Shakespeare and cultural hegemony

.... the canonized version of Shakespeare is a cultural creation, which has no intrinsic authority and whose validity is wide open to dispute.

Shakespeare … does not have to be a crucial stage in the justification of elitism in education and culture. He has been appropriated for certain practices and attitudes, and can be reappropriated for others.

Any serious venture to transform literary studies into an educational practice devoted not to maintaining but to changing the existing social order must undertake, as a major priority, the sustained reappropriation of Shakespeare's plays (Ryan 4f.).
Shakespeare Forever

• In *Reinventing Shakespeare* Gary Taylor concludes his cultural history of the Bard's incarnations by stating that Shakespeare has become a black hole. Light, insight, intelligence, matter — all pour ceaselessly into him, as critics are drawn into the densening vortex of his reputation; they add their own weight to his increasing mass.... Shakespeare himself no longer transmits visible light; his stellar energies have been trapped within the gravity well of his own reputation. We find in Shakespeare only what we bring to him or what others have left behind; he gives us back our own values (Ryan 9.)
Shakespeare and Genre
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Play</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Playhouse</th>
<th>Company</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Henry VI Part One</td>
<td>1589–90</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Rose?</td>
<td>Admiral’s/Strange’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry VI Part Two</td>
<td>1590–1</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Theatre?</td>
<td>Pembroke’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry VI Part Three</td>
<td>1590–1</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Theatre?</td>
<td>Pembroke’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard III</td>
<td>1592–3</td>
<td>History/Tragedy</td>
<td>Theatre?</td>
<td>Pembroke’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Comedy of Errors</td>
<td>1592–4</td>
<td>Comedy</td>
<td>Gray’s Inn</td>
<td>Pembroke’s?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Titus Andronicus</td>
<td>1593–4</td>
<td>Tragedy</td>
<td>Rose/Theatre?</td>
<td>Pembroke’s/Sussex’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Taming of the Shrew</td>
<td>1593–4</td>
<td>Comedy</td>
<td>Theatre?</td>
<td>Chamberlain’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Genre</td>
<td>Playhouse</td>
<td>Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Two Gentlemen of Verona</td>
<td>1594</td>
<td>Comedy</td>
<td>Theatre?</td>
<td>Chamberlain's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King John</td>
<td>1594–6</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Theatre?</td>
<td>Chamberlain's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard II</td>
<td>1595</td>
<td>History/Tragedy</td>
<td>Theatre?</td>
<td>Chamberlain's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romeo and Juliet</td>
<td>1595–6</td>
<td>Tragedy</td>
<td>Theatre?</td>
<td>Chamberlain's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Midsummer Night's Dream</td>
<td>1595–6</td>
<td>Comedy</td>
<td>Theatre</td>
<td>Chamberlain's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Merchant of Venice</td>
<td>1596–7</td>
<td>Comedy?</td>
<td>Theatre</td>
<td>Chamberlain's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry IV Part One</td>
<td>1596–7</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Theatre?</td>
<td>Chamberlain's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Merry Wives of Windsor</td>
<td>1597</td>
<td>Comedy</td>
<td>Westminster/Theatre</td>
<td>Chamberlain's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry IV Part Two</td>
<td>1598</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Theatre?</td>
<td>Chamberlain's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much Ado About Nothing</td>
<td>1598–9</td>
<td>Comedy</td>
<td>Curtain?</td>
<td>Chamberlain's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry V</td>
<td>1599</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Curtain</td>
<td>Chamberlain's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julius Caesar</td>
<td>1599</td>
<td>History/Tragedy</td>
<td>Globe</td>
<td>Chamberlain's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Genre</td>
<td>Playhouse</td>
<td>Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>As You Like It</em></td>
<td>1599</td>
<td>Comedy</td>
<td>Globe</td>
<td>Chamberlain’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Hamlet</em></td>
<td>1600–1</td>
<td>Tragedy</td>
<td>Globe</td>
<td>Chamberlain’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Twelfth Night</em></td>
<td>1601–2</td>
<td>Comedy</td>
<td>Globe</td>
<td>Chamberlain’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Troilus and Cressida</em></td>
<td>1601–2</td>
<td>Comedy?</td>
<td>Globe? But may well not have been performed</td>
<td>King’s Men, if performed (i.e. after 1603)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>All’s Well That Ends Well</em></td>
<td>1602–3</td>
<td>Comedy?</td>
<td>Globe</td>
<td>Chamberlain’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Measure for Measure</em></td>
<td>1604</td>
<td>Comedy?</td>
<td>Whitehall Palace/ Globe</td>
<td>King’s Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Othello</em></td>
<td>1604</td>
<td>Tragedy</td>
<td>Globe</td>
<td>King’s Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>King Lear</em></td>
<td>1605</td>
<td>Tragedy</td>
<td>Globe</td>
<td>King’s Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Macbeth</em></td>
<td>1606</td>
<td>Tragedy</td>
<td>Globe</td>
<td>King’s Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Antony and Cleopatra</em></td>
<td>1606–7</td>
<td>Tragedy/ History</td>
<td>Globe</td>
<td>King’s Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Coriolanus</em></td>
<td>1607–8</td>
<td>Tragedy/ History</td>
<td>Globe</td>
<td>King’s Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Timon of Athens</em></td>
<td>1607–8</td>
<td>Tragedy/ History</td>
<td>Globe? But may well not have been performed</td>
<td>King’s Men, if performed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Genre</td>
<td>Playhouse</td>
<td>Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Pericles</em> (with George Wilkins?)</td>
<td>1607–8</td>
<td>Romance</td>
<td>Globe</td>
<td>King’s Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Cymbeline</em></td>
<td>1609–10</td>
<td>Romance</td>
<td>Globe</td>
<td>King’s Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Winter’s Tale</em></td>
<td>1611</td>
<td>Romance/Tragedy</td>
<td>Globe</td>
<td>King’s Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Tempest</em></td>
<td>1611</td>
<td>Romance/Tragedy</td>
<td>Blackfriars</td>
<td>King’s Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Henry VIII</em> (with John Fletcher)</td>
<td>1612–13</td>
<td>History?</td>
<td>Globe</td>
<td>King’s Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Two Noble Kinsmen</em> (with John Fletcher)*</td>
<td>1613</td>
<td>Tragedy</td>
<td>Blackfriars</td>
<td>King’s Men</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• genre and the order in which the plays were written.

• “Broadly speaking, Shakespeare started with comedies, and moved on to histories and then tragedies. He concluded his career as a writer of romances.” (McEvoy 2006)
Genres

• John Hemmings and Henry Condell, editors of the First Folio of 1623
• divided up Shakespeare's plays into comedies, histories and tragedies.
• The 1997 *Riverside Shakespeare* uses a fourth category: romance.
The conventions of comedy include:

- disguise (often involving cross-dressing)
- thwarted love
- mistaken identity
- marital and romantic misunderstandings
- ending in multiple marriages.
The conventions of history include

- Conspiracy
- Fighting
- prominent sub-plots involving non-noble characters
- a large number of characters
- a decisive on-stage battle.
The conventions of tragedy include

- a single heroic main character (the protagonist) often suffering from a tragic flaw
- some dreadful dilemma or wrong decision
- conspiracy
- fighting
- (often) madness
- many deaths at the end.
Romance conventions include

- natural disasters
- remarkable adventures
- unlikely coincidences
- conflict between generations and within families
- an unforeseen conclusion in which forgiveness and reconciliation are achieved against all the odds.
limits as a useful means of classification

- many plays do not neatly fit one of these four categories
- combination of characteristic elements of one or more of the other three genres.
- Therefore, some of these plays are called 'problem' plays
- conventions from several genres are combined more or less uneasily.
heteroglot institution => ambivalent viewpoints

In the Elizabethan playhouse we confront an actual heteroglot institution in which the exchange of speech crosses every social boundary, and the diversity of speech types traverses the genres of literature and of authoritative discourse. Poetic language, rhetorical ornament and classical learning are compelled to share communicative space with vernacular speech and with vernacular misinterpretations of high culture. [Bristol, Carnical and Theatre, 122f.]

Shakespeare's multilingual drama forbids generic or stylistic monologue, the discursive enslavement of a manifold reality to a single viewpoint. The plays' dialogic disposition offers 'stubborn resistance to the entrenchment of any unifying language or code of representation', which might nourish the illusion of a socially and morally united nation (Ryan 34).

=> Henry IV (Falstaff) [Kenneth Branagh’s Henry V]
The World is a Stage

Making sense of an unstable world — a world which is as open to interpretation and revision as the play itself

'I am a scribbled form, drawn with a pen/ Upon a parchment (King John, Vvn 32-3)

'All the world s a stage,/ And all the men and women merely players' (As You Like It, II vn 139—40)

Antonio's 'I hold the world but as the world, Gratiano,/ A stage, where every man must play a part' (The Merchant of Venice, 11 77-8)

Duke Senior's 'This wide and universal theatre/ Presents more woeful pageants than the scene/ Wherein we play in' (As You Like It, II, vii, 137-9)

Macbeth:
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 (Macbeth, V, iv).
Rather proclaim it, Westmoreland, through my host,
That he which hath no stomach to this fight,
Let him depart; his passport shall be made
And crowns for convoy put into his purse: We would not die in that man's company
That fears his fellowship to die with us.
This day is called the feast of Crispian:
He that outlives this day, and comes safe home,
Will stand a tip-toe when the day is named,
And rouse him at the name of Crispian.
He that shall live this day, and see old age,
Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbours,
And say 'To-morrow is Saint Crispian:'
Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars.
And say 'These wounds I had on Crispin's day.'
Old men forget: yet all shall be forgot,
But he'll remember with advantages
What feats he did that day: then shall our names.
Familiar in his mouth as household words
Henry V: Holinshed vs. Shakespeare
Did Shakespeare keep to the chronicles?

Shakespeare’s use of Holinshed is described by Russ McDonald:

The Chronicle should be regarded as a vast warehouse full of character studies, dates, details of battles, genealogical data, digression on motives and consequences, Tudor political orthodoxy, and unintended subversions of that orthodoxy.

*The Bedford Companion to Shakespeare*, p. 113-114
The Battle of Agincourt


Holinshed said that Katherine was offered to King Henry by her mother who wanted to keep peace in France. The French king is said to have stayed at a castle. Isabel, Katherine’s mother, stayed with her daughter in another castle that was captured by King Henry to get Katherine.

**Concl.:** Shakespeare keeps very close to Holinshed’s chronicle. He does not exaggerate anything. Neither does he add any events to the history. He changes some events in their order in time. Sometimes he adds some scenes in order to make the play more entertaining. One of those scenes is Act 3, Scene 4, in which Katherine receives a comical lesson in English from Alice. He even uses the same phrases that occur in Holinshed’s chronicles without changing them, e.g. when King Henry names the battle according to the castle, or when he talks about Crispian’s day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Holinshed</th>
<th>Act</th>
<th>Shakespeare</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the last Act of Shakespeare’s play, King Henry talks to Katherine and convinces her to love and to marry him. She is not forced to become Queen of England; it is her own free will. She was promised as a ransom gift in the case of Henry’s V victory. In Shakespeare she appears before the Battle of Agincourt, whereas Holinshed mentions her only after the battle.</td>
<td>IV. 3.3-4</td>
<td>The French outnumbered the English five to one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holinshed gives exact dates of when the battle begins, with time and day, month and year</td>
<td></td>
<td>Shakespeare only gives the hour, e.g. it is the third hour of the day, but he never refers to any dates of the beginning or the end of the battle. But he mentions the year when the battle took place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holinshed only talks about sensible reasons.</td>
<td>IV. 2. 15 – 55</td>
<td>Shakespeare lists the reasons. He does not refer to Holinshed here, but to Hall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holinshed describes the order of the battle: archers in the meadow; stakes bound with iron shapes to hinder horseman from riding in the archers</td>
<td>IV. 3.</td>
<td>Shakespeare does not give a description of the battle at all. He creates little scenes between the English and the French that should show the merciful behaviour of the English.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Shakespeare’s use of Machiavelli
Richard II vs. Henry IV

“An die Stelle der theologisch begründeten Ethik des Mittelalters setzt Machiavelli eine Ethik staatlicher Selbsterhaltung (Staatsraison). An die Stelle der mittelalterlichen Werterationalität setzte er die neuzeitliche Zweckrationalität als das eigentliche Medium der politischen Theorie.“ (Münkler, 1984, S. 284)

- medieval order was mainly based on four principles:
  prudentia (wisdom)
  iustitia (justice)
  fortitudo (mental strength)
  temperantia (modesty)

- Machiavelli: the politician (ruler/monarch) should be as strong as a lion and as smart as a fox
Romeo and Juliet

A long stride towards disaster is taken when Mercutio's death compels Romeo to shoulder again the name he had shed for Juliet, re-enter the arena of the family feud and kill Tybalt in revenge (III.i). As a consequence, the lovers must undergo the agonies of separation, inflicted once again by a single word:

Juliet. Some word there was, worser than Tybalt's death,
That murd'red me...
'Tybalt is dead, and Romeo banished.'
That 'banished', that one word 'banished',
Hath slain ten thousand Tybalts...
'Romeo is banished': to speak that word,
Is father, mother Tybalt, Romeo, Juliet,
All slain, all dead: 'Romeo is banished'!
There is no end, no limit, measure, bound,
In that word's death, no words can that woe sound. (Ill.ii.108-9, 112-14, 122-6)

Romeo. No sudden mean of death, though ne'er so mean,
But 'banished' to kill me? 'Banished?
O Friar, the damned use that word in hell;
Howling attends it. How hast thou the heart,
Being a divine, a ghostly confessor,
A sin-absolver, and my friend profess'd,
To mangle me with that word 'banished'?

(III.iii.45-51)
Shakespeare celebrating Elizabeth I

That Shakespeare was not averse to the regal compliment that is the raison d'etre of the masque and central to so much courtly literature is clear in A Midsummer Night's Dream, where the occasion to celebrate Queen Elizabeth is created quite gratuitously, independent of any dramatic need. He introduces into the play a piece of the mythologizing iconography that the masque was to elaborate seemingly eternally, and he handles that in a fashion that assures us he can master such classical givens as the Astraea myth with the aplomb of a Jonson. And this he can do at roughly the same time that he is dramatizing the greatest dramatic victim of such compliments, Richard II.

A Midsummer Night's Dream

TITANIA Set your heart at rest:
The fairy land buys not the child of me.
His mother was a votaress of my order:
And, in the spiced Indian air, by night,
Full often hath she gossip'd by my side,
And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,
Marking the embarked traders on the flood,
When we have laugh'd to see the sails conceive
And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind;
Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait
Following.--her womb then rich with my young squire,--
Would imitate, and sail upon the land,
To fetch me trifles, and return again,
As from a voyage, rich with merchandise.
But she, being mortal, of that boy did die;
And for her sake do I rear up her boy,
And for her sake I will not part with him.

OBERON How long within this wood intend you stay?
TITANIA Perchance till after Theseus' wedding-day.

If you will patiently dance in our round
And see our moonlight revels, go with us;

If not, shun me, and I will spare your haunts.

OBERON Give me that boy, and I will go with thee.

TITANIA Not for thy fairy kingdom. Fairies, away!

We shall chide downright, if I longer stay.

[Exit TITANIA with her train]

OBERON [...] But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
Quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery moon,
And the imperial votaress passed on,
In maiden meditation, fancy-free.
Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell:
It fell upon a little western flower,
Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound,
And maidens call it love-in-idleness.

Fetch me that flower; the herb I shew'd thee once:
The juice of it on sleeping eye-lids laid
Will make or man or woman madly dote
And for her sake I will not part with him.

Fetch me this herb; and be thou here again
Upon the next live creature that it sees.

Ere the leviathan can swim a league.

Fetch me this herb; and be thou here again

PUCK I'll put a girdle round about the earth
In forty minutes.    [Exit]
Harry the king, Bedford and Exeter,
Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester,
Be in their flowing cups freshly remember'd. 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 remember'd;
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
For he to-day 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 accursed they were not here,
And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.

[Re-enter SALISBURY]
Merchant of Venice:
Anti-Semitism vs. pity for Shylock, the discriminated outsider

In responding to the play, we should not suppress the awareness we ought to have of 'the holocaust and the history of European Jewry in this century'. Nor should we resist the change in the angle of reception that such a consciousness creates. The extent to which the vision of The Merchant of Venice contradicts or corroborates the enlightened viewpoint of the present must be proved first and foremost on the evidence of the text. But we should not fail to take on board, too, the fact that the conditions of literary production in Shakespeare's time made it possible for his drama to undermine rather than underwrite the governing assumptions of his society (Ryan 18).

speech rebuking the Jew-baiting Christians on the grounds of their common constitution:
“Hath not a Jew eyes? ...“ SEE CLIP FROM LUBITSCH „TO BE OR NOT TO BE“ (III.i. 59-73).

With this speech there erupts into the play an irresistible egalitarian attitude, whose basis in the shared faculties and needs of our physical nature indicts all forms of inhuman discrimination. The speech provokes a sharp shift of emotional allegiance, from which our perception of the Christian protagonists never recovers. (Ryan 20)

Similar case:
Representation of war in Henry V
Willard Farnham. *The Medieval Heritage of Elizabethan Tragedy (1936)*:

Farnham distinguishes three representations of man’s attitude towards death:

1) De Contemptu Mundi, Weltverachtung

2) Stories like Boccaccios *De casibus virorum illustrium* (ca. 1355-1360), Chaucer, Lydgate

3) Representations of death (vanitas motives: decay)

Sin $=>$ Fortune cannot be explained and cannot be controlled (miracle plays and morality plays).

Man’s Responsibility $=>$ retribution for sinful deeds; Chaucer, Lydgate, and *Mirror for Magistrates* (1559).

Francis Bacon, analyses Fortune and distinguishes various elements which can be identified with human characteristics $=>$ man’s responsibility.

Farnham: Medieval thinking $=>$ Shakespearesche’s tragedy
Alternative: classical roots of tragedy


Christopher Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine the Great* (ca. 1587) and Thomas Kyd *The Spanish Tragedy* (ca. 1592). There is no cosmological and rational order or justice


Mirror of Magistrates not the idea of retribution, but the beginning of political theory.

Howard Baker: "Das aktive Leben einer eigenverantwortlichen Einstellung und der Glaube an das Wirken der Macht Fortuna schließen sich demnach nicht mehr, wie von Farnham nahegelegt wurde, wechselseitig aus, sondern lassen sich in einer überlegenen Haltung vereinen." (Klein, 13)

Sixteenth-century statements about the tragical

Chaucer in the Prologue of his Monk's Tale (source: Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium*); the Monk calls it "tragedie" (VII.1991); don't confuse this with Aristotle's definition in the *Poetics*. Medieval "tragedie" describes the rise and fall of famous men and women. For instance, Chaucer calls his *Troilus and Criseyde* "litel myn tragedye" (VII.1786).

Sir Philip Sidney emphasizes moral and didactic purpose
(a) Corruption in the state,
(b) Warning against tyranny,
(c) Admiration and commiseration

Klein also discusses texts by George Puttenham, Sir Thomas Elyot, Sir John Harrington and George Chapman.
DEFINITIONS OF TRAGEDY

The high and excellent Tragedy, that openeth the greatest wounds and showeth forth the ulcers that are covered with tissue; that maketh kings fear to be tyrants, and tyrants manifest their tyrannical humours; that, with stirring the affects of admiration and commiseration, teacheth the uncertainty of this world, and upon what weak foundations gilden roofs are builded. Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry* (c.1581)

Besides these Poets Comic there were other who served the stage, but meddled not with so base matters. For they set forth the doleful falls of infortunate and afflicted Princes, and were called Poets Tragical. George Puttenham in *The Arte of English Poesie* in 1589

Tragedies and comedies …differ thus: in comedies, turbulenta prima, tranquilla ultima; in tragedies, tranquilla prima turbulenta ultima: comedies begin in trouble and end in peace; tragedies begin in calms and end in tempest. Thomas Heywood, *Apology for Actors* (1612)

Classical tragedy shows 'the disastrous miseries of man's life and so out of that melancholic vision, stir horror, or murmur, against Divine Providence'. Contemporary tragedies show 'God's revenging aspect upon every particular sin, to the despair, or confusion, of mortality.' Fulke Greville, *The Life of Sir Philip Sidney* (c.1611)
Cont.

1. Thomas Nashe; *A Preface to Robert Greene's Menaphon (1590)*:

   It is a common practice now a daies amongst a sort of shrifting companions, that runne through euery arte and thrive by none, to [...] busie themselues with the indeuors of Art, that could scarcelie latinize their neck-verse if they should haue neede; yet English Seneca read by candle light yeeldes manie good sentences, as Bloud is a beggar, and so foorth: and if you intreate him faire in a frostie morning, he will affoord you whole Hamlets, I should say handfulls of tragical speaches.
Tragischer Held

Der tragische Held und harmatia

Bradleys Konzept der Shakespearschen Tragödie rückt die Unvollkommenheit oder einen Irrtum des Helden in den Vordergrund. Die Begriffe error und frailty sind Übersetzungen des griechischen harmatia.

1) hamartia bezeichnet einen Irrtum, der aus Mangel an Wissen erwächst und unbeabsichtigt ist. Er kann vermeidbar und unvermeidbar sein. Danach richtet sich die moralische Qualität des Irrtums.

2) Ferner bezeichnet hamartia einen Irrtum, dessen Handlungsanteil zwar beabsichtigt, aber nicht vorsätzlich vollzogen wird, d.h. durch Leidenschaften ausgelöst werden.

3) hamartia benennt eine Charakterfehler, der auf menschliche Schwäche zurückgeht.

A. C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy (1904)
Strukturelemente

Aristoteles

Bei der Anagnorisis handelt es sich um eine Erkenntnis, in der bisher geläufige Erkenntnisgewohnheiten umgekehrt werden, eine Erkenntnis, die als Augenblick der Wahrheit bezeichnet worden ist. Anagnorisis ist ein Umschwung, der die Weise des Erkennens beschreibt, Peripetie meint dagegen die Zielrichtung des Handelns. Beide sind Strukturelemente des plot. ("point of no return")
Katharsis

"Katharsis" (engl. purgation, dt. Reinigung)

Der Begriff "Katharsis" (engl. purgation, dt. Reinigung) stellt eine Auslegungscrux dar. Handelt es sich bei der Formulierung Aristoteles' um einen genitivus objectivus ("die Reinigung solcher Erleidnisse") oder einen genitivus separativus ("die Reinigung von solchen Erleidnissen).

Lessing: "Verwandlung der Leidenschaft in tugendhafte Fertigkeit" "Mitleid in Tugend".
Bibliography

On tragedy:
John Drakakis and Naomi Liebler (eds), Tragedy (1998)
  Terry Eagleton, Sweet Violence (2002)
  John Kerrigan, Revenge Tragedy: Aeschylus to Armageddon (1996)
  Clifford Leech, Tragedy (1969)
Film: Julie Taymor (dir.), Titus (1999)

On Shakespearean/early modern tragedy:
Tanya Hagen, 'An English Renaissance Understanding of the Word "Tragedy"
  EMLS (electronic journal) April 1997
  Terence Hawkes, That Shakespeherian Rag (1986)
  Michael Mangan, A Preface to Shakespeare’s Tragedies (1991)
  Robert Watson, The Rest is Silence (1994)
- 'Tragedy' in Michael Hattaway and A.R. Braunmuller (eds) The Cambridge
  Companion to English Renaissance Drama (1990)
Tragedy

King Lear
King Lear

For many readers *King Lear* is a story of ordinary domestic life, parents and children, family bargaining, hurt feelings, and unrequited love. *King Lear* is about an ageing parent whose excessive demands for love annihilate the basic elements of trust, openness, and mutual forbearance that constitute the minimum conditions for any kind of genuine social existence. The play dramatizes a power struggle between parents and children, in which the basic interactions of family life simply become intolerable. Central to this struggle are issues of truth, sincerity, and deception. Humanist interpretations of *King Lear* privilege the domestic sphere as the space of our moral being (Michael D. Bristol).
King Lear
Rivalry among family members/ siblings:
“Dad always liked you best”

GLOUCESTER. But I have, sir, a son by order of law [=Edmund], some year elder than this, who yet is no dearer [than my legitimate son Edgar] in my account. Though this knave came something saucily into the world before he was sent for, yet was his mother fair; there was good sport at his making, and the whoreson must be acknowledged. (1.1.18-22)
King Lear and his daughters
Regan, Goneril, and Cordelia

Lear’s tragic flaw or hamartia (i.e. the character flaw or error of a tragic hero that leads to his downfall)

Lear is incapable of acknowledging Cordelia’s love, because he is incapable of acknowledging himself.

GONERIL You see how full of changes his age is; the observation we have made of it hath not been little: he always loved our sister most; and with what poor judgment he hath now cast her off appears too grossly.

REGAN ’Tis the infirmity of his age: yet he hath ever but slenderly known himself. (1,1)

Want to check out your own Shakespearian flaw? – See http://quizilla.com/users/PlaidKing/quizzes/What%20is%20Your%20Shakespearian%20Tragic%20Flaw%3F/
Lear asks Cordelia to say how much she loves him?

KING LEAR what can you say to draw
A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak.

CORDELIA Nothing, my lord.

KING LEAR Nothing!

CORDELIA Nothing.

KING LEAR Nothing will come of nothing: speak again.

CORDELIA Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave
My heart into my mouth: I love your majesty
According to my bond; nor more nor less.

KING LEAR How, how, Cordelia! mend your speech a little,
Lest it may mar your fortunes.

CORDELIA Good my lord,
You have begot me, bred me, loved me: I
Return those duties back as are right fit,
Obey you, love you, and most honour you. [...]
A Lord of Misrule and tattered fools and madmen

Defining the Fool (Boyle): Character type often used by Shakespeare, a sharp-tongued comic, usually a professional jester, who wittily insults the other characters and comments on their actions. He often serves as a chorus, providing a position outside the plot with which we, the audience, can identify. Real jesters were well known in Shakespeare's day -- Queen Elizabeth employed fools, for instance -- and the playwright found this recognised social figure, with his well-defined traditional role, a useful embodiment of objectivity to balance the improbabilities of comedy.

The fool shows a cool detachment from the problems of the plot and a somewhat self-centred focus on his own notions of humour; verbal dexterity, a facility for imitation, and an inventive sense of the absurd; fool has a deeper significance as an emblem of freedom from convention.

The distinction between clown and fool is significant, although the Elizabethans tended to treat the terms as synonyms (Lavatch and Feste -- both professional jesters -- are designated 'Clowns'). The clown tends to be outside the plot's main developments, while the fool is involved with the central characters. Whereas the clown's humour is unintentional, the fool's intellectual wit and trenchant observation are deliberate. With his blunt, earthy spontaneity, the clown lacks the fool's satirical edge.

Characters similar to the fool/clown:

Speed in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*
Bastard in *King John*
Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (jester to Oberon).
Falstaff in *Henry IV*

Thersites in *Troilus and Cressida*.
Apemantus in *Timon of Athens*.
Lucio in *Measure for Measure*
Trinculo in *The Tempest*
The quintessential fools

Feste in *Twelfth Night* and Touchstone (a clown) in *As You Like It*.

Jacques describes Touchstone and defines the fool's profession (2.7.12-61):

JAQUES A fool, a fool! I met a fool i' the forest, A motley fool; a miserable world! As I do live by food, I met a fool Who laid him down and bask'd him in the sun. And rail'd on Lady Fortune in good terms, In good set terms and yet a motley fool. 'Good morrow, fool,' quoth I. 'No, sir,' quoth he, 'Call me not fool till heaven hath sent me fortune:' And then he drew a dial from his poke, And, looking on it with lack-lustre eye, Says very wisely, 'It is ten o'clock: Thus we may see,' quoth he, 'how the world wags: 'Tis but an hour ago since it was nine, And after one hour more 'twill be eleven; And so, from hour to hour, we ripe and ripe, And then, from hour to hour, we rot and rot; And thereby hangs a tale.' When I did hear The motley fool thus moral on the time, My lungs began to crow like chanticleer, That fools should be so deep-contemplative, And I did laugh sans intermission An hour by his dial. O noble fool! A worthy fool! Motley's the only wear. DUKE SENIOR What fool is this? JAQUES O worthy fool! One that hath been a courtier, And says, if ladies be but young and fair, They have the gift to know it: and in his brain, Which is as dry as the remainder biscuit After a voyage, he hath strange places cram'd With observation, the which he vents In mangled forms. O that I were a fool! I am ambitious for a motley coat.
DUKE SENIOR      Thou shalt have one.
JAQUES        It is my only suit;
Provided that you weed your better judgments
Of all opinion that grows rank in them
That I am wise. I must have liberty
Withal, as large a charter as the wind,
To blow on whom I please; for so fools have;
And they that are most galled with my folly,
They most must laugh. And why, sir, must they so?
The 'why' is plain as way to parish church:
He that a fool doth very wisely hit
Doth very foolishly, although be smart,
Not to seem senseless of the bob: if not,
The wise man's folly is anatomized
Even by the squandering glances of the fool.
Invest me in my motley; give me leave
To speak my mind, and I will through and through
Cleanse the foul body of the infected world,
If they will patiently receive my medicine.
[...]
DUKE SENIOR
Thou seest we are not all alone unhappy:
This wide and universal theatre
Presents more woeful pageants than the scene
Wherein we play in.
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.
The fool in King Lear is virtually an alter ego of the king.

“His jests are a foil to Lear's frenzy, and his riddles, songs, and scraps of rhyme -- combined with his ridicule of the king's folly -- offer a sense that somewhere outside the terrifying universe of the play, there remains a real world in which sanity still exists.” (Boyle)

The Fool utters simple truths, such as 'Thou should'st not have been old till thou hadst been wise' (1.5.41-42).

KING LEAR

Doth any here know me? This is not Lear:
Doth Lear walk thus? speak thus? Where are his eyes?
Either his notion weakens, his discernings
Are lethargied--Ha! waking? 'tis not so.
Who is it that can tell me who I am?

Fool Lear's shadow.

KING LEAR I would learn that; for, by the marks of sovereignty, knowledge, and reason,
I should be false persuaded I had daughters.
Shakespeare's tragedies oblige us to confront without illusions the appalling cost of beliefs that doom people to destroy not only others but themselves, making a cruel farce of their conscious intentions. Shakespeare's great tragic protagonists are indeed 'fools of Time' (Sonnet 124), but in the sense that they are hoodwinked by history. They are overpowered by the prevailing tides of their moment, which sweep them unawares out of their depth, rather than by some metaphysical misfortune or by some flaw, whether culpable, haphazard or innate, in the composition of their characters Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, Othello and Desdemona, King Lear, Macbeth, Antony and Cleopatra. All of them resonate in retrospect as figures born before their time, citizens of an anticipated age whose values their suffering discloses, pointing us towards more desirable storylines yet to be scripted by history. Their tragedy is to find themselves stranded back in time, far from that foreshadowed future, marooned in a hostile, alien reality which has already contaminated their hearts and minds, and eventually crushes them completely (Ryan 72).
Tragedy

Macbeth
Ambiguity in the concept of Tragedy
– Are the character flawed or the world?

Macbeth

• **Antithesis**
  
  Fair is foul, and foul is fair,
  Hover through the fog and filthy air. The Weïrd Sisters *[Macbeth 1.1.11]*
  
  • Macbeth: So foul and fair a day I have not seen. (I, ii)

Shakespeare's plays are filled with examples of antithesis, a rhetorical strategy whereby words are placed so as to draw the listener's attention to the contrasting values encoded in each, as when the first scene of *Macbeth* ends with the presentation of a very particular topsy-turvy world in seven words: “fair is foul and foul is fair.”

• So prevalent is this technique that it is difficult to find a speech of longer than sixlines that does not contain at least one overt and striking example of antithesis. (from Shakespearean Characterization: A Guide for Actors and Students by Leslie O'Dell; Greenwood Press, 2002, 225)
Language studies have continued to be a part of Macbeth criticism, although in recent years a theory known as Deconstruction has led to conclusions vastly different from those of New Criticism. Deconstruction contends that language patterns reflect not poetic unity but instability. The deception Malcolm employs to test Macduff in Act 4, as well as the many contradictory expressions throughout the play--"Nothing is, but what is not" and "Fair is foul, and foul is fair"--suggest to some critics that language cannot be trusted, not by the characters, nor even by Shakespeare's readers. The pervasive theme of equivocation supports this viewpoint. Meaning becomes very slippery rather than fixed and unified. Thus although language issues remain an important part of Macbeth studies, they continue to provoke more debate than consensus.

Macbeth – a battlefield of universal and antagonistic forces?

In the introduction to his Arden edition of *Macbeth*, Kenneth Muir cites and underwrites a selection of critical conclusions, which define the firmly ensconced consensus on the play:

*Macbeth* is Shakespeare's 'most profound and mature vision of evil'; 'the whole play may be writ down as a wrestling of destruction with creation"; it is 'a statement of evil'; 'it is a picture of a special battle in a universal war, and the battleground is in the souls of Macbeth and his wife' ... the contrast between light and darkness is part of a general antithesis between good and evil, devils and angels, evil and grace, hell and heaven.

With that, the abstraction of *Macbeth* into an allegorical map of mankind's pathway to perdition, tellingly exemplified by the fate of a regicidal usurper, is complete. The unpredictable specificity of the tragedy evaporates under the pressure exerted to flatten it into the familiar archetypal narrative (Ryan 89)
Macbeth – a victim of an aggressive culture?

Composed at the dawn of our self-centred capitalist culture, *Macbeth* has now become a resonant modern parable, in which that culture's competitive aggression can be seen driving it to a suicidal finale in a blind rush of male violence. This makes it even more important to grasp that Macbeth's fate is dramatized as this man's subjection to these vicious imperatives, rather than as proof of our collective enslavement to some malign, metaphysical statute, which we are powerless to repeal.

For by this means *Macbeth* creates a space in which a whole new kind of society begins to be imaginable a society in which the claims of self and the needs of others are no longer incompatible, and the 'milk of human kindness' flows freely (Ryan 95).

See also Jan Kott, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* (1964)
Tragedy

Hamlet
Hamlet – a hesitant prince?

Harold Jenkins concludes the introduction to his Arden edition of Hamlet in exactly the same vein

Johnson is well known to have said that Shakespeare seems to write without any moral purpose', but this is perhaps a play in which a moral is implicit, both simple and profound For it commends a man who, after questioning the meaning of creation, comes to accept a design in it beyond our comprehending, and who therefore, after seeking to withdraw from life through an abhorrence of all that is ugly and vicious in it, is finally - though tragically not until death approaches - content to live life as it is, able to acknowledge, in word and deed, ‘The readiness is all’

Hamlet’s task is seen here as the restoration of the status quo by exposing and killing Claudius, and thus executing the revenge commanded by the ghost of his father The tragedy of the situation is construed as Hamlet's possession of moral and psychological flaws, however virtuous their origin, which prevent him from fulfilling his obligation without delay (Ryan 69).
Hamlet - a legitimate rejection of a whole way of life?

What if Hamlet's tormented reluctance to surrender to the role of revenging prince expresses *a legitimate rejection of the whole way of life* that festers in the 'prison' (II11 243) Denmark has indeed become' In that case the tragedy turns out to be something quite different. It is the tragedy of having to live and die on the rotten' (I iv 90) terms of such a place at all, despite the knowledge that life could and should be otherwise, that human beings are not forever doomed to become the scoundrels, pawns and parasites that this sort of society moulds most of them into. Hamlet's belligerent withdrawal into the dramatic limbo and licensed discourse of his 'antic disposition' (I v 172) functions, in fact, as a sustained estrangement-effect. It sabotages the *revenge-play formula* and thereby strikes at the social order whose validity that formula presupposes, and whose axioms it would otherwise smuggle through unchallenged. Only critics for whom compliance with convention is the plainest common sense could find Hamlet’s failure to capitulate more promptly a source of endless puzzlement, and make this tragedy 'the most problematic play ever written'. But, once one has grasped that it is truly the time that is out of joint (I v 188) and not Hamlet, the supposed central problem of the play melts away (Ryan 70)
Tragedy

Revenge Tragedy
(REVENGE?) TRAGEDY

What

It is difficult to separate revenge plays from other early modern tragedies such as *Hamlet* (clearly in the revenge tradition, and owing a sizeable debt to Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*), *Othello* and *King Lear*. Moreover, simply dismissing the plays as decadent, sensationalist and, by implication, beneath serious critical attention, has provocative consequences: Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, for instance, is as bloody and barbaric as anything Webster or Ford devised and has, as a result, frequently been seen as an embarrassment by some editors.
Defining “REVENGE TRAGEDY”

History and anthropology reveal revenge to have been fundamental to the customs and practices of primitive societies.

In England, we can trace a gradual shift away from privately exacted revenge and the tradition of feud (wars between families) towards a centrally organised justice system, as the state becomes more firmly established. By the sixteenth century, a serious crime against any subject of the crown is being interpreted as a crime against the monarch's own person, and the state is required to respond.

The Elizabethan state, however, did not countenance acts of private revenge; Bowers quotes a number of sources (including a treatise by James I and various legal documents) that make it very clear that an avenger was liable to be punished by law as severely as the one who had committed the first murder.
Popular Revenge Tragedies

• One of the most popular plays throughout this period was Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, first produced in its original form around 1582 (included the appearance of a ghost, the actions of a character who pretends to be mad in order to conceal his plans for revenge, and a conclusion in which a public spectacle turns to vengeful murder and mayhem.)
• *Hamlet* (1600-1)
  Middleton's *Women Beware Women* (c. 1623)
• *Webster's The Duchess of Malfi* (1614)
• *The Atheist's Tragedy* (1607, attributed to Cyril Tourneur).
Revenge: Moral corruption and civil strife

William Baldwin is typical; in *A Treatise of Moral Philosophy* (1547; often reprinted) he writes a chapter "Of wrath" offering such pithy comments as these: "Wrath and revengement taketh from man the mercy of God, and destroyeth and quencheth the grace that God hath given him," and (borrowing from Seneca) "Forgetfulness is a valiant kind of revengement." (Hill 329)

Anyone who felt compelled to enact private revenge was expressing, implicitly or explicitly, dissatisfaction with the state's ability to intervene in an effective manner. 'Blood vengeance', as Katharine Maus remarks, 'almost automatically subverts the power of the crown.' (Simkin)
Ambivalence of Revenge in Renaissance Plays

Anne Pippin Burnett distinguishes between the functioning of revenge in ancient Greek tragedy and in English Renaissance tragedy:

So much doubleness leaves the spectator at a Renaissance revenge drama pleasurably confused. He is asked to applaud and also to condemn both the indignant criminal and the flawed order that the criminal attacks. And this bifurcated emotional response is extorted from him even as he is deprived of his ordinary identity by the sheer gory excess of the show. (Burnett, 1998, 29)

SEE Hamlet killing Polonius and revenging his father’s Death
(Revenge) Tragedy as ridiculed in
*A Warning for Fair Women* (published 1599)

In the anonymous play, a character standing for Comedy offers the following quite merciless sketch of her counterpart. Tragedy, she tells us, represents:

How some damned tyrant to obtain a crown
Stabs, hangs, imprisons, smothers, cutteth throats;
And then a chorus too comes howling in,
And tells us of the worrying of a cat;
Then too a filthy whining ghost,
Lapt in some foul sheet or a leather pilch,
Comes screaming like a pig half sticked
And cries "Vindicta! Revenge! Revenge!"
With that a little rosin flasheth forth,
Like smoke out of a tobacco pipe or a boy's squib
Then comes in two or three like to drovers,
With tailor's bodkins stabbing one another.
Revenge tragedy …

… is extraordinarily simple in some respects, built upon a handful of motifs (ghosts, madness, delay, horrible killing) that it derives from its ancient progenitor, the Roman tragic poet Seneca. At the same time, it bears a complexity of implication that will keep playgoers and readers intellectually stimulated and puzzled as well as thrilled by the exhibited gore (Hill 327).

In one of the standard books on the genre, entitled precisely The Revenger's Madness, Charles and Elaine Hallett (1980) argue that the would-be revenger, in his imagining of killing his victimizer, becomes so overwrought that he truly falls into insanity. The mind separates itself from the real world, and from the traditional moral codes that condemn private revenge.
Seneca's remarks near the opening of his treatise 
*De ira* ("On anger").

Anger is "eager for revenge though it may drag down the avenger along with it“:

You have only to behold the aspect of those possessed by anger to know that they are insane. For as the marks of a madman are unmistakable — a bold and threatening mien, a gloomy brow, a fierce expression, a hurried step, restless hands, an altered colour, a quick and more violent breathing — so likewise are the marks of an angry man; his eyes blaze and sparkle, his whole face is crimson with the blood that surges from the lowest depths of the heart, his lips quiver, his teeth are clenched, his hair bristles and stands on end, his breathing is forced and harsh, his joints crack from writhing, he groans and bellows. (Seneca, 1928, 106-9)
Dobleness/ ambivalence of revenge drama

*Hamlet* (End of Act I). The prince obliges Marcellus and Horatio to swear not to reveal what they have observed that night. At that moment, as the stage direction prompts, *Ghost cries under the stage, "Swear."* Hamlet's impromptu comment goes:

Ha, ha boy, say'st thou so?
Art thou there, truepenny?
Come on. You hear this fellow in the cellarage.
Consent to swear.

The scene is utterly literal: there is one of the fellows or shareholders of the acting company, perhaps (according to an old tradition) William Shakespeare himself, precisely in the woodwork under the stage. The phrase also works symbolically: *the foundations of Denmark are themselves haunted.*
Revenge is central to much Greek tragedy:

the story of Orestes and Electra (Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides)

Agamemnon, king of Mycenae, is murdered by his wife Clytemnestra

Responding to the bidding of the god Apollo, their children Orestes and Electra wreak vengeance on Clytemnestra and her lover Aegisthus.

Orestes is subsequently pursued and driven mad by the Furies.

The Greek influence filtered down into early modern drama primarily via the work of the Roman playwright Seneca (writing in the first century AD, some five hundred years after the Greek dramatists); Seneca's work was generally taken as an authoritative paradigm of the classical tradition.
Seneca’s Revenge Tragedies

Nine plays by Seneca — *The Trojan Women*, *Medea*, *Oedipus*, *Phaedra*, *Thyestes*, *Hercules on Oeta*, *The Mad Hercules*, *The Phoenician Women*, and *Agamemnon*— are the only surviving examples of Roman tragedy based on Greek myths. (Individual dates for his plays are not known.) Scholars continue to debate whether Seneca's dramas were staged during his lifetime or whether he wrote them as "closet dramas" intended not for production but material for recitation at banquets or other special events attended by royalty and the nobility.

On the surface, Seneca's plays appear to be similar to Greek tragedies. His plots are reworkings of Greek tales and, like the Greeks, he employs a chorus. But his tragedy is quite distinct. His choruses are not integral to the dramatic action, and unlike Greek dramatists, he emphasizes violent spectacle. Scenes which the Greeks would have banished from the stage—stabbings, murders, suicides are often the climactic onstage moments in Seneca's works. In his *Thyestes*, for example, Thyestes cuts the flesh of his children and drinks their blood in full view of the audience; and in his Oedipus, Jocasta cuts out her womb and Oedipus blinds himself onstage. This interest in violent spectacle has later historical parallels, of course. Seneca does not exploit violence; he relates it to his themes and to the tragic circumstances of his characters.
Comedy
- Measure for Measure,
- features disguise and ends with a multiple marriage vs.
- darkness of its mood and grimness of its plot.
- *The Merchant of Venice*

- is generically a comedy, but the character of the Jewish moneylender Shylock, who dominates the play, has often been seen as a tragic figure of some sort.
- The second half of what would seem a typical history, *King Henry V*, features several comedic conventions (disguise, a practical joke and a comic wooing ending in marriage).
SUMMARY

- In comedy, young people, and women in particular, are commonly seeking union with a lover, often against the wishes of their fathers. In the end they do marry those they sought.
- Given that Shakespeare was writing in a very male-dominated society, some critics read these plays as a kind of playful rebellion in sexual matters by young people against the authority of parents. That rebellion is, however, always absorbed by those in authority. At the end passionate love is transformed into safe, socially sanctioned, marriage.
- Other critics argue that although a kind of social order is imposed by the event of marriage at the end, the subversive comic energy of the ‘rebellion’ is such that it demonstrates that a more equal kind of relationship between men and women is possible, and indeed desirable.
- The playful, riddling language of some of the comedies in performance not only delights the audience but draws attention to itself, sometimes to radical effect.
Merchant of Venice

- *The Merchant of Venice* 1595/96.
- First Juli mentioned in July 1598 (Stationer’s Register)
- Quartos of 1600 and 1619 => Folio of 1623.
- Sources: Italian novella by Ser Giovanni Fiorentino, written in 1378 and published in 1558 (*Il Pecorone*). Most important scene and speeches are missing there.
- choice of chest taken from *Gesta Romanorum*.
- Shylock inspired by Barabas from Christopher Marlowe‘s *The Jew of Malta*. 
Merchant of Venice
friendship and a bond

• the merchant Antonio is sad but does not know why.
• His friends, Solanio and Salerio, Lorenzo and Gratiano try to cheer him up.
• His friend, Bassanio, informs him that he intends to seek the wealthy Portia's hand in marriage. Antonio offers Bassanio 3,000 ducats.
• At Belmont, Portia's house, she laments that she fears a suitor will pursue her hand in marriage whom she dislikes.
• According to her late father's will, the suitor must choose the correct of three chests (gold, silver, and lead), and then, if correct, he may marry Portia.
• She likes none of her six suitors, but wishes Bassanio would come and choose the correct chest.
• Although Shylock hates Antonio, he lends the money anyway, hoping Antonio will default on the loan. Antonio, though, has confidence one of his ocean vessels will come to port one month before the three month deadline.
Shylock defends himself against being ridiculed

SHY.

Signior Antonio, many a time and oft
In the Rialto you have rated me
About my moneys and my usances.
Still have I borne it with a patient shrug
(For suff'rance is the badge of all our tribe).
You call me misbeliever, cut-throat dog,
And spet upon my Jewish gaberdine,
And all for use of that which is mine own.
Well then, it now appears you need my help.
Go to then, you come to me, and you say,
»Shylock, we would have moneys,« you say so –
You, that did void your rheum upon my beard,

And foot me as you spurn a stranger cur
Over your threshold; moneys is your suit.
What should I say to you? Should I not say,
»Hath a dog money? Is it possible
A cur can lend three thousand ducats?« Or
Shall I bend low and in a bondman's key,
With bated breath and whisp'ring humbleness,
Say this:
»Fair sir, you spet on me on Wednesday last,
You spurn'd me such a day, another time
You call'd me dog; and for these courtesies
I'll lend you thus much moneys«?
"O my ducats! O my daughter!"; (II.viii.15) – Shylock‘s despair

- Shylock's daughter, Jessica, gives a love letter to Launcelot to deliver to Antonio's Christian friend Lorenzo.
- Shylock, going to the supper with Antonio, leaves his house keys with his daughter, Jessica.
- Later that night, Gratiano, Salerio, and Lorenzo meet outside Shylock's house to get Jessica. After Lorenzo and Jessica unite, they all head to meet Bassanio on Antonio's ship to sail to Portia's.
- Solanio and Salerio confirm that Antonio's ship has sunk. They then make fun of Shylock for his predicament of losing his daughters. Shylock then laments of his monetary loss to another Jew, Tubal, yet rejoices that Antonio is sure to default on his loan.
- At Portia's house, Bassanio correctly chooses the lead casket and wins Portia's hand in marriage. Portia gives Bassanio a ring, warning that he should never lose it or give it away, lest he risk losing her love for him.
- Shylock is declaring forfeiture of the bond by Antonio.
Court Scene

- Bassanio leaves for Venice to repay the loan. In Venice, Shylock has Antonio arrested for failure to repay the loan.
- At a Venetian court, the Duke presides over the sentencing hearing of Antonio wherein Shylock intends to cut "a pound of flesh from Antonio's breast", even though Bassanio offers him 6,000 ducats for repayment.
- Nerissa and Portia, disguised as a court clerk and doctor of civil law respectively, arrive at the court.
- Portia points out that the deed calls for no blood to be shed and exactly one pound to be taken, lest Shylock be guilty of not following the bond himself.
- Shylock, realizing this is impossible, recants and simply requests 9,000 ducats.
- Portia then reveals that Shylock is himself guilty of a crime; namely, conspiring to kill another citizen, i.e. Antonio.
- As punishment, the Duke and Antonio decide that Shylock must give half his belongings to the court; keep the other half for himself and promise to give all his remaining belongings to his daughter and son-in-law (Lorenzo) upon his death; and become a Christian. With no other choice, Shylock agrees.
Happy ending ... but nor for Shylock

• As Portia (as the doctor of civil law) leaves, Bassanio offers her a monetary gift. Portia turns this down, instead requesting Bassanio's gloves and wedding ring instead. Bassanio reluctantly gives away the ring.

• At Belmont, Lorenzo and Jessica share a peaceful night together. The next morning, Bassanio and Portia, and Gratiano and Nerissa reunite.

• After quarreling over the loss of rings, the women admit of their ruse and return the rings to their husbands. They inform Antonio that three of his ships have come to port full of merchandise.
O my Antonio, I do know of these
That therefore only are reputed wise
For saying nothing; when I am very sure
If they should speak, would almost damn those ears
Which hearing them would call their brothers fools.
I'll tell thee more of this another time;
But fish not with this melancholy bait
For this fool gudgeon, this opinion.

[Complete Works (Riverside Edition)]

„O mein Antonio, ich kenne deren,/ Die man deswegen bloß für Weise hält,/ Weil sie nichts sagen: sprächen sie, sie brächten/
Die Ohren, die sie hörten, in Verdammnis,/ Weil sie die Brüder Narren schelten würden./ Ein andermal sag' ich dir mehr hievon./ Doch fische nicht mit so trübsel'gem Köder/ Nach diesem Narrengründling, diesem Schein.“
(I,1,88ff.)
Antonio’s flesh, 
Shylock and his daughter

- SAL. That's certaine, if the diuell may be her Iudge.
- SHY. My owne flesh and blood to rebell.
- SOL. Out vpon it old carrion, rebels it at these yeeres.
- SHY. I say my daughter is my flesh and bloud.
- [Works (First Folio Edition): The Merchant of Venice. Shakespeare: Complete Works, S. 1094; vgl. Shakespeare-First Folio, S. 191)]
General Characteristics of Senecan Tragedy

A Roman playwright who heavily influenced Elizabethan tragedy

Amsdenr@ripon.edu
Senecan Tragedy

- Five Episodes or Acts
- Loosely related choral Odes in between
- Use formal forensic address (not natural “everyday speech”)
  - Observes the “rules” of debate and argument
- Sententiae (pithy, wise sayings)
- Violence and horror (on-stage)
- Magic, supernatural & death as topics, elements
- Major characters with a single obsessive motive
- “Technical” playwriting devices

  • Amsdenr@ripon.edu
Major characters with a single obsessive motive

- Shakespeare generally wrote characters with greater dimension
- Prospero, e.g., does not fit this category
- Faustus has doubts (so not singularly obsessed) about his sojourn into Hell
- Standard Elizabethan “revenge tragedies” fit this descriptor
- Hamlet fits much of the form of revenge tragedy, but the character of H. is far more interesting than an “obsessed” hero

• Amsdenr@ripon.edu
“Technical” Playwriting Devices

- Soliloquies
- Asides
- Confidants
- The characters “thoughts” are shared with the audience through means other than the usual protagonist/antagonist conflict

• Amsdenr@ripon.edu
End

Amsdenr@ripon.edu