sadness and tears. The greatest arts can reveal something that approaches an almost inspired vision in human life, and in doing so can reveal how profoundly creative can be the human mind (see final para p.8 & pp.1-3, p. 241.)

Shakespeare has introduced dangerous and severe storms in a number of his plays that have significant consequences. One has the impression that, for William Shakespeare, these great storms at sea carry a significant manifestation of the powers of Nature, that are so very much greater than anything man can create. In his first *Romance* play, *Pericles*, there is a great storm in the Mediterranean in which the new born baby girl, appropriately named Marina, survives with her father, but her mother, Thaisa, dies in giving birth to her. Marina has to be put in a coffin that is cast into the sea with great consequences for the play. The last play in which a great storm occurs, and which has notable consequences, is the last of the *Romance* plays, *The Tempest*, also significantly named, and in which all its crew and passengers survive and manage to get ashore. But the play, *King Lear*, has in its middle section scenes of horrific storm with thunder, lightning and torrential rain on the wild country that affects *King Lear*, his fool, Edger, and several others of his loyal retinue who together suffer the terrible soaking storm on the heath where they all met up together. Shakespeare's later tragic play, *Macbeth*, opens from its very beginning with a great storm of thunder and lightning on the heath, but with the great difference that three witches open the speeches. These three witches play an important role in the play *Macbeth*.

**First witch**

When shall we three meet again?  
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

**Second witch**

When the hurlyburly's done,  
When the battle's lost and won.

**Third witch**

That will be ere the set of sun.

**First witch**

Where the place?

**Second witch**

Upon the heath.

**Third witch**

There to meet with Macbeth.

**First witch**

I come Graymalkin!

**Second witch**

Paddock calls.

**Third witch**

Anon!

**All**

Fair is foul, and foul is fair:  
Hover through the fog and filthy air.  
(*Exeunt*)

The purpose and meaning of these lines have, unsurprisingly, been debated by scholars. The view of the writer of this book is that the witches are foretelling the future events of the play to the audience in the theatre. They are indicating the important roles that can influence the leading, and most important of all the actors, who is Macbeth. Their reference to the battle being lost means Banquo, will be the first to lose his life by his being murdered by thugs hired by Macbeth. They then forecast that Macbeth will win his kingship of Scotland, but he will lose it and his life in battle. However, they make a prophesy that the final battle will be won by someone else. Perhaps that is the meaning of the pun as the 'heir of the son' meaning Malcom, as King Duncan was killed by Macbeth leaving a son to reign. Then the witchcraft moves on to the reference to toads and frogs, long recognised as curious reptiles that live with witches who can foretell human behaviour in certain circumstances. These predictions seem to be reinforced by the last lines of 'Fair is foul and foul is fair', in the same order as are success in life and in early death of Macbeth; and they may perhaps foretell a very different future for Fleance, son of Banquo, who will survive; but for what we are not told. Of course there could be several other meanings, as scholars have suggested.

It is notable that in Act 1, Scene III, 127 we have Macbeth, who has been lifted to be the Thane of Cawdor, speaking in an 'aside', that seems to be a soliloquy without an audience:

**Macbeth (*Aside*)**

Two truths are told,  
As happy prologues to the swelling act  
Of the imperial theme.-- I thank you gentlemen.--  
(*Aside*) This supernatural soliciting  
Cannot be ill; cannot be good:----  
If ill, why hath it given me earnest of success,  
Commencing in a truth? I am Thane of Cawdor:  
If good, why do I yield to that suggestion  
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair,  
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,  
Against the use of Nature? Present fears  
Are less than horrible imaginings.

My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,  
Shakes so my single state of man,  
That function is smother'd in surmise,  
And nothing is, but what is not.

Banquo makes a short and perhaps troubled observation as he watches Macbeth.

**Ban.**

Look, how our partner's rapt.

**Macb.** (*Aside and not noticing Banquo*)

If Chance will have me King, why, Chance  
May crown me, without my stir

**Banq.**

New honours come upon him,  
Like our strange garments, cleave not to their mould,  
But with the aid of use.

**Macb.** (*Aside*)

Come what come may,  
Time and the hour runs through the roughest day.

In **Act 1 Scene IV, Line 12**, King Duncan has heard the reports of the treacherous Thane of Cawdor who was captured by Macbeth in defending the rule of King Duncan, the King asks:

**Dun.**

Is execution done on Cawdor? Or not:  
Those in commission yet return'd?

**Malcome** (*one of King Duncan's sons, reports to the King on the criminal Cawdor*):

.....  
That very frankly he confess'd his treasons,  
Implored your Highness pardon, and set forth  
A deep repentance. Nothing in his life  
Became him like the leaving it: he died  
As one that had been studied in his death  
To throw away the dearest thing he ow'd,  
As twere a careless trifle.

**Dun.**

There's no art  
To find the mind's construction in the face:  
He was a gentleman on whom I built  
An absolute trust.--

**Act 1 Sc. V, Inverness, a room in Macbeth's Castle. Enter Lady Macbeth, reading a letter:**

**Macbeth**

My dearest love,  
Duncan comes here tonight.

**Lady M**

And when goes hence?

**Macb.**

To-morrow, as he purposes.

**Lady M**

O! never.  
Shall sun that morrow see!  
Your face, my Thane, is as a book, where men  
May read strange matters.....  
.....  
He's that coming  
Must be provided for; and you shall put  
This night's great business into my dispatch;  
Which shall to all our nights and days to come  
Give soley sovereign sway and masterdom.

**Macb**

We will speak further.

**Lady M**

Only look up clear  
To alter favour ever is to fear.  
Leave all the rest to me.  
(*Exeunt*)

**Scene VI Sc.VI, before the castle:**

**Dun.**

This castle hath a pleasant seat ; the air  
Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself  
Unto our gentle senses.  
.....

**Dun.**

Give me your hand ;  
Conduct me to mine host: we love him highly,  
And shall continue our graces towards him.  
By your leave, hostess.  
(*Exeunt*)

**Scene VII, in the same room in the castle:**

**Macb**

If it were done, when 'tis done, then twere well

It were done quickly! if th' assassination  
 Could trammel up the consequence, and catch  
 With his surcease; that but this blow  
 Might be the bell and the end-all—here,  
 But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,  
 We'd jump the life to come.—But in these cases,  
 We still have judgment here; that we but teach  
 Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return  
 To plague th' inventor: this even-handed Justice  
 Commends th' ingredience of our poison'd chalice  
 To our own lips. He's in doubt trust:  
 First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,  
 Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,  
 Who should against his murderer shut the door,  
 Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan  
 Hath born his faculties so meek, hath been  
 So clear in his great office, that his virtues  
 Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongu'd against  
 The deep damnation of his taking-off;  
 And Pity, like a naked new-born babe,  
 Striding the blast, or heaven's Cherubins, hors'd  
 Upon the sightless couriers of the air,  
 Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye  
 That tears shall drown the wind,—I have no spur  
 To prick the sides of my intent, but only  
 Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself  
 And falls on th'other—

Wilson, in his side-page, notes (page 40, item 22 of the Arden Shakespeare Text) that he 'does not understand how pity—and still less a naked new-born babe can stride the sound of a blast from the trumpet'. However, if one accepts that these ten lines above enclose metaphors of great strength and beauty in their poetry, and that they are intended only to enhance the vicious, cruel and powerful wickedness that will arouse in the reader or theatre-goer the shock of such an extremely wicked killing. There are in this whole play many such powerful metaphors that characterise the many great lines of metaphoric poetry throughout much of this play. They are a notable feature of the play.

Now Lady Macbeth enters and shows something of her ambition and her metal.

**Macb.**

How now! what news?

**Lady M**

He hath almost supp'd? Why have you left the chamber?

**Macb.**

Hath he ask'd for me?

**Lady M**

Know you not he has?

**Macb.**

We will proceed no further in this business:  
He hath honor'd me of late; and I have bought  
Golden opinions from all sorts of people,  
Which would be worn now in their newest gloss,  
Not cast aside so soon.

**Lady M**

Was the hope drunk  
Wherein you dress'd yourself? Hath it slept since?  
And wakes it now to look so green and pale  
At what it did so freely? From this time  
Such I count thy love. Art thou afeard  
To be the same in thine own act and valour,  
As thou art in desire? Would'st thou have that  
Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,  
And live a coward in thine own esteem,  
Letting "I dare not" wait upon "I would,"  
Like the poor cat I' th' adage?

**Macb.**

Pr'ythee, peace,  
I dare do all that may become a man;  
Who dares do more, is none.

**Lady M**

What beast was't then  
That made you break this enterprise to me?  
When you durst do it, then you were a man;  
And, to be more than what you were, you would  
Be so much more the man. Nor time, nor place,  
Did then adhere, and yet you would not make both:  
They have made themselves, and their fitness now  
Does unmake you. I have given suck, and know  
How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:  
I would, while it was smiling in my face,  
Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,  
And dashed the brains out, had I sworn  
As you have done to this.

**Macb.**

If we should fail?

**Lady M**

We fail?  
But screw your courage to the sticking-place,  
And we'll not fail. When Duncan is asleep  
(Whereto the rather shall his day's hard journey  
Soundly invite him), his two chamberlins



Will I with wine and wassail so convince,  
That memory, the warder of the brain,  
Shall be a fume, and receipt of reason  
A limbeck only: when in swinish sleep  
Their drenched natures lie, as in a death,  
What cannot you and I perform upon  
Th' unguarded Duncan? what not put upon  
His spongy officers, who shall bear the guilt  
Of our great quell.

**Macb.**

Bring forth men-children only!  
For they undaunted mettle should compose  
Nothing but males. Will it not be receiv'd,  
When we have mark'd with blood those sleepy two  
Of his own chamber, and us'd their very daggers,  
That they have don't?

**Lady M**

Who dares receive it other,  
As we shall make our griefs and clamour roar  
Upon his death?

**Macb.**

I am settled, and bend up  
Each corporal agent to this terrible feat.  
Away, and mock the time with fairest show:  
False face must hide what false heart doth know.  
(*Exeunt*)

It is clear that Lady Macbeth has been able to shame her husband Macbeth into fulfilling their original intent to assassinate their guest, who is the King of Scotland, and a greatly respected Lord honoured throughout his kingdom. Her jeering at what she suggested was her husband's lack of masculine courage has shamed him into fulfilling their intention to carry out this appalling evil deed.

*Act II, is still in Macbeth's castle. Banquo and his son Fleance with a torch enter and shortly after Macbeth and a servant enter with a torch. There is a brief discussion between them, and then Banquo and Fleance leave. As fore-arranged with Lady Macbeth the bell rings*

**Macb**

I go, and it is done: the bell invites me.  
Hear it not Duncan; for it is a knell  
That summons thee to Heaven, or to Hell .  
(*Exit*)

**Act II, Sc II**

**Lady M**

That which hath made them drunk hath made me  
Bold:  
What hath quench'd them hath given me fire.--Hark!  
--Peace!  
It was the owl that shriek'd, the fatal bellman,  
Which gives the stern'st good-night. He is about it,  
The doors are open; and the surfeited grooms  
Do mock their charge with snores: I have drugg'd  
Their possets,  
That Death and Nature do contend about them,  
Whether they live, or die.

**Macb.** (*Within*)

Who's there? --what, ho!

**Lady M**

Alack! I am afraid they have awak'd,  
And 'tis not done:--th'attempt and not the deed  
Confounds us.--Hark! I laid the daggers ready;  
He could not miss 'em.--had he not resembled  
My father as he slept, I had done't.--My husband!

**Macb.**

I have done the deed.--Didst thou not hear a noise?

**Lady M**

I heard the owl scream, and the crickets cry.  
Did not you speak

.....

**Macb.**

Methought, I heard a voice cry, "Sleep no more!  
Macbeth does murder Sleep,"--- the innocent Sleep;  
Sleep, that knits up the revell'd sleeve of care,  
The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,  
Balm of hurt minds, great Nature's second course,  
Chief nourisher in life's feast;--

**Lady M**

What do you mean?

**Macb.**

Still it cried, "Sleep no more!" to all the house:  
"Glamis hath murder'd Sleep, and therefore Cawdor  
Shall sleep no more, Macbeth shall sleep no more!"

**Lady M**

Who was it that thus cried? Why, worthy Thane,  
.....

Go get some water,  
And wash this filthy witness from your hand. ....  
Why did you bring these daggers from their place?  
They must lie there: go carry them, and smear  
The sleepy grooms with blood.

**Macb.**

I'll go no more:  
I am afraid to think what I have done;  
Look on't again I dare not.

**Lady M**

Infirm of purpose!  
Give me the daggers. The sleeping, and the dead,  
.....  
.....  
I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal,  
For it must seem their guilt.  
(*Exit.---Knocking within.*)

**Macb.**

Whence is that knocking? ---  
.....  
Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood  
Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather  
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,  
Making the green one red.

**Lady M**

My hands are of your colour; but I shame  
To wear a heart so white.  
.....  
Hark! more  
Knocking.  
Get on your night-gown, lest occasion call us,  
And show us to be watchers.---Be not lost  
So poorly in your thoughts.

**Macb .**

To know my deed, 'twere best not to know myself.  
(*Knock*)  
Wake Duncan with they knocking: I would thou  
Couldst!  
(*Exeunt*)

**Act II Scene III, enter a Porter. Knocking within:**

**Porter.**

Here's a knocking indeed!

The Porter opened the door to find Macduff and Lenox waiting to be allowed to enter.

This use of the word knocking is often used as vulgar term for copulation, but Eric Partridge in his book of Shakespeare's Bawdy does not gloss the word 'knocking' anywhere, and there is no linked context for it in this play. The knocking scene is only 41 lines and seems to be concerned almost entirely with excessive drinking of alcoholic fluids. These somewhat vulgar 40 lines concentrate of the particular reputation of alcoholic drinks for reducing the sexual vigour of men who over-indulge in any alcoholic drinking, and their need for more than their usual amount of urinating. These lines usually receive considerable laughter from audiences.

It is interesting that Shakespeare chose to set this somewhat unusual and particular scene of the knocking because it almost marks the moment immediately before Macduff goes to visit King Duncan in his bedroom. The King had especially asked Macduff to wake him at an early hour. Of course, the horrific sight of the butchered body of the King caused Macduff to rush from the King's bedroom to alert everybody, especially Macbeth their host, of what he, Macduff, had found as soon as he saw the King dead in his bed.

There follows a vigorous discussion concerning the perpetrators of this assassination of the King . Then when Lenox tells Macbeth of the several servants to the king who had been slaughtered Macbeth admits he killed them this morning immediately he had learned of the assassination. Macbeth explains that these servants had so much blood on their hands and clothes it had been obvious to him that these servants must have killed the king when they, the servants had been so very drunk, the evidence was clear claimed Macbeth to Lenox.

Lady Macbeth then pretends to faint and Banquo carries her away to rest in a suitable room away from this scene of multiple murders.

The deceased king's two sons, Malcom and Donaldbain discuss their best action and both decide to escape: Donaldbain to Ireland and Malcolm to England for their immediate safety.

Macduff reports that Macbeth has gone to Scone to be invested as the new King of Scotland, while the servants who were found covered in blood with their daggers and all drunk and sleeping were said by Macbeth to have killed King Duncan.

**Act III Scene I, Forres: A room in the palace. Enter Banquo.**

Banquo in a soliloquy describes how Macbeth now has all that the three Witches had predicted: He is the King of Scotland, Cawdor, and Glamis. Banquo clearly thinks Macbeth killed King Duncan, he remembers that the three witches also predicted that Macbeth himself would not last long as the King. Banquo also recalls that the witches had predicted that he would be the root and father of many kings.

Then enters Macbeth as King with Lady Macbeth as Queen; Lenox, Rosse, Lords and Attendants.

Macbeth inquires after Banquo whether he intends to ride with his son Fleance that afternoon, and Banquo replies that he must. Macbeth notes that everybody must be back for supper at seven that night. Then exit Banquo and later re-enter Servant, with two Murderers.

Macbeth, now the king, interviews the two murderers who arrange with Macbeth when and how they should kill both Banquo and Fleance his son.

Lady Macbeth, the new Queen, sends a servant to ask her husband to come to talk with her for a few moments. His wife tried to persuade her husband that he should stop worrying about their past action, or as she put it 'Things without all remedy should be without regard: what's done is done.'

**Macbeth:**

We have scorch'd the snake; not killed it;  
She'll close, and be herself; whilst our malice  
whilst our more malice remains in danger of her former tooth.

.....

Duncun is in his grave;  
After life's fitful fever he sleeps well;  
Treason has done his worst: nor steel, nor poison,  
Malice, domestic, foreign levy, nothing  
Can touch him further!

.....

**Lady M**

You must leave this,

**Macb.**

O! full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife!  
Thou know'st that Banquo, and his Fleance, lives.

**Lady M**

But in them Nature's copy's not eterne.

The first murderer strikes out the light, while the others assault Banquo, who is killed, but his son Fleance flees the scene and escapes.

*Act III Scene IV, A banquet prepared, enter Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, Rosse, Lenox, Lords and Attendants. Enter first Murderer, to the door*

Macbeth welcomes all the guests and then notices that the first murderer has blood on his face. The murderer answers Macbeth and tells him the blood is Banquo' and that Banquo had his throat cut by hired men. Macbeth hears the news he dreads that Fleance has escaped on his horse, and *exit Murderer*.

**Lady M**

My royal Lord,  
You do not give the cheer: the feast is cold,

Lady Macbeth continues with her speech, urging her husband to fulfil his duties as host to his banquet and guests.

**Macbeth** (*recovers himself, and addresses his guests and his wife*):

Sweet remembrancer!--  
Now good digestion wait on appetite,  
And health on both!

**Len.**

May it please your Highness sit?

**Macb.**

Here had we now our country's honour roof'd,  
Were the grac'd person of our Banquet present;

*The ghost of Banquo enters and sits in Macbeth's place.*

Who may I rather challenge for unkindness,  
Than pity for mischance!

**Rosse.**

His absence, Sir,  
Lays blame upon his promise. Please't your Highness  
To grace us with your royal company?

**Macb.**

The tables full.

**Len.**

Here is a place reserv'd, Sir.

**Macb.**

Where?

**Len.**

Here, my good Lord, What is't that moves your  
Highness?

**Macb.**

Which of you have done this?

**Lords**

What my good Lord?

**Macb.**

Thou canst not say, I did it: never shake  
Thy gory locks at me.

**Rosse.**

Gentlemen, rise; his Highness is not well.

**Lady M**

Sit, worthy friends. My Lord is often thus,  
.....  
Feed, and regard him not.--- Are you a man?

**Macb.**

Ay, and a bold one, that dear look on that  
Which might appal the Devil.

**Lady M**

O proper stuff!  
This is the very painting of your fear:  
This is the air-drawn dagger, which, you said,  
Led you to Duncan.  
.....  
When all's done,  
You look but on a stool.

*(Ghost disappears)*

.....  
What! quite unmanned in folly?

.....  
*(Re-enter Ghost)*

**Macb.**

To all, and him, we thirst,

**Lords**

Our duties, and the pledge.

**Macb.**

Avaunt! And quit my sight! let the earth hide thee!  
Thy bones are marowless, thy blood is cold ;  
Thou has no speculation in those eyes  
Which thou dost glare with.

**Lady M**

Think of this, good Peers,  
But as a thing of custom: 'tis no other;  
Only it spoils the pleasure of the time.

**Macb.**

What man dare, I dare:  
.....  
Hence, horrible shadow!  
Unreal mock'ry, hence!---  
*(Ghost disappears)*  
Why so; ---being gone,  
I am a man again,---Pray you, sit still.

**Lady M**

You have displac'd the mirth, broke the good  
Meeting  
With most admir'd disorder.

**Macb**

Can such things be,  
And overcome us like a summer's cloud,  
Without our special wonder.

.....

**Lady M**

A kind good night to all!  
(*Exeunt Lords and Attendants*)

**Macb**

It will have blood, they say: blood will have blood:  
Stones have been known to move, and trees to speak  
Augures, and understood relations, have  
By maggot-pies, and choughs, and rooks, brought forth  
The secret'st man of blood. ---What is the night?

.....

I am in blood  
Stepp'd in so far, that, should I wade no more,  
Returning were as tedious as go o'er.

.....

**Lady M**

You lack the season of all natures, sleep.

**Act III Scene V**, *the heath, thunder. Enter the three witches, meeting Hecate:*

This Scene opens with the three witches of which only one speaks and she is the first to speak:

**Ist Witch.**

Why, how now, Hecate? you look angerly.

There follows 34 lines spoken by Hecate to the witches criticising the three witches for their behaviour in trading with riddles and affairs. Which are related to death and in particular with Macbeth and maybe with Banquo. The associated song is sometimes omitted from the stage performance.

**Act IV Scene I**, *within a dark cave in the middle of which is cauldron, thunder is heard. Enter three witches:*

The three witches are chanting their rhyming text . At one point Hecate arrives with the three witches and Hecate commends the witches for their reformed behaviour.



One of the most important parts of these scenes with the witches is the warning given to the witches by an Apparition: the warning revolves around the chant of Macbeth!

Macbeth! Macbeth! Beware Macduff; beware the Thane of Fife.

The second important Apparition arrives to make a chant about Macbeth:

Be bloody, bold and resolute: laugh to scorn  
The power of man, for none of woman born  
Shall harm Macbeth

Then live Macduff: what need I fear of thee?  
But yet I'll make assurance double sure,  
And take a bond of Fate: thou shalt not live;  
That I may tell pale-hearted fear it lies,  
And sleep in spite of thunder.

#### **Act IV Scene III, *England* :**

Malcolm and Macduff have arrived and others continue to arrive from Scotland to seek help against Macbeth. After a time a group of men from Scotland have gathered together in London. Macduff is listening to people talking, and now he listens to Rosse

**Rosse**

Let not your ears despise my tongue for ever,  
Which shall possess them with the heaviest sound,  
That ever yet they heard.

**Macd**

Humh! I guess at it.

**Rosse**

Your castle is surprise'd; your wife, and babes,  
Savagely slaughter'd: to relate the manner,  
Were, on the quarry of these murder'd deer,  
To add the death of you.

**Mal.**

Merciful Heaven!--  
What, man! ne'er pull your hat upon your brows:  
Give sorrow words; the grief, that does not speak,  
Whispers the o'er-fraught heart, and bids it break.

**Macd.**

My children too?

**Rosse.**

Wife, children, servants, all  
That could be found.

**Macd.**

And I must be from thence!  
My wife kill'd too?

**Rosse.**

I have said.

**Mal.**

Be comforted:  
Lest make us med'cines of our great revenge,  
To cure this deadly grief.

**Macd.**

He has no children.--All my pretty ones?  
Did you say all?---O Hell-kite---All?  
What, all my pretty chickens, and their dam,  
At one fell swoop?

**Mal.**

Dispute it like a man.

**Macd.**

I shall do so  
But I must also feel it as a man:  
I cannot but remember such things were,  
That were all most precious to me. --Did heaven look on,  
And did not take their part? Naught that I am,  
Not for their own demerits, but for mine,  
Fell slaughter on their souls: Heaven rest them now!

**Mal.**

Be this the whetstone of your sword: let grief  
Convert to anger; blunt not the heart, enrage it.

**Macd.**

O! I could play the woman with mine eyes,  
And braggart with my tongue.--But, gentle Heavens,  
Cut short all intermission; front to front,  
Bring though this fiend of Scotland, and myself;  
Within my sword's length set him; if he 'scape,  
Heaven forgive him too!

**Act V Scene III, Dunsinane, a room in the castle. Enter Macbeth, Doctor, and Attendants:**

For some time now Lady Macbeth has been troubled with a sickness in which she cannot sleep and has distressing memories. Her husband has found a doctor to look after her.

**Doct.**

Not so sick, my Lord,  
As she is troubled with thick-coming fancies,  
That keep her from her rest.

**Macb.**

Cure her of that:  
Canst thou not minister to a mind diseas'd,  
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,  
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,  
And with some sweet oblivious antidote  
Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff  
Which weighs upon the heart?

**Doct.**

There in the patient  
Must minister to himself.

**Macb**

Throw physic to the dogs; I'll none of it.--  
Come, put mine armour on; give me my staff.--  
Seyton, send out--Doctor, the Thanes fly from me--  
Come, sir, despatch, ---If thou couldst, Doctor, cast  
The water of my land, find her disease,  
I would applaud again.--Pull't off, I say.--  
What rhubarb, cyme or what purgative drug,  
Would scour these English hence? -- Hear'st thou of  
them.

**Doct.**

Ay, my good Lord: your royal preparation  
Makes us hear something.

**Macb**

Bring it after me,--  
I will not be afraid of death and bane,  
Till Birnam forest come to Dunsinane.

**Doct.** (*Aside*)

Were I from Dunsinane away and clear,  
Profit again should hardly draw me here.

**Act V Scene V, Dunsinane, within the castle. Enter, with drums and colours, Macbeth, Seyton and Soldiers:**

**Macb.**

Hang out our banners on the outward walls;  
The cry is still, "They come!" Our castle's strength  
Will laugh a siege to scorn: here let them lie,  
Till famine and the ague eat them up.

.....

What is that noise?  
(*A cry within, of women*)

**Sey.**

It is the cry of women, my good Lord.

**Macb.**

I have almost forgot the taste of fears.  
The time has been, my sense would have cool'd  
To hear a night-shriek; and my fell of hair  
Would at a dismal treatise rouse, and stir,  
As life were in't. I have supp'd full with horrors:  
Direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts,  
Cannot once start me.

*Re-enter Seyton*

Wherefore was that cry?

**Sey.**

The Queen, my Lord, is dead.

**Macb.**

She should have died hereafter:  
There would have been a time for such a word.—  
To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,  
To the last syllable of recorded time;  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!  
Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
And then is heard no more: it is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.

*Enter a Messenger*

Thou com'st to use thy tongue; thy story quickly.

**Mess.**

Gracious my Lord,  
I should report that which I say I saw,  
But know not how to do't.

**Macb.**

Well, say, sir.

**Mess.**

As I did stand my watch upon the hill,  
I looked toward Birnam, and anon, methought,  
The wood began to move.

**Macb.**

Liar and slave!

**Mess.**

Let me endure your wrath, if it be not so.  
Within this three mile may you see it coming;  
I say, a moving grove.

.....

**Macb.**

I 'gin to be aweary of the sun,  
And wish th' estate o' th' world were now undone---

Ring the alarm bell!--Blow, wind! Come, wrack!  
At least we'll die with harness on our back.

**Act V Scene VII, the same Another part of the plain, enter Macbeth:**

**Macb.**

They have tied me to a stake: I cannot fly,  
But, bear-like, I must fight the course,--- What's he,  
That was not born of woman? Such a one  
Am I to fear, or none.

.....

**Act V Scene VIII, another part of the field, enter Macbeth:**

**Macb.**

Why should I play the Roman fool, and die  
On my own sword? whiles I see lives, the gashes  
Do better upon them.

*Re-enter Macduff*

**Macb.**

Turn Hell-hound, turn!  
Of all men else I have avoided thee;  
But get thee back, my soul is too much charg'd  
With blood of thine already.

**Macd.**

I have no words;  
My voice is in my sword: thou bloodier villain  
Than terms can give thee out!

*They fight.*

**Macb.**

Thou lovest labour:  
As easy may'st thou the intrenchant air  
With thy keen sword impress, as make me bleed:  
Let fall thy blade on vulnerable crests;  
I bear a charmed life; which must not yield  
To one of woman born.

**Macd.**

Despair thy charm;  
And let the Angel, whom thou still hast serv'd  
Tell thee, Macduff was from his mother's womb  
Untimely ripp'd.  
And thou oppos'd being of no woman born,  
Yet I will try the last: before my body  
I throw my warlike shield: lay on, Macduff,  
And damn'd be him that first cried, "Hold enough"!"

*Exeunt, fighting. Re-enter fighting, and Macbeth slain.*

Macduff appears to have been lost in the fighting until he reappears holding Macbeth's head that he had taken after Macduff had killed Macbeth in their sword fight.

**Macd.**

Hail, King! for so thou art. Behold, where stands  
The usurper's cursed head: the time is free.  
I see thee compass'd with thy kingdom's pearl,  
That speak my salutation in their minds;  
Whose voices I desire aloud with mine,—  
Hail, King of Scotland!

**All.**

Hail, King of Scotland

Malcolm acknowledges the salute to his becoming King and he thanks all who have helped rid Scotland of the Macbeth fiends, both King and Queen now being dead. Malcolm invites all his warriors to see him crowned at Scone.

Thus, in conclusion, this play is about good and evil. That is something which has occupied much of Shakespeare's playwriting. It involves physical violence, and cruelty, brutality and vicious scheming. In Shakespeare's plays evil is more often than not supplanted by good. In the play, Macbeth, the evil husband and wife, Macbeths, are replaced by the good in the person of Malcolm, who is the oldest son of the murdered King Duncan.

Another major feature of this play is the richness of metaphoric poetry of great beauty that runs through most of the five Acts of this play. Examples have been set out in this book. It is this great poetry that is the greatest achievement of the play. The character of

the Macbeth's does not present attractive, nor very interesting people. It is Shakespeare's poetry that stands out as being of the greatest interest and attraction.

The main theme of the play is the ruthless seeking after power in the form of the two hosts, Macbeth and his wife both assassinating the old King Duncan who is a guest in their castle. The Macbeths supplant him to become King of Scotland, and Macbeth's wife is recognised as Queen. The great part of the play is the excessive anxiety of Macbeth, who, having become King, then becomes suspicious and deeply anxious that he will have to face adversaries who suspect him of killing, first the King Duncan, and then Banquo, who was one of Macbeth's former close colleagues, who Macbeth had killed. A prime target for Macbeth was then Macduff, whose entire family and servants are all killed in his castle on orders from Macbeth, while Macduff was away in England, trying to raise military help to fight Macbeth and his supporters in Scotland.

### *Antony & Cleopatra*

The play Antony and Cleopatra is described and discussed in Part I of this book, where it is used, in more than any other play, to show examples of the Shakespeare-Keats coefficient of beauty and truth, and in examples of Shakespeare's literary sandwich device, that are first introduced in the Introduction to Part 1 of this book. This has naturally led to some aspects of the play, Antony and Cleopatra, being omitted from the analysis and discussion in Part 2. Immediately below is a brief summary of the play and it includes some commentary on the play as a whole, in an attempt to balance up the content of this great play that would otherwise have been given less attention than the discussion of the other great Tragedies in this book.

Antony and Cleopatra is thought to have been written in 1606, and is therefore one of the last tragedies written by Shakespeare. Like the others it is rich in beautiful and powerful dramatic poetry. Of all the tragic plays of Shakespeare it is one of the most tender in the heart and mind. There are hardly any brutal battles and behaviour anywhere in this play, although battles do take place at sea and on land, to a relatively minor degree.

It is sometimes thought of, and is referred to, as a Roman play because of the location in Rome and in part of the Empire in Egypt. The play is treated here as a Tragedy rather than as a Roman play because of the decision taken by the writer of this book to classify all tragic plays together and not to classify the Roman Tragedies separately. Troilus and Cressida is classified as a Roman play because that play is not regarded as a tragedy, but it is set in Greece and Troy that remains invaded by Greeks throughout the whole play. Antony and Cleopatra is undoubtedly a Tragedy because of the five suicidal deaths that play an important role in this play.

The play opens with two soldiers and colleagues of Antony on stage. We catch a few words from Philo to Demetrius concerning their opinions of what is happening, and what is reported in Philo's opening lines:

“Nay, but this dotage of our general’s” ..... and which end after a few lines with reference to their General, Antony, describing him as having become as indicated immediately below:

“And is become the bellows and the fan  
To cool a gypsy’s lust.”

Then follows the enchanting scene of Antony and Cleopatra entering the stage where Philo and Demetrius are observing the arrival of their General, Antony, and revealing their respect for what they refer to as the triple pillar of the world, despite him being, for the moment perhaps, “a strumpet’s fool”.

As Antony and Cleopatra enter, we then can overhear the lover’s conversation:

**Cleo.**

If it be love indeed, tell me how much.

**Ant.**

There’s beggary in the love that can be reckon’d.

**Cleo.**

Il set a bourn how far to be below’d.

**Ant.**

Then must thou needs find out new heaven, new earth.

This opening of the play can be found discussed in Part 1 of this book. The play has a large cast and we visit them first in Egypt and later in Rome, and later still, on board ship in the Mediterranean.

Cleopatra (in **Act 1, Sc 1**) teases Antony about his absence from his wife Fulvia in Rome. Antony replies with:

**Ant.**

Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch  
Of the rang’d empire fall! Here is my space,  
Kingdoms are clay, our dungy earth alike  
Feeds beast as man; the nobleness of life  
Is to do thus: when such a mutual pair,  
(*Embracing*)  
And such a twain can do’t, in which I bind,  
On pain of punishment, the world to weet  
We stand up peerless.

**Cleo.**

Excellent falsehood!  
Why did he marry Fulvia, and not love her?  
I’ll seem the fool I am not; Antony  
Will be himself.



This banter between the two stars of the play continues for some time, followed by the exit of Antony and Cleopatra with their train.

**Dem.**

Is Caesar with Antonius priz'd so slight?

**Phil.**

Sir, sometimes, when he is not Antony,  
He comes too short of that great property  
Which still should go with Antony.

**Dem.**

I am full sorry  
That he approves the common liar, who  
Thus speaks of him at Rome; I will hope  
Of better deeds to-morrow. Rest you happy.  
(*Exeunt*)

These tittle-tattle about Antony foretell what is to become in the end of this play when Antony's decline associated with this irresponsible behaviour and his lack of duty, not only to his wife Fulvia, but also to his two fellow triumvirs, Octavius Caesar and Lepidus. This behaviour of Antony's with all its fun, its great military skill and its memories of Antony's great military conquests, are to be overtaken to a large part because of his obsession with Cleopatra. Antony's fall and Cleopatra's some little time later bring this great play to a close.

A surprising thing to be noticed is that this play is not linked to the problem of good and evil which is something we have come to expect in Shakespeare's Tragedies. Secondly, there is no obvious similarity or association with the Romance plays that were written in 1608-1611, after *Macbeth*. But *Antony and Cleopatra* was written in 1606. Despite these relatively close dates of writing, the two sets of plays are dissimilar in so many ways; and *Macbeth* is a very different play from *Antony and Cleopatra*. There is very little violence in *Antony and Cleopatra*, a play that involves several women with important parts, such as Cleopatra, and her two attendants, Charmian and Iris, who have very good dramatic poetry to speak in crucial parts of the play. Octavia is a political woman in the sense that she is married off to Antony for political reasons, and soon abandoned insensitively and unhappily by Antony for his Cleopatra in Egypt. Alexas is an engaging attendant to Cleopatra. An unusual role is Mardian, a eunuch who attends on Cleopatra in the early part of the play.

The rest of the actors are divided equally as friends of Antony, and friends of Octavius Caesar, whose soldiers overcome Antony's supporting soldiery who are defeated by Caesar. An interesting role is that of Enobarbus, the loyal, astute, supporting soldier of Antony, who in a dramatic way towards the end of the play abandons Antony when he can see that Antony cannot possibly defeat the forces of Caesar. There is a very moving and impressive exchange of letters between them before Enobarbus commits suicide in the traditional Roman manner because he let Antony down.

Not long after this defeat of Antony by Caesar, Antony is misled by Cleopatra with false messages from her with the intent to make Antony believe that Cleopatra has died. This, together with Antony having recognised his unusually poor tactics in his battles at

sea and on land, he then attempts to commit suicide, and he makes a mess of that. The servants of Cleopatra then carry Antony to her monument. There Antony is lifted by up to be with Cleopatra. Antony knows he is about to die. Near to his very end he says to Cleopatra, "I am dying Egypt, dying". Then he warns Cleopatra about some of the people close to Caesar, and also tells her who of Caesar's people she can trust. Then he is silent. Cleopatra is distraught

**Cleo.**

Noblest of men would die?  
Hast no care of me, shall I abide  
In this dull world, which in they absence is  
No better than a sty? O see, my women:  
The crown of the earth doth melt.

*(Antony dies)*

My lord?  
O, wither'd is the gardland of the war,  
The soldier,s pole is fall'n young boys and girls  
Are level to men: the odds is gone,  
And there is nothing left remarkable  
Beneath the visiting moon.

The play progresses after Antony's death by Caesar wanting to capture Antony, but he soon learns that Antony is dead by his own hands in the traditional way of Roman soldiers. Caesar is shaken by the sudden realisation of what the death of Antony means for the military Roman world. Caesar's surprise becomes a shock.

**Caes.**

The breaking of so great a thing should make  
A greater crack. The round world  
Should have shook lions into civil streets,  
And citizens to their dens. The death of Antony  
Is not a single doom, in the name lay  
A moiety of the world.

**Dec.**

He is dead, Caesar,  
Not by a hired knife, but that self hand  
Which writ his honour in the acts it did,  
Hath, with the courage which the heart did lend it,  
Splitted the heart. This is his sword,  
I rubb'd his wound of it: behold it stain'd  
With his most noble blood.

**Caes.**

Look you sad friends?  
The gods rebuke me, but it is a tidings  
To wash the eyes of kings.

**Agr.**

And strange it is,  
That nature must compel us to lament  
Our most persisted deeds.

**Maec**

His taints and honours  
Wag'd equal with him.

**Agr.**

A rarer spirit never  
Did steer humanity: but you gods will give us  
Some faults to make us men. Caesar is touch'd.

**Maec**

When such a spacious mirror's set before him,  
He needs must see himself.

**Caes.**

O Antony,  
I have follow'd thee to this, but we do launch  
Diseases in our bodies. I must perforce  
Have shown to thee such a declining day,  
Or look on thine: we could not stall together,  
In the whole world. But let me lament  
With tears as sovereign as the blood of hearts,  
That thou my brother, my competitor,  
In top of all design; my mate in empire,  
Friend and companion in the front of war,  
The arm of mine own body, and the heart  
Where mine his thoughts did kindle; --that our stars,  
Unreconcilable, should divide  
Our equalness to this. Hear me, good friends,--  
But I will tell you at some meter season,  
The business of this man looks out of him,  
We'll hear him what he says.?

Then a little later in **Act V Scene V**, *in Alexandria, a room in the monument. Enter Cleopatra, Charmian, and Iras:*

**Cleo.**

My desolation does begin to make  
A better life: 'tis paltry to be Caesar:  
Not being Fortune, he's but Fortune's knave,  
A ministere of her will: and it is great  
To do that thing that ends all other deeds,  
Which shackles accidents, and bolts up change;  
Which sleeps, and never palates more the dung,  
The begger's nurse, and Caesar's.

We can note the use of sharp edged, metaphoric poetry which shows us that Cleopatra recognises clearly what a cold and common minded man she takes Octavius Caesar to be. O! what a different man was he from her exciting and warm blooded Antony. There was a man whose rich embraces she had loved. She had no intention of allowing Caesar to display her and her loving women. Cleopatra made sure that she and her attendants would not be taken back to Rome by Caesar to be exhibited in the streets of Rome where they would be humiliated. Cleopatra knew that she had to act quickly before Caesar could prevent her suicide that he was sure she would attempt. Cleopatra arranged for a local man to bring her a basket of poisonous snakes that she and her attendants would use to escape the humiliations planned by Caesar.

When one reflects on the marvels of the narrative, the characters, their great range and, throughout the play, the marvellous dramatic poetry and prose that seldom fail to amaze with their originality, and the ways this great poetry and prose are arranged to be spoken so well by such a wide range of the characters. It is, for the most part, a very gentle entertainment, and there is a balance set up between the men and women characters, and the wonders they are given to speak. This tragedy undoubtedly belongs with the great tragedies and the great plays. The only real occasions of sadness are the deaths of Enobarbus, Antony and of Cleopatra.

This is a late play, and if Shakespeare is telling us anything in this play that saddens and disappoints us, it concerns the character of the jolly, courageous, fun loving, great soldier, Antony, unfortunately with a caddish, unkind way to treat his two Roman wives. The character, behaviour and speeches of Cleopatra are marvellous in conception and in their wide range. The manner of her death and the accompanying roles of the deaths of her three women, Octavia, Charmian and Iras are most gently done. Here is something, that, so very many times in Shakespeare's plays, leaves us in wonderment at their sublime beauty: exemplified by Cleopatra's behaviour and her last spoken words.

Here are these last lines of the dying Cleopatra, as the poison of the snakes on her breasts and arms fulfil their deadly purposes in **Act V, Scene II, lines 308-318**.

**Char.**

O eastern star!

**Cleo.**

Peace, peace!  
Dost thou not see my baby at my breast,  
That sucks the nurse asleep?

**Char.**

O break! O break!

**Cleo.**

As sweet a balm, as soft as air, as gentle.  
O Antony! Nay, I will take thee too  
*(She takes another poisonous snake to her arm)*  
What should I stay—  
*(Dies).*

**Char.**

In this vile world? So fare thee well.  
Now boast thee, death, in thy possession lies  
A lass unparallel'd. Downy windows, close,  
And golden Pheobus, never be beheld  
Of eyes again so royal! Your crown's awry,  
I'll mend it, and then play

Charmian dies a few lines later from the snake's venom, after having seen to her remaining duties to Cleopatra. How perfectly chosen were those lines that Shakespeare created for Charmian to speak on the death of Cleopatra, immediately after Cleopatra's last thoughts of Antony:

“O Antony! Nay, I will take thee too”

“Now boast thee death, in thy possession lies  
A lass unparallel'd.”

## *Coriolanus*

The play opens in Rome where a mutinous crowd of citizens are gathered with staves, clubs and other weapons, they are demanding their access to foodstuffs at reasonable prices, that the poor of Rome can afford. They claim that many of the poor citizens are starving from hunger. Some in this crowd want to bring a procedure against Caius Martius in the Senate. Others point out what a marvellous soldier he has been in defending Rome against their enemies. Shakespeare had written two plays that involved Jack Cade scenes in *Henry VI pt 2* in 1590, and similar scenes in the early part of *Julius Caesar* in 1599, so he was not a stranger to this kind of rioting in the streets against the authorities. But the play *Coriolanus*, that was written in 1607, involved Cade-like scenes to a much greater extent than the two earlier plays. Furthermore this rioting was of an extended political kind that is a major part of this later play. We are made aware of the political resentment expressed by the socialist attitudes of the poor section of the society, and the aggressive mutinous attitudes towards the great military hero of Rome in the person of Caius Martius, who has driven off the neighbouring Volscians army. There are calls for the rebellious poor to kill the Roman military hero Caius Martius who they describe as the chief enemy of the people. These are extreme attitudes, irresponsible and unjustified.

**Letter from John Keats to his brother and sister-in law concerning comments by Hazlitt, and John Keats making observations on Hazlitt's views on Shakespeare's play *Coriolanus* ( Letter 123, Letters of John Keats, Ed. M.B Forman, O.U.P. 1952)**

In his letter 123, written by John Keats in 1819, written to George and Georginana, Keats referred to a statement by Hazlitt that “*Coriolanus* is a storehouse of political commonplaces. The arguments for and against aristocracy and d(e)mocracy, on the priviledges of the few and the claims of the many, on liberty and slavery, power and the abuse of it, peace and war, are here very ably handled, with the spirit of a poet and the acuteness of a philosopher. Shakspeare himself seems to have had a leaning to the

arbitrary side of the question, perhaps from some feeling of contempt for his own origin, and to have spared no occasion of bating the rabble. “*What he says of them is very true; what he says of their betters is also very true, though he dwells less upon it.*” I then proceed to account for this by showing how it is that “the cause of the people is but little calculated for a subject for poetry; or that the language of poetry naturally falls in with the language of power.” I affirm, Sir, that poetry, that the imagination, generally speaking, delights in power, in strong excitement, as well as in truth, in good, in right, whereas pure reason and the moral sense approve only of the true and good. I proceed to show that this general love or tendency to immediate excitement or theatrical effect, no matter how produced, gives a bias to the imagination often consistent with the greatest good, that in poetry it triumphs over principle, and bribes the passions to make a sacrifice of common humanity.

From the opening lines of this play it is clear Coriolanus is focused to a large extent on the social politics of Rome. The play takes its name from the honour bestowed on Caius Martius, later in the play, for he is the leading soldier defending Rome against the neighbouring people, the Volscians, whose military leader is Tullus Aufidius. He becomes a very important character and soldier in this play, and he kills Coriolanus just before the end of the play.

An unusually important character in one of Shakespeare’s plays is Volumnia the mother of the military leader of the Romans, Caius Martius, who is later to be promoted and given the title of Coriolanus; this title recognises the great battles he wins against the Volscians in the region of the city of Corioles part of Volscia. Coriolanus from the very beginning of the play reveals that he has a deep and wide sense of pride in himself, and justly in his military achievements for the Roman armies against their enemies. But his self-pride is just too excessive for many people to tolerate easily. Early in Act I there is talk of war between the Romans led by Coriolanus and the Volscians led by Tullus Aufidius.

**Act I, Scene I, lines 222, *enter a Messenger hastily:***

**Mess.**  
Where’s Caius Martius?

**Mar.**  
Here; what’s the matter?

**Mess.**  
The news is, sir, the Volscies are in arms.

**Mar.**  
I am glad on’t; then we shall ha’ means to vent  
Our superfluity, see, our best elders.

*Enter Sicinius Velutus, Junius Brutus, Cominius, Titus Lartius, with other Senators.*

**First Sen.**  
Martius, ‘tis true, that you have lately told us,  
The Volscies are in arms.

**Mar.**

They have a leader,  
Tullus Aufidius, that will put to't.  
I sin in envying his nobility ;  
And were I anything but what I am,  
I would wish me only he.

**Com.**

You have fought together!

**Mar.**

Were half to half the world by th'ears, and he  
Upon my party, I'd revolt to make  
Only my wars with him. He is a lion  
That I am proud to hunt.

**First Sen.**

Then worthy Martius,  
Attend upon Cominius to these wars.

**Com.**

It is your former promise.

**Mar.**

Sir, it is.  
And I am constant. Titus Lartius, thou  
Shalt see me once more strike at Tullus' face,  
What, art thou stiff? Standst out?

**Lar.**

No Caius Martius,  
I'll lean upon one crutch, and fight with t'other,  
Ere stay behind this business.

**Men.**

Oh, true bred!

**First Sen.**

Your company to th'Capitol, where I know  
Our greatest friends attend us.

**Lar. (To Cominius)**

Lead you on.

*(To Martinus)*

Follos Cominius, we must follow you,  
Right worthy your priority.

**Com.**

Noble Martius.

**First Sen.** (*To the citizens*)

Hence to your homes, be gone!

**Mar.**

Nay, let them follow.

The Volsces have much corn; take these rats thither,

To gnaw their garners. Worshipful mutineers,

Your valour puts well forth: pray follow.

(*Exeunt*)

*Citizens steal away. Sicinius and Berutus remain.*

**Sic.**

Was ever man so proud as is this Martius?

**Bru.**

He has no equal.

**Sic.**

When we were chosen tribunes for the people---

**Bru.**

Mark'd you his lip and eyes?

Nay, but his taunts.

**Bru Sic.**

Being mov'd he will not spare to gird the gods.

**Sic.**

Bemoock the modest moon.

**Bru.**

The present wars devour him. He is grown

Too proud to be so valiant.

**Sic.**

Such a nature

Tickled with good success, disdains the shadow

Which he treads on at noon. But I do wonder

His insolence can brook to be commanded

Under Cominius.

**Bru.**

Fame, at which he aims,

In whom already he's well grac'd, cannot

Better be held, nor more attained than but

A place below the first: for what miscarries

Shall be the general's fault, though he perform

To th'utmost of a man, and giddy censure



Will then cry out of Martius, 'Oh, if he  
Had borne the business!  
Besides, if things go well,  
Opinion, that so sticks on Martius, shall  
Of his demerits rob Cominius.

**Bru.**

Come,  
Half all Cominius honours are to Martius,  
Though Martius earn'd them not; and all his faults  
To Martius shall be honours, though indeed  
In aught he merit not.

**Sic.**

Let's hence, and hear  
How the dispatch is made; and in what fashion,  
More than his singularity, he goes  
Upon this present action.

**Bru.**

Let's along.  
(*Exeunt*)

**Act I Scene II**, *the scene moves away from Rome to their enemy, the Volscians. Enter Tullus Aufidius with senators of Corioles:*

**First Sen.**

So, your opinion is, Aufidius,  
That they of Rome are enter'd in our councils,  
And know how we proceed.

**Auf.**

Is it not yours?  
What ever have been thought on in this state  
That could be brought to bodily act, ere Rome  
Had circumvention? 'Tis not four days gone  
Since I heard thence; these are the words---I think  
I have the letter here---yes, here it is:  
'They have press'd a power, but it is not known  
Whether for east or west. The dearth is great,  
The people mutinous; and it is rumour'd,  
Cominius, Martius your old enemy  
(who is of Rome worse hated than of you)  
And Titius Lartius, a most valiant Roman,  
These three lead on this preparation  
Wither 'tis bent: most likely 'tis for you.  
Consider of it.'

**First Sen.**

Our army's in the field.

We never yet made doubt but Rome was ready  
To answer us.

**Auf.**

Nor did you think it folly  
To keep your great pretences veil'd, till when  
They needs must show themselves, which in the  
Hatching,  
It seem'd, appear'd to Rome. By the discovery  
We shall be shorten'd in our aim, which was  
To take in many towns, ere, almost, Rome  
Should know we were afoot.

**Second Sen.**

Noble Aufidius,  
Take your commission, hie you to your bands;  
Let us alone to guard Corioles.  
If they set down before's, for the remove  
Bring up your army ; but I think you'll find  
Th'have not prepar'd for us.

**Auf.**

Oh, doubt not that,  
I speak from certainties. Nay more,  
Some parcels of their power are forth already  
And only hitherward. I leave your honours.  
If we and Caius Martius chance to meet,  
'Tis sworn between us, we shall ever strike  
Till one can do no more.

**All.**

The gods assist you!

**Auf.**

And keep your honours safe.

**First sen.**

Farewell.

**Second sen.**

Farewell

**All.**

Farewell

**Act I, Scene III, enter Volumnia and Virgilia, mother and wife to Martius. They set them down on two low stools and sew.**

**Vol.**

I pray you, daughter, sing, or express yourself in a more comfortable

sort. If my son were my husband I should freelier rejoice in that absence wherein he won honour, than in the embracement of his bed., where he would show most love.

.....

**Vir.**

But had he died in the business, madam, how then?

**Vol.**

Then his good report should have been my son, I therein I would have found issue. Hear me profess sincerely:  
Had I a dozen sons, each in my love alike,  
And none less dear than mine and my good Martius,  
I had rather had eleven die nobly for their country,  
Then one voluptuously surfeit out of action.

*Act I, Scene IV, enter Martius, Titus Lartius with drum & colours with Captains and soldiers:*

**Mar.**

They fear us not, but issue from their city.  
Now put your shields before your hearts, and fight  
With hearts more proof than shields . Advance, brave  
Titus.  
They do disdain us much beyond our thoughts,  
Which makes me sweat with wrath. Come on, my  
Fellows:

**Alarum.**

The Romans are beat back to their trenches.

*Enter Martius, cursing.*

**Mar.**

All the contagion of the south light on you,  
You shames of Rome! You herd of ---boils and plagues  
Plaster you o'er, that you maybe abhorr'd  
Farther than seen, and one infect another  
Against the wind a mile! You souls of geese,  
That bear the shapes of men, how have you run  
From slaves that apes would beat! Pluto and hell!  
All hurt behind, backs red, and faces pale  
With flight and agued fear! Mend and charge home.  
Or, by the fires of heaven, I'll leave the foe  
And make my wars on you. Look to't. Come on ;  
If you'll stand fast, we'll beat them to their wives,  
As they us to our tranches. Fellow me!

*Another alarum, and Martius follows them to (the) gates.*

So, now the gates are ope. Now prove good seconds!  
'Tis for the followers Fortune widens them,  
Not for the fliers. Mark me, and do the like!  
*(Enters the gates)*

**First Sol.**  
Foolhardiness! not I.

**Second Sol**  
Nor I

*Martius is shut in*

**First Sol.**  
See, they have shut him in.

*Alarum continues*

**All .**  
To th'pot, I warrant him.

*Enter Titus Lartius*

**Lar.**  
What is becoming of Martius?

**All.**  
Slain, sir, doubtless.

**First Sol.**  
Following the fliers at the very heels,  
With them he enters; who, upon sudden,  
Clapp'd to their gates; he is himself alone,  
To answer all the city..

**Lar.**  
Oh noble fellow!  
Who sensibly outdares his senseless sword,  
And when it bows, stand'st up. Thou art left, Martius:  
A carbuncle entire, as big as thou art,  
Were it not so rich a jewel. Thou wast a soldier  
Even to Cato's wish, not fierce and terrible  
Only in strokes, but with thy grim looks and  
The thunder-like percussion of thy sounds  
Thou mad'st thine enemies shake, as if the world  
Were feverous and did tremble.

*Enter Martius, bleeding, assaulted by the enemy.*

**First Sol.**

Look sir!

**Lar.**

Oh, 'tis Martius!  
Lets fetch him off, or make remain alike.

*They fight, and all enter the city.*

**Act I, Scene VI, enter Cominius as it were to retire. Enter a messenger:**

**Mess.**

The citizens of Corioles have issued,  
And given to Lartius and to Martius battle.  
I saw our party to their trenches driven  
And then I came away.  
.....

*Enter Martius*

**Com.**

Who's yonder,  
That does appear as he were flay'd? O Gods,  
The shepherd knows not thunder from a tabor  
More than I know the sound of Martius' tongue  
From every meaner man.

**Mar.**

Come I too late?

**Com.**

Ay if you come not in the blood of others,

Martius now insists that he should be the man to face up to a battle with Aufidius and his Antiates. Martius then encourages all his Roman soldiers. The fighting continues with both Marius on the Roman side and Aufidius of the Volscians being wounded.

Later Junius Brutus and other Roman tribunes of the people were planning how to outsmart Martius who they consider to be a great danger to the freedom of their lower ranks of Roman society. Then suddenly a messenger arrives to greet the tribunes who tells them that Martius is going to be raised to being consul because of his great courage and success in war.

**Act II, Sc II, a Senate. Enter the Patricians, and the Tribunes of the people, Lictors before them.**

Menenius makes the case for rewarding Martius Coriolanus for his great military battles against the Volscians.

When Coriolanus told them of his wounds got in his country's service, when some of the plebeian soldiers ran away, Coriolanus told them to clean their teeth and wash their

faces, it was pointed out to Coriolanus that the plebeian Tribunes will want to deny any advancement or honour going to Coriolanus. That wish to deny a Consulship given to Coriolanus. There follows many disputes between the plebeian tribunes and other plebeians who resent any honour to Coriolanus, and they resent any of the rich and powerful who support Coriolanus.

Volumnia, the mother of Coriolanus, sums up the general view of nobles and others who recognise the great value of Coriolanus as a military general, but who also recognise the ridiculous and insulting attitudes of Coriolanus towards the plebeians and the others, for other ranks in Roman society who resent the arrogant attitudes and manners of Coriolanus towards any who disagree with his general aggressive and insulting behaviour of Coriolanus. Here is what his mother Volumnia says; she puts the whole foolish behaviour of her son, Coriolanus, clearly to the gathering, but she herself fails to correct her son's behaviour.

**Vol.**

Let go.  
You might have been enough the man you are,  
With striving less to be so: lesser had been  
The thwartings of your dispositions, if  
You had not show'd them how ye were dispos'd,  
Ere they lack'd power to cross you.

**Cor.**

Let them hang.

**Vol.**

Ay, and burn too.

*Enter Menenius with the Senators*

**Vol.**

Pray be councell'd;  
I have a heart as little apt as yours,  
But yet a brain that leads my use of anger  
To better vantage.

**Men.** (*friend of Coriolanus*)

Well said, noble woman.  
Before he should thus stoop to th'herd, but that  
The violent fit o'th'time craves it as physic  
For the whole state. I would put mine armour on,  
Which I can scarcely bear.

**Cor.**

What must I do?

**Men.**

Return to th'tribunes.

**Cor.**  
Well, what then? What then?

**Men.**  
Repent what you have spoke.

**Cor.**  
For them? I cannot do it to the gods,  
Must I then do't to them?

**Vol.**  
You are too absolute  
Though therein you can never be too noble,  
But when extremities speak. I have heard you say,  
Honour and policy, like unsever'd friends,  
I'th'war do grow together: grant that and tell me,  
In peace what each of them by th'other lose  
That they combine not there.

**Cor.**  
Tush, tush!

**Men.**  
A good demand.

**Vol.**  
If it be honour in your wars to seem  
The same you are not, which, for your best ends  
You adopt your policy, how is it less or worse  
That it shall hold companionship in peace  
With honour, as in war, since that to both  
It stands in like request?

**Cor.**  
Why force you this?

**Vol.**  
Because that now it lies you on to speak  
To th' people; not by your own instruction,  
Nor by th' matter which your heart prompts you,  
But with such words that are but rooted in  
Your tongue, though but bastards and syllables  
Of no allowance to your bosom's truth.  
Now, this no more dishonours you at all,  
Than to take in a town with gentle words  
Which else would put you to your fortune and  
The hazard of much blood.  
I would dissemble with my nature where  
My fortunes and my friends at stake requir'd  
I should do so in honour. I am in this  
Your wife, your son, these senators, the nobles;

And you will rather show our general louts  
How you can frown, than spend a fawn upon 'em  
For the inheritance of their loves and safeguard  
Of what that want might ruin.

**Men.**

Noble lady!  
Come, go with us; speak fair; you may salve so  
Not what is dangerous present, but the loss  
Of what is past.

**Vol.**

I prithee now, my son,  
Go to them, with this bonnet in thy hand,  
And thus far, with having stretch'd it—here be with them—  
Thy knee bussing the stones—for in such business  
Action is eloquence, and the eyes of th'ignorant  
More learned that the ears--waving they head,  
Which often, thus correcting they stout heart,  
Now humble as the ripest mulberry  
That will not hold the handling; or say to them,  
Thou art their soldier, and being bred in broils,  
Hast not the soft way which, thou dost confess,  
Were fit for thee to use, as they to claim,  
In asking their good loves; but thou wilt frame  
Thyself, forsooth, hereafter theirs, so far  
As thou hast power and person.

**Men.**

This bit done,  
Even as she speaks, why, their hearts were yours;  
For they have pardons, being ask'd as free  
As words to little purpose.

**Vol.**

Prithee now,  
Go, and be rul'd although I know thou had'st rather  
Follow thine enemy in a firey gulf  
Than flatter him in a bower.

A few lines later after these finely argued passages we hear Coriolanus speaking to his mother again:

**Cor.**

Pray be content.  
Mother, I am going to the market place:  
Chide me no more. I'll mountebank their loves,  
Cog their hearts from them, and come home below'd  
Of all the trades in Rome. Look, I am going.  
Commend me to my wife. I'll return consul,



Or never trust to what my tongue can do  
I'th'way of flattery further.

**Vol.**

Do your will.

**Com.**

Away! The tribunes do attend you: arm yourself  
To answer mildly; for they are prepar'd  
With accusations, as I hear, more strong  
Than are upon you yet.

**Cor.**

The word is 'mildly'. Pray you, let us go.  
Let them accuse me by invention: I  
Will answer in mine honour.

**Men.**

Ay, but mildly.

**Cor.**

Well, mildly be it then. Mildly.  
(*Exeunt*)

I suppose it was predicable that Coriolanus would be received by the plebeians with total rejection and insistence that he must be banished from Rome for ever. He was not allowed to speak, nor to give his point of view on any issue.

What follows is soon over when the plebeians all demand that Coriolanus is forced to leave Rome on the grounds that he is the people's enemy, and because the plebeians outnumber the nobles who in general support Coriolanus. His dismissal from all formal positions and from Rome is over in a few minutes.

This leaves us at the beginning of **Act IV Sc. I**, with the mother and wife of Coriolanus are obviously distressed at this terrible decision. The next **Scene II** finds us with a Roman and a Volscian in discussion. It is not long before Aufidius and Coriolanus meet after Aufidius has heard of the great upset in the army of Rome. Shortly after this Coriolanus and Aufidius have joined together with the Volscian army in preparation for attacking Rome. Then later after various turns in the story Aufidius encourages those Volscians who have suffered by losing their relatives in wars with Rome led by Coriolanus in the past are incited to attack Coriolanus and he is cut down by many swords.

Aufidius regrets this gross murder of Coriolanus and he arranges to give Coriolanus a noble memory and he is carried from the stage with the dead march sounded.

This is not one of Shakespeare's great plays and most of the text is not helped by great or even notable poetry or prose, with the exception of part of **Act III, Scene II** where Volumnia opens the criticism of the intemperate behaviour of her son Coriolanus. This debate and discussion between line 17 and line 145 is distinguished by its candour and perception of the need for change in the behaviour of Coriolanus.

## *Timon of Athens*

Timon of Athens is recognised in both the Encyclopedia Britannica 15<sup>th</sup> Edition 1992, and Columbia 5<sup>th</sup> Ed, 1993, as one of Shakespeare's tragic plays, despite the fact that no one is killed and no one is even physically wounded in the play.

This play was written in 1607 (the Editor H. J. Oliver of the 1959 Arden Shakespeare edition argues that it must have been written after 1604, and that it was never produced on stage in Shakespeare's lifetime), and it is obviously regarded as one of his late plays. H. J. Oliver has provided an exceptionally good account of this play, that was only printed in the first Folio and did not appear in any of the Quarto volumes. This editor's account for thinking that this play was written entirely by Shakespeare, is, like so many of this editor's suggestions, convincing and well argued. This editor points out that 'usury was in Elizabethan eyes a sin', and he reminds us that Apemantus closes the first act with the lines:

O that men's ears should be  
To council deaf, but not to flattery

In a way, from the beginning of the play, the excessively generous gifts of money, jewels and other treasures, as well as the great banquets given by Lord Timon for his many noble friends, and other neighbours, must have been recognised by his recipients as not being likely to continue at such a pace without Timon beginning to realise that he was probably emptying his coffers. It is well done in that it gives the impression that this excessive generosity of gifts by Timon will continue. The key actors are first Timon, who is presented in four modes:

(1) At the beginning of the play he seems to be a great host to the local grandees and some lesser folk. Then, he is made to realise by his Steward that his foolishly gross over spending on gifts, and too many grand banquets have left him bankrupt.

(2) That first part of the play is followed by anger and resentment by Timon for the meanness of his former guests and recipients of his generous gifts, being unwilling to lend him funds now that he is broke. The Steward of his financial affairs had done his best to warn Timon of the dangers of spending more than he could afford, is now being pestered by those who had lent monies to Timon, and now seek to be paid back for all these loans Timon had borrowed during his wild spending spree.

It is interesting to note that Shakespeare had a dislike of ingratitude that he shows so clearly in several of his plays, such as *King Lear*, that was written in 1605, which was 3 years before he wrote *Timon*. Furthermore, we can see from the scholarly accounts of Shakespeares life that he was very careful with the money he earned, and the way in which he so carefully invested his income in properties in Stratford and elsewhere during his life, from what he had earned from his playwriting and from his investment in building London theatres.

(3) The third mode of Timon is the most interesting. In his play, *Timon of Athens*, Shakespeare shows his character, Timon, raging at the ingratitude

shown to him by so many of the noble characters who were refusing him any financial help in his current difficulties, after all those generous gifts and great banquets he had foolishly given them. Furthermore Shakespeare seems to have carefully managed his working life as a playwright and poet who carefully invested his earned income on purchasing properties in London and Stratford, and in contributing to the building of theatres for the London stage. It was obvious that Shakespeare was not a wastrel himself in his own life, quite the contrary it seems. But in his play *Timon of Athens* Shakespeare showed us his character Timon, as a man who wasted his own money for which he was despised by his rich neighbours.

(4) There is a fourth mode where Timon leaves his great property and goes to live in a crude, small cave on the beach. After some time he dies in his beach cave. While Timon lives on the beach it is notable that he has been searching for gold in the sands of the beach in proximity of his cave, and he has been successful in finding quantities of small heavy particles of various size that are characteristic of pure gold, for we see their weight when he throws handfuls of them at people who visit him in his cave. Such gravel and sand size particles of pure gold in sandy beaches and along coasts are found in various parts of the world.

The other major characters in this play are Alcibiades an Athenian Captain, and Apemantus, who is the most interesting of the characters. From the start Apemantus realises the foolishness of Timon's extravagant waste of money, and Timon's flattery, something that Apemantus avoids. Furthermore, he will not judge people by their appearance, and in Timon's case this means that Apemantus is not unlike Jaques in the play *As You Like It*. It is notable that Apemantus closes Act 1 with these four lines with which he addresses Timon:

So. Thou wilt not hear me now; thou shalt not  
Then. I'll lock thy heaven from thee.  
O that men's eyes should be  
To counsel deaf, but not to flattery .

Timon's steward of his estate and affairs warn Timon of his unwise extravagance. The other characters are mainly the rich Athenian lords who have absorbed much of Timon's financial resources and enjoyed many of his grand banquets.

There is no doubt that Timon is by far the most important and leading actor in this play. It is essentially Timon's behaviour and that of his rich neighbours that provides most of the interest. The behaviour of the other actors constitute those who have exploited Timon and his weaknesses, and those few who have been sympathetic towards Timon in his difficulties. The whole play is made up of the interaction between these individuals and their behaviour. However, it is particularly notable that the death of Timon of Athens is not shown as an important event, it is hardly noticed.

The very free running text in *Timon of Athens* often lacks structure, even the iambic pentameter structure is not as strongly expressed as one might expect. Perhaps Shakespeare had become tired, or even exhausted, by the time he had written those 13

plays beginning with Henry V in 1598, Julius Caesar, As You Like It, Twelfth Night, Hamlet, Troilus & Cresida, Measure for Measure, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth, and Antony & Cleopatra in 1606, of which only the The Merry Wives of Windsor and Alls Well that Ends Well would be classed as not brilliant or masterful plays among these thirteen plays, all written within 8 years 1598-1606. The other 11 plays with their enormous variety of great poetry, great characters and story lines, beginning with Henry V in 1598, then:- Julius Caesar, Hamlet, Troilus & Cresida, Measure for Measure, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth, to Antony and Cleopatra 8 years later in 1606, amounts to an enormous creativity at that level, and at that pace of creation almost questions belief.

**A brief discussion of the changes in some of Shakespeare's plays written after 1606. We shall return to Timon.**

Immediately after this extraordinary flow of 11 plays of unquestionably creative genius, Shakespeare then produced the two less distinguished plays of Coriolanus and then Timon of Athens in 1607. It is hardly surprising that both lacked his great dramatic poetry. Then he suddenly switches to write a group of four fascinating plays, very different from any of his previous dramas. These four were written as a gradually evolving group within the four years of 1608-1611. They developed steadily from using first the supernatural magic story of Thaisa who died giving birth to Marina. Thaisa was then put in her coffin that was thrown into the sea in the wild storm raging round the boat. That coffin bearing the dead body of Thaisa was washed up onto the beach from where she was carried into the village where she was then magically brought back to life by the help of Diana, the Roman Goddess of women in child birth. Much later her father is also helped to recover from a severe illness by his daughter Marina assisted by the Goddess Diana..

Now we move to his second Romance play, Cymbeline, where there is help from the Roman God Jupiter. Here, towards the end of this play, there is one marvellous ending in **Act V Scene V** where all the unhappiness that has been shown to us during the first four Acts, is suddenly dealt with sympathetically. The bad mistakes and wrongs are put right by those who have perpetrated them. Those who had been separated find each other again, and perhaps, with just a wink in Will's eye, Shakespeare gives us what he had not ganted us for several plays that preceded this one, he gives us just three short but brilliant lines at a level of poetry we had come to expect from this great poet and playwright of drama. His great verse writing was something which we had not found in several plays. This renewal of dramatic verse is now shown us in these three short lines that shine out from this example in **Act V, Scene V** from one of the four Romance plays.

*Imogen finding her husband, Postumus, again, she asks of him:*

**Imogen.**

Why did you throw your wedded lady from you?  
Think that you are upon a rock, and now  
Throw me again.  
(*Embracing him*)

**Posthumus.**

Hang there like fruit, my soul,  
Till the tree die.

Now in the third Romance play of *The Winter's Tale* there are no magical events but there is a great line with helpful advice from Greece. This time from Apollo, the Greek God who passes judgement on the wickedness of King Leontes, who Apollo has said that Leontes' wife must be released from prison on his authority. She is returned to her family at the very end of the play. Finally, in the last of the four Romances, *The Tempest*, Alonso and Sebastian are punished and then forgiven by Prospero, and he with his young daughter, Miranda, are returned to their home in Milan, and all this without any of the classical Gods. These four plays are designed by Shakespeare to be the opening background for his last sole-author play in *King Henry VIII*. This is a great play where there are no magical deeds, no fairy tales and no supernatural events associated with any Judaic-Christian dogma. In fact, Shakespeare indicates that there is no need for any claims for any kind of after-life, nor for any after-life punishment for evils committed on Earth. This must have brought great comfort to many people who had been taught from Christian dogma to believe in this magical business that frightened so many of them during their lives.

So why are the two plays of *Coriolanus* and *Timon of Athens* so relatively weak by comparison with any of the great plays of Shakespeare? It is difficult to answer that question. But one can suggest that after those great eight plays, that have been listed above, it is unreasonable to expect that Will Shakespeare could possibly continue writing at the level of those eight plays that are brilliant in all respects, not just of dramatic storyline, but also at that extraordinary level of creative dramatic poetry.

In contrast, and yet in some ways similar, when Shakespeare began to work on his four Romance plays, *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winters Tale* and then *The Tempest* there seems to have been a weakening and lack of the mighty lines of superb dramatic poetry of diverse subjects by comparison with the preceeding great plays from *Henry V* in 1598 through to *Antony & Cleopatra* in 1606.

**Now we return to *Timon of Athens* after the discussion of some post-1606 plays.**

To a large extent *Timon of Athens* is a play not about money so much as about the behaviour of those who have money, those who have lost it, and those who want more of it. There is not much discussion of what one can do with money, nor of the sense of its value. Only the whores seem to recognise why they want it, and even then they are the only people in the play who seem to be willing to work for it. This simple summary as it is expressed here reveals how this theme of money runs everywhere in this play. For example, towards the end of the play after *Timon* has left Athens and we see him enter the woods where he soliloquises in **Act IV Scene III**.

**Tim.**

O blessed breeding son, draw from the earth  
Rotten humidity; below thy sister's orb  
Infect the air! Twinn'd brothers of one womb,  
Whose procreation, residence and birth  
Scarce is dividend---touch them with several fortunes,  
The greatest scorns the lesser. Not nature,

To whom all sores lay siege, can bear great fortune,  
But by contempt of nature.  
Raise me this beggar, and deny't that lord,  
The senators shall bear contempt hereditary,  
The beggar native honour.  
It is the pasture lards the brother's sides,  
The want that makes him lean. Who dares, who dares,  
In purity of manhood stand upright,  
And say this man's a flaterer? If one be,  
So are they all, for every guise of fortune  
Is smooth'd by that below: the learned pate  
Ducks to the golden fool; all's obliquy;  
There's nothing level in our cursed natures  
But direct villainy. Therefore be abhorr'd  
All feasts, societies, and throngs of men!  
His semblable, yea himself, Timon disdains.  
Destruction fang mankind! Earth, yield me roots.

*(Digging)*

Who seeks for better of thee, sauce his plate  
With the most operant poison. What is here?  
Gold? Yellow, glittering, precious gold?  
No gods, I am no idle votarist.  
Roots, you clear heavens! Thus much of this will make  
Black, white; foul, fait; wrong, right;  
Base, noble; old, young; coward, valiant.  
Ha, you gods! Why this? What this? you gods? Why, this  
Will lug your priests and servants from your sides,  
Pluck stout men's pillows from below their heads.  
This yellow slave  
Will knit and break religions, bless th'accurs'd,  
Make the joar leprosy ador'd, place thieves,  
And give them title, knee and approbation  
With senators on the bench. This is it  
That makes the wappen'd widow wed again:  
She whom the spital-house and ulcerous sores  
Would cast the gorge at, this embalms and spices  
To th'April day again. Come, damn'd earth,  
Thou common whore of mankind, that puts ods  
Among the rout of nations, I will make thee  
Do thy nature.

*(March far off)*

Ha? A drum? Th'art quick,  
But yet I'll bury thee. Thou'lt go, strong thief,  
When gouty keepers of thee cannot stand.  
Nay, stay thou our for earnest.

*(Keeping some gold)*

**Act IV Scene III line 48**, enter Alcibiades with drum and fife, in warlike manner ;and Phrynia and Timandra.

**Alcib.**

What are thou there? Speak.

**Tim.**

A beast as thou art. The canker gnaw thy  
Heart,  
For showing me again the eyes of man!

**Alcib.**

What is they name? Is man so hateful to thee  
That art thyself a man?

**Tim.**

I am *Misanthropos*, and hate mankind.  
For thy part, I do wish thou wert a dog,  
That I might love thee something.

**Alcib.**

I know thee well;  
But in thy fortunes am unlearn'd and strange.

**Tim.**

I know thee too, and more than that I know thee  
I not desire to know. Follow thy drum;  
With man's blood paint the ground, gules, gules.  
Religious canons, civil laws are cruel;  
Then what should war be? This fell whore of thine  
For all her cherubin look.

**Phry.**

Thy lips rot off!

**Tim.**

I will not kiss thee; then the rot returns  
To thine own lips again.

**Alcib.**

How came the noble Timon to this change?

**Tim.**

As the moon does, by wanting light to give.  
But then renew I could not like the moon;  
There were no suns to borrow of.

**Alcib.**

Noble Timon, what friendships may I do thee?

**Tim.**

None, but to maintain my opinion.

**Alcib.**

What is it, Timon?

**Tim.**

Promise me friendship, but perform none. If thou  
Wilt not promise, the gods plague thee, for thou art  
a man! If thou dost perform, confound thee, for  
thou art a man!

**Alcib.**

I have heard in some sort of thy miseries.

**Tim.**

Thou saw'st them when I had property.

**Alcib .**

I see them now; held with a brace of harlots.

**Timan.**

Is this the Athenian minion whom the world  
Voic'd so regardfully?

**Tim.**

Art thou Timandra?

**Timan.**

Yes.

**Tim.**

Be a whore still. They love thee not that use thee.  
Give them diseases, leaving with thee their lust.  
Make use of thy salt hours; season the slaves  
For tubs and baths; bring down rose-cheek'd youth  
To the tub-fast and the diet.

**Timan.**

Hang thee, monster!

**Alcib.**

Pardon him, sweet Timandra, for his wits  
Are drowned and lost in his calamities.  
I have but little gold of late, brave Timon,  
The want were of doth daily make revolt  
In my penurious band. I have heard and griev'd

How cursed Athens, mindless of thy worth,  
Forgetting thy great deeds, when neighbour states,  
But for the sword and fortune, trod upon them---



**Tim.**  
I prithee beat thy drum, and get thee gone.

**Alcib.**  
I am thy friend, and pity thee, dear Timon.

**Tim.**  
How dost thou pity him whom thou dost trouble?  
I had rather be alone.

**Alcib.**  
Why, fare thee well:  
Here is some gold for thee.

**Tim.**  
Keep it, I cannot eat it.

**Alcib.**  
When I have laid proud Athens on a heap---

**Tim.**  
Warrst thou gainst Athens?

**Alcib.**  
Ay, Timon, and have cause.

**Tim.**  
The gods confound them all in thy conquest,  
And thee after, when thou has conquer'd!

**Alcib.**  
Why me, Timon?

**Tim.**  
That by killing of villains  
Thou wast born to conquer my country,  
Put up thy gold. Go on. Here's gold. Go on.  
Be as a planet plague, when Jove  
Will o'er some high-vic'd city hand his poison  
In the sick air. Let not thy sword skip one,  
Pity not honour'd age for his whire beard:  
He is an usurer. Strike me the counterfeit matron:  
It is her habit only that is honest,  
Herself's a bawd. Let not the virgin's cheek  
Make soft the trenchant sword: for those milk-paps,  
That through the window-bars bore at men's eyes,  
Are not within the leaf of pity writ,  
But set them down horrible traitors. Spare not the babe  
Whose dimpled smiles from fools exhaust their mercy:  
Think it a bastard, whom the oracle

Hath doubtfully pronounc'd the throat shall cut,  
And mince it sans remorse. Swear against objects.  
Put armour on thine ears and on thine eyes  
Whose proof nor yells of mothers, maids, nor babes,  
Nor sight of priests in hold vestements bleeding  
Shall pierce a jot. There's gold to pay thy soldiers.  
Make large confusion ; and, thy fury spent  
Confounded be thyself! Speak not, be gone.

**Alcib.**

Hast thou gold yet? I'll take the gold thou givest me,  
Not all thy counsel.

**Tim.**

Enough to make a whore forswear her trade,  
And to make whores a bawd. Hold up, you sluts,  
Your aprons mountant. You are not othable,  
Although I know you will swear, terribly swear  
Into strong shoulders and to heavenly agues  
Th' immortal gods that hear you. Spare your oaths:  
I'll trust in your conditions. Be whores still ;  
And he whose pious greath seeks to convert you,  
Be strong in whore, allure him, burn him up ;  
Let your close fire predominate his smoke,  
And be no turncoats: yet may your pains, six months,  
Be quite contrary. And thatch  
Your poor tin roofs with burdens of the dead--  
Some that were hang'd may mire upon your face:  
A pox of wrinkles!

**Phry., Timan.**

Well more gold. What then?  
Believe't that we'll do anything for gold.

**Tim.**

Consumptions sow  
In hollow bone of man ; strik'e their sharp shins,  
And mar men's spuring. Crack the lawer's voice,  
That he may never more false title plead,  
Nor sound his quilllets shrilly. Hoar the flamen,  
That scolds against the quality of flesh,  
And not believes himself. Down with the nose,  
Down with it flat, take the bridge quite away  
Of him that, his particular to foresee,  
Smells from the general weal. Make curl'd-pate ruffians  
Bald,  
And let the unscarr'd braggarts of the war  
Derive some pain from you. Plague all,  
That your activity may defeat and quell  
The source of all erection. There's more gold.

Do you damn others, and let this damn you,  
And ditches grave you all!

**Phry., Timan.**

More council with more money, bounteous  
Timon.

**Tim.**

More whore, more mischief first ; I have given you  
ernest.

**Alcib.**

Strike up the drum towards Athens! Farewell, Timon:  
If I thrive well, I'll visit thee again.

**Tim .**

If I hope well, I'll never see thee more.

**Alcib.**

I never did thee harm..

**Tim.**

Yes, thou spok's well of me .

**Alcib.**

Call'st thou that harm?

**Tim.**

Men daily find it. Get thee away, and take  
Thy beagles with thee.

**Alcib.**

We but offend him. Strike!

*Drum beats, Exuent Alcibiades, and his two whores, Phrynia and Timandra*

**Tim.**

That nature, being sick of man's unkindness,  
Should yet be hungry! Common mother, thou  
Whose womb unmeasurable and infinite breast  
Teems and feeds all; whose self-same mettle,  
Whereof thy proud child, arrogant man, is puff'd,  
Engenders the black toad and adder blue  
The guided newt and eyeless venom'd worm,  
With all the abhorred births below crisp heaven  
Whereon Hyperion's quickening fire doth shine:  
Yield him, who all the human sons do hate,  
From forth thy plentousd bosom, one poor root.  
Ensear thy firtile and conceptious womb ;  
Let no more bring out ingrateful man.

.....

**Apem.**  
Thou hast cast away thyself, being like thyself  
A madman so long, now a fool  
.....

**Tim.**  
What wouldst thou do with the world,  
Apemantus, if it lay in thy power?

**Apem.**  
Give it the beasts, to be rid of the men.

**Tim.**  
Wouldst thou have thyself fall in the confusion of  
Men, and remain a beast with the beasts?

**Apem.**  
Ay, Timon.

**Tim.**  
A beastly ambition, which the gods grant thee  
‘attain to. ....  
.....

**Poet.**  
Having often of your open bounty tasted,  
Hearing you were retir’d, your friends fall’n off,  
Whose thankless natures (O abhorred spirits!)  
Not all the whips of heaven are large enough----  
What to you,  
Whose star-like nobelness gave life and influence  
To their whole being! I am rapt, and cannot cover  
The monstrous bulk of this ingratitude  
With any size of words.

**Painter.**  
He and myself  
Have travail’d in the great show’r of your gifts,  
And sweetly felt it.

**Tim.**  
Ay, you are honest men.

**Painter.**  
We are hither come to offer you our service.

**Tim.**  
Most honest men! Why, how shall I requite you?

Can you eat roots and drink cold water, no?  
.....

Come not to me again; but say to Athens,  
Timon hath made his everlasting mansion  
Upon the beached verge of the saly flood  
Who once a day with his embossed froth  
The turbulent surge shall cover.  
.....

**Soldier.**

By all description this should be the place.  
Who's here? Speak, ho! No answer? What is this?  
Timon is dead, who hath outstretch'd his span:  
Some beast read this ; there does not live a man.

What this play *Timon of Athens* has given us is a sympathetic account of man with a weakness for wanting to be liked by his noble lords and men of the arts. He succumbs to the temptation of giving grossly over generous gifts and entertainments that eventually cost him all his funds. He has so foolishly spent all his fortune and his rich neighbours will not lend him the money to help him pay any of his debts. As a consequence he lives a wild and deeply impoverished life in a small cave next to the beach, there he discovers gold detritus that must have been flushed into the beach sands from the rivers. Timon in his exchanges with Alcibides and his two whores had lost all interest in money just as he seems to have little interest in other people, in terms of mutual friendship, and more seriously he had little interest in what he is doing on this earth. It is in that frame of mind that he dies in his cave behind the beach. Yet looking back, Timon had an enormous enjoyment of his fellow men and women in the first part of this play, where he could make many people happy by his generosity and by his genuine interest in what they were doing. So the second cause of Timon's great failure to enjoy life was that he failed to understand how the world works. He eventually realised that, in his judgements, not just concerning money, but in most other ways, he had failed. This play is classified as a tragedy, where nobody is killed, nor even deliberately wounded.

### *Titus Andronicus*

This is a very early play, dated 1593, that is set in Rome. There are three Quarto editions of this play before the 1st Folio. The text of the 1<sup>st</sup> Folio was set up from the copy of Q3.

The decision was taken by the writer of this book to have this play at the end of the 10 Tragedies, because in some ways it displays aspects of several of the Tragedies, and because it is the most Roman play of all Shakespeare's Roman plays.

The play is well known for its exceptional, one might almost write 'notorious' violent and brutal scenes, especially the mutilation of Lavinia, the daughter of Titus

Andronicus. It opens with the Tribunes and Senators, before Saturninus, son to the late Emperor of Rome, who was later to be Emperor.

Saturninus, the first born son of the recently deceased Emperor is asking for the support of the Romans in the following words:

**Sat.**

Noble patricians, patrons of my right,  
Defend the justice of my cause with arms;  
And, countrymen, my loving followers,  
Plead my successive title with your swords;  
I am his first-born son that was the last  
That wore the imperial diadem of Rome;  
Then let my father's honours live in me,  
Nor wrong mine age with this indignity.

.....

The opening of this play represents ten years of struggle by the Romans to remove the Goths who wish to replace the Romans from their part of Italy.

**Sat.**

Friends, that have been thus forward in my right,  
I thank you all and here dismiss you all,  
And to the love and favour of my country  
Commit myself, my person, and the cause.

*Exeunt the followers of Saturninus*

Rome, be as just and gracious unto me  
As I am confident and kind to thee  
Open the gates and let me in.

**Bass.**

Tribunes, and me, a poor competitor

*They go up the Senate-house. Enter a Captain:*

**Cap.**

Romans, make way, the good Andronicus,  
Patron of virtue, Rome's best champion,  
Successful in the battles that he fights,  
With honour and with fortune is return'd  
From where he circumscribed with his sword,  
And brought to yoke, the enemies of Rome.

Sound drums and trumpets, and then enter two of Titus' sons, and then two Men bearing a coffin covered with black; then two other sons; then Titus Andronicus; and then Tamora, the Queen of the Goths, and her sons, Alarbus, Chiron, and Demetrius,

with Aaron the Moor, and others as many as can be; then set down the coffin, and Titus speaks:

**Tit.**

Hail, Rome, victorious in thy mourning weeds!  
Lo, as the bark that hast discharg'd his fraught  
Returns with precious lading to the bay  
From whence at first she weigh'd her anchorage,  
Cometh Andronicus, bound with laurel boughs,  
To re-salute his country with his tears,  
Tears of true joy for his return to Rome.

.....

*They open the tomb.*

There greet in silence, as the dead are wont,  
And sleep in peace, slain in your country's wars.

.....

**Tam.**

Stay, Roman brethren! Gracious conqueror,  
Victorious Titus, rue the tears I shed,  
A mother's tears in passion for her son:  
And if thy sons were ever dear to thee,  
O, think my son to be as dear to me.

.....

Andronicus, stain not thy tomb with blood:  
Wilt now draw near the nature of the gogs?  
Draw near them then in bearing merciful;  
Sweet mercy is nobilities true badge:  
Thrice-noble Titus, spare my first-born son.

**Act I, Scene I Line 271....**

**Sat.**

Thanks, sweet Lavinia. Romans let us go:  
Ransomless here we set our prisoners free.  
Proclaim our honours, lords, with trump and drum.

**Bass.**

Lord Titus, by your leave, this maid is mine.

**Tit.**

How, sir! Are you in earnest then, my lord?

**Bass.**

Ah, noble Titus; and resolv'd withal  
To do myself this reason and this right..

**Marc.**

*Suum cuique* is our Roman justice:  
This prince in justice seizeth but his own.

**Luc.**  
And that he will, and shall, if Lucius live.

**Tit.**  
Traitors avaunt! Where is the emperor's guard?  
Treason, my lord! Lavinia is surpris'd.

**Sat.**  
Surpris'd by whom?

**Bass.**  
By him that justly may  
Bear his betroth'd from all the world away.  
(*Exeunt Marcus and Bassianus, with Lavinia*)

**Mut.**  
Brothers, help to convey her hence away,  
And with my sword I'll keep this door safe.  
(*Exeunt Lucius, Quintus, and Martius.*)

**Tit.**  
Follow, my lord, and I'll soon bring her back.

**Mut.**  
My lord, you pass not here.

**Tit.**  
What villain boy,  
Barr'st me my way in Rome?

*He kills him. During the fray, exeunt Saturninus, Tamora, Demetrius, Chiron and Aeron.*

**Mut.**  
Help, Lucius, help!

*Re-enter Lucius*

**Luc.**  
My lord, you are unjust, and, more than so,  
In wrongful quarrel you have slain your son.

**Tit.**  
Nor thou, nor he, are any sons of mine;  
My sons would never so dishonour me.  
Traitor, restore Lavinia to the emperor.



**Luc.**

Dead, if you will; but not to be his wife,  
That is another's lawful-promis'd love.  
(*Exit*)

*Enter aloft the Emperor with the Goth Tamora and her two sons and Aaron the Moor*

**Sat.**

No, Titus, *no*; the emperor needs her not,  
Nor her, nor thee, nor any of thy stock:  
I'll trust by leisure him that mocks me once;  
Thee never, nor thy traitorous haughtier sons,  
Confederates all thus to dishonour me.  
Was none in Rome to make a stale  
But Saturnine? Full well, Andronicus,  
Agree these deeds with that proud brag of thine  
That said'st I begged the empire at thy hands.

**Tit.**

O monstrous! What reproachful words are these?

**Sat.**

But go thy ways; go, give that changing piece  
To him that flourish'd for her with his sword.  
A valiant son-in-law thy shall enjoy;  
One fit to bandy with thy lawless sons  
To ruffle in the commonwealth of Rome.

**Tit.**

These words are razors to my wounded heart

**Sat**

And therefore, lovely Tamora, Queen of Goths,  
That like the stately Phoeby 'mongst her nymphs  
Dost overshadow the gallan'st dames of Rome,  
If thou be pleas'd with this my sudden choice,  
Behold, I choose thee, Tamora, for my bride,  
And will create thee Empress of Rome,  
Speak, Queen of Goths, dost thou applaud my  
Choice ?

.....

**Tam.**

And here in sight of heaven to Rome I swear,  
If Saturnine advance the Queen of Goths,  
She will a handmaid be to his desires,  
A loving nurse, a mother to his youth.

**Sat.**

Ascend, fair queen, Pantheon. Lords, accompany

Your noble emperor, and his lovely bride.  
Sent by the heavens for Prince Saturnine,  
Whose wisdom hath her fortune conquered.  
There shall we consummate our spousal rites.  
(*Exeunt all but Titus*)

**Tit.**

I am not bid to wait upon this bride.  
Titus, when wert thou wont to walk alone,  
Dishonoured thus, and challenged of wrongs?

*Re-enter Marcus, Lucius, Quintus, and Martius :*

**Marc.**

O Titus, see, O see what thou hast done,  
In a bad quarrel slain a virtuous son.

**Tit.**

No foolish tribune, no; no son of mine  
Nor thou, nor these, confederates in the deed  
That hath dishonoured all our family:  
Unworthy brother, and unworthy sons!

**Luc.**

But let us give him burial, as becomes;  
Give Mutius burial with our brethren.

**Tit.**

Traitors, away! he rests not in this tomb:  
This monument five hundred years hath stood,  
Which I have sumptuously re-edified:  
Here none but soldiers and Rome's servitors  
Repose in fame; none basely slain in brawls.  
Bury him where you can, he comes not here.

**Marc.**

My lord, this is impiety in you.  
My nephew Mutius' deeds do plead for him;  
He must be buried with his brethren.

**Tit.**

"Shall "!" What villain was it spake that  
word?

**Marc.**

No, noble Titus, but entreat of thee  
To pardon Mutius and to bury him.

**Tit.**

Marcus, even thou hast stroke upon my crest,

And with these boys mine honour thou has  
wounded:  
My foes I do repute you every one;  
So trouble me no more, but get you gone.

**Quint.**

He is not with himself; let us withdraw.

**Mart.**

Not I, till Mutius' bones be buried.

*The brother and the sons kneel.*

**Marc.**

Suffer thy brother Marcus to inter  
His noble nephew here in virtue's nest,  
That died in honour and Lavinia's cause.  
Thou art a Roman; be not barbarous:  
The Greeks upon advice did bury Ajax  
That slew himself; and wise Laertes' son  
Did graciously plead for his funerals.  
Let not young Mutius then, that was thy joy,  
Be barr'd his entrance here.

**Tit.**

Rise, Marcus, rise;  
The dismall'st day is this that e'er I saw,  
To be dishonoured by my sons in Rome!  
Well, bury him, and bury me the next.

*They put him in the tomb.*

**Luc.**

There lie thy bones, sweet Mutius, with thy friends,  
Till we with trophies do adorn thy tomb.

**All.** (*Kneeling*)

No man shed tears for noble Mutius;  
He lives in fame that died in virtue's cause.

**Marc**

My lord, to step out of these dreary dumps,  
How comes it that the subtle Queen of Goths  
Is of a sudden thus advanc'd in Rome?

**Tit.**

I know not, Marcus, but I know it is:  
Whether by device or no, the heavens can tell.  
Is she not then beholding to the man  
That brought her for this high good turn so far?

Yes, and will nobly him remunerate.

*Enter the Emperor, Tamora and her two sons with the Moor, at one door. Enter at the other door Bassianus and Lavinia with others.*

**Sat.**

So, Bassianus, you have play'd you prize:  
God give you joy, sir, of your gallant bride.

**Bass.**

And you and your, my lord ; I say no more,  
Nor wish no less; and so I take my leave.

**Sat.**

Traitor, if Rome have law or we have power,  
Thou and thy fraction shall repent this rape.

**Bass.**

Rape call you it, my lord, to seize my own,  
My true-betrothed love, and now my wife?  
But let the laws of Rome determine all;  
Meanwhile am I possess'd of that is mine.

**Sat.**

'Tis good, sit: you are very short with us;  
But, if we live, we'll be as sharp with you.

**Bass.**

My lord, what I have done, as best I may,  
Answer I must, and shall do so with my life.

.....

**Sat.**

Rise, Titus, rise; my empress hath prevail'd.

**Tit.**

I thank your majesty, and her, my lord.  
These words, these looks, infuse new life in me.

**Tam.**

Titus, I am incorporate in Rome,  
A Roman now adopted happily,  
And must advise the emperor for his good.  
This day all quarrels die, Andronicus;  
And let it be mine honour, good my lord,  
That I have reconcil'd your friends and you.  
For you, Prince Bassianus, I have pass'd  
My word and promise to the emperor  
That you will be more mild and tractable.  
By my advice, all humbled on your knees,

You shall ask pardon of his majesty.

**Luc.**

We do, and vow to heaven and to his highness,  
That what we did was mildly as we might,  
Tend'ring our sister's honour and our own.

**Marc.**

That on mine honour here I do protest.

**Sat.**

Away, and talk not; trouble us no more.

**Tam.**

Nay, nay, sweet emperor, we must all be friends:  
The tribune and his nephews kneel for grace;  
I will not be denied: sweet heart, look back.

**Sat.**

Marcus, for thy sake, and thy brother's here,  
And at my lovely Tamora's entreats,  
I do remit these young men's heinous faults:  
Stand up.  
Lavinia, though you left me like a churl,  
I found a friend, and sure as death I swore  
I would not part a bachelor from the priest.  
Come, if the emperor's court can feast two brides,  
You are my guest, Lavinia, and your friends.  
This day shall be a love-day, Tamora.

**Tit.**

To-morrow, and it please your majesty  
To hunt the panther and the hart with me,  
With horn and hound we'll give your grace bonjour.

**Sat.**

Be it so, Titus, and gramercy too.

*Sound trumpets . Exeunt all but Aaron.*

**Act II**, with its first three Scenes sets out the desperate determination of the Goths led by Aaron and Tamora with their sons to destroy some of the key youthful soldiery of the Romans. Something of the ruthless attitudes of the Goths is shown to us by Demetrius, son of Temora in these nine lines 81-90 of Act II Scene and what follows:

**Dem.**

Why makes it so strange?  
She is a woman, therefore to be woo'd;  
She is a woman, therefore to be won;  
She is Lavinia, therefore must be lov'd

What, man more water glideth by the mill  
Than wots the miller of; and easy it is  
Of a cut loaf to steal a shive, we know:  
Though Bassianus be the emperor's brother,  
Better than have won Vulcan's badge.

**Aar.** (*Aside*)

Ay, and as good as Vulcan's badge.

**Dem.**

Then why should he despair that knows to court it  
With words, fait looks, and liberality?  
What, hast now not full often stroke a doe  
And borne her cleanly by the keeper's nose?

**Aar.**

Why, then, it seems some certain snatch or so  
Would serve your turns.

**Chi.**

Ay, so the turn were served.

**Dem.**

Aaron, thou hast hit it.

**Aar**

Would you had hit it too!  
Then we should not be tir'd with this ado.

**Aar.**

.....  
Take this of me: Lucrece was not more chaste  
Than this Lavinia, Bassianus's love.  
A speedier course than ling'ring languishment  
Must we pursue, and I have found the path.

.....  
The emperor's court is like the house of Fame,  
The palace full of tongues, of eyes and ears:  
The woods are ruthless, dreadful, deaf, and dull:  
There speak, and strike, brave boys, and take yout  
turns;  
There serve your lust, shadowed from heaven's eye,  
And revel in Lavinia's treasury.

**Chi.**

Thy counsel, lad smells of no cowardice.

**Dem.**

*Sit fas aut nefas*, till I find a stream  
To cool this heat, a charm to calm these fits,

*Per Stygia, per manes vehor.*  
(*Exeunt*)

**Act II Scene III Line 30**, following a speech by Tamora addressed to Aar:

**Aar.**

Madam, though Venus govern your desires,  
Saturn is dominator over mine:  
What signifies my deadly-standing eye,  
My silence and my cloudy melancholy,  
My fleece of woolly hair that now uncurls  
Even as an adder when she doth unroll  
To do sole fatal execution?  
No, madam, these are no veneral signs:  
Blood and revenge are hammering in my head.  
Hark, Tamaora, the emperor of my soul,  
Which never hopes more heaven than rests in thee,  
Thy sons make pillage of her chastity,  
And wash their hands in Baddianus' blood.  
Seeist now this letter? take it up, I pray thee,  
And give the king this fatal -plotted scroll.  
Now question me no more; we are espied;  
Here comes a parcel of our hopeful booty,  
Which dreads not yet their lives' destruction.

It is not long in this play now before the speech of Tamora, the Queen of the Goths, who has observed Chiron, Demetrius, and two young dangerous Goths with the Roman Lavinia, the young and comely daughter of Titus Andronicus. Lavinia will be first brutally raped by Goths, who then cut her tongue and then chop off both her hands, before setting her free to wander in search of Roman soldiers. They will conduct her to the Romans who can protect what is left of her.

It is not long in this violent brutality when Bassianus, brother of the Roman Emperor, Saturninus, is found murdered. The problem is that the general belief in the Roman community, cultivated by the Goths, is that it was opportunistic Romans who mutilated Lavinia and who murdered Bassianus. This scheme planned by Aaron, whose key role in the play is really based on his deeply personal relationship with Tamora, the queen of the Goths, and Aaron, a Moor with whom Tamora is in love. It is this close grouping that makes possible the whole pretence of the killing of Bassianus by Romans and of the rape and mutilation of Lavinia by Romans, a pretence dreamed up and planned by Aaron and helped by Tamora who ensures that her two sons Demitrius and Chiron execute Bassianus, and then first rape Lavinia before mutilating her. Tamora then goes to find Aaron, with whom she is in love.

A particular feature of this play is the fact that the text, while maintaining good Shakespearean qualities of language, and the dramatic poetry, that one expects and finds in Shakespeare achievements, it never quite reaches the better poetry that is found in some of the early History plays of Shakespeare. This play has some good poetry that maintains a higher level, but there are no great lines, nor great speeches such as one

finds in some of Shakespeare's early history and tragic plays. Thus we cannot find any great passages or lines as in the plays, for example, Antony & Cleopatra, Lear, Macbeth, Hamlet, Julius Caesar, or Measure for Measure. This play of Titus Andronicus is very much an early play of Shakespeare's, but its structural complexities and the literary qualities are nevertheless remarkable for such an early play. A particularity is the language of the detailing of the violence and cruelty through almost the whole play. However, there are no loveable or even very likeable characters, and no happy scenes; there is an absence of joy and of laughter anywhere in the play. The only major character that is likeable is Titus Andronicus but he too is involved in the bloodshed, so there is no room for him to be happy or amusing in any way. Lavinia has had so much intense suffering and misery that she is perhaps closest to Ophelia in her mental suffering, but Ophelia never suffers anything like the physical brutality visited on Lavinia.

It is the cruelty and brutality arranged by Tamora, quite as much as the brutality carried out by many of the men characters, and the level of the suffering by the woman, Lavinia, that more than anything, is probably responsible for the lack of popularity reached by the play. One can only speculate why Shakespeare did not provide some balance by reducing the degree and quantity of brutality and misery, and did not include some softening femininity by women characters, or including some humour by a Fool who could have lightened the play perhaps. It seems possible that maybe Shakespeare was experimenting, to see just how a play of this kind would work on an audience on a London stage. In the absence of any observations and personal letters written to or by Will Shakespeare on such topics we shall probably never know what he intended by the extreme brutality in this play.

Now we see Demetrius and Chiron, sons of Tamora, Queen of the Goths, stab Bassianus to death and after that Tamora encourages her two sons to rape Lavinia and then mutilate her. Tamora leaves her two sons with this brief instruction before she leaves the scene to find Aaron:

**Tam.**

Farewell, my sons: see that you make her sure.  
Ne'er let my heart know merry cheer indeed  
Till all the Andronici be made away.  
Now will I hence to seek my lovely Moor  
And let my spleenful some this trull deflower.  
(*Exit*)

These instructions begin the second part of this play which now becomes the carrying out of the plans by Aaron supported by Tamora and others which is their avowed intent to destroy the Roman family of Andronici. This plan has the double intent and success in dividing the Roman community led by the Andronici.

#### Act IV Scene I

**Tam.**

Now will I to that old Antonius,  
And tempt him with all the art I have,  
To pluck proud Lucius from warlike Goths.



And now sweet emperor, be blithe again,  
And bury all thy fear in my devices.

**Sat.**

Then go incessantly, and plead to him.  
(*Exeunt*)

**Act V Scene I, enter Lucius with an army of Goths, with drums and soldiers:**

**Luc.**

Approved warriors and my faithful friends,  
I have received letters from great Rome  
Which signifies what hate they bear their emperor  
And how desirous of our sight they are.  
Therefore great lords, be, as your titles witness,  
Imperious and impatient of your wrongs;  
And wherein Rome hath done you any scath,  
Let him make treble satisfaction.

**First Goth.**

Brave slip, sprung from the great Andronicus,  
Whose name was once our terror, now our comfort,  
Whose high exploits and honourable deeds  
Ingrateful Rome requites with foul contempt,  
Be bold in us: we'll follow where thou lead'st  
Like stinging bees on hottest summer's day  
Led by their master to the flow'ring fields,  
And be aveng'd on cursed Tamora.

This is an important act in that it discloses that Aaron, who is a man of black skin, whose has evil desires against the ruling Andronici family and other Goths. He has sired a black child who is Tamora's baby. So much evil scheming against Goths and Romans by Aaron and by Tamora together, is now about to be reversed.

**Second Goth**

Renowned Lucius, from our troops I stray'd  
To gaze upon a ruinous monastery;  
And as I earnestly did fix mine eye  
Upon the wasted building, suddenly  
I hears a child cry underneath a wall.  
The crying babe controll'd with this discourse:  
Did not thy hue bewray whose brat thou art,  
Villain, thou might'st have been an emperor:  
But where the bull and cow are both milk-white,  
They never do beget a coal-black calf.  
Peace, villain, peace!" even thus he rates the babe,  
"For I must bear thee to a trusty Goth,  
Who, when he knows thou art . the emperess' babe,  
Will hold thee dearly for thy mother's sake."  
With this my weapon drawn, I rush'd upon him,

Surpris'd him suddenly, and brought him hither  
To use as you think needful of the man.

**Luc.**

O worthy Goth, this is the incarnate devil  
That robb'd Andronicus of his good hand:  
This is the pearl that pleas'd your empress 'eye,  
And here's the base fruit of her burning lust.  
Say, wall-ey'd slave, wither would'st thou convey  
This growing image of thy fiend-like face?  
Why dost not speak? What, deaf? Not a word?  
A halter, soldiers, hang him on this tree,  
And by his side his fruit of bastardy.

**Aar**

Touch not the boy, he is of royal blood.

**Luc**

Too like the sire for ever being good.  
First hang the child, that he may see it sprawl---  
A sight to vex the father's soul withal.  
Get me a ladder.  
*(A ladder is brought, which Aaron is made to ascend)*

**Aar.**

Lucius, save the child ;  
And bear it from me to the empress .  
If thou do this, I'll show you three wondrous things  
That highly may advantage thee to hear:  
If thou wilt not, befall what may befall,  
I'll speak no more but "Vengeance rot you all!"  
.....

**First Goth.**

What, canst thou say all this, and never  
blush?

**Aar.**

Ay, like a black dog, as the saying is.

**Luc.**

Art thou not sorry for these heinous deeds?

**Aar.**

Ay, that I had not done a thousand more.  
.....

**Luc.**

Bring down the devil for he must not die  
So sweet a death as hanging presently.

**Aar.**

If there be devils, would I were a devil,  
To live and burn in everlasting fire,  
So I might have your company in hell,  
But to torment you with my bitter tongue!

**Luc.**

Sirs, stop his mouth, and let him speak no more

**Act V, Scene II, enter Tamora, and her two sons disguised:**

**Tam.**

Thus, in this strange and sad habiliment,  
I will encounter with Andronicus,  
And say I am Revenge, sent from below  
To join with him and right his heinous wrongs;  
Knock at his study, where they say he keeps,  
To ruminat strange plots of dire revenge;  
Tell him revenge is come to join him  
And work confusion on his enemies.

*They knock and Titus opens his study door.*

**Tit.**

Who does molest my contemplation?  
Is it your trick to make me ope the door,  
That my so sad my decrees may fly away  
And all my study be to no effect?  
You are deceiv'd; for what I mean to do?  
So here in bloody lines I have set down;  
And what is written shall be executed.

**Tam.**

Titus, I am come to talk with thee.

**Tit.**

No, not a word; how can I grace my talk,  
Wanting a hand to give it action?  
Thou hast the odds of me; therefore no more.

**Tam.**

If thou didst know me, thou would'st talk with me.

**Tit.**

I am not mad; I know thee well enough:  
Witness this wretched stump, witness these crimson  
lines;  
Witness these trenches made by grief and care;  
Witness the tiring day and heavy night;

Witness all sorrow that I know thee well  
For our proud empress, mighty Tamora.  
Is not thy coming for my other hand?

**Tam.**  
Know thou, sad man, I am not Tamora;  
.....

**Tit.**  
Art thou revenge? and art thou sent to me  
To be torment to mine enemies?

**Tam.**  
I am; therefore come down and welcome me.

**Tit.**  
Do me some service ere I come to thee.  
Lo, to the side where Rape and Murder stands;  
Now give some surance that thou art Revenge:  
Stab them, or tear them on thy chariot-wheels,  
And then I'll come and be thy waggoner,  
And worl along with three about the globe.  
Provide two proper palfreys, black as jet,  
To hale thy vengeful wagon swift away,  
And find out murderers in their guilty caves:  
And when thy car is loaden with their heads,  
I will dismount, and by thy wagon-wheel  
Trot like a servile footman all day long,  
Even from Hyperion's rising in the east  
Until his very downfall in the sea  
And day by day I'll do this heavy task  
So thou destroy Rapine and Murder there.

**Tam.**  
These are my ministers, and come with me.

**Tit.**  
Are they thy ministers? what are they called?

**Tam.**  
Rape and Murder ; therefore called so  
'Cause they take vengeance of such kind of men  
Have miserable, mad, mistaking eyes.  
O sweet Revenge, now do I come to thee;  
And if one's arm's embracement will content thee,  
I will embrace thee in it by and by.  
(*Exit*)

Now the play begins to move towards its close. In **Act V Scene III** the two wicked sons, of Tamora, Demetrius and Chiron, now have their throats cut by Titus

Andronicus. Shortly after this he has the bodies of these two sons of Tamora cooked and prepared to be eaten at a grand feast that Titus has arranged.

Trumpets sounding, enter Titus, like a cook placing the dishes with him Lavinia with a veil over her face. The invited guests are Tamora, mother of the two sons Demetrius and Chiron, and with the Emperor Saturninus and his Empress have also been invited.

The great meal consists of the bodies of two sons of Tamora.

Then Titus stabs his daughter Lavinia, then holds her dying body deeply in his sorrowing arms. He explains that he killed her so that she does not die of the shame that she was raped by the two sons of Tamora, and had both her hands cut off by these villainous two men

Next Titus stabs the Empress Tamora who encouraged her two sons to rape and then to mutilate, Lavinia. Then the Emperor Saturninus stabs and kills Titus, and in revenge of this Lucius kills the Emperor Saturninus.

Following this bloody but understandable violence there is a great discussion when Lucius Andronicus, the son of Titus, is chosen to be the Governor of Rome, a decision which is strongly supported by Marcus Andronicus, a younger son of Titus. With this decision made the play closes.



## *Chapter 17*

### *Greek & Roman Play*

#### *Troilus & Cressida*

This play is set in Greece and Troy, but most of the action takes place in Troy. The play was written in 1601-1602. It was one of the great plays that Shakespeare wrote between 1598 with *Henry V* and 1606 with *Antony & Cleopatra*.

The play opens with the Prologue who enters in armour on to a bare stage:

#### **Prol.**

In Troy, there lies the scene. From Isles of Greece  
The princes orgulus, their high blood chaf'd,  
Have to the port of Athens sent their ships  
Fraught with the ministers and instruments  
Of cruel war: sixty and nine that wore  
Their coronets regal, from th'Athenian bay  
Put forth toward Phrygia, and their low vow is made  
To ransack Troy, within whose strong immures  
The ravish'd Helen, Menelaus' queen,  
With wanton Paris sleeps--and that's the quarrel.

The Prologue speaks of Troy, now an ancient city that is on the west coast of Asian Turkey, south of the Dardanelles. It was the ancient city that Homer described where the Greeks were taken by surprise, and where, Helen wife of Menelaus, was raped by Paris, one of the sons of Priam, King of Troy. From there Paris took Helen back to Troy where he effectively took her for his wife. This produced a great enmity between Troy and Greece, giving rise to a prolonged war between them. It gave rise to a long resentment so that when Troilus, another son of Priam, fell in love with Cressida, daughter of Calchas, a Trojan priest, she was easily seduced to leave Troilus, with support from the Trojans, and given to the Greek, Diomedes for his bed. This was another example of a beautiful young woman being seduced by the opportunity offered by the sexual excitement of a different man, and in a way, it balanced the exchange of first, a Greek, Helen, who was taken to Troy by Paris. It was much later in time, and in this play, that the Trojan woman Cressida, whose Trojan lover was Troilus, was given by the Trojans to serve as bed fellow of the Greek, Diomedes, to the great distress of Troilus.

Before this exchange of Cressida to a Greek, Pandarus, who is a Trojan uncle to Cressida and one who was trying to encourage two young Trojans, Troilus and Cressida, to be in love with each other since Troilus has confessed he is drawn to Cressida. Pandarus and Cressida are watching the Trojans coming back from a war one afternoon.

**Pand.**

Mark him, note him. O brave Troilus!  
Look well upon him, niece, look you how his sword is  
blooded, and his helm more hacked than  
Hector's, and how he looks, and how he goes! O  
admirable youth ; he never saw three and twenty.  
Troilus, go thy way. Had I a sister were a grace,  
or a daughter a goddess, he should  
take his juice. O admirable man! Paris? Paris  
is dirt to him, and I warrant Helen, to change,  
would give him an eye to boot.

.....

Pandarus likes to excite both Cressida and Troilus as an encouragement to get them to become lovers.

**Pand.**

You are such a woman, a man knows not at  
What ward you lie.

**Cress.**

Upon my back, do defend my belly; upon my wit, to defend my wiles; upon  
my secrecy, to defend my honesty; my mask, to defend my beauty;  
and you, to defend all these; and at all wards I lie, at a thousand watches.

**Pand**

Say one of your watches.

**Cress.**

Nay, I'll watch you for that, and that's one of  
The chiefest of them to. If I cannot ward what I  
Would not have hit. I can watch you for telling  
How I took the blow, unless it swell past hiding,  
And then its past watching.

**Pand.**

You are such another.

**Cress.**

By the same token, you are a bawd,  
Words, vows, gifts, tears, and love's full sacrifice  
He offers in another's enterprise;  
But more in Troilus thousand-fold I see  
Than in the glass of Panda's praise may be;  
Yet hold off. Women are angels, wooing;  
Things won are done; joy's soul lies in the doing.  
That she belov'd knows naught that knows not this:  
Men prise the thing ungain'd more than it is.  
That she was never yet that ever knew



Love got so sweet as when desire did sue.  
Therefore this maxim out of love I teach:  
'Achievement is command ; ungain'd, beseech.'  
Then though my heart's content firm love doth bear,  
Nothing of that shall from mine eyes appear.  
(*Exit*)

Here is another debate among the Greeks that concerns authority, prerogative and power that concerns Agamemnon, Ulysses and Nestor:

**Ulyss.**

O, when degree is shak'd,  
Which is the ladder of all high designs,  
The enterprise is sick. How could communities,  
Degrees in schools, and brotherhoods in cities,  
Peaceful commerce from dividable shores,  
And primogenity and due of birth  
Prerogative of age, crown, sceptres, laurels,  
But by degree stand in authentic place?  
And hark what discord follows. Each thing melts  
In mere oppugnacy; the bounded waters  
Should lift their bosoms higher than the shores,  
And make a sop of all this solid globe ;  
Strength should be lord of imbecility,  
And the rude son should strike his father dead;  
Force should be right--or rather, right and wrong,  
Between whose endless jar justice resides,  
Should lose their names, and so should justice too.  
Then everything includes itself in power,  
Power into will, will into appetite,  
And appetite, an universal wolf.  
So doubly seconded with will and power,  
Must make perforce an universal prey,  
And last eat up himself. Great Agamemnon,  
This chaos, when degree is suffocate,  
Follows the choking;  
And this neglect of degree it is  
That by a pace goes backward, with a purpose  
It hath to clim. The general's disdain'd  
By him one step below, he by the next,  
The next by him beneath: so every step,  
Exempl'd by the first pace that is sick  
Of his superior, grows to an envious fever  
Of pale and bloodless emulation.  
And 'tis this fever that keeps Troy on foot,  
Not her own sinews. To end a tale of length,  
Troy in our weakness stands, not in our strength.

**Act II, Scene I, first page, enter Ajax and Thersites:**

**Ajax**

Thersites---

**Thers**

Agamemnon--how if he had boils, full, all over,  
generally?

**Ajax.**

Thersites---

**Thers.**

And those boils did run--say so--did not the general  
Run then? Were not that a botchy core?

**Ajax.**

Dog!

**Thers**

Then would come some matter from him: I see  
None now.

**Ajax**

Thou bitch-wolf's son, canst thou not hear?  
Feel then.  
(*Strikes him*)

**Thers.**

The plague of Greece upon thee, thou mongrel  
beef-witted lord!

**Ajax.**

Speak then, thou vinewed'st leaven, speak! I  
Will beat thee into handsomeness!

**Thers**

I shall sooner rail thee into wit and holiness,  
But I think thy horse will sooner con an oration  
then thou learn a prayer without book. Thou  
canst strike, canst thou? A red murrain o' thy  
jade's tricks.

**Ajax.**

Toadstool! Learn me the proclamation.

**Thers**

Dost thou think I have no sense, thou strikest  
me thus?

**Ajax.**

The proclamation.

**Thers.**

Thou art proclaimed fool, I think

**Ajax**

Do not, porpentine, do not, my fingers itch---

**Thers**

I would thou didst from head to foot: and  
I had the scratching of thee, I would make thee  
The loathsomest scab in Greece. When thou art  
Forth in the incursions thou strikest as slow as  
another.

**Ajax**

I say the proclamation

**Thers**

Thou grumblest and railest every hour on  
Achilles, and thou art as full of envy at his great-ness  
As Cerberus is as Proserpina's beauty---ay,  
That thou bark'st at him.

**Ajax.**

Mistress Thersites!

**Thers**

Thou shouldst strike him.

**Ajax**

Cobloaf!

**Thers**

He would pun thee into shivers with his fist,  
As a sailor breaks a biscuit.

**Ajax**

You whoreson cur!

**Thers**

Do! Do!

**Ajax**

Thou stool for a witch!

**Thers**

Ay, do! do! do! thou sodden-witted lord, thou hast  
no more brain that I have in mine elbows: an  
asinico may tutor thee. Thou scurvy-valiant ass,  
thou art here but to thrash Trojans, and thou art

bought and sold among those of any wit, like a barbarian slave. If thou use to beat me, I will begin at thy heel, and tell what thou art by inches, thou thing of no bowels thou.!

**Ajax**

You dog!

**Thers**

You scurvy lord!

**Ajax**

You cur!

*(Beats him)*

**Thers**

Mars his idiot! do, rudeness: do, camel: do do!

*Enter Achilles and Patroclus*

**Achill.**

Why, how now, Ajax, wherefore do ye thus?

How now, Thersites, what's the matter man?

**Thers**

You see him there, do you?

**Achill.**

Ay: what's the matter?

**Thers**

Nay look upon him.

**Achil.**

So I do: what's the matter?

**Thers**

Nay but regard him well.

**Achill.**

Well? --why do I do.

**Thers**

But yet you look not well upon him, for whosoever you take him to be, he is Ajax.

**Achill.**

I know that fool.

**Thers**

Ay, but that fool knows not himself.

**Ajax.**

Therefore I beat thee.

**Thers**

Lo, lo, lo, lo, what modicums of wit he utters---  
His evasions have ears thus long. I have bobbed  
His brain more than he has beat my mones. I will  
Buy nine sparrows for a penny, and his pia mater  
Is not worth the ninth part of a sparrow. This lord,  
Achilles--Ajax, who wears his wit in his belly and  
His guts in his head---I'll tell you what I say of him.

**Achill.**

What?

**Thers**

I say, this Ajax.

**Achill.**

Nay, good ajax.

**Thers**

Has not so much wit--

**Achill.**

Nay, I must hold you.

**Thers**

As will stop the eye of Helen's needle, for whom  
He comes to fight.

**Achill.**

Peace, fool.

**Thers**

I would have peace and quietness, but the fool  
Will not: he there, that he: look you there.

**Ajax**

O thou damned cur, I shall----

**Achill.**

Will you set your wit to a fool's?

**Thers**

No I warrant you, the fool's will shame it.

**Patro.**

Good words, Thersites.  
Achill. What's the quarrel?

**Ajax**  
I bade the vile owl go learn me the tenor of the  
proclamation, and he rails upon me.

**Thers**  
I serve thee not.

**Ajax**  
Well, go to, go to.

**Thers**  
I serve here voluntary.

**Achil.**  
Your last service was suffrance--'twas not  
voluntary, no man is beaten voluntary: Ajax was  
here the voluntary, and you as under an impress.

**Thers**  
E'en so—a great deal of your wit too lies in  
Your sinews, or else there be liars. Hector shall  
Have a great catvch and a knock out either of your  
Brains: a were as good crack and a knock our either of  
your brains: a were as goo crack a fusty nut with no  
kernel.

**Achil.**  
What with me too, Thersites?

**Thers**  
There's Ulysses, and old Nestor, whose wit was  
mouldy ere your gransires had nails on their toes,  
yoke you like a draught-oxen and make you plough  
up the wars.

### **Act II, Scene II, Lines 51-61**

Here is a short debate between Hector and Troilus, two Trojans, concerning the political and, by implication, the military cost of keeping Helen in Troy, who was the wife of Menalaus, who was raped in Greece by Paris a Trojan who then brought her back to Troy where she has lived ever since as the wife of Paris.

Hector, an heroic Trojan soldier, and brother of Troilus, discussing the cost of keeping Helen, who had kept her great beauty, and who has remained safe in Troy, instead of returning her to Greece where her husband and the Greeks have always wanted her returned to their country Greece.

Hector is addressing Troilus, his brother:

**Hect.**

Brother  
She is not worth what she doth cost the keeping.

**Troil.**

What's aught but as 'tis valued?

**Hect.**

But value dwells not in particular will:  
It holds his estimate and dignity  
As well wherein 'tis precious of itself  
As in the prizer. 'Tis mad idolatry  
To make the service greater than the god;  
And the will dotes that is attributive  
To what infectiously itself affects,  
Without some image of th'affected merit.

**Troil.**

I take today a wife, and my election  
Is led on in the conduct of my will:  
My will enkindled by mine eyes and ears,  
Two traded pilots 'twix the dangerous shores  
Of will and judgement---how may I avoid,  
Although my will distaste what it elected,  
My wife I choose? There can be no evasion  
To blench from this and to stand firm by honour.  
We turn not back the silks upon the merchant  
When we have soil'd them, nor the remainder viands  
We do not throw in in unrespective sieve  
Because we now are full. It was thought meet  
Paris should do some vengeance on the Greeks;  
Your breath with full consent bellied his sails;  
The seas and winds, old wranglers, took a truce  
And did him service; he touch'd the points desir'd,  
And for an old aunt whom the Greeks held captive,  
He brought a Grecian queen, whose youth and freshness  
Wrinkles Apollo's, and makes stale the morning.  
Why keep we her?---The Grecians keep our aunt.  
Is she worth keeping? Why, she is a pearl  
Whose price hath above a thousand ships,  
And turned crown'd kings to merchants.  
If you'll avouch 'twas wisdom Paris went---  
As you must needs, for you all cried 'Go, go':  
If you'll confess he brought home worthy prize---  
As you must needs, for you all clapp'd your hands  
And cried 'Inestimable!': why do you now  
The issue of your proper wisdoms rate,  
And do a deed that never Fortune did---

Begger the estimation which you priz'd  
Richer than sea and land? O theft most base,  
That we have stol'n what we do fear to keep;  
But thieves unworthy of a thing so stol'n,  
That in their country did them that disgrace  
We fear to warrant in our native place.

.....

*Enter Cassandra raving:*

Cry, Trojans, cry! Practise your eyes with tears!  
Troy must not be, nor goodly Ilion stand:  
Our firebrand brother Paris burns us all  
Cry Trojans cry! A Hele, and a woe:  
Cry, cry! Troy burns, or else let Helen go.

**Hect.**

Now, youthful Troilus, do not these high strains  
Of divination in our sister work  
Some touches of remorse? Or is your blood  
So madly hot, that no discourse of reason,  
Nor fear of bad susses in a bad cause,  
Can qualify the same?

**Troil.**

Why, brother Hector,  
We may not think the justice of each act  
Such and no other than death doth form it,  
Nor once deject the courage of our minds  
Because Cassandra's mad: her brain-sick raptures  
Cannot distaste the goodness of a quarrel  
Which hath our several honours all engag'd  
To make it gracious. For my private part,  
I am no more touch'd thyan all Priam's sons;  
And Jove forbid there shouldbedone amongst us  
Such things as might offend ther weakes spleen  
To fight for and maintain.

This debate continues until brave Hector offers to fight alone any man of the Greeks. And whosoever triumphs in this fight, be it Greek or Trojan, that shall settle whether Helen shall be returned to Greece or whether she shall remain with Paris in Troy.

This play is full of debates among the Trojans, and quite separately we are treated to similar debates between the Greeks whose army is camped on Trojan beaches.

Here Priam, Paris and Hector, three Trojans debate the future of the beautiful Greek woman raped by Paris and brought to Troy where she becomes the wife of Paris.

**Priam.**

Paris, you speak



Like one besotted on your sweet delights,  
You have the honey still; but these the gall:  
So to be valiant is no praise at all.

**Paris.**

Sir, I propose not merely to myself  
The pleasures such a beauty brings with it,  
But I would have the soil of her fair rape  
Wip'd off in honourable keeping her.  
What treason were it to the ransack'd queen,  
Disgrace to your great worths, and shame to me,  
Now to deliver her possession up  
On terms of base compulsion! Can it be,  
That so degenerate a stratin as this  
Should once set footing in your generous bosoms?  
There's not the meanest spirit on our party  
Without a heart to dare or sword to draw  
When Helen is defended: nor none so noble  
Whose life were ill bestow'd, or death unfam'd,  
Where Helen is the subject. Then, I say,  
Well may we fight for her whom we no well  
The worlds large spaces cannot parallel.

**Hector**

Paris and Troilus, you have both said well,  
And on the cause and question now in hand  
Have glos'd, but superficially---not much  
Unlike young men, whom Aristotle thought  
Unfit to hear moral philosophy.  
The reasons you allege do more conduce  
To the hot passion of distemper'd blood  
Than to make up a free determination  
Twixt right and wrong: for pleasure and revenge  
Have ears more deaf than adders to the voice  
Of any true decision. Nature craves  
All dues be render'd to their owners: now  
What nearer debt in all humanity  
Than wife is to the husband? If this law  
Of nature be corrupted through affection,  
And that great minds, of partial indulgence  
To their benumbed wills, resist the same,  
There is a law in each well-order'd nation  
To curb those raging appetites that are  
Most disobedient and refractory.  
If Helen be the wife to Sparta's king,  
As it is known she is, speak aloud  
To have her back return'd: thus to persist  
In doing wrong extenuates not wrong,  
But makes it much more heavy. Hector's opinion  
Is this in way of truth: yet ne'ertheless,

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

**Troilus.**

Why, there you touch'd the life of our design:  
Were it not glory that we more affected  
Than the performance of our heaving spleens,  
I would not wish a drop of Trojan blood  
Spent more in her defence. But, worthy Hector,  
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 canonise us;  
For I presume brave Hector would not lose  
So rich advantage of a promis'd glory  
As smiles upon the forehead of this action  
For the wide world's revenue.

**Hector.**

I am yours,  
You valiant offspring of great Priam.  
I have a roisting challenge sent amongst  
The dull and factious nobles of the Greeks  
Will strike amazement to their drowsy spirits.  
I was advertis'd their great general slept  
Whilst emulation in the army crept:  
This, I presume, will wake him.  
(*Exeunt*)

**Act II Scene III Line 42, enter Achilles:**

Why, my cheese, my digestion, why has thou not  
Served thyself in to my table so many meals?  
Come, what's Agamemmon?

**Thers.**

Thy commander, Achilles: then tell me Patroclus, what's Achilles?

**Patro.**

Thy lord, Thersites: then tell me I pray thee,  
What's Thersites?

**Thers**

Thy knower, Patroclus: then tell me Patroclus,  
what art thou?

**Patro.**

Thou mayest tell that knowest.

**Achill.**

O tell, tell.

**Thers.**

I'll decline the whole question. Agamemnon  
Commands Achilles, and Patroclus is a fool.

**Patro.**

You rascal !

**Thers**

Peace, fool, I have not done.

**Achill.**

He is a privileged man: proceed, Thersites.

**Thers.**

Agamemnon is a fool, Achilles is a fool, Thersites,  
Is a fool, and, as aforesaid, Patroclus is a fool.

**Achill.**

Derive this: come.

**Thers**

Agamemnon is a fool to offer to command  
Achilles, Achilles is a fool to be commanded of  
Agamemnon, Thersites is a fool to serve such a fool  
, and this Patroclus is a fool positive.

**Patro.**

Why am I a fool?

**Thers**

Make that demand of the Creator, it suffices me  
thou art. Look you, who comes here?

### **Act III, Scene 1, lines 110-121.**

Not long after this teasing discussion among Greeks, there is a very different teasing song, in this case, that involves both Greeks and Trojans including Paris the Trojan lover of the Greek lady Helen, who was raped by Paris and then carried off to Troy where they lived together as lovers. This sexy song is sung by Pandarus:

**Pand.**

*Love, love nothing but love, still love, still more!  
For O love's bow  
Shoots buck and doe ;  
The shift confounds*

*Not that it wounds  
But tickles still the sore.  
These lovers cry O ho, they die!  
Yet that which seems the wound to kill  
Doth turn O ho, to Ha, ha he!  
So dying love loves still.  
O ho, a while, but Ha ha, ha!  
O ho, groans out for Ha, ha, ha!---Heigh ho!*

Note that the expression 'to die', and especially the expression 'love dying' in late Tudor and Jacobean times was slang word meaning 'an orgasm', and, in the context of this song, perhaps the expression 'to kill' may have had the same meaning.

The discussion among the group, who have listened to this bawdy song, follows here with more witty references to sexual excitement.

**Helen**

In love, i'fath, to the very tip of the nose.

**Paris**

He eats nothing but doves, love, and that breeds hot blood, and hot blood  
Begets hot thoughts, and hot thoughts beget hot deeds, and hot deeds is love.

**Pand.**

Is this the generation of love? Hot blood, hot thoughts, and hot deeds? Why  
they are vipers. Is love a generation of vipers? Sweet lord, who's afield  
today?

**Paris**

Hector, Deiphobus, Helenus, Antenor, and all the gallantry of Troy. I would  
fain have armed today, but my Nell would not have it so. How chance my  
brother Troilus went not?

**Helen**

He hangs the lip at something: you know all, Lord Pandarus.

**Pand.**

Not I, honey-sweet queen ; I long to hear how they sped today, ---  
You'll remember your brother's excuse?

**Paris**

To a hair.

**Pand.**

Farewell, sweet queen.

**Helen**

Commend me to your niece.

**Pand.**

I will sweet queen.  
(*Exit*)

*Sound a retreat.*

**Paris**

They're come from the field: let us to Priam's hall  
To greet the warriors. Sweet Helen, I must woo you  
To help unarm our Hector. His stubborn buckles,  
Shall more obey then to the edge of steel  
Or force of Greekish sinews: you shall do more  
Than all the island kings---disarm great Hector.

**Helen**

'Twill make us proud to be his servant, Paris.  
Yea, what he shall receive of us in duty  
Gives us more palm in beauty than we have,  
Yea, overshines ourself.

**Paris**

Sweet, above thought I love thee.  
(*Exeunt*)

During **Act III** Cressida and Troilus are encouraged by Pandarus to become lovers when Cressida gives indications of her being unsure that she wants to be hurried into this. Then she decides to spend a night with Troilus after some persuasion from Pandarus, and of course from Troilus. Two issues concern the couple are the certainty of their love for each other.

Here in verse is Troilus speaking to Cressida;

O that I thought it could be in a woman---  
As, if it can, I will presume in you---  
To feed for aye her lamp and flames of love;  
To keep her constancy in plight and youth,  
Outliving beauty's outward, with a mind  
That doth renew swifter than blood decays!  
Or that persuasion could but thus convince me  
That my integrity and truth to you  
Might be affronted with the match and weight  
Of such a winnow'd purity in love---  
How were I then uplifted! But alas,  
I am as true as truth's simplicity,  
And simpler than the infancy of truth.

Cressida replies to this poetry from her lover Troilus by telling him that:

'In that I'll war with you'.

Troilus replies to Cressida by telling her:

‘O virtuous fight’  
When right with right wars who shall be most right!  
True swains in love shall, in the world to come,  
Approve their truth by Troilus; when their rhymes,  
Full of protest, of oath, and big compare,  
Wants smiles, truth tir’d with irritation  
(As true as steel, as plantage to the moon  
As sun today, as turtle to her mate,  
As iron to adamant, as earth to the centre)  
Yet, after all comparisons of truth,  
As truth’s authentic author to be cited,  
As true as Troilus’ shall crown up the verse  
And sanctify the numbers.

Cressida replies with:

Prophet may you be!  
If I be false, or swerve a hair from truth,  
When time is old and hath forgot itself,  
When water-drops have worn the stones of Troy,  
And blind oblivion swallow’d cities up,  
And mighty states characterless are grated  
To dustry nothing--yet let memory,  
From false to false, among false maids in love  
Upbraid my falsehood. ....  
.....

Pandarus then leads these two lovers to a bedroom with a bed that Pandarus says will provide for their pretty encounters.

Then very soon after this political negotiation between Greece and Troy have led to an agreement of exchanging two men and also making a gift of Cressida to the Greeks in the persons of Calchas and Diomedes. Diomedes is much younger of the two and in the event Cressida is given to Diomedes to have in his bed.

If we move on in **Act III Scene III** we come to Achilles who has a great history of fighting for the Greeks in the years that have passed. He notices how much he contributed to Greece that seems to have been forgotten or ignored. In his discussion with Achilles, Ulysses observes that:

Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back  
Wherein he puts alms for oblivion  
A great-sized monster of ingritudes.  
Those scraps are good deeds past, which are devour’d  
As fast as they are made, forgot as soon  
As done. Perseverance, dear my lord,  
Keeps honour bright: to have nothing done is to hang  
Quite out of fashion, like a rusty mail  
In monumental mockery. Take the instant way;  
For honour travels in a strait so narrow  
Where one goes abreast. Keep then the path;

For emulation hath a thousand sons  
 That one by one pursue; if you give way  
 Or hedge aside from the direct forthright,  
 Like to an enter'd tide they all rush by  
 And leave you hindmost;  
 Or like a gallant horse fall'n in first rank,  
 Lie there for pavement for the abject rear,  
 O'er run and trampled on. Then what they do in  
 present  
 Though less than yours in past, must o'er top yours;  
 For Time is like a fashionable host  
 That slightly shakes his parting guest by th'hand,  
 And with his arms out-stretch'd, as he would fly,  
 Grasps in the comer. Welcome ever smiles,  
 And farewell goes out sighing. O let not virtue seek  
 Remuneration for the thing it was; For beauty, wit,  
 High birth, vigour of bone, desert in service,  
 Love, friendship, charity, are subjects all  
 To envious and calumniating Time.  
 One touch of nature makes the whole world kin—  
 That all with one consent praise new-born gauds,  
 Though they are made and moulded of things past,  
 And give to dust that is a little gilt  
 More laud than gilt o'er-dusted.  
 The present eye praises the present object:  
 Then marvel not, thou great and complete man,  
 That all the Greeks begin to worship Ajax,  
 Since things in motion sooner catch the eye  
 Than what stirs not. The cry went out once on thee,  
 And still it might, and yet it may again  
 If thou wouldst not entomb thyself alive  
 And case thy reputation in thy tent,  
 Whose glorious deeds but in these fields of late  
 Made emulous missions 'mongst the gods themselves,  
 And drave great Mars to faction.

.....

**Patro.**

To this effect, Achilles, have I moved you.  
 A woman impudent and mannish grown  
 Is not more loath'd than an effeminate man  
 In time of action. I stand condemn'd for this:  
 They think my little stomach to the war  
 And your great love to me restrains you thus.  
 Sweet, rouse yourself; and the weak wanton Cupid  
 Shall from your neck unloose his amorous fold,  
 And, like a dew-drop from the lion's mane,  
 Be shook to air.

**Achill.**

Shall Ajax fight with Hector?

**Petro.**

Ay, and perhaps receive much honour by him.

**Achill.**

I see my reputation is at stake:  
My fame is shrewdly gor'd.

This debate between the Greek and Trojan warriors and Thersites continues until Achilles and Patroclus leave the scene, with Thersites who, before he leaves, cannot resist his short soliloquy:

**Thers.**

Would the fountain of your mind were clear  
again, that I might water an ass at it: I had rather  
be a tick in a sheep than such a valiant ignorance.

We are now at **Act IV, Scene I** when the trading of the attractive young woman, Cressida by the Trojans to the Greeks is about to take place. This is going to cause Troilus much distress and especially as his recently won lover is almost certainly going to be bedded very soon by a young Greek.

**Paris**

I fear  
We shall be much unwelcome.

**Aeneas** (*Aside*)

That I assure you:  
Troilus had rather Troy were borne to Greece  
Than Cressid borne from Troy.

**Paris** (*Aside*)

There is no help:  
The bitter disposition of the time  
Will have it so  
(*Aloud*)  
On, lord, we'll follow you.

**Aeneas**

Good morrow all  
(*Exit Aeneas with servant*).

**Paris**

And tell me, noble Diomed, faith, tell me true,  
Even in the soul of sound goodfellowship,  
Who in your thoughts deserves fait Helen best--  
Myself, or Menelaus?

**Diom.**



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 pleas'd to breed out your inheritors.  
Both merits pois'd, each weighs nor less nor more,  
But he as thee, each heavier for a whore.

**Paris**

You are too bitter to your country-woman.

**Diom.**

She's bitter to her country: hear me, Paris.—  
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; Since she could speak,  
She hath not given so many good words breath  
As for her Greeks and Trojans suffer'd death.

**Paris**

Fair Diomed, you do as chapman do,  
Dispraise the thing they desire to buy;  
But we in silence hold this virtue well,  
We'll not commend, that not intend to sell.  
Here lies our way.  
(*Exeunt*)

There follows a banter with Pandarus teasing Cressid over the loss of her maidenhood to Troilus during last night. Later Troilus appears in response to people looking for him urgently.

*Enter Troilus*

**Troil.**

How now, what's the matter?

**Aeneas**

My lord, I scarce have leisure to salute you,  
My matter is so rash: there is at hand  
Paris your brother, and Deiphobus,  
The Grecian Diomed, and our Antenor  
Deliver'd to us, and for him forthwith,  
Ere the first sacrifice, within this hour,

We must give up to Diomedes' hand  
The lady Cressida.

**Troil.**  
Is it so concluded?

**Aeneas**  
By Priam and the general state of Troy.  
They are at hand, and ready to effect it.

**Troil.**  
How my achievements mock me!  
I will go to meet them; and, my Lord Aeneas,  
We met by chance: you did not find me here.

**Aeneas**  
Good, good, my lord: the secrets of nature  
Have not more gift in taciturnity.  
(*Exeunt Troilus & Aeneas*).

Of course when Cressida hears of this she refuses to leave Troy. This brings up a change of Scene, and we are now in **Act 4, Scenes III & IV**; the three persons of Pandarus, Cressida and Troilus are obviously concerned that Cressida has been traded from Troy to Greece. Troilus seems to be the one most affected by his loss. In **Act IV, Scene IV, lines 41-47**, Troilus addressing Cressida and Pandarus says:

Injurious Time now with a robbers haste  
Crams his rich thiev'ry up, he knows not how;  
As many farewells as be stars in heaven,  
With distant breath and consign'd kisses to them,  
He fumbles up into a loose adieu,  
Distasted with the salt of broken tears.

**Aeneas** (*Within*)  
My lord, is the lady ready?

**Troil.**  
Hark, you are call'd. Some say the Genius  
Cries so to him that instantly must die.  
Bid them have patience: she shall come anon.

**Pand.**  
Where are my tears? Rain, to lay this wind, or  
My heart will bear blown up by th'root.

**Cress.**  
I must then to the Grecians?

**Troil.**  
No remedy.

**Cress.**  
A woeful Cressid 'mongst the merry Greeks  
When shall we see again?

**Troil.**  
Hear me, my love: be thou but true of heart---

**Cress.**  
I true? How now, what wicked deem is this?

**Troil.**  
Nay, we must use expostulation kindly,  
For it is parting from us.  
I speak not 'Be thou true' as fearing thee---  
For I will throw my glove to Death himself  
That there's no masculation in thy heart---  
But, 'e thou true' say I to fashion in  
My sequent prostration: be thou true,  
And I will see thee.

**Cress.**  
O you shall be expos'd, my lord, to dangers  
As infinite as imminent! But I'll be true.

**Troil.**  
And I'll grow friend with danger: wear this sleeve.

**Cress.**  
And you this glove: when shall I see you?

**Troil.**  
I will corrupt the Grecian sentinels  
To give thee nightly visitation  
But yet be true.

**Cress.**  
O heavens---'be true' again?  
.....

**Aeneas** (*Within*)  
Nay, good my lord!

**Troil.**  
Come, kiss and let us part.

**Paris** (*Within*)  
Brother Troilus!

**Troil** (*Aloud*)

Good brother, come thou hither,  
And bring Aeneas and the Grecian with you.

**Cress.**  
My lord, will you be true?

**Troil.**  
Who I?—alas, it is my vice, my fault.  
Whiles others fish with craft for great opinion  
I with great truth catch mere simplicity;  
Whilst some with cunning gild their copper crowns,  
With truth and plainness I do wear mine bare.

Later when Cressida has been transferred to the Greeks .....

*Enter Diomedes and Cressida*

**Agam.**  
Is this the Lady Cressid?

**Diom.**  
Even she.

**Agam.**  
Most dearly welcome to the Greeks, sweet lady.  
(*kisses her.*)

Then as she meets a number of Greeks she is welcomed and kissed in succession by Nestor, Achilles, then Patroclus. Ulysses avoids kissing her after which Patroclus kisses her again.

**Menel.**  
I'll have my kiss, sir. Lady, by your leave.

**Cress.**  
In kissing, do you render or receive?

**Menel.**  
Both take and give.

**Cress.**  
I'll make my match to live,  
The kiss you take is better then you give:  
Therefore, no kiss.  
.....

**Ulyss.**  
It were no match, your nail against his horn.  
May I, sweet lady, beg a kiss of you?

**Cress.**

You may.

**Ulyss.**

I do desire it.

**Cress.**

Why, beg two.

**Ulyss.**

Why then, for Venus' sake, give me a kiss  
When Helen is a maid again, and his.

**Cress.**

I am your debtor; claim it when 'tis due.

**Ulyss.**

Never's my day, and then a kiss of you.

**Diom.**

Lady, a word: I'll bring you to your father.  
(*Exeunt Diomedes and Cressida*).

**Nest.**

A woman of quick sense.

Now Ulysses, in a quick moment of insight of the concupiscence of this young, attractive lady, gives a sharp retort to the aged Nestor.

**Ulyss.**

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 move of her body.  
O, these encounters, so glip of tongue,  
That give accosting welcome ere it comes,  
And wide unclasp the tables of their thoughts  
To every ticklish reader: set them down  
For sluttish spoils of opportunity  
And daughters of the game  
(*Flourish*)

**All.**

The Trojan's trumpet

Later Thersites notes that the two Greeks, Achilles and Patroclus with too much blood and too little brain they run mad, but if with too much brain and too little blood they do, I'll be a curer of madmen.

A little later in the play Cressida after seeing and talking with Troilus that she cannot see the Greek Diomedes tomorrow night and she does not want him to woo her. But then she admits that she loves to kiss him. Diomedes reminds her that she had given him her heart so recently. Then shortly after this

**Diomedes** says to Cressida:

‘What, shall I come? The hour?’

**Cressida** replies:

A come: O Jove, do come: I shall be plagu’d.

**Diam.**

Farewell till then

**Cress.**

Good night; I prithee come.  
Troilus, farewell! One eye yet looks on thee,  
But with my heart the other eye doth see.  
Ah poor our sex! this fault in us I find:  
The error of our eye directs our mind.  
What error leads must err; O then conclude,  
Minds sway’d by eyes are full of turpitude.  
(*Exit*)

**Thers**

A proof of strength she could not publish more,  
Unless she said ‘My mind is now turn’d whore’ .

.....

Troilus now aware of the fact that Cressida has taken another lover from the Greek Diomedes. We can see how Troilus has responded.

**Troil.**

This she?—No, this is Diomed’s Cressida.  
If beauty have a soul, this is not she;  
If souls guide vows, if vows be sanctimonies,  
If sanctimony be the god’s delight,  
If there be rule in unity itself,  
This is not she. O madness of discourse,  
That cause sets up with and against itself!  
Bifold authority! where reason can revolt  
Without perdition, and loss assume all reason  
Without revolt. This is, and is not, Cressid.  
Within my soul there doth conduce a fight  
Of this strange nature, that a thing inseparate  
Divides more wider than the sky and earth;  
And yet the spacious breadth of this division  
Admits no orifice for a point as subtle  
As Ariadne’s broken woof to enter.  
Instance, O instance! strong as Pluto’s gates:  
Cressid is mine, tied with the bonds of heaven.

Instance O instance! Strong as heaven itself:  
The bonds of heaven are slipp'd dissolv'd, and  
Loos'd  
And with another knot, five-finger-tied,  
The fractions of her faith, orts of her love,  
The fragments, scraps, the bits, and greasy relics  
Of her o'er-eaten faith are given to Diomed.

.....

**Thers**

He'll tickle it for his concupy\*

[NB\*There may be several possible meanings to "He'tickle it for his concupy".]

**Troil.**

O Cressid! O false Cressid! False, false. False!  
Let all untruths stand by thy stained name,  
And they'll seem glorious.

Now the battle for mastery be it Greece or Troy is closing in . After discussion and debate it is determined that Hector shall lead for Troy and Achilles will represent Greece. But Achilles is of great cunning and he has arranged with his Myrmidons, being his personal group of soldiers who will fight in any way that Achilles tells them. Achilles has determined to work for an opportunity for using his Mermidons to kill Hector, even though the fight between Hector and Achilles is one that only these two men are permitted to fight each other.

Then when during the early part of their fight Hector asks for a short break; Achilles agrees immediately, and then Hector takes off all his armour and lays down his sword. At that moment Achilles tells his Myrmidons to rush upon the now helpless and unarmed Hector, where they all cut him down and quickly killed Hector. From there the dead body is tied to a horse and it pulled around the grounds where it is torn to shreds.

Everybody was horrified at this disgraceful, cowardly and treacherous behaviour of Achilles.

There is hardly anything more to say. But, in a way the treachery of Cressida, who encouraged an attractive young Greek, Diomedes, who seduced her so easily, into welcoming him to her bed again for a second time, despite her promises of sexual restraint not to go with other men. She broke her promise to keep faith with her Trojan lover, Troilus.

This reflects the same breaking of faith with the rules and laws of war in the behaviour of the Greek, Achilles, who took such an advantage of Hector who was disarmed.

The play ends with Troilus and then Pandarus.

**Troil.**

Go into Troy, and say there 'Hector's dead'.

There is a word will Priam turn to stone,  
Make wells and Niobes of the maids and wives,  
Cold statues of the youth, and, in a word,  
Scare Troy out of itself. But march away.  
Hector is dead: there is no more to say--  
.....

*Exeunt (all but Troilus), enter Pandarus*

**Pand.**  
But hear you, hear you!

**Troil.**  
Hence, broker-lackey! Ignomy and shame  
Pursue thy life, and live aye with thy name!  
.....

**Pand.**  
As many as be here of Pandar's hall,  
Your eyes, half out, weep out and Panda's fall;  
Or if you cannot weep, yet give some groans,  
Though not for me, yet for your aching bones.  
Brethren and sisters of the hold-door trade, \*\*  
Some two months hence my will shall here be made.  
It should be now, but that my fear is this:  
Some galled goose of Winchester \*\*\* would hiss.  
Till then I'll sweat and seek about for eases,  
And at that time bequeath you my diseases. \*\*\*\*

[*Glossary*, \*\* bawds and panders; \*\*\* A Winchester goose is a prostitute from the Southwark stews; \*\*\*\* The writer wishes his diseases upon you, he does not necessarily wish to transmit his diseases to you.]



## *Chapter 18*

### *Conclusions*

Of all the people who could have best explained to us what conclusions can be taken from a close study of Shakespeare's 37 plays, we must surely include John Keats. He was born in 1795 and he died in his 26<sup>th</sup> year in 1821 from a pulmonary tuberculosis that left him eventually with almost no functioning pulmonary tissue with which to breathe, so strong had he been in mind and heart. That robbed us of a very talented poet and writer who, had he lived, he might well have become a very great writer. But he had nursed his brother, Tom, until Tom's death from this disease, and in doing so he contracted it himself. Eventually John Keats went to Italy in the hope of a cure but he died as indicated above. His letters and his well noted observations on Shakespeare's work, reveal what Keats called "negative capability", and we can imagine him saying "let the mind be a thoroughfare for all thought".

Shakespeare, this intellectually lively, perceptive, observant, reflective man, with great creative talents and a memory that was awake to his world, its politics, its social ways, its morals, ambitions, wars, envies, disappointments, loves, lusts, sorrows, kindness, generosity, neglects, dislikes and hatreds. The same writer made acute observations on Nature; he had a creative genius for humour, and an acuity of vision for, and judgement of, the behaviour of so many men and women whom he had observed and he wrote about in varying detail in 37 plays, 2 great long poems, and a sequence of 154 sonnets of astonishing variety, all completed within 22 years when he died at 52 years of age, four years after his play, *Henry VIII*, was completed.

Shakespeare's ideas and opinions on so many matters are there in the words spoken by his actors, if we care to read them with close attention. Of course there will remain uncertainties, largely because Will intended sometimes not to disclose everything in detail, not to make too obvious what were his ideas and opinions. But his ideas and his opinions are there in his texts, where he left them, and this book attempts to identify some of the most obvious and most interesting examples. They are scattered through this book, where they are pointed out and discussed for any reader who might be interested.

The late Professor Nuttall, and many other scholars, have claimed that we cannot recognise any of Shakespeare's ideas or opinions. But we need to recall that Shakespeare eschewed any pedagogy and proselytizing of his own work. We can find his own opinions and views, and even some in such sensitive and dangerous subjects as religion and politics. The texts in various stages were in the language he gave his actors to speak, and this way the ownership remains with Shakespeare who arranged for his actors to learn and then to express them verbally on the stage. Nowhere did Shakespeare signify that they have been the opinions of the author himself. Shakespeare's first person singular and possessive pronouns are never sounded with his voice on these matters, but for any attentive and open minded reader his ideas and opinions are accessible, as this book attempts to show.

Shakespeare retired to live with his wife in their house in Stratford on Avon in about 1613, and he died there age 52 in April 1616. During those last four years he even helped John Fletcher, who seems to have been having some difficulty completing his play, *The Two Noble Kinsmen* in 1614.

Shakespeare, towards the end of his life, seems to have wanted to write four plays that were to be very different from the great body of his earlier 32 plays. These four Romances, as they are called, that he wrote during 1608-1611, are very much concerned with good and evil. These four plays are also concerned with sexual innocence and chastity of young women, and Shakespeare was equally concerned with love and marriage. We can note that all these four plays have happy endings. Significantly love and marriage also figure in many of his earlier plays, written between 1590 to 1607.

Finally, in 1612 he wrote his great and last play, *King Henry VIII*, which is linked to the four Romance plays that preceded it. One imagines that Shakespeare wrote that last sole-author play, *Henry VIII*, in order to complete his series of ten History of England plays, that range from the later Plantagenet, through the Houses of Lancaster and York, and end with the Tudor play about *King Henry VIII*. Bearing in mind Shakespeare's obvious and profound concern with good and evil, he must have also wanted to write about *Henry VIII* and his Chancellor, Wolsey, two ruthless and self-serving politicians. However, above all, it seems that Shakespeare wanted to write about the exceptionally kind, generous hearted and considerate woman, who cared for her servants, and who was Katherine of Aragon, daughter of the King of Spain and then the wife and Queen of *Henry VIII* of England. Shakespeare must also have wanted to write about the gentle cleric, Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who features so strongly in the last act of this, Shakespeare's last sole author play.

Two other significant features of these important last five plays are the notable presence of the ancient gods of Greece and Rome, who appear only in the first three Romance plays, and their absence from *The Tempest* is notable. It is highly significant that the fairy tales colour all four of the Romance plays. However, nowhere is there to be found in the last play, *King Henry VIII*, any mention of the ancient gods of Greece and Rome, nor is any mention made of the fairy tales in this last play of *Henry VIII*. It is significant because it is important to bear in mind the widespread and general indoctrination of the punishment that would be inflicted after death on all of us. These after-life punishments emanated from the Christian churches from long before Shakespeare was born and for hundreds of years after his death. Thus, we can all note that as he wrote his last five plays he gradually reduced the fantasies that had adorned the general beliefs concerning first the gods of ancient Greece and Rome, then the fairy tales widespread though Europe. There was probably very widespread belief throughout Europe of life after death with its punishment in purgatory, and for some, or many, who would have to suffer burning in hell after their death. All these and related matters have been discussed above.

One might suggest that as Shakespeare came towards the end of his last play he may have realised that he was probably coming to the end of his writing career, and he may have even been aware that he might not have much longer to live. Such thoughts might have encouraged Shakespeare to have decided that it was time to give to those watching

or reading his plays something of the raw truth about our human existence on this Earth. Thus Shakespeare may have decided to indicate to his playgoers and readers that our destiny after death does not involve any kind of life after death. Any who read his plays or watched them would have been made aware by Shakespeare that there was nothing to fear about our dying, and that the after-life was a complete fiction and a nonsense. In this way Will Shakespeare would have taken much pleasure in ridding his playgoers and readers of the awful anxieties concerning the fiction of terrifying punishment after our death; that was something that the population as a whole had been brought up by the Church to believe and to fear.

Will Shakespeare in some of his plays, that he wrote as sole-author, wrote a great kindness into the minds of his fellow men and women, for now they could believe him and what he wrote about such matters because he was so obviously such a clever and erudite member of their society, who had built for himself one of the largest and smartest houses in all Stratford on Avon. They could now, if they chose, stop worrying about their terrifying after-life punishments, and of purgatory, and of having to face everlasting Hell fire and damnation. Here was the brilliant man William Shakespeare having put into writing and having his actors telling his playgoers the true nature of our death without any punishment by a God who would make them suffer such intense misery after death.

### **The last Act of King Henry VIII**

To have written the last play, Henry VIII, before the Tudor Queen Elizabeth had died would have been impossible for obvious political reasons. One suspects that Shakespeare had waited as long as was practical before he wrote it. It must have given him great satisfaction to write of Queen Katherine and of Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury; these were people whose behaviour we could admire. So too, he must have taken great pleasure in writing the four Romance plays with their concern with good and evil, and with love and marriage, as he gradually filtered out and melded in some key aspects of the first three Romance plays into The Tempest. He then began his very last play as the sole author, of King Henry VIII, with its final concerns for good and evil, and which leaves us with the very moving examples of kindness and of generosity of heart and in mind of both the Queen Katherine and of Cranmer.

Perhaps above all, it is notable that in the last Act of the play, Shakespeare shows us a subdued King Henry VIII who had to respect Cranmer. The later brutal parts of Henry's reign, and of the reign of his daughter Mary, who was also a Catholic, and was brutal in several ways, were given no place in the last Act V of this play. Further, there is not a single mention anywhere in the last Act V of Henry VIII's very recently deceased, maltreated, loyal and devoted wife, Queen Katherine. Her last hours were marked with her great concern and endeavour for her few poor women servants, and what would be their desperate need for employment and finding husbands after her death. She reveals her efforts to find help for her even poorer men servants. Katherine showed no fear whatsoever as her death approached towards the end of Act IV.

Here follows some of the last lines of Act IV which were the last lines that found any mention of this fine woman in this play. Queen Katherine is speaking to Lord Capuchious, the Ambassador from the Emperor Charles V, who had sent him to Katherine when the Emperor had learned that she was dying, poor and neglected.

**Katherine** (*speaking to the Ambassador from the Emperor Charles V*)

‘ My next poor petition  
Is that his noble grace would have some pity  
Upon my wretched women, that so long  
Have follow’d both my fortunes faithfully,  
Of which there is not one, I dare avow  
(And now I should not lie) but will deserve  
For virtue and true beauty of the soul,  
For honesty and decent carriage,  
A right good husband (let him be a noble),  
And sure those men are happy that shall have ‘em.  
The last is for my men, they are the poorest  
( But poverty could never ‘em from me),  
That they may have their wages duly paid ‘em,  
And something over to remember me by.  
If heaven had pleas’d to have given me longer life  
And able means, we had not parted thus.  
These are the whole contents, and my good Lord,  
By that you love the dearest in this world,  
As you wish Christian peace to souls departed,  
Stand these poor people’s friend and urge the King  
To do me this last right.’

What a masterly play is this **King Henry VIII**, and what lines to have written to close Act IV, that is the last Scene of the penultimate Act of his sole-author play. We neither see nor hear **Katherine**’s voice again after this Scene closes.

### **Some other Conclusions to be found in this book**

The following points are drawn from the discussions in both Part 1 and 2 of this text:

- 1) Shakespeare’s avoidance of pedagogy, polemics and proselytizing of his own views and opinions.
- 2) His technical methods of writing, such as the Shakespeare-Keats coefficient of beauty and truth, and his literary sandwich device.
- 3) The strong themes of moral purpose in Shakespeare’s plays.
- 4) Negative capability in his plays.
- 5) Shakespeare’s imagined realities enriched by a great variety of his hundreds of speaking characters.
- 6) Astonishing quality of his dramatic poetry and his prose: see almost any chapter in his plays; but **Macbeth**, **King Lear**, **Antony & Cleopatra**, **Romeo & Juliet**, **Hamlet** and **King Henry V** will keep anyone busy and astonished.

- 7) Shakespeare's writings of revulsion from sexual lust without love.
- 8) Shakespeare's observations on good and evil.
- 9) His extraordinary ability to write plays based largely, or in part, on fairy-tales, the ancient gods of Greece and Rome that can, and still do, enchant adult audiences, for plays such as *MSND* and the his 4 Romance plays.
- 10) His characterisation of men and women of such a wide range that he drew from people of his own generation, and who remind us of our contemporaries in character and behaviour.
- 11) His decision to gently inform his contemporaries of the ridiculous and horrible fiction that when we die we go to purgatory or hell where we are gravely punished. This was something that frightened, or terrified some, and maybe many of his epoch before they died. This was a courageous act on his part because the Church of his times might have taken great exception to these views being made public.
- 12) The publishing of his beautiful and powerful poem that he called 'The Phoenix and Turtle' in which it is believed by some, but not by all scholars, that one of the characters in this poem was based on Mrs Anne Line who, together with the others was brutally executed at Tyburn, for being one of a tiny group of Catholics who had gathered together in a house in London for a prayer meeting. This poem is a powerful expression of his horror at this brutality that clearly greatly upset William Shakespeare. This was a dangerous decision for Shakespeare to have taken, for he might have brought a severe retribution on his head from the Monarch, Queen Elizabeth, or from one of her senior courtiers.
- 13) We shall never know because we cannot ever know whether Will Shakespeare might have been speaking, at least in part, for himself when he spoke these so moving lines to Horatio in *Hamlet*, Act 3, Scene 2, lines 71-73: (Arden Edition)
 

Give me that man  
That is not passion's slave, and I shall wear him  
In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart,  
As I do thee.

No more can we know whether Shakespeare spoke for himself when he created his Sonnet 129, that is one of the most perturbed and outspoken of his late sonnets that scholars think were written about the same time as the play *Hamlet*. These two somewhat contrary examples are given here because they illustrate how difficult it is for us to understand, and how impossible to be certain, what Shakespeare really wants us to take away from some of our readings of his plays and some of his sonnets and his three long poems.
- 14) Finally, we have left to the last of this list *Hamlet's* cruel treatment of Ophelia, of his own mother Gertrude, and of Polonius, the father of Ophelia. We cannot know whether Shakespeare had some particular intention to write about these cruelties, and especially those of Ophelia and of Gertrude because Shakespeare did rather draw out

their unhappiness caused by the cruelty inflicted upon them. Similarly there is the awful cruelty suffered by Desdemona from both Iago and Othello, almost throughout the whole of that play. Then too, there is the appalling unhappiness that King Lear inflicted upon Cordelia, his youngest daughter. Some of the worst excesses to cause misery and pain, let alone unhappiness, were the brutal treatment of Lavinia in the play Titus Andronicus, and the execution of Mrs Ann Line and some of her Catholic friends described in The Phoenix and Turtle poem

One is left not knowing if there was a particular intention in the mind of Shakespeare to write of these torments imposed on these attractive, kind, considerate, loving, women, that we witness when we follow the three great plays of Hamlet, Othello and King Lear. We can notice that many of these women were very young. It would seem, perhaps, that our world has always had men who have wished to exercise their cruelty upon others and especially on women. Perhaps Shakespeare wished to remind us to make great efforts to find ways to reduce this habit. Today's newspapers, the wireless and the television report almost every week such horrors from around the world .