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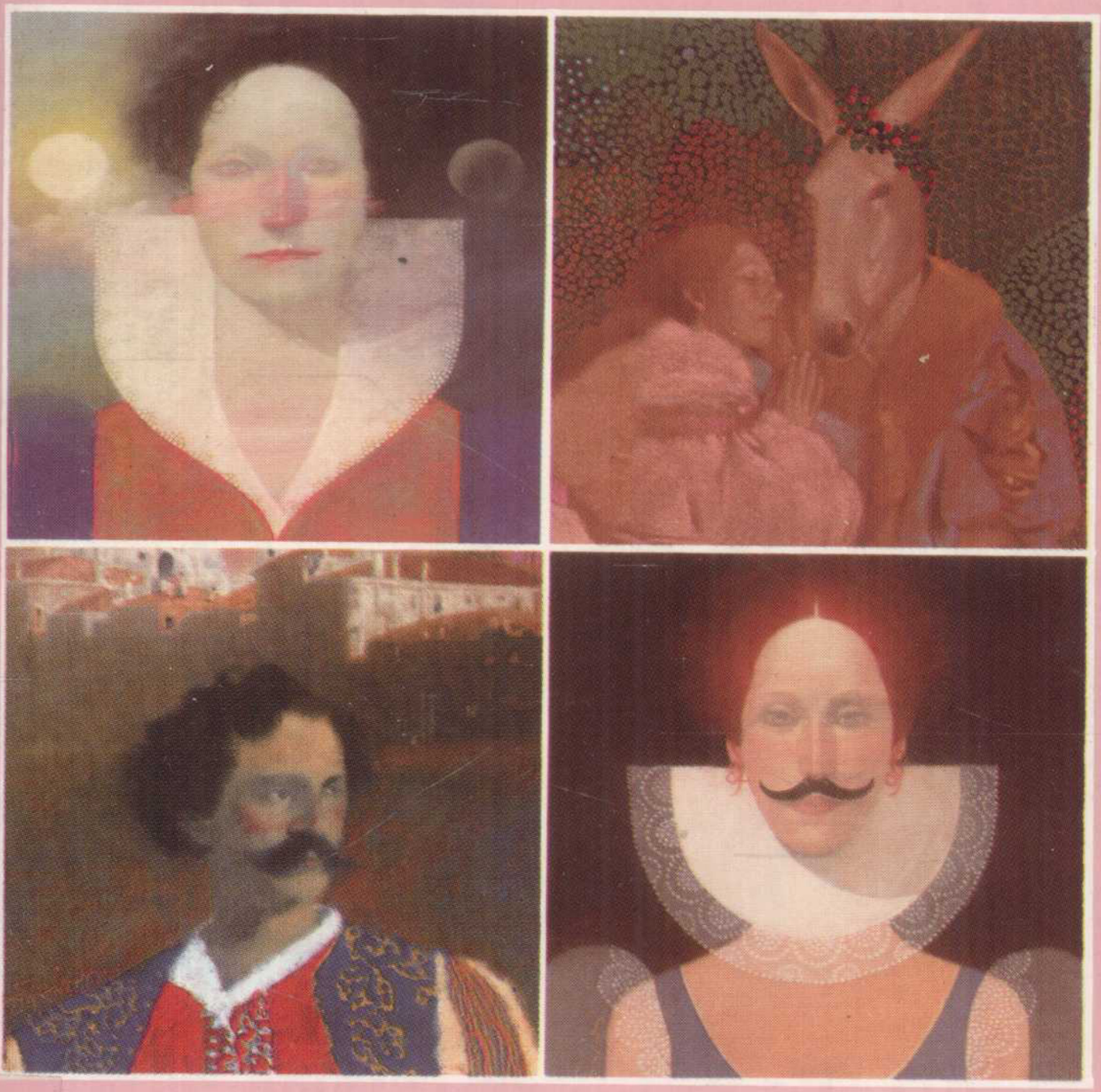

THE TAMING OF THE SHREW
A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM
THE MERCHANT OF VENICE
TWELFTH NIGHT

EDITED BY DAVID BEVINGTON
WITH A FOREWORD BY JOSEPH PAPP

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William Shakespeare

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A Midsummer Night's Dream
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Twelfth Night

Edited by
David Bevington

David Scott Kastan,
James Hammersmith,
and Robert Kean Turner,
Associate Editors

With a Foreword by

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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

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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.

Does *The Taming of the Shrew* have anything to say to us today, or is it hopelessly outdated by its male chauvinism? After all, here's a guy, Petruchio, who starves his wife, Kate, half to death, mocks and embarrasses her publicly, calls her "my goods, my chattels . . . my house, My household stuff, my field, my barn, My horse, my ox, my ass, my anything," and hurls verbal abuse at her—all in the name of taming her, the shrew. After a play full of this kind of treatment from her husband, Kate does indeed seem chastened: in her last speech she advises the other "froward wives" to honor and obey their men and acknowledges her own submission by putting her hand beneath Petruchio's foot. "Such duty as the subject owes the prince," she says, "Even such a woman oweth to her husband."

This is certainly bound to raise the hackles of many women, and even some men, who feel that Kate has betrayed the principles of the women's movement. But if we approach the play unburdened by present-day politics, we will find that the last speech is the culmination of a hard-fought and hard-won love between Kate and Petruchio, and that the notion of one-upmanship isn't part of the picture.

Shakespeare says quite plainly that if two people are really in love, the issue of who does what for whom does not exist. It's taken for granted in *The Taming of the Shrew* that Kate's last speech is certainly not the basis for their relationship, but will serve to bring out the best in Petruchio. Remember—Kate isn't the only one who has learned a lesson. The teacher Petruchio has also been a student and beneficiary of the painful lessons both have undergone.

On the stage, the playing is the thing. For example, when Meryl Streep and Raul Julia played Kate and Petruchio at the Delacorte Theater in Central Park, it was quite clear that the two characters cared for each other intensely. These wonderful actors entered the spirit of the play so wholeheartedly that they brought the characters to life and made what happens in the play totally believable.

Kate is one of Shakespeare's intelligent women who will not be pushed around. She is dumbfounded when Petruchio attempts to do just that. But his intention, as she discovers, is not to dominate but to rid her of an intractable manner she herself dislikes; he alone has the chutzpah to tackle her.

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Petruchio deserves a medal for understanding Kate so well; instead, Shakespeare gave him a play!

✣

You may be a corporate executive or a plain everyday wage slave, a brilliant student or a high-school dropout, eight years old or eighty-plus—but dollars to doughnuts you'll laugh your head off at the antics of Nick Bottom and company in *A Midsummer Night's Dream.*

A group of workingmen meet in a wood (that is also, unbeknownst to them, an enchanted fairyland) and set out to rehearse a play. All of them are shy and modest, with one large exception: Nick Bottom. He is an arrogant, pushy, pompous bully, an egotistical know-it-all—in plain words, a big ass.

But he gets his comeuppance. First we see him actually transformed into an ass through a spell cast by a mischievous wood sprite called Puck; then we see him adored by the beautiful and sexy Queen of the Fairies, Titania, who has been bewitched by her jealous lover, Oberon; and finally we see him awakened from his midsummer night's dream. Typically, in calling it "Bottom's Dream," he takes the credit away from his creator, William Shakespeare.

Two sets of desperate lovers chase each other through the forest, while two magical monarchs, Titania and Oberon, contend for supremacy of the leafy kingdom. To add to the magic, tiny wood creatures abound, with such names as Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed. Along the way we light upon some of Shakespeare's loveliest poetry—such as Oberon's description of a white blossom turning "purple with love's wound."

And, in the midst of all this enchantment of love and passion, Nick Bottom and his "hempen homespuns"—Quince, Snug, Flute, and Starveling—press on with their hilarious efforts to make a play. The mingling of all these is what makes *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Shakespeare's most captivating comedy.

✣

The Merchant of Venice has been one of Shakespeare's most popular—and controversial—plays wherever it has been performed. The controversy usually centers around the way Shylock the Jew is portrayed and treated. Many people think that Shakespeare himself was being anti-Semitic here. I personally don't believe this, judging from the humanity in all the works of this great writer, especially this one. It's difficult for me to label *The Merchant of Venice* as anti-Semitic when it has one of the most eloquent pleas to our sense of common humanity ever uttered on the stage:

> Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?

There is no indication that the romantic lead, Bassanio, and the woman he marries, Portia, are prejudiced against Shylock because he's a Jew. Portia's goal is to save Antonio's life in order to free her new husband from his obligations to the merchant. Bassanio wants to rescue a friend to whom he's heavily indebted. It would be difficult to prove that anything either of them says has an unusually anti-Semitic prejudice.

And yet there is anti-Semitism *within* the play. We find it most virulently in Antonio, the merchant of Venice, and his henchmen Salerio and Solanio, very strongly in Gratiano, somewhat in Lorenzo, and especially in the comedian Launcelot Gobbo, Shylock's former servant.

The Merchant of Venice was the first play we at the New York Shakespeare Festival produced at the Delacorte Theater in Central Park, with George C. Scott as Shylock. I can remember telling George not to play for sympathy, not to be nice, not to turn the other cheek, but to feel the righteous anger that belongs to him. After all, Shylock has been so kicked around and spat on just for trying to make a living that it would be unnatural for him *not* to want vengeance. He's taunted in the streets; his daughter runs away with a

Christian, taking his money and jewels with her; the ruling elite in Venice, personified by Antonio, are arrayed against him—who wouldn't press for his pound of flesh in those circumstances?

Shakespeare provides Shylock with a rationale—but not an excuse—for his behavior. But Antonio, unlike Shylock, has no real reason for his hatred and cruelty toward the Jewish man; nor can there ever be a rational explanation for anti-Semitism. Antonio treats Shylock abominably. In the early scenes of the play we learn that he has spurned and spat upon him, calling him a dog, and Antonio goes on to say, "I am as like to call thee so again, To spit on thee again, to spurn thee too." In the trial scene, Shylock is threatened with the confiscation of all of his remaining money and property. The compromise suggested by Antonio requires, among other things, that Shylock change his religion—the cruelest punishment that could be devised.

One of the most poignant moments Shakespeare gives Shylock occurs when Tubal tells him that Jessica, Shylock's daughter, who has run off with Lorenzo, has traded a family ring for a monkey. "It was my turquoise," says Shylock, "I had it of Leah when I was a bachelor. I would not have given it for a wilderness of monkeys." What makes me sad here is that Jessica seems to have completely disregarded the emotional value of the ring. There seems to be very little triumph in her act; instead, Jessica must suffer the consequences of her actions, as we perceive in the last scenes of the play, where she is unaccountably melancholic.

Because of Shylock, *The Merchant of Venice* can easily be called a tragedy. He will always remain a complex, fascinating character. No wonder so many actors want to play him, to understand him, and to enter into his tragedy—he is one of the greatest dramatic figures of all time.

I've always loved the scene in *Twelfth Night* where the steward Malvolio discovers the love letter addressed to him that he imagines was written by the Lady Olivia. In having Malvolio read it out loud, Shakespeare gives us a glimpse of a man whose fantastic ambitions and exaggerated sense of his own worth make him an obvious target for those in the

play—Sir Toby Belch, Sir Andrew Aguecheek, Maria, and Fabian—who cannot tolerate his pomposity.

There's no question that Malvolio is the character of greatest interest to Shakespeare, because he subjects him to the cruellest kind of treatment at the hands of Olivia's alcoholic uncle and his cohorts. While the audience is led to enjoy the antics and mischief perpetrated on this puritanical figure, Shakespeare (as usual), is not content with a simplistic attitude toward this important character. Instead, the playwright encourages us to feel sympathetic toward Malvolio for his tribulations in the later scene, tribulations that seem overly severe.

At the end of the play, Feste, the Fool, echoes the very words that Malvolio himself uttered in reading the planted letter: "Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them." These words linger in our minds as we apply them to the world outside the play. We think of people who *are* born great and seem to have a natural genius; others who achieve greatness through hard work in the arts, in the sciences, in sports, in politics; and still others who unexpectedly have greatness thrust upon them, such as a vice president who may suddenly become the president of the United States after an assassination or a resignation.

JOSEPH PAPP

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

Four Comedies

In the 1590s, during the first decade of his career as dramatist and actor, Shakespeare concentrated mainly on English history plays and romantic comedies. His only tragedies at that time (apart from his history plays, in which tragic events often occur) were an early revenge play, *Titus Andronicus* (c. 1589–1591), and *Romeo and Juliet* (c. 1594–1596); the great tragedies came later. Shakespeare meantime achieved considerable fame as a historical dramatist with his *Henry VI* plays and *Richard III* (c. 1589–1594), with *King John* (c. 1594–1595), and with the four-play sequence from *Richard II* through the two parts of *Henry IV* to *Henry V* (c. 1595–1599). And at the same time he was experimenting with and perfecting his own special kind of romantic comedy, probably beginning with *The Comedy of Errors* (c. 1589–1593), an imitation of the Latin dramatist Plautus; *Love's Labor's Lost* (c. 1588–1589, perhaps later revised), a love comedy in the mannered style of John Lyly; and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (c. 1590–1594), an apprenticeship to the romantic fiction of Italy. He achieved major successes with *The Taming of the Shrew* (c. 1592–1594) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (c. 1594–1595) and went on in the second half of the decade to produce immortal comedies at the rate of approximately one a year: *The Merchant of Venice* and *Much Ado about Nothing* by 1599, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* in 1597 or possibly 1600, *As You Like It* by 1600, and *Twelfth Night* by 1602. Shakespeare then turned to tragedy and away from historical drama and romantic comedy, as though he had said what he had to say in these genres. His subsequent comedies tend to be dark problem plays, such as *Measure for Measure, All's Well That Ends Well,* and *Troilus and Cressida* (c. 1601–1604), or, toward the end of his career, tragicomic romances, such as *Pericles, Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale,* and *The Tempest* (c. 1607–1611).

The present collection offers four of Shakespeare's most enduring romantic comedies from the period of the 1590s. In these plays we can see Shakespeare developing the form of comedy we associate with his name. They are all romantic comedies in at least two senses: their main action is

about love, and they contain elements of the improbable and the miraculous. Courtship is a staple of Shakespearean comic plotting; these comedies regularly end with a parade of couples to the altar and a festive gathering of those who long to celebrate the joys of love. Some of these plays, because of their comic emphasis on mating rituals and the battle of the sexes, as in *The Taming of the Shrew,* are also called love-game comedies (see David Stevenson's *The Love-Game Comedy* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1946]). Elements of the improbable are no less prominent and help define the way in which Shakespearean comedy is so different from the drawing-room social comedy of dramatists such as William Congreve and George Bernard Shaw. Fairies complicate the love relationships of the four lovers in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and have their own quarrels as well; a beggar turns lord for a day in *The Taming of the Shrew* and beholds a play presented in his honor; Portia's wooers in *The Merchant of Venice* must venture across the seas to a mountaintop retreat and choose among three caskets in order to gain the hand of the fair lady; Illyria in *Twelfth Night* is (as its name suggests) a place of illusion and delirium, where Viola disguises herself as a young man and is mistaken for her supposedly dead brother.

Shakespearean comedy achieves a festive and celebratory mood that is all the more theatrically effective because of the perils with which the comedy must deal. The term "festive" comedy emphasizes this sense in which the joyous holiday impulse of carnival must do unremitting battle with the Lenten spirit. Antonio in *The Merchant of Venice* is inexplicably sad when the play begins; something is amiss or incomplete in his mercantile world. His Venice is a place of conflict and hatred as well as laughter, and indeed his very life is soon threatened by Shylock's vengeful demand for a pound of Antonio's flesh. The play's comic ending must not only unite the lovers in marriage but rescue Antonio from a terrible death. *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* for all its hilarity, gives us ample glimpses of the dark side of love, embodied in the forest of Athens. There the lovers must learn what it is to be lost, rejected, and misunderstood before they can find their true selves in marriage. The opposing worlds of revelry and sobriety, carnival and Lent,

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