
Cultural Daily

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Shakespeare on Despots, Power, and Finally... Transition

Jerry Kavanagh · Wednesday, January 27th, 2021

The timeless words of Shakespeare might have some application to our deposed demagogue.

“That every stride he makes upon my land is dangerous treason.”

— *King Lear*

“Farewell the neighing steed and the shrill trump.”

— *Othello*

“Think not on him till tomorrow. I’ll devise thee brave punishments for him. Strike up, pipers!”

— *Much Ado About Nothing*

“The mind growing once corrupt they turn to vicious forms.”

— *Henry VIII*

“Still in motion of raging waste! It cannot hold; it will not.”

— *Timon of Athens*

“Before him he carries noise, and behind him he leaves tears.”

— *Coriolanus*

“Proud man, drest in a little brief authority, most ignorant of what he’s most assured, his glassy essence, like an angry ape, plays such fantastic tricks before high Heaven as makes the angels weep...”

— *Measure for Measure*

“Not so much brain as earwax.”

— *Troilus and Cressida*

“What simple thief brags of his own attainment?”

— *The Comedy of Errors*

“The most peaceable way for you, if you do take a thief, is to let him show himself what he is...”

— *Much Ado About Nothing*

“Striving to make an ugly deed look fair.”

— *Timon of Athens*

“Upon my tongues continual slanders ride, the which in every language I pronounce, stuffing the ears of men with false reports.”

— *Henry IV, Part 2*

“Let all untruths stand by thy stained name.”

— *Troilus and Cressida*

“I have seen the dumb men throng to see him and the blind to hear him speak.”

— *Coriolanus*

“What a wretched and peevish fellow is this...to mope with his fat-brain'd followers so far out of his knowledge!”

— *Henry V*

“My followers' base and ignominious treasons makes me betake me to my heels.”

— *Henry VI, Part 2*

“Where are your mess of sons to back you now?”

— *Henry VI, Part 3*

“I pray, sir, can you read?”

— *Romeo and Juliet*

“O, do ye read, my lord?”

— *Titus Andronicus*

“Hast thou read truth?”

— *The Winters Tale*

“You will compel me, then, to read...?”

— *Julius Caesar*

”Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak when power to flattery bows? To plainness honor's bound when majesty falls to folly.”

— *King Lear*

“To ease ourselves of divers slanderous loads.”

— *Julius Caesar*

“Take heed, my lord; the welfare of us all hangs on the cutting short that fraudulent man.”

— *Henry VI, Part 2*

“God grant that we may never have need of you!”

— *Richard III*

“Though those that are betray'd do feel the treason sharply, yet the traitor stands in worse case of woe.”

— *Cymbeline*

“Blush, blush, thou lump of foul deformity.”

— *Richard III*

“Thou art a boil, a plague-sore, an embossed carbuncle, in my corrupted blood.”

— *King Lear*

“Thou art as opposite to every good...”

— *Henry VI, Part 3*

“Time shall unfold what plighted cunning hides, who covers faults at last with shame derides.”

— *King Lear*

“He is deformed, crooked, old and sere, ill-faced, worse-bodied, shapeless everywhere: vicious, ungentle, foolish, blunt, unkind, stigmatical in making, worse in mind.”

— *The Comedy of Errors*

“What tempest, threw this whale, with so many tuns of oil in his belly, ashore...?”

— *The Merry Wives of Windsor*

“By this good light, this is a very shallow monster!...a very weak monster!”

— *The Tempest*

“Things base and vile, holding no quantity.”

— *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

“He jests at scars that never felt a wound.”

— *Romeo and Juliet*

“Mere prattle, without practice, is all his soldiership.”

— *Othello*

“A most devout coward, religious in it.”

— *Twelfth Night*

“The abuse of greatness is when it disjoins remorse from power.”

— *Julius Caesar*

“Your dishonour mangles true judgement.”

— *Coriolanus*

“The evil that thou causeth to be done, that is thy means to live. Do thou but think what 'tis to cram a maw or clothe a back from such a filthy vice... Canst thou believe thy living is a life, so stinkingly depending!”

— *Measure for Measure*

“I am disgraced, impeach'd and baffled here, pierced to the soul.”

— *Richard II*

“I have forgot my part, and I am out, even to a full disgrace.”

— *Coriolanus*

“Should I stay longer, it would be my disgrace and your discomfort.”

— *Macbeth*

“I have lived in such dishonour, that the gods detest my baseness.”

— *Antony and Cleopatra*

“Pardon me, or strike me, if you please; I cannot be much lower.”

— *Pericles*

“Give not this rotten orange to your friend.”

— *Much Ado About Nothing*

“A beggar, that was used to come so smug upon the mart.”

— *The Merchant of Venice*

“So, there goes our Protector in a rage.”

— *Henry VI, Part 2*

“Get thee gone, thou false deluding slave.”

— *The Taming of the Shrew*

“Let him not ask our pardon; the nature of his great offence is dead.”

— *All's Well That Ends Well*

“By the merit of vile gold, dross, dust, purchase corrupted pardon of a man, who in that sale sells pardon from himself.”

— *King John*

“I wonder that you will still be talking. Nobody marks you.”

— *Much Ado About Nothing*

“I take no pleasure in aught an eunuch has.”

— *Antony and Cleopatra*

“Dull unfeeling barren ignorance is made my gaoler.”

— *Richard II*

“His silence will sit drooping.”

— *Hamlet*

“I stand dishonour'd.”

— *Much Ado About Nothing*

“Let loose on me the justice of the state for thus deluding you.”

— *Othello*

“Thy ignominy sleep with thee in the grave.”

— *Henry IV, Part 1*

And, finally:

“A good riddance.”

— *Troilus and Cressida*

Image: Watercolor of Shakespeare by Johann Heinrich Ramberg, 1832

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