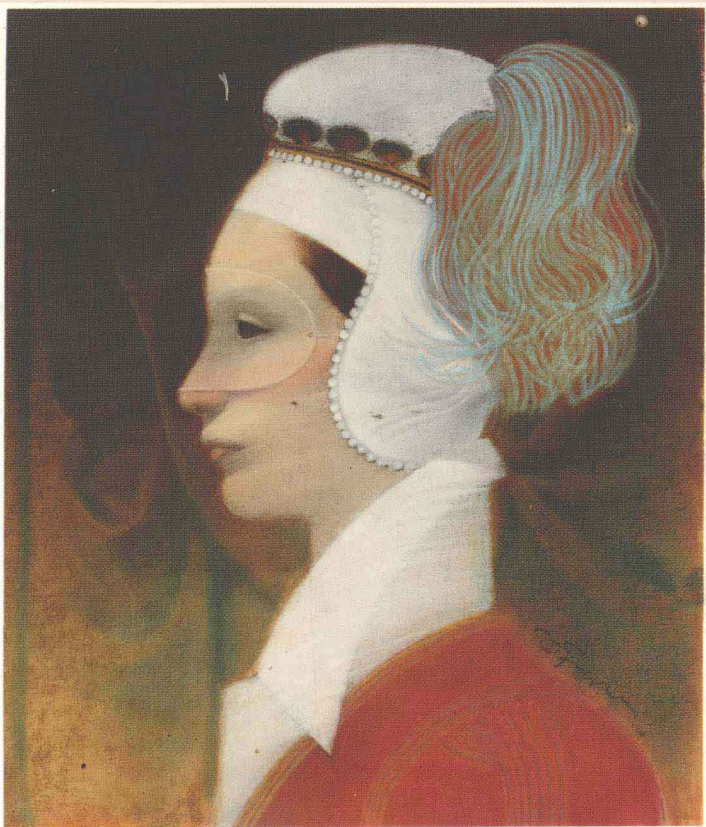


Shakespeare

MEASURE FOR MEASURE
ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL
and TROILUS AND CRESSIDA



EDITED BY DAVID BEVINGTON
WITH A FOREWORD BY JOSEPH PAPP

William Shakespeare

MEASURE FOR MEASURE ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL TROILUS AND CR

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in April, 1564, and his birth is traditionally celebrated on April 23. The facts of his life, known from surviving documents, are sparse. He was one of eight children born to John Shakespeare, a merchant of some standing in his community. William probably went to the King's New School in Stratford, but he had no university education. In November 1582, at the age of eighteen, he married Anne Hathaway, eight years his senior, who was pregnant with their first child, Susanna. She was born on May 26, 1583. Twins, a boy, Hamnet (who would die at age eleven), and a girl, Judith, were born in 1585. By 1592 Shakespeare had gone to London, working as an actor and already known as a playwright. A rival dramatist, Robert Greene, referred to him as "an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers." Shakespeare became a principal shareholder and playwright of the successful acting troupe the Lord Chamberlain's men (later, under James I, called the King's men). In 1599 the Lord Chamberlain's men built and occupied the Globe Theatre in Southwark near the Thames River. Here many of Shakespeare's plays were performed by the most famous actors of his time, including Richard Burbage, Will Kempe, and Robert Armin. In addition to his 37 plays, Shakespeare had a hand in others, including *Sir Thomas More* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, and he wrote poems, including *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*. His 154 sonnets were published, probably without his authorization, in 1609. In 1611 or 1612 he gave up his lodgings in London and devoted more and more of his time to retirement in Stratford, though he continued writing such plays as *The Tempest* and *Henry VIII* until about 1613. He died on April 23, 1616, and was buried in Holy Trinity Church, Stratford. No collected edition of his plays was published during his lifetime, but in 1623 two members of his acting company, John Heminges and Henry Condell, published the great collection now called the First Folio.

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Foreword

It's hard to imagine, but Shakespeare wrote all of his plays with a quill pen, a goose feather whose hard end had to be sharpened frequently. How many times did he scrape the dull end to a point with his knife, dip it into the inkwell, and bring up, dripping wet, those wonderful words and ideas that are known all over the world?

In the age of word processors, typewriters, and ballpoint pens, we have almost forgotten the meaning of the word "blot." Yet when I went to school, in the 1930s, my classmates and I knew all too well what an inkblot from the metal-tipped pens we used would do to a nice clean page of a test paper, and we groaned whenever a splotch fell across the sheet. Most of us finished the school day with ink-stained fingers; those who were less careful also went home with ink-stained shirts, which were almost impossible to get clean.

When I think about how long it took me to write the simplest composition with a metal-tipped pen and ink, I can only marvel at how many plays Shakespeare scratched out with his goose-feather quill pen, year after year. Imagine him walking down one of the narrow cobblestoned streets of London, or perhaps drinking a pint of beer in his local alehouse. Suddenly his mind catches fire with an idea, or a sentence, or a previously elusive phrase. He is burning with impatience to write it down—but because he doesn't have a ballpoint pen or even a pencil in his pocket, he has to keep the idea in his head until he can get to his quill and parchment.

He rushes back to his lodgings on Silver Street, ignoring the vendors hawking brooms, the coaches clattering by, the piteous wails of beggars and prisoners. Bounding up the stairs, he snatches his quill and starts to write furiously, not even bothering to light a candle against the dusk. "To be, or not to be," he scrawls, "that is the—." But the quill point has gone dull, the letters have fattened out illegibly, and in the middle of writing one of the most famous passages in the history of dramatic literature, Shakespeare has to stop to sharpen his pen.

Taking a deep breath, he lights a candle now that it's dark, sits down, and begins again. By the time the candle has burned out and the noisy apprentices of his French Huguenot landlord have quieted down, Shakespeare has finished Act 3 of *Hamlet* with scarcely a blot.

Early the next morning, he hurries through the fog of a London summer morning to the rooms of his colleague Richard Burbage, the actor for whom the role of Hamlet is being written. He finds Burbage asleep and snoring loudly, sprawled across his straw mattress. Not only had the actor performed in *Henry V* the previous afternoon, but he had then gone out carousing all night with some friends who had come to the performance.

Shakespeare shakes his friend awake, until, bleary-eyed, Burbage sits up in his bed. "Dammit, Will," he grumbles, "can't you let an honest man sleep?" But the playwright, his eyes shining and the words tumbling out of his mouth, says, "Shut up and listen—tell me what you think of *this*!"

He begins to read to the still half-asleep Burbage, pacing around the room as he speaks. "... Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune—"

Burbage interrupts, suddenly wide awake, "That's excellent, very good, 'the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,' yes, I think it will work quite well. . . ." He takes the parchment from Shakespeare and murmurs the lines to himself, slowly at first but with growing excitement.

The sun is just coming up, and the words of one of Shakespeare's most famous soliloquies are being uttered for the first time by the first actor ever to bring Hamlet to life. It must have been an exhilarating moment.

Shakespeare wrote most of his plays to be performed live by the actor Richard Burbage and the rest of the Lord Chamberlain's men (later the King's men). Today, however, our first encounter with the plays is usually in the form of the printed word. And there is no question that reading Shakespeare for the first time isn't easy. His plays aren't comic books or magazines or the dime-store detective novels I read when I was young. A lot of his sentences are complex. Many of his words are no longer used in our everyday

speech. His profound thoughts are often condensed into poetry, which is not as straightforward as prose.

Yet when you hear the words spoken aloud, a lot of the language may strike you as unexpectedly modern. For Shakespeare's plays, like any dramatic work, weren't really meant to be read; they were meant to be spoken, seen, and performed. It's amazing how lines that are so troublesome in print can flow so naturally and easily when spoken.

I think it was precisely this music that first fascinated me. When I was growing up, Shakespeare was a stranger to me. I had no particular interest in him, for I was from a different cultural tradition. It never occurred to me that his plays might be more than just something to "get through" in school, like science or math or the physical education requirement we had to fulfill. My passions then were movies, radio, and vaudeville—certainly not Elizabethan drama.

I was, however, fascinated by words and language. Because I grew up in a home where Yiddish was spoken, and English was only a second language, I was acutely sensitive to the musical sounds of different languages and had an ear for lilt and cadence and rhythm in the spoken word. And so I loved reciting poems and speeches even as a very young child. In first grade I learned lots of short nature verses—"Who has seen the wind?," one of them began. My first foray into drama was playing the role of Scrooge in Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* when I was eight years old. I liked summoning all the scorn and coldness I possessed and putting them into the words, "Bah, humbug!"

From there I moved on to longer and more famous poems and other works by writers of the 1930s. Then, in junior high school, I made my first acquaintance with Shakespeare through his play *Julius Caesar*. Our teacher, Miss McKay, assigned the class a passage to memorize from the opening scene of the play, the one that begins "Wherefore rejoice? What conquest brings he home?" The passage seemed so wonderfully theatrical and alive to me, and the experience of memorizing and reciting it was so much fun, that I went on to memorize another speech from the play on my own.

I chose Mark Antony's address to the crowd in Act 3,

scene 2, which struck me then as incredibly high drama. Even today, when I speak the words, I feel the same thrill I did that first time. There is the strong and athletic Antony descending from the raised pulpit where he has been speaking, right into the midst of a crowded Roman square. Holding the torn and bloody cloak of the murdered Julius Caesar in his hand, he begins to speak to the people of Rome:

If you have tears, prepare to shed them now.
You all do know this mantle. I remember
The first time ever Caesar put it on;
'Twas on a summer's evening in his tent,
That day he overcame the Nervii.
Look, in this place ran Cassius' dagger through.
See what a rent the envious Casca made.
Through this the well-belovèd Brutus stabbed,
And as he plucked his cursèd steel away,
Mark how the blood of Caesar followed it,
As rushing out of doors to be resolved
If Brutus so unkindly knocked or no;
For Brutus, as you know, was Caesar's angel.
Judge, O you gods, how dearly Caesar loved him!
This was the most unkindest cut of all . . .

I'm not sure now that I even knew Shakespeare had written a lot of other plays, or that he was considered "timeless," "universal," or "classic"—but I knew a good speech when I heard one, and I found the splendid rhythms of Antony's rhetoric as exciting as anything I'd ever come across.

Fifty years later, I still feel that way. Hearing good actors speak Shakespeare gracefully and naturally is a wonderful experience, unlike any other I know. There's a satisfying fullness to the spoken word that the printed page just can't convey. This is why seeing the plays of Shakespeare performed live in a theater is the best way to appreciate them. If you can't do that, listening to sound recordings or watching film versions of the plays is the next best thing.

But if you do start with the printed word, use the play as a script. Be an actor yourself and say the lines out loud. Don't worry too much at first about words you don't immediately understand. Look them up in the footnotes or a dictionary,

but don't spend too much time on this. It is more profitable (and fun) to get the sense of a passage and sing it out. Speak naturally, almost as if you were talking to a friend, but be sure to enunciate the words properly. You'll be surprised at how much you understand simply by speaking the speech "trippingly on the tongue," as Hamlet advises the Players.

You might start, as I once did, with a speech from *Julius Caesar*, in which the tribune (city official) Marullus scolds the commoners for transferring their loyalties so quickly from the defeated and murdered general Pompey to the newly victorious Julius Caesar:

Wherefore rejoice? What conquest brings he home?
What tributaries follow him to Rome
To grace in captive bonds his chariot wheels?
You blocks, you stones, you worse than senseless
things!

O you hard hearts, you cruel men of Rome,
Knew you not Pompey? Many a time and oft
Have you climbed up to walls and battlements,
To towers and windows, yea, to chimney tops,
Your infants in your arms, and there have sat
The livelong day, with patient expectation,
To see great Pompey pass the streets of Rome.

With the exception of one or two words like "wherefore" (which means "why," not "where"), "tributaries" (which means "captives"), and "patient expectation" (which means patient waiting), the meaning and emotions of this speech can be easily understood.

From here you can go on to dialogues or other more challenging scenes. Although you may stumble over unaccustomed phrases or unfamiliar words at first, and even fall flat when you're crossing some particularly rocky passages, pick yourself up and stay with it. Remember that it takes time to feel at home with anything new. Soon you'll come to recognize Shakespeare's unique sense of humor and way of saying things as easily as you recognize a friend's laughter.

And then it will just be a matter of choosing which one of Shakespeare's plays you want to tackle next. As a true fan of his, you'll find that you're constantly learning from his plays. It's a journey of discovery that you can continue for

the rest of your life. For no matter how many times you read or see a particular play, there will always be something new there that you won't have noticed before.

Why do so many thousands of people get hooked on Shakespeare and develop a habit that lasts a lifetime? What can he really say to us today, in a world filled with inventions and problems he never could have imagined? And how do you get past his special language and difficult sentence structure to understand him?

The best way to answer these questions is to go see a live production. You might not know much about Shakespeare, or much about the theater, but when you watch actors performing one of his plays on the stage, it will soon become clear to you why people get so excited about a playwright who lived hundreds of years ago.

For the story—what's happening in the play—is the most accessible part of Shakespeare. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for example, you can immediately understand the situation: a girl is chasing a guy who's chasing a girl who's chasing another guy. No wonder *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is one of the most popular of Shakespeare's plays: it's about one of the world's most popular pastimes—falling in love.

But the course of true love never did run smooth, as the young suitor Lysander says. Often in Shakespeare's comedies the girl whom the guy loves doesn't love him back, or she loves him but he loves someone else. In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Julia loves Proteus, Proteus loves Sylvia, and Sylvia loves Valentine, who is Proteus's best friend. In the end, of course, true love prevails, but not without lots of complications along the way.

For in all of his plays—comedies, histories, and tragedies—Shakespeare is showing you human nature. His characters act and react in the most extraordinary ways—and sometimes in the most incomprehensible ways. People are always trying to find motivations for what a character does. They ask, "Why does Iago want to destroy Othello?"

The answer, to me, is very simple—because that's the way Iago is. That's just his nature. Shakespeare doesn't explain his characters; he sets them in motion—and away they go. He doesn't worry about whether they're likable or not. He's

interested in interesting people, and his most fascinating characters are those who are unpredictable. If you lean back in your chair early on in one of his plays, thinking you've figured out what Iago or Shylock (in *The Merchant of Venice*) is up to, don't be too sure—because that great judge of human nature, Shakespeare, will surprise you every time.

He is just as wily in the way he structures a play. In *Macbeth*, a comic scene is suddenly introduced just after the bloodiest and most treacherous slaughter imaginable, of a guest and king by his host and subject, when in comes a drunk porter who has to go to the bathroom. Shakespeare is tickling your emotions by bringing a stand-up comic on-stage right on the heels of a savage murder.

It has taken me thirty years to understand even some of these things, and so I'm not suggesting that Shakespeare is immediately understandable. I've gotten to know him not through theory but through practice, the practice of the *living* Shakespeare—the playwright of the theater.

Of course the plays are a great achievement of dramatic literature, and they should be studied and analyzed in schools and universities. But you must always remember, when reading all the words *about* the playwright and his plays, that *Shakespeare's* words came first and that in the end there is nothing greater than a single actor on the stage speaking the lines of Shakespeare.

Everything important that I know about Shakespeare comes from the practical business of producing and directing his plays in the theater. The task of classifying, criticizing, and editing Shakespeare's printed works I happily leave to others. For me, his plays really do live on the stage, not on the page. That is what he wrote them for and that is how they are best appreciated.

Although Shakespeare lived and wrote hundreds of years ago, his name rolls off my tongue as if he were my brother. As a producer and director, I feel that there is a professional relationship between us that spans the centuries. As a human being, I feel that Shakespeare has enriched my understanding of life immeasurably. I hope you'll let him do the same for you.



Measure for Measure surprised me; I didn't really understand the play until I directed it, which just goes to show that Shakespeare can always teach us something new. The play is often called a dark comedy, or a problem play—mostly, I think, because the character of the Duke has puzzled many directors and critics.

When I started work on the play in preparation for directing it a few years ago, I began under the influence of previous interpretations of the Duke, in which he was seen as Christ-like, or sinister and cruel, or almost psychotically manipulative. Whatever the approach, it invariably darkened the production and made it into a disjointed and strange drama about political corruption. But it was placed among the Comedies in the First Folio, and I had to take that seriously, so I began trying to figure out how the term was justified.

After a while I realized that *Measure for Measure* is a love story between the Duke and Isabella. He's falling in love with this rigidly chaste young woman during the events in the course of the play that draw them together. She is adamantly and religiously bound to preserving her chastity above all else, cutting herself off from life in the process, but throughout the play the Duke is gradually winning her over.

It's not so different in kind from what goes on between Petruchio and Kate in *The Taming of the Shrew*, but where Petruchio *breaks* his shrew, Kate, the Duke *softens* his nun, Isabella. Once I realized that the play was really a light comedy, it stopped being a problem play for me and I knew just how to cast the Duke—as a young romantic type who's a perfect match for Isabella, not some weird psychotic that she picks up at the end for lack of anything better.

One of my favorite characters in the play is Barnardine, the prisoner who indignantly refuses to die when he's called up to the gallows to suit the machinations of the plot. I cast him as an elegant but faded gentleman wearing once-sumptuous clothes now in tatters. He stumped out with a cane, furious with those who would have him die before he's ready to go, and exclaimed, "You rogue, I have been drinking all night. I am not fitted for 't." It's a small moment, but he almost stole the show.

Measure for Measure is full of interesting, "playable"

characters—the Provost, who is put into a difficult position as a middleman; Elbow, another constable figure who could be Dogberry's (from *Much Ado about Nothing*) twin brother; and Escalus, who stands out because of his wisdom. Though it took me a long time to cast these characters, because it took awhile to understand the play in its new light, in the end it worked quite well. "Problem" or not, *Measure for Measure* is a terrific play.



All's Well That Ends Well is usually thought of as a difficult play. The "hero" of the play, Bertram, isn't someone the audience exactly warms to—in fact, he's easy to dislike. There are questions about Helena, the heroine, too; she is dogged in her pursuit of him, but why she wants a cad like Bertram is a mystery to us all. The Widow Capilet and Diana, who help Helena trick Bertram into her bed, aren't particularly likable either. The whole play seems to have an air of unpleasant realism about it, unlike some of the lighter comedies such as *As You Like It* or *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

And yet for all of its drawbacks, *All's Well* is playable. Audiences like the bed trick, for everyone wants the snobbish young Bertram to get his richly deserved comeuppance at the end, especially after he tries to worm out of what he's done. Parolles, that blustering braggart, that second-rate Falstaffian poltroon, who barks loudly but bites not at all, is entertaining. There is a funny scene where Bertram's soldiers kidnap and blindfold Parolles and talk gibberish to him, a scene that works well on the stage and even engenders some sympathy for him.

And in the end, though it's not easy, we just have to accept Helena at face value: she wants Bertram, rogue though he is, and that's that. It's as if Shakespeare is giving Bertram a second chance here, just as he gives another chance to the hypocrite Angelo at the end of *Measure for Measure*, to the treacherous Oliver in *As You Like It*, and to the unforgivable Proteus in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

This belief that people can and will change really works only in the comedies. Shakespeare can't apply this generosity to the histories, where unyielding historical fact deter-

mines who's executed, who's banished, and who's allowed to survive. No, such humanizing forgiveness flourishes only in comedy, where no factual restraints apply, and where no character is so bad that he cannot undergo a process of reformation.



If *Troilus and Cressida* is a problem play, as it is often called, then Troilus is definitely the problem—and Cressida the victim. When I directed this play, I found myself disliking the actor who played Troilus, because I was so much on Cressida's side. Troilus talks a lot, but he never does anything when it comes down to it. Instead of standing *up* for Cressida, he stands idly by watching the exchange of prisoners that sends her over to the Greek camp and effectively ends their relationship. What does he expect her to do, a lone woman against the whole Greek army? Of course she'll find herself someone else; she'll need a protector.

The Greeks themselves are something of a problem too, with their long, drawn-out scenes and speeches. Though there are some fine passages here and there—such as Ulysses' famous speech on honor, which begins, "The heavens themselves, the planets, and this center / Observe degree, priority, and place,"—the play can get bogged down in a lot of talk and stagnate.

Indeed, there is more *talk* about honor here than in any other play of Shakespeare's—but there's little honorable behavior. It is a play full of corruption and dishonor; people are selling out while putting up an "honorable" front. All of this ugliness is clothed in silk and powdered over with elegant makeup—which just makes the spread of moral infection and disease all the more disgusting. Look what the Greeks and the Trojans are fighting over—Helen, a woman who's portrayed in the play as nothing more than a whore. *Troilus and Cressida* is a stark, cynical portrayal of the internal rottenness and ugliness in people, and one you won't easily forget.

JOSEPH PAPP GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES THE HELP OF
ELIZABETH KIRKLAND IN PREPARING THIS FOREWORD.

Shakespeare's Problem Plays

The three plays in this volume are pivotal in Shakespeare's development as an artist. Written between 1601 and 1604, they are later than most of the romantic comedies, such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (c. 1594–1595), *Much Ado about Nothing* and *As You Like It* (c. 1598–1600), and *Twelfth Night* (1600–1602). They are instead contemporaneous with several of Shakespeare's greatest tragedies, including *Hamlet* (c. 1599–1601), *Othello* (c. 1603–1604), and *King Lear* (c. 1605). Two of these dark plays, *All's Well That Ends Well* and *Measure for Measure*, are comedies in that they end in forgiveness and marriage; yet their resolutions are so perilously achieved that we remain troubled by the image of a dark world of human failing in which the comic spirit must struggle to survive. The third play in this group, *Troilus and Cressida*, cannot be said to be a comedy at all, though it is not a true tragedy either: in it, the love affair between Troilus and Cressida ends dismally, but without the death of either lover, while the Trojan War produces nothing more conclusive than a stalemate and the unchivalric slaughter of Hector by Achilles. The uncertainty we feel about the genre of *Troilus and Cressida* seems appropriate for this period in Shakespeare's career, when he was turning from romantic comedy and English historical drama to tragedy.

These three plays are sometimes grouped together under the generic label of "problem plays." The label is, to be sure, a convenience of modern literary criticism and one that can be challenged. The first complete edition of Shakespeare's plays, the First Folio (1623), simply includes *All's Well* and *Measure for Measure* among Shakespeare's comedies; of the three, only *Troilus and Cressida* appears as an anomaly, inserted late in the printing process between the histories and comedies. Not until the late nineteenth century was the term "problem play" applied by F. S. Boas to these plays (referring both to the difficulty of categorizing them and to the problematic nature of evil and of love presented in them), and the exact definition of the group remains in dispute. Boas himself included *Hamlet* (as did E. M. W. Tillyard), while other scholars, such as Ernst

Schanzer and Peter Ure, have applied the term to *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Timon of Athens*. One can argue, moreover, that the problematic nature of evil intrudes into Shakespearean comedy well before 1601: in Shylock's murderous threat against Antonio (*The Merchant of Venice*), in Don John's slander of Hero (*Much Ado about Nothing*), or even in old Egeon's rendezvous with public execution for violating the laws of Ephesus (*The Comedy of Errors*). In fact, Shakespearean comedy regularly delivers its long-suffering and deserving protagonists from the perils of exile, separation, and character assassination, as well as the prospect or illusion of death.

Despite all these qualifications, which in fact point to the remarkable continuity of Shakespeare's artistic development, a strong case can be made for there being a cohesiveness among the three plays included in this volume. To begin with, the fictional worlds of these plays are generally darker than those of the earlier romantic comedies; Shakespeare presents us with a whole world in conflict with itself. The mood of *All's Well* is elegiac; many of its most attractive figures, such as the Countess and Lafew, are old (a surprising thing in a comedy), while the young, particularly Bertram and Parolles, are apt to be callow. Repeatedly this play expresses a longing for a better world now seemingly vanished, one that is appreciated only when it is no longer present to be enjoyed: "That's good that's gone" (5.3.61). The world of Vienna in *Measure for Measure* is morally corrupt at every level; much of the joking is about venereal disease, copulation, police incompetence, and the roguish attempts of pimps and bawds to stay one step ahead of the law. War is the pervasive fact of life in *Troilus and Cressida*, and an especially unglamorous war at that, one for which "all the argument is a whore and a cuckold" (2.3.71-72). Again the acerbic humor tends to center on diseases, lechery, and infidelity. Small wonder that the lovers in these surroundings find themselves threatened by a sense of universal human failure of which their own inadequacy is an inescapable part.

A significant corollary of this sense of universal malaise is that the lovers of the problem plays find themselves confronted with problems not external to themselves but within themselves. Unlike the young lovers of *A Midsum-*