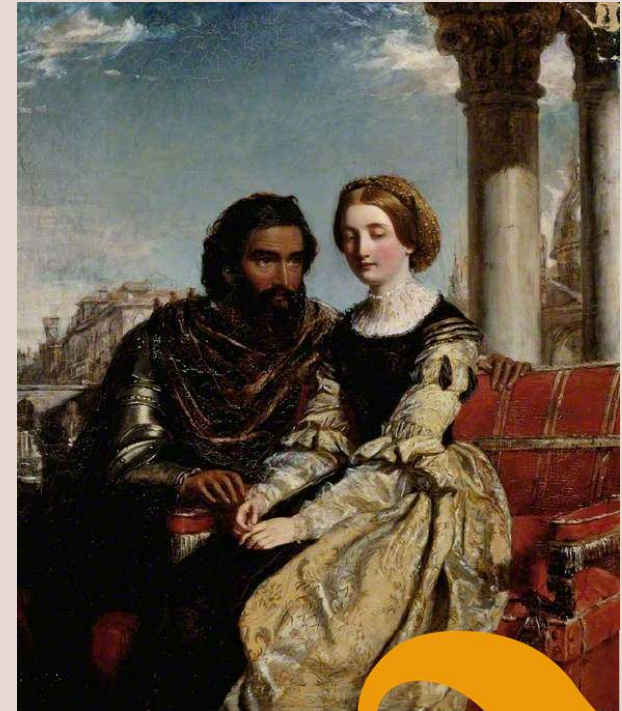


# Othello

- ✦ Subtitled 'The Moor of Venice'
- ✦ Tragedy of passion
- ✦ More intimate in scale than the other tragedies
  - ✦ No supernatural terror as in Hamlet or Macbeth
  - ✦ No psychological derangement as in King Lear
  - ✦ No kingdoms are at stake
  - ✦ Political consequences of the action not emphasized
- ✦ For the first time in Shakespeare, hero is a colossal figure, towering over all other characters
  - ✦ It was not so in the case of Hamlet or Julius Caesar
- ✦ Coleridge applied the term "motiveless malignity" to Iago
- ✦ Major source Cinthio's Hecatommithi



# Characters



- Othello
- Desdemona
- Iago
- Emilia
- Cassio
- Bianca
- Roderigo
- Brabantio
- Duke of Venice
- Montano
- Lodovico
- Gratiano
- Clown
- Herald

# Plot



- Othello, a trusted general of the Venetian army, has secretly married Desdemona, daughter of the Venetian senator Brabantio.
- Othello's ensign Iago, whom Othello believes to be "honest", is scheming against him mainly because Othello chose Cassio as his lieutenant, in preference to Iago.
- At Iago's prompting, Roderigo, Desdemona's foolish suitor, reports the marriage to Brabantio.
- Though Brabantio demands Othello's arrest, he has to accept the wholeheartedness of Desdemona's love, when she appears before the senate.

# Plot



- There is an impending Turkish attack on Cyprus and Othello leaves immediately with Desdemona, Iago, Cassio and Roderigo.
- In Cyprus Iago contrives to discredit Cassio, whom Othello dismisses.
- Iago advises Cassio to appeal to Desdemona and implants in Othello's mind a suspicion regarding Desdemona and Cassio.
- Her support of Cassio, along with Iago's innuendos, deepens Othello's suspicion.
- Desdemona accidentally drops a handkerchief, Othello's first token of love, which Iago brings into Cassio's hand.
- Cassio gives the handkerchief to his mistress Bianca.

# Plot



- Bianca's possession of the handkerchief convinces Othello of Desdemona's infidelity.
- He humiliates Desdemona in public to the dismay of Iago's wife Emilia.
- Iago urges Roderigo to kill Cassio but Roderigo manages only to wound him.
- Iago kills Roderigo to ensure silence and Othello kills Desdemona in her bed chamber.
- In the presence of Venetian representatives, Emilia reveals Iago's guilt.
- Iago kills her, is wounded by Othello, and tries to escape.
- The remorseful Othello stabs himself
- Iago is captured and condemned to torture and prison.
- Cassio takes command in Cyprus.

# Themes



- Major theme: Jealous mistrust
- Central concern of the play is Othello's change in attitude towards Desdemona
- Othello's loss of trust in Desdemona, reducing Othello to a bestial frenzy
- His trust in Iago never flags
- He begins to see love through Iago's eyes than Desdemona's

# Iago and Desdemona



- Desdemona and Iago thus represent two internalized features of the hero: his loving and generous self, and his darkly passionate self-centred ego
- Iago and Desdemona also present two sides of trust and love: Iago cannot trust or love; Desdemona offers an ideal, unconditional love and trust
- Iago is associated with the devil several times in the play, while Desdemona is a symbol of Christian love and resignation to the will of God

# Other Themes



- The mercantile society of Venice (as well as England) as dominated by inhuman commercial values
  - Such a society is parochial, greedy and racist, and cannot appreciate Othello's virtues
- However, such a society is united by trust and cooperation
  - The Venetians, including Brabantio, accept Othello as their general to ward off the Turkish threat
  - Venice is not a suitable milieu for Iago's plot, so the scene is moved to isolated Cyprus

# Quotes



- Iago is most honest (II.iii.7)
- Who steals my purse steals trash (III.iii.157)
- green-eyed monster (III.iii.166)
- vale of years (III.iii.266)
- Men should be what they seem; / Or those that be not, would they might seem none (III.iii.126-127)
- foregone conclusion (III.iii.428)
- pomp and circumstance (III.iii.354)
- so sweet was never so fatal (V.ii.20)
- Some bloody passion shakes your very frame (V.ii.44)
- loved not wisely but too well (V.ii.345)
- 'tis the curse of service, / Preferment goes by letter and affection (I.i.35-36)
- And will as tenderly be led by the nose / As asses are (I.iii.403-404)

# King Lear

(dating from 1604-5, performed at court 1606)

- ✦ Central unresolvable question
  - ✦ How can we reconcile human dignity with human failure in the face of life's demands?
- ✦ Play is filled with various manifestations of human cruelty, desire for power and agonizing disasters
- ✦ Themes: insignificance of human life; whether there is justice in this world; pride; betrayal
- ✦ Powerful conclusion emphasizing a morbid response to life, and the finality of death
- ✦ Underlying theme of disease and sex as perverse
- ✦ Nahum Tate famously produced the play with a happy ending, putting Edgar in the place of the King of France as Cordelia's lover



# Characters

- King Lear
- Cordelia
- Goneril
- Edmund
- Edgar
- Kent
- Fool
- Albany
- France
- Regan
- Gloucester
- Cornwall
- Oswald
- Curran



# Plot



- The aged British King Lear decides to share his kingdom between his three daughters and spend his remaining years at their courts.
- His youngest and favourite daughter Cordelia refuses to earn her share by joining Goneril and Regan in exaggerated declaration of love for their father.
- The angry king divides the kingdom between his two eldest daughters and Cordelia is married without dowry by the king of France.
- The king meets with hostility at his eldest daughter's courts.
- He rants against them and rages out into a storm, accompanied by his fool, and the loyal Duke of Kent.
- Tried beyond his strength, he goes mad.

# Plot

- Goneril, Regan, and Regan's husband the Duke of Cornwall hear that the French army has landed at Dover, and Lear would meet Cordelia there.
- The Duke of Gloucester, who assisted Lear by keeping the French invasion secret, is blinded and tortured by Cornwall, with the help of Gloucester's illegitimate son Edmund, who is also the lover of the villainous sisters.
- Mad Lear and blind Gloucester meet near Dover.
- The French army is defeated in Dover and Lear and Cordelia are arrested.

# Plot

- Edmund gives orders that she should be put to death but is himself killed by his legitimate brother Edgar who had been wrongly exiled by Gloucester and had cared for Lear and saved Gloucester from accidental death in the heath disguised as the lunatic Tom o' Bedlam.
- Edmund makes a dying confession but Cordelia has already been hanged by then.
- Lear brings his daughter's corpse at the stage and dies asserting that she is still alive.

# Sources

- Various versions of chronicle material
- An earlier anonymous play King Leir (c.1590)
- Holinshed's Chronicles
- Version of a tale from Mirror for Magistrates
- Sub-plot is from Sidney's Arcadia



# Religious undertones



- Cordelia
  - Christ-like figure
  - Her death symbolizes Christ's crucifixion
- Tragedy as a manifestation of God's will
  - The sufferings of Lear and Gloucester which they have brought upon themselves, is punishment for their sins by God
  - Their forgiveness is accompanied by death, a symbol of eternal mercy

# Political Themes



- Reflects the then-prevalent belief of an approaching apocalypse (total collapse of social structures; end of the world)
- Fear of impending Civil War
- The play supports civil authority expected from King James I, as against the catastrophe of Lear's reign
- The sovereign (king) as responsible for his subjects
- As Lear realizes during the storm scenes
- Conflict between the rising bourgeoisie and the old aristocracy of Shakespeare's day reflected here

# Sub-Plot

- Gloucester's blinding
- Edgar's exile as mad Tom
- Regan's and Goneril's sexual rivalry
- Sub-plot is more complex and well-defined than main plot

# Comedy in King Lear

- Main sources of comedy
  - Kent's accusation of Oswald (Goneril's steward who humiliates Lear)
  - Edgar's remarks as Tom O'Bedlam
  - Fool's remarks
- Complicate our responses to the play and increase its emotional power
- Comedic techniques employed
  - Double-plot
  - Use of a jester to comment on the action
  - Use of disguise
  - Progression of action from the royal court to the country and back to court
  - Juxtaposition of youth and old age

# Act 1, Scene 1



- "Nothing will come of nothing."
  - King Lear (speaker)
- "I want that glib and oily art / To speak and purpose not."
  - Cordelia (speaker)
- "Yet he hath ever but slenderly known himself."
  - Regan (speaker), King Lear

## Act 1, Scene 2



- "Thou, Nature, art my goddess."
  - Edmund (speaker)
- "These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us."
  - Gloucester (speaker)
- "As if we were villains on necessity; fools by heavenly compulsion."
  - Edmund (speaker)

## Act 1, Scene 3



- "Old fools are babes again."
  - Goneril (speaker), King Lear

## Act 1, Scene 4



- "Thou hast pared thy wit o' both sides and left nothing in the middle."
  - Fool (speaker), King Lear

## Act 2, Scene 1



- "My old heart is cracked; it's cracked."
  - Gloucester (speaker), Edgar

## Act 2, Scene 3



- "I will preserve myself, and am bethought  
To take the basest and most poorest shape  
That ever penury in contempt of man  
Brought near to beast."
  - Edgar (speaker)

## Act 2, Scene 4



- "O sir, you are old.  
Nature I you stands on the very verge  
Of his confine."
  - Regan (speaker), King Lear
- "O, reason not the need! Our basest  
beggars  
Are in the poorest thing superfluous.  
Allow not nature more than nature  
needs,  
Man's life is cheap as beast's."
  - King Lear (speaker)

- "Here's a night pities neither wise  
men nor fools."
  - Fool (speaker)
- "The art of our necessities is strange  
And can make vile things precious."
  - King Lear (speaker)

## Act 3, Scene 4



- "Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are,  
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,  
How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,  
Your looped and windowed raggedness defend you  
From seasons such as these? O I have taken  
Too little care of this."
  - King Lear (speaker)
- "Child Rowland to the dark tower came  
His word was still 'Fie, foh, and fum,  
I smell the blood of a British man."
  - Edgar (speaker)

## Act 3, Scene 6



- "All the power of his wits have given way to his impatience."
  - Kent (speaker), King Lear
- "Out, vile jelly!"
  - Cornwall (speaker), Gloucester

## Act 4, Scene 1



- "The worst is not  
So long as we can say 'This is the worst.'"
  - Edgar (speaker)

## Act 4, Scene 2



- "The nature which contemns its origin  
Cannot be bordered certain in itself."
  - Albany (speaker), Goneril

## Act 4, Scene 6



- "How fearful  
And dizzy tis to cast one's eyes so low!  
[...]  
I'll look no more  
Lest my brain turn and the deficient sight  
Topple down headlong."
  - Edgar (speaker), Gloucester
- "Gloucester: Oh let me kiss that hand!  
Lear: Let me wipe it first; it smells of mortality."
  - King Lear, Gloucester (speaker)

## Act 5, Scene 3



- "No, no, no, no. Come, let's away to prison.  
We two alone will sing like birds in the cage."
  - King Lear (speaker), Cordelia
- "Howl, howl, howl! O, you are men of stones!  
Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so  
That heaven's vault should crack. She's gone  
forever."
  - King Lear (speaker), Cordelia

- "No, no, no life?  
Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life,  
And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no  
more,  
Never, never, never, never, never."
  - King Lear (speaker), Cordelia

# Macbeth (1606)

- ✦ Last of the tragedies; style is completely formed
- ✦ Source: Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland; George Buchanan's Latin history of Scotland; Reginald Scott's Discovery of Witchcraft; King James I's Daemonologie
- ✦ Thomas Middleton is believed to have adapted and abridged the original play written by Shakespeare
- ✦ Performed before James I, who was believed to have been a descendent of Banquo; the play shows Shakespeare's close relationship with the king



# Characters

- Macbeth
- Lady Macbeth
- Banquo
- Macduff
- King Duncan
- Malcolm
- Weird Sisters



# Plot



- Scotland is stormed by rebellion, which is effectively resisted by the generals Macbeth and Banquo.
- On their way back to King Duncan's court, the generals meet three witches who prophesy that Macbeth will become Thane of Cawdor and King of Scotland and that Banquo's sons will be kings.
- Almost at once Macbeth learns that he has been proclaimed Thane of Cawdor, which makes him believe in the witches' prophecy.
- King Duncan intends to visit Macbeth's castle at Inverness and Lady Macbeth overrides her husband's hesitation and makes him kill the King.

# Plot

- Suspicion falls on Duncan's sons, Malcolm and Donalbain, who flee from Scotland.
- Macbeth is now king but feels insecure.
- Macbeth sends murderers to kill Banquo and his sons, but the sons escape.
- Macbeth is weighed down by guilt and sleeplessness but the witches assure him that he will not be defeated until Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinain castle and that no man born of woman can harm him.
- Macduff, the powerful Thane of Fife, joins Malcolm in England against Macbeth, and Macbeth slaughters Macduff's family.

# Plot

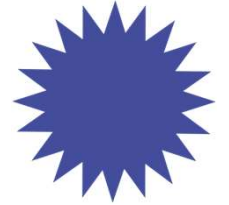
- A distraught Lady Macbeth walks and talks in her sleep, betraying the secret of Duncan's murder.
- Malcolm's soldiers cut branches from Birnam Wood to camouflage their attack.
- Macbeth also gets word that Lady Macbeth is dead.
- Macbeth is killed by Macduff who was not "born" but "untimely ripped" from his mother's womb.
- Malcolm is now king of Scotland.

# Features of the Play



- Compared to the other tragedies, action progresses at a fast pace, parallel to which is shown the agony of a soul rushing towards its doom
- In its language and action, the play is full of violence and storm
- Darkness broods over this tragedy: The Witches, the vision of the dagger, the murder of Duncan, the murder of Banquo, the sleep-walking of Lady Macbeth, all come in night-scenes
- Darkness is relieved by occasional flashes of colour and light: lightning, flames beneath the cauldron, glitter of the dagger, torches, taper, and above all the colour of blood

# Depiction of Evil



- Study of the human potential for evil
- Presents in a secular context the Judeo-Christian concept of the Fall and humanity's loss of God's grace
- The triumph of evil in a man of many good qualities, due to
  - Political ambition
  - Influence of Lady Macbeth
  - Instigation of supernatural powers (the witches)
- Depiction of evil in the play has two aspects
  - Natural / human (Macbeth, the man himself)
  - Supernatural (the witches, omens)

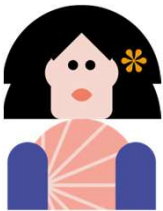
# The character of Macbeth

- Three major attributes
  - Bravery
  - Ambition
  - Self-doubt
    - The weakness of self-doubt is what prevents Macbeth from becoming a villain like Iago or Edmund
    - Before he kills Duncan, Macbeth is plagued by worry
    - After the murder, he is increasingly alone
    - Fluctuates between fits of feverish action (plots a series of murders) and moments of terrible guilt (as when Banquo's ghost appears) and pessimism (after his wife's death)
    - Macbeth is revolted by himself and his self-awareness makes his descent even more appalling



# The character of Lady Macbeth

- One of Shakespeare's most frightening female characters
  - Stronger, ruthless and more ambitious than her husband
  - Relates power, ambition and violence to masculinity
  - Uses the "female" method of manipulation to achieve power
- Lady Macbeth presents the weakness of humanity in the face of evil
  - Avoids mentioning the murder too explicitly
  - Cannot do the deed herself
  - Falls into an anguished madness and disrupted sleep
  - Commits suicide



# The role of the three Witches

- Supernatural beings called “weird sisters”
- In 1.1, they appear in the thunder and lightning of the storm and say they will meet again to encounter Macbeth
- In 1.3, they boast of their evil deeds and greets Macbeth with titles he yet not possesses, and assures Banquo that his descendants will be kings
- Their prophecy sparks Macbeth’s ambition
  - Leads him to kill King Duncan and Banquo as well as others
- In 3.5, the Witches appear with the more powerful spirit Hecate

# The role of the three Witches

- In 4.1, the Witches concoct a magical brew in a cauldron and meet Macbeth who wishes to learn how to assure his safety now that he is a king
- The Witches contribute greatly to the pervasive tone of mysterious evil
- Offer an important theme of the play: psychology of evil
- Represent the irrational and supernatural, which is terrifying because it is beyond human control
- Therefore, they are symbolic of the unpredictable force of human motivation & of moral disruption

# Act 1, Scene 1



- Fair is foul, and foul is fair;  
Hover through the fog and filthy air.
  - Weird Sisters (speaker)

## Act 1, Scene 3



- And oftentimes, to win us to our harm,  
The instruments of darkness tell us truths,  
Win us with honest trifles, to betray's  
In deepest consequence.
  - Banquo (speaker), Macbeth, Weird Sisters

# Act 1, Scene 4



- Stars, hide your fires!

Let not light see my black and deep desires.

- Macbeth (speaker)

# Act 1, Scene 5



- Come, you spirits

That tend on mortal thoughts! unsex me here,  
And fill me from the crown to the toe, top-full  
Of direst cruelty; make thick my blood,  
Stop up the access and passage to remorse,  
That no compunctious visitings of nature  
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between  
The effect and it! Come to my woman's breasts,  
And take my milk for gall.

- Lady Macbeth (speaker)

- Look like the innocent flower,  
But be the serpent under it.

- Lady Macbeth (speaker), Macbeth

# Act 1, Scene 7



- I have no spur

To prick the sides of my intent, but only  
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself  
And falls on the other.

- Macbeth (speaker)

- I dare do all that may become a man;

Who dares do more, is none.

- Macbeth (speaker)

- Macbeth: If we should fail.

Lady Macbeth: We fail?

But screw your courage to the sticking-place,  
And we'll not fail.

- Macbeth, Lady Macbeth (speaker)

# Act 2, Scene 1



- Is this a dagger which I see before me,  
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee;  
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.  
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible  
To feeling as to sight? or art thou but  
A dagger of the mind, a false creation,  
Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?  
I see thee yet, in form as palpable  
As this which now I draw.
  - Macbeth (speaker)

## Act 2, Scene 2



- Methought I heard a voice cry, Sleep no more!  
Macbeth does murder sleep, — the innocent sleep;  
Sleep, that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care,  
The death of each day's life, sore labor's bath,  
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,  
Chief nourisher in life's feast.
  - Macbeth (speaker)

## Act 3, Scene 2



- Nought's had, all's spent

Where our desire is got without content.

- Lady Macbeth (speaker)

## Act 3, Scene 4



- I am in blood

Stepp'd in so far, that, should I wade no more,

Returning were as tedious as go o'er.

- Macbeth (speaker)

## Act 4, Scene 1



- By the pricking of my thumbs,  
Something wicked this way comes.
  - Weird Sisters (speaker), Macbeth

# Act 5, Scene 1



- Out, damned spot! out, I say!
  - Lady Macbeth (speaker)

# Act 5, Scene 5



- Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day  
To the last syllable of recorded time;  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!  
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 (speaker)