William Shakespeare

A Literary Reference to His Life and Work

Contents

How to Use This Book

Part I of this book contains a brief biography of Shakespeare. Part II contains entries on all of Shakespeare's known works. Furthermore, each entry on a play contains subentries on all the characters appearing in that play. Many characters appear in more than one play but are fully entered at only one to avoid pointless duplication. In this case cross-references are provided in the other corresponding plays. Part III contains entries on related places, terms, documents, references, works, and people, including collaborators, actors, scholars, relatives, and more. Part IV contains the appendices: a collection of quotations, a Shakespearean time line, a suggested reading list, and a list of the entries in this book divided into categories.

Reference to any name or term that appears as an entry in Part III: Related Entries is printed on first appearance in SMALL CAPITALS.

Part II

Works

A–S

All Is True

Alternative title for *Henry VIII*. The play is called *All Is True* in a contemporary account of its performance the day the GLOBE THEATRE burned down. This was probably a subtitle—perhaps to imply a contrast to another play about Henry VIII, the blatantly fictitious *When You See Me, You Know Me* (1605) by Samuel ROWLEY. Some scholars, however, contend that *All Is True* was Shakespeare's original title, which was altered in the FIRST FOLIO (1623) to go with the other HISTORY PLAYS, all named for kings.

All's Well That Ends Well

SYNOPSIS

Act 1, Scene 1

The Countess of Rossillion's son Bertram is leaving for the court of the King of France. The Countess and Lord Lafew discuss the King's poor health; she regrets that the father of her ward, Helena, has died, because he was a great physician. The Countess bids Bertram farewell and departs, and Bertram, after a cursory farewell to Helena, leaves with Lafew. Helena soliloquizes on her seemingly hopeless love for Bertram. Bertram's friend Parolles arrives and engages Helena in an exchange of witticisms on virginity. Parolles leaves, and Helena decides that she must act if her love is to be rewarded. She sees an opportunity in the King's illness.

Act 1, Scene 2

The King discusses the war between FLORENCE and Siena, stating that he has decided to permit noblemen of FRANCE to fight in the conflict if they wish. Bertram arrives and is welcomed warmly by the King. The King remarks on his ill health and regrets the death of the famed doctor who had served in the court at ROSSILLION.

Act 1, Scene 3

The Countess's jester, the Clown, requests permission to marry, making obscene jokes and singing songs. The Steward wishes to speak about Helena, and the Countess sends the Clown to get her. The Countess remarks on her fondness for Helena, and the Steward confides that he has overheard the young woman musing on her love for Bertram. As the Steward leaves, Helena arrives, and the Countess elicits from her a confession of her love for Bertram and of her intention to go to Paris. Helena asserts that she has secret prescriptions of her father's that she is convinced will cure the King, and the Countess agrees to help her travel to Paris to try them.

Act 2, Scene 1

The King bids farewell to the First and Second Lords (1) and other young noblemen leaving to fight in Italy. Bertram regrets that he is commanded to remain at court. Lafew appears and introduces Helena as a young woman who can cure the King's illness. Helena convinces the King to try her medicine, offering to wager her life that it will work within 24 hours. In return, she asks the King to approve her marriage to the man of her choice.

Act 2, Scene 2

The Clown jests about life at the King's court, and the Countess gives him a message to take to Helena.

Act 2, Scene 3

Lafew, interrupted repeatedly by Parolles, tells of the King's return to health. The King arrives with Helena, who is to choose from among the young gentlemen of the court. She selects Bertram, but he refuses to marry her, saying that her social rank is too low. However, the King orders him to accept, and he acquiesces. Parolles puts on airs, and Lafew disdains him with elaborate insults. Lafew leaves, and Bertram reappears, declaring that he will run away to the wars in Italy before he will consummate his marriage to Helena. He plans to send Helena back to the Countess alone.

Act 2, Scene 4

Parolles conveys Bertram's instructions to Helena.

Act 2, Scene 5

Lafew warns Bertram not to rely on Parolles. Helena tells Bertram she is ready to leave; he pointedly avoids a farewell kiss. She departs, and Bertram and Parolles leave for Italy.

Act 3, Scene 1

The Duke of Florence receives the First and Second Lords (1).

Act 3, Scene 2
The Countess reads Bertram's letter declaring that he has run away from his new wife, as Helena appears with the First and Second Lords (1), who are on leave from Florence. She reads aloud a letter from Bertram: he will not acknowledge her as his wife until she wears his ring and bears his child, which, he insists, will never happen. In a soliloquy, Helena decides that she must leave France and become a wanderer so that her husband may live unhindered by an unwanted wife.

Act 3, Scene 3
The Duke of Florence makes Bertram his general of cavalry. Bertram rejoices to be engaged in war, not love.

Act 3, Scene 4
The Steward reads a letter from Helena stating that she has become a pilgrim. The dismayed Countess orders him to write Bertram, asking him to return, hoping that Helena will eventually come back as well.

Act 3, Scene 5
The Widow Capilet, a landlady of Florence, her daughter Diana, and their neighbor Mariana remark that the new French general, Bertram, has attempted to seduce Diana, sending Parolles as his intermediary. Helena appears, identifying herself as a French pilgrim, and she is told about the general, whom the ladies have heard has rejected his wife. Helena agrees to lodge with the Widow.

Act 3, Scene 6
The two Lords (1) propose to prove to Bertram that Parolles is a coward. They will kidnap him and make him believe he has been captured by the enemy; they are sure that he will betray his comrades out of fear while Bertram overhears his interrogation. Parolles enters and brags that he will retrieve a captured regimental drum, a prized emblem. He leaves, and the First Lord follows to prepare the plan; Bertram invites the Second Lord to visit Diana with him.

Act 3, Scene 7
Helena has told the Widow that she is Bertram's wife, and she proposes a plot: if Diana pretends to accept Bertram as a lover, Helena will substitute for the young woman in bed; Bertram will not recognize her in the dark. The Widow agrees.

Act 4, Scene 1
The First Lord (1) instructs his men to pose as foreign mercenaries, pretending to speak in an exotic language to Parolles, and a Soldier volunteers to act as their "interpreter." Parolles appears, wondering what excuse he can offer for returning without the drum. He is captured and immediately promises, through the "interpreter," to reveal military secrets if his life is spared.

Act 4, Scene 2
Bertram attempts to talk Diana into sleeping with him. She demands that he give her his ring, a family heirloom, and also asks him to promise not to speak to her when they meet later that night. He agrees.

Act 4, Scene 3
The First and Second Lords (1) discuss Bertram's disgrace for having left his wife, noting also that he has seduced a young woman by giving her his family ring. They have heard that his wife has died, and they regret that he is probably pleased by this. Bertram arrives, and the blindfolded Parolles is brought in to be "interrogated." He reveals military secrets, disparaging both Bertram and the Lords as he does so. The blindfold is removed, and Parolles sees who has exposed him. The Lords, Bertram, and the Soldiers bid him a sardonic farewell and leave for France, the war being over. Alone, Parolles declares that having been proven a fool, he will simply have to become a professional FOOL, or jester.

Act 4, Scene 4
Helena intends to take the Widow and Diana to the King's court at MARSEILLES, where she can get an escort to Rossillion and arrive ahead of Bertram.

Act 4, Scene 5
In Rossillion, Lafew, the Countess, and the Clown mourn Helena. Lafew proposes that Bertram marry his daughter, and the Countess agrees. Lafew has learned that the King will visit Rossillion shortly. The Clown reports Bertram's approach.

Act 5, Scene 1
In Marseilles, Helena and her companions encounter a Gentleman who informs them that the King has gone on to Rossillion.

Act 5, Scene 2

In Rossillion, Parolles, now in rags, is teased by the Clown. Lafew appears, and Parolles begs him for assistance. After chastising him for having earned his misfortune through knavery, Lafew promises him a position in his household.

Act 5, Scene 3

The King pardons Bertram for his part in Helena's death and tells him of his prospective marriage to Lafew's daughter. Bertram offers Lafew a ring to give his daughter. The King recognizes it as the one he had given Helena, but Bertram claims that it came from an admirer in Florence. The unbelieving King orders him arrested. Diana arrives and asserts that Bertram cannot deny that he took her virginity. She produces his family ring and says that Parolles can testify to her relationship with him. Bertram insists that she seduced him and then demanded his ring; he equates the gift with payment to a prostitute. Parolles appears and states that Bertram's infatuation with Diana extended to promising marriage. Helena appears and claims Bertram as her husband, reminding him that he had said he would accept her when she wore his ring and bore his child. She says these things are done and tells of her impersonation in Diana's bed. The delighted King promises Diana a dowry if she wants to marry. He speaks an EPILOGUE to the audience, asking for applause.

COMMENTARY

All's Well That Ends Well presents the customary material of COMEDY—the triumph of love over obstacles—in a grotesque and ambivalent light, and this has led most scholars to place it with *Measure for Measure* and *Troilus and Cressida* among the so-called PROBLEM PLAYS. Like its fellows, *All's Well* centers on sex and social relations and offers no sure and convincing resolution at its conclusion, leading its audiences to recognize the inadequacy of humanity to live up to the grand ideals and happy endings of literary romance. Nevertheless, *All's Well* is humorous, and it does in the end offer the traditional comedic resolution, albeit in muted form.

Though love is the play's most prominent subject, there is a marked absence of the mutual joy of earlier Shakespearean lovers—as in, say, *Much Ado About Nothing.* Helena is obsessed with a clearly inferior man whose response to her is wholly negative until his grudging and heavily qualified acceptance at the close, and she wins him only through the rather sordid "bed trick." The comments of the Lords, the Clown, and other characters deflate the main plot even further. However, although the play supports negative interpretations, it is clear that Shakespeare did not intend such views to predominate. They are effectively countered by the positive attitudes of the Countess, the King, and Lafew. The playwright is careful to build his lovers up and to minimize the vileness of the bed trick, and he provides the traditional reconciliation scene at the close of the play. Moreover, in Helena's persistent pursuit of Bertram despite his manifest unworthiness, some commentators have seen an allegory of Christian grace, though others disagree. In any case, many critics see an artistic failure in the playwright's attempt to force his naturalistic presentation of Bertram's snobbery and Helena's manipulation into the traditional mold of reconciliation comedy. That *All's Well* is weaker than many other Shakespearean dramas is widely conceded, but it remains of considerable interest precisely because of its conflict between naturalism and romantic fantasy. Though somewhat unsatisfying in its own terms, the play constitutes a step toward the ROMANCES, where a different approach to the same conflict yields more successful results.

All's Well centers on Helena. Though she is sometimes seen by critics as a satirical portrait of a possessive woman, this view seems contrary to Shakespeare's intentions, for he presents her in the most flattering of lights. She is the subject of highly complimentary remarks by the Countess and Lafew at the play's outset, and the King also admires her, both before and after the success of her medicine. In restoring a dying monarch to health, she resembles a heroine of age-old legends, and she takes on an appropriate aura of undoubted goodness. Later, the Widow and Diana welcome her into their lives enthusiastically, and upon her return to those who believe her dead, in 5.3, she is received with the awe due a goddess. Moreover, her immediate resolution of all problems seems to justify this reverence; she is a virtual deus ex machina.

that Humphrey MOSELEY's 1653 inventory lists both *The Second Maiden's Tragedy* and *Cardenio*. Hamilton's claim remains a subject of controversy, but most authorities do not accept this play in the Shakespearean CANON.

Comedy of Errors, The

SYNOPSIS

Act 1, Scene 1

Duke Solinus of Ephesus informs Egeon, a merchant of Syracuse, that he is subject to the death penalty, prescribed for any citizen of Syracuse found in EPHESUS, unless he can pay an immense ransom. Egeon tells of the long search that has brought him to Ephesus: 23 years earlier, his wife and one of their infant twin sons had been separated from him in a shipwreck. The other son had set forth, at the age of 18, in search of his lost brother. He took with him his servant, who had also been separated from a twin brother in the same shipwreck. Egeon himself had then begun to roam the world for news of either son. The Duke is sympathetic to this tragic tale; he gives the prisoner the rest of the day to beg or borrow ransom money.

Act 1, Scene 2

A local Merchant advises Antipholus of Syracuse, newly arrived, not to reveal his origins, telling of the fate of Egeon. Antipholus instructs his servant, Dromio of Syracuse, to return to their inn and guard their money. In a soliloquy, Antipholus tells of his search for his lost brother, and the audience realizes that he is one of Egeon's sons. Dromio of Ephesus enters and mistakes Antipholus for his own master, Antipholus of Ephesus. Antipholus of Syracuse in turn mistakes this Dromio for his own servant. The presence in the city of the two sets of twins is now known to the audience. Dromio of Ephesus relays his mistress's demand that his master return home. Antipholus of Syracuse asks about the safety of the money, and Dromio denies knowledge of any money. Antipholus beats him, and the mystified servant runs away. Antipholus remarks to himself on the reputation of Ephesus as a center for witchcraft and thievery, and he hurries back to his inn, fearing theft.

Act 2, Scene 1

Adriana, the wife of Antipholus of Ephesus, complains that her husband is late for lunch, thus triggering a disputation on marriage with her sister, Luciana; Luciana holds for wifely obedience in all things, while Adriana asserts her independence. Dromio of Ephesus returns to tell of the beating he has received. Adriana sends him out again to fetch Antipholus home. Adriana asserts that her husband prefers the company of other women to her own, though Luciana rebukes her for unjustified jealousy.

Act 2, Scene 2

Antipholus of Syracuse encounters his own servant, whom he berates for the behavior of the other Dromio and then beats when he declares his innocence. Adriana and Luciana appear, and Adriana, thinking Antipholus of Syracuse to be her husband, chastises him for infidelity. When he responds with natural confusion, he is rebuked by Luciana. The servant also claims ignorance, and the two are jointly condemned by the women. The visitors are mystified and fear that supernatural doings are afoot. However, Antipholus decides to follow the drift of things in the hope of discovering the truth, and he permits himself to be taken to Adriana's home, where Dromio is assigned the gate-guarding duties of his namesake.

Act 3, Scene 1

Antipholus of Ephesus enters with his servant Dromio and two friends, Angelo, a goldsmith, and Balthasar, a merchant. Antipholus invites his friends to come to his house, but they are turned away at the gate by Dromio of Syracuse, who is obeying his orders to keep out all comers. Another servant, Luce, and finally Adriana herself, persist in keeping Antipholus out, believing him to be an imposter. The outraged husband announces that he will pay a visit to a Courtesan he knows and that, moreover, he will give that woman the gold necklace he had commissioned from Angelo as a gift for his wife.

Act 3, Scene 2

Luciana is appalled that Antipholus of Syracuse, whom she believes to be her brother-in-law,

Antipholus of Ephesus, has declared his love for her. She concludes that he is mad and flees, announcing her intention to tell Adriana about this turn of events. Dromio of Syracuse enters and tells of the extravagantly ugly kitchen maid, Nell, who has claimed him as a husband. Antipholus sends him to prepare to depart; as he observes in a soliloquy, they must flee the witchery of the place, especially since he has fallen in love with one of the supernatural creatures—namely, Luciana. Angelo appears with the gold chain commissioned by the other Antipholus and turns it over to this one, despite the latter's bewildered protests.

Act 4, Scene 1

A Merchant demands of Angelo the repayment of a debt, and he is accompanied by an Officer empowered to arrest debtors. Angelo says that he can satisfy the debt as soon as Antipholus pays him for the gold chain. Just then, Antipholus of Ephesus appears with his servant, whom he sends to buy a rope, with which he proposes to whip his wife for having kept him out of his house. When he sees Angelo, he protests that he has not received the chain. Confusion leads to anger, and Antipholus is arrested. At this point, Dromio of Syracuse appears. He announces that he has arranged passage on a ship and bids Antipholus go aboard. For this seeming asininity, and for not having a rope, Antipholus rebukes Dromio and promises him a future beating. The servant is then sent to Adriana for bail money.

Act 4, Scene 2

Luciana and Adriana discuss the apparent infidelity of Antipholus. Dromio of Syracuse enters and tells of the need for bail. The women, who think he is Dromio of Ephesus, send him back with the required funds.

Act 4, Scene 3

Antipholus of Syracuse is wearing the gold chain provided by Angelo. Dromio of Syracuse arrives with the bail money, but of course his master does not know what he is talking about. Antipholus attributes their confusion to the supernatural qualities of Ephesus. Consequently, when the Courtesan appears, asking if his gold chain is the one he has promised her, he responds by asserting that she must be an agent of the devil. When she demands the return of a ring she had given him, the two Syracusans flee. The Courtesan reflects that Antipholus must surely be mad. She determines to tell Adriana of her husband's state.

Act 4, Scene 4

Antipholus of Ephesus, in the custody of the Officer, sees Dromio of Ephesus and thinks his bail money has arrived. This Dromio, however, has the rope he was sent to purchase. He is struck with it by the furious Antipholus and delivers an elaborate lament on being beaten. Adriana, Luciana, and the Courtesan arrive with Doctor Pinch, whom Adriana entreats to restore Antipholus to sanity. Antipholus, becoming more and more enraged, attempts to strike Adriana, and he and Dromio are restrained and tied up by a group of passersby. Pinch takes the two prisoners to Adriana's house for treatment. Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse appear; the others flee, believing the two have escaped from Pinch and are bent on revenge.

Act 5, Scene 1

Angelo and the Merchant discuss the strange behavior of Antipholus of Ephesus. Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse appear; Angelo charges Antipholus with dishonesty, and tempers flare. Antipholus and the Merchant draw their swords. Adriana, Luciana, and the Courtesan reappear, calling for help in capturing Antipholus and Dromio. The two Syracusans flee, taking sanctuary in the PRIORY. The Abbess of the Priory, Emilia, emerges. Adriana demands the return of her husband; the Abbess refuses to permit a violation of the right to sanctuary.

Adriana determines to appeal to the Duke. The Duke appears, with a retinue including the unfortunate Egeon, who is to be beheaded. Antipholus and Dromio of Ephesus arrive, having escaped from Pinch. Antipholus, too, demands justice of the Duke. Charges and countercharges are exchanged by Antipholus, Angelo, Adriana, and the Courtesan. The extent of the confusion overwhelms the Duke, who sends for the abbess. Egeon claims Antipholus of Ephesus as his son, but as it is the wrong Antipholus he addresses, he is repudiated. The abbess reappears with Antipholus and Dromio

"Methinks you are my glass, and not my brother" (*The Comedy of Errors* 5.1.417). The two Dromios, brothers separated at birth, are reunited at the end of the play. *(Courtesy of Culver Pictures, Inc.)*

of Syracuse. All are stunned by the presence, together for the first time, of the two sets of identical twins. The abbess recognizes Egeon and reveals that she is his long-lost wife, Emilia. The identities of the twins are quickly established, and Emilia invites all the company to a feast of celebration in the Priory.

COMMENTARY

The Comedy of Errors is an early work, lacking most of the features we associate with Shakespeare's masterpieces. It contains no brilliant dialogue or poetry, no very impressive characters, and, most strikingly, its plot line is difficult to take at all seriously. Of all Shakespeare's plays, *The Comedy of Errors* most nearly resembles a FARCE, pure and simple, which the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines as "a dramatic work (usually short) which has for its sole object to excite laughter."

This play is both short and funny, but it is also more than that. Shakespeare's genius lies in his concern with what it is to be human and here he elevates a common farce by means of telling depictions of the human condition. He presents and resolves disruptions and anxieties that invite sympathy and stimulate compassion. In watching or reading *The Comedy of Errors,* we experience an awareness of the value to an individual of relationships to other people. Further, the play presents aspects of the situation of women in Elizabethan society, a matter Shakespeare often dealt with. The redeeming power of love, a profound theme in much of the playwright's later work, is also presented here, in an uncomplicated foreshadowing of subtler renderings.

A traditional opinion among scholars and critics, only lately being revised, is that *The Comedy of Errors* is best regarded as an apprentice work, only marginally related to the greater plays that followed. There is some justification for this point of view. For one thing, the play is very conventional, conforming in staging and general outline to standard Elizabethan ideas, derived from what was known, from ancient Roman drama, of what constituted a proper play. In staging his play, Shakespeare was content to abide by most of the ancient conventions of the form. In accordance with accepted neoclassical doctrine, the action of the play takes place in a single place and in a single day. The setting consists of three buildings—the PHOENIX, the PORCUPINE, and the Priory, each labeled with a sign or emblem—in imitation of Roman stagecraft as it was understood in Shakespeare's time.

Moreover, Shakespeare's play is undeniably farcical in its assembled absurdities. These are simply conventions of farce, as acceptable to a 16th-century audience as those of the Marx Brothers are acceptable today, and no different in kind. In adding the twin servants to the story he received from PLAUTUS (see "Sources," below), Shakespeare doubled the chances for misadventure and created a set of complications that has been likened to a Bach fugue, but the principles of farce remain the same.

Another striking addition Shakespeare made, changing the character of the work in a very impor-

tant way, is the SUBPLOT featuring Egeon. Egeon's explanation of his family's separation in 1.1 serves as a PROLOGUE to the play, a classical device that Shakespeare used more formally elsewhere. More important, Egeon's pathetic circumstances serve to color the farcical main plot: We cannot wholly forget this poor, unfortunate father to the Antipholus twins. Because this is a humorous play, we of course presume that all will end well, but we know that before it does this potential tragedy will have to be overcome somehow. Indeed, Egeon experiences a moment of extreme despair after his seeming rejection by his long-sought son (5.1.298–322). Thus, the coming reconciliation scene ends a truly important human crisis, as well as resolving the comic confusions of the central tale. Shakespeare, even as a young man at the beginning of his career, felt that a happy ending should not be divorced from an awareness of mortality and human frailty. In this he utterly transcends the genre of farce.

Some critics have charged that this device damages a play that might have been a fine farce but that, in its present form, is neither tragic nor wholly comic. However, modern opinion has generally held that the Egeon subplot is necessary, providing a moral ground for an otherwise unenlightening display of low comedy. In any case, this subplot is an early example of an important aspect of Shakespeare's art—the formulation of more than one point of view, generating different and potentially conflicting responses from the audience.

Chief among the characters involved in the central story of *The Comedy of Errors* is Adriana, one of the earliest of Shakespeare's many attractive heroines. Shakespeare developed Adriana from a stereotype of the contentious, jealous shrew, and she conforms to this image. But she is raised from a type to a real human being through the wit her creator gives her. Further, her evident loyalty to and love for her difficult husband render her quite sympathetic and admirable. She resembles such other Shakespearean women as Katherina in *The Taming of the Shrew* and Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing* in being sharp-tongued and independent-minded but ultimately tender and accepting. The playwright could thus present the reality of Elizabethan women whose personal strengths enabled them to temper, if not overcome, the general subservience of their gender, while at the same time confirming the legitimacy of the system, as his own conservatism inclined him to do. Adriana is contrasted with her sister Luciana, who is a dimmer figure, demure and passive. The debate between the two women on the proper relation of man and wife (2.1.7–42) is a set-piece disputation of a sort often presented on the Elizabethan stage. Although Adriana is a much more interesting and appealing character, Luciana's attitude to marriage seems to prevail at the play's end, in keeping with the common opinion of the day, which most women and Shakespeare shared.

Many of Shakespeare's plays hinge on a basic political question, the nature of the relationships among the citizen, the ruler, and the state. In this early work, the matter is only touched upon, but in a fashion that reveals an attitude that the playwright was to hold all his life. In a brief but telling passage, the Duke of Ephesus refuses to allow any alteration in the laws (1.1.142–148). He is explicit: His personal honor requires this relationship to the state. This is a kingly ideal that is expressed repeatedly, in much greater elaboration, in later plays. That the young Shakespeare found occasion to present it here, without any compelling reason to do so, suggests its early importance for him.

For Shakespeare and his contemporaries, everyone, not just the king, took his or her identity from a relationship with society as a whole. One was not simply a conscious, individual being, but, more important, one occupied a position in the social framework. Shakespeare was to consider this matter of social identity in a number of ways in later plays; it is touched on in this early work. Antipholus of Syracuse is concerned for his lost selfhood when he regrets the loss of his family in a touching soliloquy (1.2.33–40) on his lack of contentment. Also, it is evident that the distress undergone by the four misidentified twins is caused by the loss of their sense of identity; as the people in their world fail to recognize them, they experience a painful uncertainty as to who they are themselves.

Antipholus of Syracuse, in his confusion, seeks to be remade through love, by Luciana. The transforming power of love was always an important theme for Shakespeare; in several later plays, it is a

major concern. Here it is overwhelmed by the farce for the most part, but we see it roughly sketched out with reference to romantic love in the depiction of the marriage of Adriana and Antipholus of Ephesus, and in the wooing of Luciana by Antipholus of Syracuse. Familial love triumphs in the reunion at the close of the play. And Emilia, the abbess who provides the resolution when the Duke, for all his power, cannot, represents the strength of Christian grace and mercy, a transcendent form of love.

Shakespeare's interest in the inner and outer worlds of human experience is what makes him great. He writes of the web of relationships, both political and domestic, that make up a society, and his characters have inner lives that we can recognize as realistic. In *The Comedy of Errors,* although it is derivative and rather limited in range, we see his talent already beginning to produce a drama of conflict and resolution in a world of basic human concerns, using themes and materials that would recur in his mature work.

SOURCES OF THE PLAY

Shakespeare's principal source for *The Comedy of Errors* was *The Menaechmi,* a play by the ancient Roman playwright Plautus. The first English translation of *The Menaechmi,* by William WARNER, was not published until 1595, a little later than the date when Shakespeare's play was presumably written, but the playwright may have known the translation in manuscript, as was common at that time, or he might have read it in one of several 16th-century Latin editions. Shakespeare made a number of important changes in the story, as he usually did when using sources. His boldest and best-known alteration was the addition of a second set of misidentified twins, a twist he took from another play by Plautus, *Amphitryon.* A number of other changes result in a general shift in the qualities of the play. For example, a ribald emphasis on a husband's relations with a mistress is elevated to a concern with the virtues of courtship and marriage.

The subplot concerning Egeon may derive from any of a number of sources; the motif of separated and reunited families had been familiar since ancient times. Shakespeare surely knew it from the medieval *Gesta Romanorum,* translated by Richard ROBINSON—later a source for *The Merchant of Venice*—and the *Confessio Amantis,* by John GOWER—later a source for *Pericles.* However, the hostility between cities resulting in a traveler's death penalty comes from George GASCOIGNE's *Supposes* (performed 1566, published 1573), where the situation is invented as part of a ruse; it is used in the same way to dupe the Pedant in *The Taming of the Shrew.*

TEXT OF THE PLAY

The Comedy of Errors is sometimes said to have been the first play that Shakespeare wrote, although this cannot be proven. It was certainly one of his earliest. The play's first recorded performance was held on December 28, 1594, as part of a program of Christmas revels at Gray's Inn (see INNS OF COURT). This private performance, the play's brevity (with fewer than 1,800 lines, it is Shakespeare's shortest), and its resemblance to ancient Roman comedy have prompted some scholars to suggest that the play was commissioned for this presentation to a particularly learned audience. However, most scholarly opinion holds that it was written at an earlier date; estimates have ranged from the late 1580s to 1594.

The play was initially published in the FIRST FOLIO in 1623. This version is believed to have been derived from Shakespeare's FOUL PAPERS. The Folio contains the only early publication of *The Comedy of Errors,* and it has been the basis for all subsequent editions of the play.

THEATRICAL HISTORY OF THE PLAY

The Gray's Inn performance of December 1594 and a performance at the court of King JAMES I in the Christmas season of 1604 are the only known early productions, although various references in contemporary plays and books suggest that there were probably other 16th- and 17th-century stagings. In the 18th century and well into the 19th, all presentations of *The Comedy of Errors,* with the possible exception of a brief run in 1741, were adaptations that varied more or less grossly from the original. The brevity of the play, its esoteric relation to classical drama, and a sense that it was more an "apprentice" piece than a mature work seem to have combined to provide justification for a long series of

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Lacy, John (d. 1681) English actor and playwright, author of an adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew.* Lacy's *Sauny the Scot* (1667) was a farcical revision in which the comical servant Grumio—renamed Sauny—was the principal character. The play was written in prose and set in England. Extremely popular, *Sauny* was revived periodically for a century.

Originally a dancing instructor, Lacy turned to the theater in the 1660s and achieved fame as a comic actor in Thomas KILLIGREW's company. He was particularly noted for his Falstaff, and he played the title role in the original production of *Sauny.* He wrote three other comedies.

Lady Elizabeth's Men Seventeenth-century LONDON theatrical company (see ELIZABETHAN THEATER). Founded in 1611 and named for their patron, the princess ELIZABETH STUART, Lady Elizabeth's Men spent a year touring the provinces before coming to London and playing under contract to Philip HENSLOWE. Among the members were William ECCLESTONE, John RICE, and Joseph TAYLOR. They performed at the ROSE, SWAN, and WHITEFRIARS THEATREs. In 1613 they absorbed the Children of the Queen's Revels (see CHILDREN'S COMPANIES) and, with them, Nathan FIELD, who became their leader. After two seasons at the HOPE THEATRE, the company sued Henslowe in 1615; some of the records of the case survive and provide a glimpse of the theater world's business side. Sometime just before or after Henslowe's death in 1616, the company formed an alliance with PRINCE CHARLES' MEN, but Field had already left and soon the company failed, though it seems to have existed in the provinces for several years. In 1622 a new company called Lady Elizabeth's Men was formed by Christopher BEESTON, and it prospered briefly, but it was stricken by plague in the epidemic of 1625 and was not re-founded. Princess Elizabeth had long been gone from England, and Beeston replaced Lady Elizabeth's Men with Queen Henrietta's Men, named for the new queen.

Lamb, Charles (1775–1834) English essayist, best known for his whimsical essays written under the pseudonym Elia. Lamb also wrote commentary on Shakespeare's plays, and with his sister Mary (1764–1847), he compiled prose renditions of the comedies and tragedies in *Tales from Shakespeare* (1807). Lamb's most influential critical work was his *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets who lived about the time of Shakespeare* (1808), which did much to revive interest in ELIZABETHAN DRAMA. He also wrote a notorious essay, "On the Tragedies of Shakespeare" (1811), in which he contended that the plays—especially *King Lear*—were unsuited for performance, though he also insisted that if they were staged, it should be done using Shakespeare's texts rather than adaptations. Lamb wrote essays on contemporary Romantic poetry as well; he was one of the first critics to recognize the genius of John KEATS, and Samuel Taylor COLERIDGE and William Wordsworth (1770–1850) were close friends. He wrote poetry himself, but neither it nor his fiction is widely read today, whereas *Tales from*

Shakespeare and the collected *Essays of Elia* (1823, second series 1833) have continued to be popular.

Lamb's life was stricken by personal tragedy. Mental illness ran in his family; Lamb himself was briefly hospitalized for insanity in his youth and suffered from alcoholism all his life. In 1796 his sister Mary Lamb killed their mother in a fit of temporary madness; Lamb refused to have Mary institutionalized and cared for her the rest of his life.

Lamb, George (1784–1834) British politician, playwright, and poet, author of an adaptation of *Timon of Athens.* In 1816 Lamb composed an adaptation of Shakespeare's play with the intention of restoring the original text, which was heavily altered in presentations at the time. While Lamb's *Timon* retained some features of its immediate predecessors and failed to restore some omissions, it did employ most of Shakespeare's text. Produced by Edmund KEAN, who also took the title role, it was only moderately successful but may have paved the way for the first staging of the complete text, by Samuel PHELPS, a generation later.

Lamb had a varied career. After briefly practicing law, he shared in the management of the Drury Lane Theatre in London. He staged two of his own plays—an operetta and a farce—besides *Timon.* He was probably best known for his translation of the poems of Catullus (ca. 84–ca. 54 B.C.), though both it and his own poetry are generally regarded as mediocre. Introduced into politics by his brother William Lamb, Lord Melbourne (1779–1848), twice prime minister, George Lamb was a member of parliament in 1819–20 and again from 1826 to his death. He also served briefly as undersecretary of state.

Lambert, John (active 1587–1602) Shakespeare's first cousin and opponent in litigation. In 1588 John SHAKESPEARE—acting for himself, his wife Mary Arden SHAKESPEARE, and his son William—sued his nephew John Lambert (the son of Mary Arden Shakespeare's sister and Edmund Lambert [ca. 1525–87]) for the return of a piece of property—a house on 56 acres of land near STRATFORD—which Lambert had inherited from his father. This property had been mortgaged to Edmund by John Shakespeare in 1578, in return for a loan of £40 to be repaid in two years. The money was never repaid, and Edmund still owned the land at his death. According to the Shakespeares' complaint, John Lambert had agreed to accept £20 in return for clear title to the land, but Lambert denied this and won his case. John and Mary sued again in 1597 on different grounds but again lost. Lambert sold part of the property in 1602. The naming of William Shakespeare in the legal papers of 1588 is the only surviving mention of the playwright between the baptism of Hamnet and Judith SHAKESPEARE in Stratford in 1585 and the mocking reference by Robert GREENE to the young LONDON playwright in 1592. This mention has sometimes been thought to indicate that Shakespeare was in residence in Stratford or its environs at the time, but scholars generally agree that his technical involvement in the suit has little significance.

Lancaster family Branch of the PLANTAGENET FAMILY, major figures in Shakespeare's HISTORY PLAYS. The Lancastrian kings were descended from John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, the third son of King Edward III. Gaunt had inherited the title from his father-in-law, Henry of Lancaster, the Earl of Derby in *Edward III.* In 1399 Gaunt's son, Henry Bolingbroke, deposed King Richard II and ruled as Henry IV. He bequeathed the throne to his son, Henry V, in 1413. These events are dealt with in the major TETRALOGY of history plays, comprising *Richard II, 1* and *2 Henry IV,* and *Henry V.* When Henry V died in 1422, his son, Henry VI, was an infant. In the absence of a strong monarch, opposition to the illegal deposition of Richard II revived, and the YORK branch of the dynasty successfully pressed its claim to the throne, overthrowing Henry VI in 1461 (he was briefly reinstated in 1470–71). The rivalry between Lancaster and York, culminating in the WARS OF THE ROSES, is the principal subject of the minor tetralogy, consisting of *1, 2,* and *3 Henry VI* and *Richard III.* The Yorkists were finally defeated in 1485 by the last Lancastrian, the Earl of Richmond. This distant cousin of Henry VI, who ruled England as Henry VII, founded the TUDOR DYNASTY.

Lane, John (1590–1640) Resident of STRATFORD who was sued for slander by Shakespeare's daugh-

ter, Susanna SHAKESPEARE Hall. In June 1613 Lane allegedly declared that Mrs. Hall had committed adultery with a local hatter, Raphael Smith (1577–1621). She promptly sued him, and when he failed to appear for the trial on July 15, she was formally declared innocent of any impropriety and he was excommunicated. Lane was apparently a difficult man; he was tried in 1619 for riot and libel after he attacked—presumably by public verbal abuse—the vicar and aldermen of Stratford, and in the same year he was declared a drunkard by the churchwardens. Stratford was a small town, and the Shakespeare and Lane families were acquainted in other contexts. Lane's uncle, Richard LANE, was a business partner of Shakespeare's, and his first cousin Thomas NASH later married Susanna's daughter Elizabeth HALL.

Lane, Richard (ca. 1556–1613) Resident of STRATFORD, a business acquaintance of Shakespeare. Lane was a friend of Shakespeare's father, John SHAKESPEARE, who chose him in 1599 to help gather depositions in a lawsuit. In 1611 Lane joined William Shakespeare in a complicated lawsuit over tithe holdings (see COMBE, WILLIAM). In his will Lane appointed Shakespeare's son-in-law Dr. John HALL as trustee for his children, just a few days before Susanna SHAKESPEARE Hall sued his nephew John LANE for libel.

Laneman, Henry (Henry Lanman) (1536–ca. 1592) English theatrical entrepreneur, owner and probably the founder of the CURTAIN THEATRE. Laneman was the owner of the Curtain during the period 1585–92, when he and James BURBAGE, owner of the neighboring playhouse, THE THEATRE, agreed to pool the profits of both theaters. In 1581 he was the lessor of the land on which the Curtain stood, and so he is presumed to have built it in 1577. Nothing else is known of him.

Langbaine, Gerard (1656–1692) English scholar and writer, the author of the first account of Shakespeare's sources. Langbaine's *Momus Triumphans, or the Plagiaries of the English Stage exposed* (1687) is a catalogue of the sources used by various Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights, including Shakespeare. However, his treatment was brief and pedantic and was superseded by the work of Charlotte LENNOX and more modern scholars.

Langley, Francis (1550–1601) Goldsmith and theatrical entrepreneur in LONDON, owner of the SWAN THEATRE. Langley's name is linked with Shakespeare's in a mysterious lawsuit. Langley bought land on the south bank of the Thames near the ROSE THEATRE in 1595 and built the Swan, despite the opposition of the London government. However, in the summer of 1597, in the theater's second season, PEMBROKE'S MEN staged Thomas NASHE's allegedly "seditious" play *Isle of Dogs*, with the result that the royal CENSORSHIP closed all the London theaters for four months. After that Langley kept his theater open only with difficulty. Upon his death, the Swan Theatre was sold to another London investor.

Records show that another company played at the Swan before Pembroke's Men, and the scholar Leslie HOTSON has established a relationship between Langley and Shakespeare, which suggests that the company was probably the CHAMBERLAIN'S MEN. The owner of the Swan and the playwright were named jointly in a legal paper, though their connection is unknown (see GARDINER, WILLIAM). The most plausible relationship between the two is that of theater owner and representative of an acting company, so it is concluded that Shakespeare's troupe probably performed at the Swan.

Lanier, Emilia (1570–1654) Mistress of theatrical patron Henry Carey, Lord HUNSDON, and possibly the Dark Lady of the *Sonnets*. Emilia Bassano was the illegitimate daughter of an Italian musician at the court of Queen Elizabeth I and became the mistress of Lord Hunsdon when she was in her teens. In 1593 she became pregnant and was given some money and married to Alphonse Lanier, another court musician. The next year Hunsdon became the patron of Shakespeare's theatrical company, and it is possible that Emilia Lanier might have known Shakespeare through this connection. She might also have known the playwright through her husband's place in the world of court entertainment. The possibility that she was Shakespeare's

Dark Lady rests chiefly on these connections, plus a description of her—by the astrologer, Simon FORMAN, with whom she may have had an affair—as a witch-like "incuba," a characterization thought to accord well with the poet's "female evil . . . [who can] corrupt [a] saint to be a devil" (Sonnet 144.5–7).

Lanier's husband Alphonse was a wastrel, and they were soon impoverished. She published a book—a long poem on the women of the Bible—but it was not popular, and when Alphonse died in 1613, she was very poor. She opened a school, but it failed. Her son, Henry, a court musician to King Charles I, may have provided for her, but he died in 1633, and Lanier was left with the responsibility for his two children. She received a pension from the crown but died in near poverty.

Laplace, Pierre-Antoine de (1707–1793) French translator of Shakespeare. Laplace, under the influence of a concern to revitalize the French theater, wrote a book, *A Discourse on English Theatre* (1745), and translated 23 English plays, 10 of them by Shakespeare, the first renderings of the playwright into French. These adaptations, though they were significantly adulterated versions, introduced French readers to ELIZABETHAN DRAMA and inspired the adaptations of Jean-François DUCIS and, later, their own surpasser, the translations of Pierre LE TOURNEUR. (See also TRANSLATION OF SHAKESPEARE.)

Laughton, Charles (1899–1962) British actor. Laughton, who studied acting under Theodore KOMISARJEVSKY, is probably best known for his performance in the title role of the 1933 film *The Private Lives of Henry VIII* (not based on Shakespeare's play)—for which he won an Academy Award—and other movie roles, such as Captain Bligh in *The Mutiny on the Bounty* (1935) and the *Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1939). However, in the 1930s, Laughton succeeded in a variety of Shakespearean roles at the OLD VIC THEATRE, including Prospero *(The Tempest)*, Angelo *(Measure for Measure)*, and Macbeth. Also, after years in Hollywood—he became an American citizen in 1941—he returned to England in 1959 and played Bottom *(A Midsummer Night's Dream)* and Lear at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in STRATFORD.

Law, Matthew (active 1599–1629) Publisher and bookseller in LONDON. Law bought the rights to three of Shakespeare's plays from Andrew WISE and then produced the third through sixth editions of *1 Henry IV* (1603, 1608, 1613, 1622), the fourth and fifth editions of *Richard II* (1608, 1615), and the fourth through sixth editions of *Richard III* (1605, 1612, 1622). Errors in the printing of each of these plays in the FIRST FOLIO (1623) point to delays in the setting of type for them; scholars attribute this delay to difficulties involved in securing Law's permission to republish them. Originally a draper, Law joined the STATIONERS' COMPANY in 1599; he had two bookshops for much of his career. He was fined several times for selling books on Sundays and for selling pirated texts.

Law Against Lovers, The Play by William DAVENANT based loosely on *Measure for Measure* and *Much Ado About Nothing.* Produced in 1662, *The Law Against Lovers* has a main plot that is a much-altered version of *Measure for Measure,* combined with some material from the Beatrice and Benedick plot of *Much Ado* and much that had nothing to do with Shakespeare's plays. Most of the dialogue is by Davenant, who declared his intention to "save" Shakespeare by making the plays palatable to a new audience. This play, however, was unsuccessful, receiving only a few performances and remaining unrevived thereafter. Though Samuel PEPYS liked it, an anonymous satirical poet of the day differed, saying of Davenant that ". . . only he the Art of it had / Of two good Playes to make one Bad." *The Law Against Lovers* nevertheless inspired an imitation, Charles GILDON's *Measure for Measure, or Beauty the Best Advocate* (1699), in which much of Davenant's text was retained, but the material from *Much Ado* was replaced by an operatic MASQUE.

Leake, William (d. 1633) London publisher of several editions of *Venus and Adonis.* After buying the rights to Shakespeare's poem from John HARRISON in 1596, Leake, a prosperous bookseller and

officer of the STATIONERS' COMPANY, published six editions (Q5–Q10) between 1599 and 1617.

Lee, Sidney (1859–1926) British scholar, author of a standard biography of Shakespeare. Lee, an editor and writer of the *Dictionary of National Biography,* elaborated his dictionary article on the playwright into his *Life of William Shakespeare* (1898), which remained the definitive biography for decades. He wrote other books on Shakespeare, including *Shakespeare and the Modern Stage* (1906) and *Shakespeare and the Italian Renaissance* (1915); he also edited a facsimile edition (1902) of the FIRST FOLIO.

Legh, Gerard (d. 1563) English antiquarian, author of a minor source for *The Taming of the Shrew* and *King Lear.* Legh's book on heraldry, *Accedens of Armory* (1562), contains a story that probably inspired the episode of the Tailor in 4.3 of *Shrew;* it also includes one of many versions of Lear's story and provided some minor details for Shakespeare's play on the subject. A prosperous draper, Legh was largely self-taught. The *Accedens,* his only work, is a compendium of miscellaneous heraldic lore in the form of a dialogue between a herald named Gerard and a knight named Legh.

Leicester, Robert Dudley, Earl of (1532–1588) English nobleman and theatrical patron. As patron of the acting company called LEICESTER'S MEN, Leicester was an important figure in the early history of ELIZABETHAN THEATER, even though he merely gave the troupe the legal standing they needed and did not actively engage in the production of plays. Leicester was a favorite of Queen Elizabeth I (see Elizabeth I in *Henry VIII*) and may have been her lover, but the evidence is uncertain. Though already married, he was thought to aspire to a royal wedding; when his wife died suspiciously in 1560, rumor called it murder (historians generally disagree), so it may have been impossible for the queen to marry him even if she had wished to. She continued to demonstrate her favor in any case, giving him KENILWORTH Castle and making him earl of Leicester.

Leicester became leader of an important political faction and intrigued against the queen's chief minister, Lord BURGHLEY. When he remarried in 1578, he acquired a stepson, Robert Devereux, Earl of ESSEX, who came to share his hostility to Burghley. His marriage offended the queen, and Leicester was out of favor for several years, but he resumed his position when given the command of English forces aiding the Dutch rebellion against Spain. The actor William KEMPE was in Leicester's retinue in the Netherlands, and some scholars speculate that the young Shakespeare may have been as well, though no confirming evidence exists. Leicester returned to England to take a high command in the army assembled to resist the Spanish Armada in 1588 and died of an illness soon after the crisis ended.

Leicester's Men Early English theatrical company. From at least 1559, the nobleman Robert Dudley, later Earl of LEICESTER, patronized a company of actors. Known as Dudley's Men until 1564, when their patron received his title, this troupe mostly toured the provinces. It did, however, play at the court of Queen Elizabeth I several times between 1560 and 1562, perhaps because their patron was the queen's favorite, possibly her lover.

In 1572, when actors were declared vagrants unless supported by a nobleman (see ELIZABETHAN THEATER), Leicester's Men was formally defined and its players named, including James BURBAGE and Robert WILSON. In 1574 the queen declared Leicester's Men her own employees as well, licensing them to play anywhere in England, including LONDON. This challenged for the first time the London government's puritanical opposition to public theater, an important watershed in the history of English drama.

For a decade Leicester's Men were the most important theatrical troupe in England, performing at Elizabeth's court and (after 1577) at Burbage's THEATRE. However, with the creation in 1583 of the QUEEN'S MEN, which was permitted to raid some of Leicester's best performers, their prominence diminished. In the summer of 1586, one of Leicester's Men, William KNELL, died while the troupe was performing in STRATFORD. This fact has prompted speculation that the young Shakespeare joined them at this time and returned with them to London to begin his career, although no other evidence supports this

A Collection of Quotations from Shakespeare's Works

All's Well That Ends Well

Helena: Oft expectation fails, and most oft there
Where most it promises, and oft it hits
Where hope is coldest and despair most fits.

—2.1.141–143

First Lord: The web of our life is of a mingled yard, good and ill together [. . .]

—4.3.68–69

King: The bitter past, more welcome is the sweet.

—5.3.328 (last line of the play)

Antony and Cleopatra

Enobarbus: 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.

—2.2.235–240 (speaking of Cleopatra)

Antony: Sometime we see a cloud that's dragonish,
A vapour sometime, like a bear, or lion,
A tower'd citadel, a pendent rock,
A forked mountain, or blue promontory
With trees upon 't, that nod unto the world,
And mock our eyes with air.

—4.14.2–7

Cleopatra: Let's do it after the high Roman fashion,
And make death proud to take us.

—4.15.87–88 (as she proposes suicide)

As You Like It

Duke: Sweet are the uses of adversity,
Which like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head[.]

—2.1.12–14

Jaques: 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 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.

—2.7.139–166

Rosalind: But these [tales] are all lies. Men have died from time to time and worms have eaten them, but not for love.

—4.1.101–103

The Comedy of Errors

Antipholus of Syracuse: [T]here's many a man hath more hair than wit.

—2.2.81–82

Abbess (Emilia): The venom clamours of a jealous woman
Poisons more deadly than a mad dog's tooth.

—5.1.69–70

Coriolanus

Sicinius: Nature teaches beasts to know their friends.

—2.1.5

Sicinius: What is the city but the people?

—3.1.197

Aufidius: So our virtues
Lie in th'interpretation of the time,
And power, unto itself most commendable,
Hath not a tomb so evident as a chair
T'extol what it hath done.

—4.7.49–53

Cymbeline

Guiderius: Fear no more the hear o'th' sun,
Nor the furious winter's rages,
Thou thy worldly task has done,
Home art gone and ta'en thy wages.
Golden lads and girls all must,
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

—4.2.258–263 (a funeral SONG)

Pisanio: Fortune brings in some boats that are not steer'd.

—4.3.46

Cymbeline: By med'cine life may be prolong'd, yet death
Will seize the doctor too.

—5.5.29–30

Edward III

King Edward: Like as the wind doth beautify a sail
And as a sail becomes the unseen wind,
So do her words her beauty, beauty, words.

—2.1.280–282 (on the Countess of Salisbury)

Hamlet

Hamlet: 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.

—1.2.129–137

Hamlet: I have of late, but wherefore I know not, lost all my mirth, forgone 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'er hanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appeareth nothing to me but a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What 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?

—2.2.295–308

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 a 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 th'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 currents turn awry
And lose the name of action.

—3.1.56–88

Hamlet: Get thee to a nunnery. Why, wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners? I am myself indifferent honest, but yet I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother had not borne me. I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious, with more offences at my beck than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in. What should such fellows as I do crawling between earth and heaven? We are arrant knaves all, believe none of us. Go thy ways to a nunnery.

—3.1.121–130 (to Ophelia)

Hamlet: 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—

—5.2.8–11

Hamlet: 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, hows aught, what is't to leave betimes? Let be.

—5.2.215–220

Horatio: Now cracks a noble heart. Good night, sweet prince,
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.

—5.2.364–365 (as Hamlet dies)

Henry IV, Part 1

Falstaff: Now, Hal, what time of day is it, lad?
Prince Hal: Thou art so fat-witted with drinking of old sack, and unbuttoning thee after supper, and sleeping upon benches after noon, that thou hast forgotten to demand that truly which thou wouldst truly know. What a devil hast thou to do with the time of day? Unless hours were cups of sack, and minutes capons, and clocks the tongues of bawds, and dials the signs of leaping-houses, and the blessed sun himself a fair hot wench in flame-coloured taffeta, I see no reason why thou shouldst be so superfluous to demand the time of the day.

—1.2.1–12

Falstaff: No, my good lord; banish Peto, banish Bardolph, banish Poins—but for sweet Jack Falstaff, kind Jack Falstaff, true Jack Falstaff, valiant Jack Falstaff, and therefore more valiant, being as he is old Jack Falstaff, banish not him thy Harry's company, banish not him thy Harry's company, banish plump Jack, and banish all the world.
Prince Hal: I do, I will.

—2.4.468–475

Falstaff: The better part of valour is discretion, in the which better part I have saved my life.

—5.4.119–120 (remarks after having played dead in battle)

Henry IV, Part 2

Falstaff: I am not only witty in myself, but the cause that wit is in other men.

—1.2.8–9

Feeble: [A] man can die but once, we owe God a death. [. . .] and let it go which way it will, he that dies this year is quit for the next.

—3.2.229–233 (as he volunteers for the army)

Henry IV: Be it thy course to busy giddy minds
With foreign quarrels, that action hence borne out
May waste the memory of the former days.

—4.5.213–215 (the king recommends "wagging the dog")

Henry V

Prologue: O, for a Muse of fire, that would ascend
The brightest heaven of invention [. . .]

—PROLOGUE, 1–2

Henry V: This story shall the good man teach his son;
And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by,
From this day to the ending of the world,
But we in it shall be remembered;
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
For he today that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile
This day shall gentle his condition:
And gentlemen in England now a-bed
Shall think themselves accurs'd they were not here,
And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.

—4.3.56–67 (speech before the battle of AGINCOURT)

Henry VI, Part 1

Bedford: 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.

—1.1.1–7

Warwick: Between two hawks, which flies the higher pitch;
Between two dogs, which hath the deeper mouth;
Between two blades, which bears the better temper;
Between two horses, which doth bear him best;
Between two girls, which hath the merriest eye—
I have perhaps some shallow spirit of judgment;
But in these nice sharp quillets of the law,
Good faith, I am no wiser than a daw.

—2.4.11–18

Henry VI, Part 2

Henry VI: O Lord, that lends me life,
Lend me a heart replete with thankfulness!

—1.1.19—20

Duchess: Could I come near your beauty with my nails
I'd set my ten commandments in your face.

—1.3.141–142 (to Queen Margaret)

Cade: [W]hen I am king, as king I will be,—
All: God save your Majesty!
Cade: I thank you, good people—there shall be no money; all shall eat and drink on my score, and I