Trevor R Griffiths
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Longman Guide to Shakespeare Quotations

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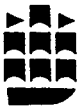

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In memory of Adrian Gunn and Joseph Lederer, colleagues and friends

Introduction

SHAKESPEARE has been quoted – and misquoted – for nearly 400 years; since at least 1592, when another writer, Robert Greene, laced an attack on him with a parody of a line from *Henry VI Part 2*. Since then, Shakespeare's lines have been enlisted by politicians spurred on by praises of English virtues, by lovers seeking to impress their loved ones with their borrowed eloquence, by ordinary people who see in his words a crystallization of their own hopes and fears.

Quotation always involves removing the lines quoted from their context and can lead to serious falsification if it is assumed that, for example, Hamlet's meditation on suicide or Jaques's Seven Ages of Man speech represents Shakespeare's own thoughts. In this book we have selected over 2000 quotations from Shakespeare's works – many of them familiar, some less so – and replaced them in a context. In the case of lines from the plays, this usually involves stating who says the lines to whom, in what context, and commenting on any other features which contribute to the words being particularly memorable: perhaps the quality of the expression, perhaps their subsequent use by others.

In our choice of quotations we have naturally included many old favourites, but the increased representation of the comedies and histories reflects their growing reputation since the established selections of Shakespearian quotations were made. As well as all the plays and poems substantially attributed to Shakespeare (including *The Two Noble Kinsmen*), we have included the will and the epitaph. We have interpreted context in a wide sense to mean anything that is helpful to understanding the quoted lines. In our comments we sometimes give an approximate 'meaning' for an obscure word or phrase, but that 'meaning' is often only one of a number of possible readings. In a work of this kind the editors must rely heavily on the labours of many editors, scholars, and critics who have established reliable texts, elucidated difficult passages, and enhanced our knowledge of Shakespeare's period, life, and works. Our gratitude is great but our errors are our own. We are particularly grateful to Penguin Books Ltd for permission to use the texts of those volumes of the New Penguin Shakespeare that have so far been published; in the case of works not yet available in that series we have returned to the earliest authoritative editions and modernized spelling and punctuation.

The most important thing to remember about a quotation is that, however well-phrased or 'true' it may seem, it is best appreciated in the context of the work in which it appears. No quotation is an island of meaning in itself – its meaning depends first on its place in the greater

whole of which it is part. Shakespeare wrote poems and plays within certain conventions and we can never assume, except perhaps in the will, that he was writing in the first person – even the 'I' of the sonnets does not necessarily correspond exactly with William Shakespeare, the man. In the plays a character's words may be undercut or disputed by the next character, or by the context, or by the action of the play. We hope that this collection will make it a little easier to appreciate this fact.

In preparing this work we have benefited not only from the work of all those scholars we have already acknowledged, but also from the material support and help of Caroline Thorley, Karen Swinden, and Craig Thomson.

To our publisher Kathy Rooney we owe our grateful thanks for her encouragement, help, guidance, and forbearance during the gestation of this book.

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Contents

All's Well That Ends Well

1 'Twere all one
That I should love a bright particular star
And think to wed it, he is so above me.
In his bright radiance and collateral light
Must I be comforted, not in his sphere.
(I.1.84–8)
Helena, brought up in the household of the Countess of Rossillion, has fallen in love with the Countess's son, Bertram, who is, as she says, of a higher social class. She uses imagery drawn from Ptolemaic astronomy to make the contrast between their status, seeing them as confined to separate spheres.

2 The hind that would be mated by the lion
Must die for love.
(I.1.90–1)
Helena sees herself as a deer whose love for Bertram ('the lion') is inevitably doomed.

3 It is not politic in the commonwealth of nature to preserve virginity. Loss of virginity is rational increase, and there was never virgin got till virginity was first lost. That you were made of is mettle to make virgins. Virginity, by being once lost, may be ten times found; by being ever kept it is ever lost. 'Tis too cold a companion. Away with't!
(I.1.124–31)
Parolles, a braggart soldier and follower of Bertram, is talking to Helena about virginity, using sophistry to argue against the preservation of virginity. 'Got' means begotten.

4 Your virginity, your old virginity, is like one of our French withered pears: it looks ill, it eats drily.
(I.1.157–9)
Parolles continues to decry virginity to Helena.

5 Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie,
Which we ascribe to heaven. The fated sky
Gives us free scope, only doth backward pull
Our slow designs when we ourselves are dull.
(I.1.212–15)

Helena decides that her former view that she could do nothing about her love for Bertram was misguided, drawing ideas from astrology and theology to stress the importance of free will.

6 Was this fair face the cause, quoth she,
Why the Grecians sackèd Troy?
(I.3.68–9)
Lavatch, the Countess's Clown, sings this song to her while they await the arrival of Helena. The song is presumably occasioned by Helena's name, since the 'fair face' is that of Helen of Troy, whose abduction led the Greeks to besiege and sack the town of Troy.

7 That man should be at woman's command, and yet no hurt done!
(I.3.89–90)
Lavatch the Clown comments on his being a woman's servant, probably with a sexual innuendo.

8 This thorn
Doth to our rose of youth rightly belong.
(I.3.124–5)
The Countess muses on Helena's love for Bertram, seeing the pain it causes her as the thorn which goes together naturally with youth.

9 Mars dote on you for his novices!
(II.1.47)
Parolles, who has gone to the court with Bertram, bids farewell to some lords who are going off to the wars in Italy. He asks the god of war to take good care of them as his pupils.

10 Now, Dian, from thy altar do I fly,
And to imperial Love, that god most high,
Do my sighs stream.
(II.3.73–5)
Helena as a virgin has previously devoted herself to Diana, the chaste goddess, but she is now choosing a husband as her reward for curing the King of France. She therefore abjures her former goddess in favour of love.

11 From lowest place when virtuous things proceed,
The place is dignified by th'doer's deed.
Where great additions swell's and virtue none,
It is a dropsied honour...
Honours thrive

When rather from our acts we them derive
Than our foregoers.
(II.3.124–7, 134–6)
As her reward for curing the King of France, Helena has chosen Bertram as her husband; but Bertram has objected to the marriage, partly on the ground of their different social status. In this speech the King counters that Bertram's view is based on a mistaken reverence for inherited honour and on too little regard for the individual's innate honour. Similar conflicts of views run through much of the play in the form of arguments about male and female values, war and love, and inherited and achieved honour. 'Additions' means titles or honours; 'swell's' is short for swell us.

12 He wears his honour in a box unseen
That hugs his kicky-wicky here at home.
(II.3.277–8)
Bertram, appalled at being married off to Helena, has decided to go to the Italian wars before the marriage can be consummated. Parolles encourages him to do so with this dismissive view of domestic bliss. Although 'kicky-wicky' does not appear elsewhere, it is clearly a term of endearment or a pet name, meaning darling or lover.

13 Wars is no strife
To the dark house and the detested wife.
(II.3.289–90)
Bertram sees going to war as preferable to ('To') the available alternatives. The 'dark house' probably refers to the gloomy marital home but there may also be a reference to the madhouse, since madmen were often kept in darkness in this period.

14 A young man married is a man that's marred.
(II.3.296)
Parolles adopts a proverbial phrase to the context of Bertram's forced marriage. Once again the idea of honour is prominent.

15 The soul of this man is his clothes.
(II.5.43–4)
Lafeu, an old courtier, comments on Parolles to Bertram. He, unlike Bertram, has spotted Parolles's essential worthlessness.

16 Here comes my clog.
(II.5.53)
Bertram, unhappy at being forced to marry Helena, comments on her arrival, seeing her as being like a clog, a block of wood tied

to an animal to stop it from straying which thus prevents it from following its own inclinations.

17 Strangers and foes do sunder and not kiss.
(II.5.86)
Helena, instructed by Bertram to leave for Rossillion before they have consummated their marriage, attempts unsuccessfully to beg at least a farewell kiss.

18 I knew a man that had this trick of melancholy hold a goodly manor for a song.
(III.2.8–9)
Lavatch, the Countess's Clown, is telling her that he thinks Bertram is a melancholy man because of the way that he sings while doing other things. In this remark he refers to the use of 'going for a song' to mean selling at a very low price – the melancholy man sold the manor very cheap, or he was so pleased by a song that he was willing to accept it as payment for the manor.

19 *When thou canst get the ring upon my finger, which never shall come off, and show me a child begotten of thy body that I am father to, then call me husband; but in such a 'then' I write a 'never'.*
(III.2.56–9)
Bertram's letter rejecting Helena, here read by Helena, is presumably meant to be no more than a hyperbolic rejection of her, but she eventually chooses to regard it as a set of folk-tale tasks which she sets about fulfilling in the rest of the play.

20 Let us assay our plot, which, if it speed,
Is wicked meaning in a lawful deed,
And lawful meaning in a lawful act,
Where both not sin, and yet a sinful fact.
But let's about it.
(III.7.44–8)
Helena has arrived in Florence, where she has met Diana who is being sexually pursued by Bertram. She has formulated a plot to fulfil Bertram's demands on her by persuading Diana to get his ring as a love token and to arrange a night-time assignation. Helena plans to substitute herself for Diana at this assignation in the hope that she will become pregnant as the result of their lovemaking. The result of the plot, as Helena's speech makes clear, will be paradoxical: Bertram intends to commit adultery ('wicked meaning'), but will actually make love to his wife ('a lawful deed'), and Helena will be sleeping with her husband ('a

lawful act'), which is what she intends ('lawful meaning'), so that what might appear sinful is in fact legitimate ('both not sin, and yet a sinful fact'). The final line reflects Helena's businesslike approach to getting things done. 'Speed' means succeed; 'meaning' means intention.

21 So you serve us
Till we serve you; but when you have our roses,
You barely leave our thorns to prick ourselves,
And mock us with our bareness.
(IV.2.17–20)
Diana distrusts Bertram's vows of undying love, complaining that men always make such vows ('so you serve us') until women agree to have sex with them ('we serve you'). According to Diana, using the familiar associations of flowers and love, when men have had sex they leave women exposed to the pricks of remorse.

22 The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together. Our virtues would be proud if our faults whipped them not, and our crimes would despair if they were not cherished by our virtues.
(IV.3.70–3)
The First Lord, one of the brothers Dumaine, speaks these lines which many critics see as a key to the play in which 'realistic' and folk-tale elements coexist in an unstable mixture. The immediate occasion of the speech is the (false) news that Helena is dead and the nobles' anticipation of Bertram's reaction.

23 A whale to virginity.
(IV.3.215–16)
Parolles, believing that he has been captured by the enemy, is busy telling his captors – who are actually the Dumaine brothers demonstrating his falsity to Bertram – the secrets of the army. Here he is describing Bertram's attitude to virgins: he is like a whale swallowing all the small fish that come within reach.

24 Who cannot be crushed with a plot?
(IV.3.315)
Parolles has had his deficiencies exposed to Bertram but, as this line indicates, he remains resilient.

25 Simply the thing I am
Shall make me live.
(IV.3.323–4)

Parolles, his pretensions deflated and his hollowness exposed, decides that he will have to find another, more honest, means of getting his livelihood.

26 I am for the house with the narrow gate, which I take to be too little for pomp to enter; some that humble themselves may, but the many will be too chill and tender, and they'll be for the flowery way that leads to the broad gate and the great fire.
(IV.5.48–53)
Lavatch, the Countess's Clown, in joking with Lafeu, the old courtier, hopes for salvation, drawing on the biblical imagery of the narrow and difficult path to heaven and the broad path to hell. Shakespeare uses the idea of the flowery path to hell in *Hamlet* (see 35) and *Macbeth* (see 53) as well, though there is no biblical justification for it.

27 Natural rebellion done i'th'blade of youth.
(V.3.6)
The Countess asks the King to forgive Bertram for his folly in rejecting Helena, on the grounds that youth is naturally rebellious. 'Blade' means a plant's shoot.

28 Praising what is lost
Makes the remembrance dear.
(V.3.19–20)
The King comments on Lafeu's praise of Helena ('what is lost').

29 For we are old, and on our quickest decrees
Th'inaudible and noiseless foot of time
Steals ere we can effect them.
(V.3.39–41)
The King has decided that Bertram should marry Lafeu's daughter and wants to move quickly because of his age, at which time creeps up silently before things can be done.

30 'Tis but the shadow of a wife you see,
The name and not the thing.
(V.3.305–6)
The pregnant Helena has reappeared to claim Bertram. She is the ghost of a wife, an actor in the role of wife, an imitation of a wife (all conveyed by 'shadow'); she has the title ('name') but not the substance of a wife.

31 If she, my liege, can make me know this clearly
I'll love her dearly, ever, ever dearly.
(V.3.313–14)
Bertram, baffled to find Helena alive and pregnant by him, tells the King ('my liege') that if Helena ('she') can explain things to him he will love her. Some critics and audiences find his conditional response ungenerous, but those who see the play as testing the values of the Romance genre against those of the everyday world tend to view this as another example of Bertram's prosaic nature.

32 Mine eyes smell onions, I shall weep anon.
(V.3.318)
Lafeu, the old courtier, protests that the cause of his weeping is an external stimulus ('onions') rather than a sentimental reaction to the reunion of Bertram, Helena, and the Countess.

33 All yet seems well, and if it end so meet,
The bitter past, more welcome is the sweet.
(V.3.330–1)
The King ends the action of the play with a summing-up couplet which stresses the play's characteristic mixture of bitter and sweet and the conditional nature of the final reconciliation. 'Meet' means appropriately.

34 The King's a beggar, now the play is done.
(Epilogue 1)
The King speaks the epilogue, using the disparity between his commanding role in the play and his dependence, as an actor, on the audience's generosity to beg their applause.

Antony and Cleopatra

1 His captain's heart,
Which in the scuffles of great fights hath burst
The buckles on his breast, reneges all temper,
And is become the bellows and the fan
To cool a gypsy's lust.
(I.1.6–10)
In the opening speech of the play, Philo, a follower of Antony, is explaining to a companion, Demetrius, how Antony's martial values have been debased by his infatuation with Cleopatra. 'Reneges all temper' means renounces moderation. The pejorative use of 'gypsy' to indicate Cleopatra combines the

Renaissance belief that gypsies were of Egyptian origin with the early seventeenth-century cant use of the term to mean a woman.

2 Take but good note, and you shall see in him
The triple pillar of the world transformed
Into a strumpet's fool.
(I.1.11–13)
Philo's denunciation of Antony opposes his desertion of Roman military values to his embrace of Egyptian sensuality. Antony's designation as 'the triple pillar of the world' refers to his being one of the triumvirs (Lepidus and Octavius Caesar being the other two) who ruled the Roman world between them.

3 CLEOPATRA
If it be love indeed, tell me how much.
ANTONY
There's beggary in the love that can be reckoned.
CLEOPATRA
I'll set a bourn how far to be beloved.
ANTONY
Then must thou needs find out new heaven, new earth.
(I.1.14–17)
In the first exchange of Antony and Cleopatra, the vastness of their love is expressed in terms of wealth and distance that transcend the limits of the Roman Empire and comprehend the spiritual realm. 'Beggary' here signifies meanness and 'bourn' a boundary.

4 Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch
Of the ranged empire fall! Here is my space.
Kingdoms are clay.
(I.1.33–5)
Cleopatra has mocked Antony for being at the beck and call of Fulvia, his wife, and of Octavius Caesar, because a messenger has arrived from Rome. Antony's response is anarchic in its image of the destruction of empire. His elevation of his mistress ('my space') above 'kingdoms' is a commonplace of the love poetry of the period. 'Ranged' has given rise to much editorial comment, but the weight of philological evidence would suggest that it combines the sense of extent with a term from masonry indicating course or foundation, and so following the architectural image of 'arch'.

5 There's not a minute of our lives should stretch
Without some pleasure now. What sport tonight?
(I.1.46–7)
Antony's line indicates his enslavement to the sensual pleasures of Egypt and his rejection of the demands of Roman public life.

6 In Nature's infinite book of secrecy
A little I can read.
(I.2.10–11)
The soothsayer is speaking to Charmian and Iras, attendant women of Cleopatra, and to Alexas, the eunuch. Egypt is associated in the play with intuitive modes of perception in contrast to Rome's cool rationality. It was a medieval and Renaissance commonplace to conceive the world, or realm of nature, as a book to be read.

7 O, excellent! I love long life better than figs.
(I.2.33)
Charmian has just been told by the soothsayer that she will outlive Cleopatra. Her response is flippant, but the soothsayer's predictions in this scene are significant. Charmian does outlive her mistress, but only by a tragically brief span.

8 Mine, and most of our fortunes, tonight shall be drunk to bed.
(I.2.46–7)
Enobarbus is present at the fortune-telling session of the soothsayer with Charmian, Iras, and Alexas. He has on his entrance called for the preparation of a banquet with 'wine enough / Cleopatra's health to drink'. He therefore knows that the evening is to end in revelry and drunkenness.

9 He was disposed to mirth; but on the sudden
A Roman thought hath struck him.
(I.2.82–3)
Cleopatra is describing the changed disposition of Antony, who was last seen dedicating himself and the night to revelry. Antony's mind has turned to the news brought by the messenger from Rome. Immediately after these lines, Antony enters listening to the messenger's narrative. The essence of the statement contrasts the Roman world of public duty with the private world of the senses represented by Egypt.

10 These strong Egyptian fetters I must break,
Or lose myself in dotage.
(I.2.117–18)

These lines are delivered by Antony in an aside on learning of Rome's military setbacks from the messengers arrived from various parts of the Empire. The image of 'fetters' implies enslavement, while the term 'dotage', signifying feebleness of mind, had been applied to Antony by Philo in the first line of the play.

11 ANTONY She is cunning past man's thought.
ENOBARBUS Alack, sir, no; her passions are made of nothing but the finest part of pure love. We cannot call her winds and waters sighs and tears; they are greater storms and tempests than almanacs can report. This cannot be cunning in her; if it be, she makes a shower of rain as well as Jove.
(I.2.146–52)
Antony has decided to leave Egypt to see to affairs of state in the Empire. The hard-bitten Enobarbus, who has been entranced by Cleopatra, is pointing out the effect the news of Antony's departure will have upon the Queen. A dual perspective is given of Cleopatra through Antony's picture of a cunning enchantress and Enobarbus' vision of 'pure love' which rivals the forces of nature.

12 O, sir, you had then left unseen a wonderful piece of work, which not to have been blessed withal would have discredited your travel.
(I.2.154–6)
Enobarbus is responding to Antony's wish that he had never seen Cleopatra. Cleopatra is pictured by Enobarbus almost as if she were one of the wonders of the world. To depict the beauty of mankind's form as the masterpiece of nature's handiwork was a Renaissance commonplace.

13 This grief is crowned with consolation: your old smock brings forth a new petticoat; and indeed the tears live in an onion that should water this sorrow.
(I.2.168–71)
Although Enobarbus is smitten with Cleopatra's charms, he remains cynical about relations with women in general. His response to Antony's news of the death of his wife, Fulvia, is an example of this cynicism.

14 If you find him sad,
Say I am dancing; if in mirth, report
That I am sudden sick.
(I.3.3–5)
Cleopatra's instructions for the message that Alexas, the eunuch, is to bear to Antony are a demonstration of the wiles by which

she enslaves him. Variety of mood is the essence of her attraction.

15 CHARMIAN
In each thing give him way. Cross him in nothing.
CLEOPATRA
Thou teachest like a fool: the way to lose him.
(I.3.9–10)
The exchange of Charmian and Cleopatra opposes two contrasted views of how to keep a man. Of these two, the play seems to endorse Cleopatra's, provided you have her attractions and wiles. Ultimately though, the play suggests that only death ensures eternal fidelity and inseparability.

16 Eternity was in our lips and eyes,
Bliss in our brows' bent; none our parts so poor
But was a race of heaven.
(I.3.35–7)
Cleopatra is feigning illness and displeasure, fearing news of Antony's departure. Whilst not allowing him to speak, she is contrasting the high point of their union, which merited words ('Then was a time for words', line 34), with this separation, for which none are fitting. Her depiction of their love in spiritual absolutes ('eternity', 'bliss', 'heaven') reinforces the sense of deities: she as a Venus, he as a Mars. 'Bent' means arch.

17 This is the news: he fishes, drinks, and wastes
The lamps of night in revel.
(I.4.4–5)
This is Octavius Caesar's summary of the news from Egypt concerning Antony. The accusation derives from Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romanes* (1579), the main source of Shakespeare's play.

18 Give me to drink mandragora...
That I might sleep out this great gap of time
My Antony is away.
(I.5.4–6)
Cleopatra is speaking to Charmian. Mandragora, the juice of the mandragora or mandrake plant, was credited with strong narcotic powers in the Renaissance. Amongst other things, it was thought to be an aphrodisiac.

19 Where think'st thou he is now? Stands he, or sits he?
Or does he walk? Or is he on his horse?
O happy horse, to bear the weight of Antony!