

Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue. If you mouth it, as many of our players do, I'd as lief the town crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus, but use all gently, for in the very torrent, tempest, and (as I may say) whirlwind of your passion, you must acquire a smoothness. O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ear of the groundlings, who for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb shows and noise. Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor. Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance, that you overstep not the modesty of nature. For anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, was and is, to hold, as t'were, the mirror up to nature!

London! A city of loud noises, hooves and raw coach wheels on the cobbles, the yells of traders, the brawling of apprentices, scuffles to keep the wall and not be shouldered into the stinking street. Everybody is shouting. Everybody is half cut. It's not a sober city.

London. Night. So still, you can hear a horse's hoof or a baby's cry at a quarter mile; so dark a man can be on you before he is seen. The rustle of a women's dress, the death-gurgle of a rat, a footfall...

London Bridge. The houses on either side are so tall and full of magnificence, that passage across is narrow and dark. Over each gate where the bridge ends is a tower with iron pikes, where the heads of traitors are crammed till

the birds and the weather dissolve them. Hundreds of swans float on the Thames at London and all sorts of fish abound, nourished by the garbage and excrement.

London! Spring! The parks, the walks, green everywhere. The smell of the grass and the ram's bell tinkle. Piemen and flower sellers cry. From a barber-shop comes the tuning of a lute and then the aching sweetness of treble song.

London, the docks. There are manacled corpses in the Thames, that three tides have washed...A crow overhead drops a gobbet of human flesh...In a smoky tavern a rude song is flung at the foul air...pickpurses stroll among gawping country cousins...a limping child with a pig's head leers out from an alleyway...a couple of Paul's men swagger by, going haw haw haw...stale herring smell to heaven in a fishman's basket...a cart lurches, rounding a corner; wood splintering against stone...the sun, in sudden great glory, illuminates white towers...a thin girl in rags begs, whining...an old soldier with one eye munches bread in a dark passage...skulls on Temple Bar...a dray-horse farts...LONDON.

London, night. Peering out the window. The damp, most insidious of all enemies: swells the wood, furs the kettle, rusts the iron, and rots the stone. The stars reflect themselves in deep pits of stagnant water which lies in the middle of the streets. The dark shadow at the corner where the wine shop stands is likely as not the corpse of a murdered man. The cries of the wounded in night brawls, troops of ruffians, men and woman unspeakedly

interlaced, lurch down the streets, trolling out old songs, with jewels flashing in their ears, and knives gleaming in their fists. To the north, the outline of Hampstead Forest, contorted, writhing, against the sky. Here and there on the hills above London, a stark gallows tree, with a parched or rotting corpse. Danger and insecurity, lust and violence, poetry and filth, roam the narrow pathways of the city, and buzz and stink.

During the time in which we speak, there reigned in the cities a stench barely conceivable to modern men and women. The streets stank of manure, the courtyards of urine, the stairwells stank of moldering wood and rat droppings, the kitchens of spoiled cabbage and mutton fat; the un-aired parlors stank of pale dust, the bedrooms of soiled sheets, damp featherbeds, and the pungently sweet aroma of chamberpots. The stench of sulphur rose from the chimneys, the stench of caustic lyes from the tanneries, and from the slaughterhouse came the stench of congealed blood. People stank of sweat and unwashed clothes; from their mouths came the stench of rotting teeth, from their bellies that of onions, and from their personas, if they were no longer very young, might come the stench of rancid cheese, sour milk and tumorous disease. The rivers stank, the marketplaces stank, the churches stank; it stank beneath the bridges and in the palaces. The peasant stank as did the priest, the apprentice did as his master's wife, the whole aristocracy stank, the King himself stank, stank like a rank lion, and the Queen like an old goat, summer and winter.

Elizabethan society was basically the rich and powerful nobility, who owned or controlled everything and hovered around and got their power from the

monarch, and then everybody else. The problem was, as the world began opening up, “everybody else” wanted their fair share.

In August 1592, a huge Portugese carrack, sailing around the horn of Africa from the East Indies, a floating castle, seven decks high with a crew of over 600, was captured at sea by the privateering English and taken into Dartmouth. In her hold they found 537 tons of spices: pepper, cloves, cinnamon, mace, and nutmeg. They found 15 tons of ivory, large pieces of jewelry studded with diamonds, chests overflowing with musk, pearls, amber, calicoes, silks, drugs, tapestries, silver and gold. Valued at over half a million pounds of treasure it provoked an orgy of looting, embezzlement and waste. Men flocked by horse and ship from all over the west country with ready cash for bargains of a lifetime. By the time Sir Walter Raleigh and his men finally arrived from London and restored order, they only managed to save 30% of the treasure. And then the Queen, who was actually a rather modest privateering investor, took far more than her share. Life wasn't fair in Elizabethan England; it was a brutal struggle just to survive.

Thou, nature, art my goddess; to thy law my services are bound.

Wherefore should I stand in the plague of custom, and permit the curiosity of nations to deprive me,
for that I am some twelve or fourteen moon-shines lag of a brother?

Why bastard? Wherefore base, when my dimensions are as well compact, my mind as generous,
and my shape as true, as honest madam's issue?

Why brand they us with base? With baseness? Bastardy? Base. Base?

Who, in the lusty stealth of nature, take more composition and fierce quality
than doth, within a dull, stale, tired bed, go to the creating a whole tribe of fops got 'tween asleep and wake?

Well then, legitimate Edgar, I must have your land.

Our father's love is to the bastard Edmund as to the legitimate.

Fine word, 'legitimate.'

Well, my legitimate, if this letter speed, and my invention thrive, Edmund the base shall top the legitimate.

I grow; I prosper. Now gods, stand up for bastards!

Life was challenging for all. Even the life of this third son of a northern Earl held its dangers. One political or religious misstep could lead one to the Tower or even the scaffold. Courtly life consisted of constant intrigue, constantly shifting alliances, all centered on the monarch.

At the palace of Whitehall, the giving and receiving of gifts (never money) for past or future favors was common practice all through courtly society. Jewels, books, wine, game, hunting hawks, dogs, even horses were common gifts.

Last Christmas the Russian ambassador gave King James sable furs, black foxes, ermines, hawks with hoods and mantles covering their wings all embroidered with gold and pearl, a Persian dagger, a knife inlaid with stones and pearls, Persian horse-clothes of cloth and gold, and a Persian kettle. Not all gifts were happily received however, as a supposedly tame leopard presented by a Spanish ambassador almost killed a little white fawn which was one of the royal pets. The fawn even had a woman especially employed for its care.

Another way to win favor, especially with Queen Elizabeth (and Sir Walter Raleigh was a master at this) was with poetry. This sonnet of Shakespeare's, although it sounds like it is to a woman, was probably the

lowly playwright, Shakespeare, trying to ingratiate himself to the young and handsome Earl of Southampton.

When in disgrace with Fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone beweepe my outcast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon myself and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featured like him, like him with friends possessed,
Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least;
Yet in these thought myself almost despising,
Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;
For thy sweet love rememb'red such wealth brings
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

Elizabeth died in 1603 so the last 13 years of Shakespeare's life was under James I. Whereas Elizabeth had been tight-fisted and prudent James spent his reign hunting and lavishly rewarding his favourites. Whereas Elizabeth had been the virgin Queen, James sired 8 children and formed highly dependant bonds with a few male intimates.

One of the King's desperately overworked ministers, and inner circle, speaks some truth.

The King is a thickset man of little more than medium height. His skin is remarkably soft and white. His tongue is too large for his mouth making his speech thick and his drinking ungraceful, 'as if eating his drink.' His co-ordination is poor, his doublet ever encrusted with food, his walk a species of jerky shambles-circular in nature, often leaning on a favorite, his fingers ever fiddling about his codpiece. He is highly intellectual and learned and yet believes in witches; and has been responsible for the torture, hanging and burning of many old women. He wears a padded vest, lives in constant fear of assassination and indeed is one of the most, complicated, superstitious neurotics ever to come to the English throne.

Edmund again on his father's belief in astrology:

This is the excellent foppery of the world,
 that when we are sick in fortune, often the surfeits of our own behavior,
 we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars;
 as if we were villains on necessity; fools by heavenly compulsion;
 knaves, thieves, and treachers, by spherical predominance;
 drunkards, liars, and adulterers, by an enforced obedience of planetary influence;
 and all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting on.

An admirable evasion of whoremaster man, to lay his goatish disposition to the charge of a star.

My father compounded with my mother under the Dragon's Tail, and my nativity was under Ursa Major, so that it follows, I am rough and lecherous.

Fut! I should have been that I am, had the maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my bastardizing.

Even some of Shakespeare's nicest ladies had bastards:

His mother was a votaress of my order,
 and in the spiced Indian air, by night, full often hath she gossiped by my side,
 and sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands, marking the embarked traders on the flood.

When we have laughed to see the sails conceive and grow big-bellied with the wanton wind;
which she, with pretty and with swimming gait following (her womb then rich with my young squire)
would imitate, and sail upon the land to fetch me trifles,
and return again, as from a voyage, rich with merchandise.

But she, being mortal, of that boy did die,
and for her sake do I rear up her boy,
and for her sake I will not part with him.

Let's go find some more bastards at the Globe:

We come upon a crowd, a mass of people pressing as near the silken rope as they dare. We're shouldered by apprentices; tailors; fishwives; horse dealers; starving scholars; maids in their whimples; orange girls; bawdy tapsters; sober citizens; and a pack of little ragamuffins such as always haunt the outskirts of a crowd, screaming and scrambling among the people's feet - all the riffraff of London are here, some with mouths gaping a yard wide; all rigged out as vigorously as their purse or stations allow; here in fur and broadcloth, there in tatters with their feet kept from the ice by a dishcloth bound about them. Once inside we witness a dramatic performance with a black man waving his arms and vociferating and a woman laid white on a bed - the main press standing opposite the stage, laughing when an actor trips, or when bored, tossing an orange peel on the ice which a dog scrambles for. But oh, the astonishing, sinuous melody of the words, spoken with extreme speed and daring agility of tongue, like sailors singing in the beer gardens of Wapping. The passions, the tears, the Moor strangles the woman in her bed. The life of man ends in a grave.

Elizabeth loved and encouraged the theatre but her clergy did not.

Theatres were only allowed outside the city walls. Inside the square mile of the city walls, that had room for over a hundred churches, one could easily encounter a sermon like this:

The common haunters of the theatres are the lowliest persons in the land, apt for pilfering, forgeries, or any rogueries, the very scum, rascality, and baggage of the people: briefly, an unclean generation, a spawn of vipers. A play is like a sink in a town, where all the filth doth run.

Nay, many poor, needy creatures, who have scarce cloth for their backs not food for their bellies, will do almost anything to see a play - let wife and children beg!

As for the Players, do they not maintain bawdry, insinuate foolery and renew the remembrance of heathen idolatry? Nay, are they rather not the plain devourers of maiden virginity and chastity? For proof whereof but mark the running and flocking to the theatres, daily and hourly, time and tide, to see plays; where such wanton gestures, such bawdy speeches, such laughing and fleering, such kissing and bussing, such winking and glancing of wanton eyes is used, tis wonderful to behold.

The cause of plagues is sin. The cause of sin is plays. Therefore, the cause of plagues are plays!

Speaking of the plague: the bubonic plague, the purple whip of vengeance, was carried by rats and passed by flea bites. Elizabethans didn't know this but they did know that a person first developed a primary buboe in the armpits or groin, which then multiplied into many running sores; and

accompanied with sweating, shakes, nausea, chills, high temperatures, vomiting and diarrhea, would cause one to gallop towards a nasty, painful messy death. In 1603, the year Elizabeth died, 30,000 Londoners died of the plague - 1/5 of the population. Odds like that...

But just like today, there were those enterprising individuals who could turn a profit from other peoples' miseries. This little thief's name was Cutting Ball. He was a relative through marriage to Robert Greene, another Elizabethan playwright. He was short, vicious and got his nickname, Cutting Ball, by the way he won his knife-fights. He died at the end of a hangman's rope. While living, this was one of his less successful scams.

You see the thing is, you get a doctors coat and you act like a well spoken smoothie, good social standing and you say you got a cure. I mean some of them rich foreigners, they don't know the form. And people want to do all they can, don't they? They'll try anything, any cure. I mean, it'd be worth a go, wouldn't it? I mean, if it was you, you'd be willing to try, wouldn't you?

Well, I made a mistake. I thought the geezer was dead. Looked dead. No chest movement. That gone away look over his mug. And they didn't care-his nearest and dearest-huddled down in the kitchen: "Don't touch us after you've touched him! Say your words, get the medicine down him and get out! You'll get paid if he makes it; if he don't you can come and take him for catsmeat!" Families! I ask you.They're fatal! Have you bound and buried before breakfast! Anyway, I was sure he'd snuffed it...and there it was, this gold chain, round his scrawny neck. They hadn't noticed it, that's

for sure. Probably forgotten it was there. I mean it was very thin, like a snail's trace, and sort of imbedded in the brown parchment of his skin. I mean if they had-noticed it-it wouldn't have been there, if you follow. No, ripped off and away! I mean, everything else was gone, rings and whatnot: "You won't need these, will you dad? They'll only weigh you down and turn the sheets green!" Families! Anyway, not to mince matters, I lifted it. Very gentle, mind you, very respectful of the dear departed, as I thought...I saw it as a gratuity, you see, you know, a tip from the torpid. Anyway, I was sure he wouldn't mind-the cadaver-except he wasn't cadaverous. For friends, as I dangled the thin glitter between my fingers, admiring its fragility, I became aware that I was not the only one! Slowly I turned my peepers and there was another pair turned to mine-his! They looked to the chain, and then back to mine, and his cakehole opened, all toothless, and vented forth a roar of anguish, the foul wind of which lifted my forelock. I mean, naked we come into this orb and naked we should depart. At least that was the principle I was working on. Not him, though, nor his poxy kin! Obviously, they recognized the cry of the dispossessed and, greed-mad, scorning fear of plague, came belting up the stairs as I disappeared through the window. 'Stop him! Stop thief!' Hue and cry. Me: gallop, gallop! Them, and others, in close pursuit, till, a veritable crowd trapped me up close. "You can't touch me!" I said, "I'm a medical man!" "In that case," they replied, "you'll have a cure for this," and kicked the living shit out of me.

So, everyone struggled to survive, but life could be particularly hard on the playwrights. When the playhouses were shut down because of plague or

public disorder, some resorted to writing pamphletts, the low-brow rags of the day. This highly condensed and popular pamphlett of Thomas Dekker's mocked the vacuous social climbers of the day. Called 'The Gull's Hornbook,' or what we might term 'A Fool's Instructional Manual,' it details how a gallant should lead his life. I suspect Shakespeare might have read this pamphlett before creating Sir Andrew Aguecheek.

If your worm-eaten father be dead and hath left you 500 pound a year to keep you and an Irish horse-boy like a gentleman, listen to this...

To begin with, have the softest largest down bed; and never rise till your belly grumbles. Midday slumbers are golden: they make the body fat, the skin fair, the flesh plump, delicate and tender. They make a russet colour on the cheeks of young maids and cause lusty courage to rise up in young men. Besides they save us the price of breakfast and preserve our clothes; for while we are warm in our beds, our clothes are not worn.

Next walk up and down your chamber in a bare shirt or stark naked. If the morning thrusts her frosty fingers into your bosom, pinching you black and blue with her nails made of ice, creep into the chimney corner and toast yourself till the fat dew of your body trickles down your sides. For then you may say, "You live by the sweat of your brows!"

Next, dress yourself. Good clothes are the embroidered trappings of pride. The Spanish slop, the skippers galligaskin, the Switzer's blistered cod piece, the Danish sleeve, the French standing collar, your stiff necked rebatoes, your stockings and your shoes.

For your hair, never allow a comb to fasten its teeth there, but let it grow bushy like a forest or some wilderness, lest those six footed creatures that

breed in it are hunted to death, and that delicate pleasure of scratching be taken from you. Besides a head all hid in hair, gives to even the most wicked face, sweet proportion. And put feathers in your hair as do gallants in their hats: for then none can accuse you of sleeping in a field like a beggar, for your feathers prove you have lain on the softest down bed.

Next, to Paul's walk go. But be sure to pick an hour when the main shoal of Islanders are swimming up and down. Be sure to walk in the middle so as to publish your fine suit of clothes. If perchance you should meet a knight of your acquaintance, do not name him Sir Such-and-Such, but call out, "Ned or Jack," as this will mightily impress everyone. Before leaving Pauls you must set your watch by the clock, and if you are hungry you must off to the ordinary. Go in a coach if possible, to hide from your creditors.

Being arrived in the room, walk up and down as scornfully and carelessly as possible. Select some friend, dressed worse than you, to walk up and down with you. If you but make noise, and laugh in the fashion and have a sour face to promise quarrelling, you shall be much observed. Talk as loud as you can, no matter to what purpose. If you have languages, this is an excellent occasion to show them. If not, get some fragments of French or small parcels of Italian to fling about the table. Never, be silent: but say how often this lady hath sent her coach for you, or how often you have sweat in the tennis-court with that great lord. After manfully devouring your stewed mutton, goose, or woodcocks, you must ask some special friend of yours to talk with you in the withdrawing chamber, where you may enquire about which new pamphlets or poems a man might think best to wipe his tail with? In asking this question you may abuse the works of any man,

deprave his writings, which you cannot equal, and purchase in time the terrible name of severe critic. Next to dice, and if you lose not your suit of clothes, to the theatre.

Once you have paid your penny to enter, stay not with the groundlings with their garlic sausage and stink, nor go not to the balconies where much new satin is dammed by being smothered in darkness, but advance yourself to the throne of the stage, where like a feathered ostrich you may ignore the hoots and hisses of the scarecrows who spit at you, yea who throw dirt even in your teeth: for by sitting on the stage the essential parts of the gallant are perfectly revealed -good clothes, a porportional leg, a white hand, a tolerable beard.

On the stage you can so rail against the author that you can force him to know you. For doth not the fool, the Justice-of-the-Peace, the cuckold, the captain, the Lord Mayor's son, the stinkard, or the sweet smelling courtier, have all equal voice in the play's life and death? Be sure to laugh so high that all the house may hear during the saddest scenes of the terriblest tragedy. If the writer perchance be a fellow that hath flirted with your mistress, or hath epigrammed you, or hath brought your red beard or your little legs on stage, you may disgrace him worse than stabbing him in the tavern, if during the middle of the play you rise with screwed and discontented face from your stool, and be gone. And sneak not away, but draw what troop you can with you. The actors will thank you for allowing them elbow-room. And to conclude, hoard up what play scraps you can for the ordinary, the tavern, or your mistress. Then to the tavern.

To choose a tavern enquire out whose masters are most drunk (for that confirms their wholesome wines.) Confine not yourself to any one particu-

lar liquor but partake of all. It is not fitting a man should trouble his head with sucking at one grape, but that he may be able to drink any stranger drunk in his own element. Keep a boy in fee who underhand shall proclaim you in every room what a gallant fellow you are, how much you spend yearly in taverns, what a great gamester, what witty discourse you maintain at table, what gentlewomen or citizen's wives you can have sup with you at any time. Thus all will admire you and think it paradise to be merely in your acquaintance.

When the spirit of wine and tobacco walks in your brain, the tavern door being shut upon your back, hire that boy to be as a lantern to your feet to light you on your way home. On all the way, especially near some gate, talk of none but lords and ladies. Haply, it will be blown abroad that you swam through such an ocean of wine, that you danced so much money away, it will be known, and you will be held in great estimation. The only danger is, if you owe money and your creditors hear of these tales, for they will be thundering at your chamber door the next morning. To counter this, send out the horseboy for your apothecary. He will contrive such tales of your sickness, that they will be driven into their holes like foxes. Well that's it. A day in my life!

So that's how many writers survived: they fed the public's insatiable appetite for drama and language by creating out of their daily lives. Many people believe Shakespeare wrote the *Merchant of Venice* as a reaction to

this famous event in 1594

As an island people, surrounded by enemies, and embroiled in religious wars, the English neither liked nor trusted foreigners of any kind. In 1593 Dr. Roderigo Lopez: a Jew from Portugal, physician to the Queen, (the Queen's little ape) became the hated enemy of the Earl of Essex, one of the most powerful men in the kingdom.

Lopez had good connections in Portugal, and Walshingham, the head of the Secret Service, found him to be a reliable forwarding agent to and from English spies on the Iberian peninsula. When Walshingham died in 1590, Essex took over the services of Lopez. From that point on Lopez would provide Essex little gobbets of information which he would use to ingratiate himself with the Queen. One morning a beaming Essex approached the throne with the white-hot bit of news and was told by his all-knowing sovereign that, "She already knew it." Lopez had gone behind his back, and Essex was going to get his revenge. An opportunity arose when a man called Tinocco confessed that he, and another man named Ferrara, had been sent over to England to persuade Lopez to work for the Spanish cause. They even claimed that Lopez had accepted a rich jewel from the Spanish King. Lopez was questioned and his rooms searched but no incriminating evidence could be found. The Queen accused Essex of *malice* and he went away in disgrace.

well, Essex then spent the whole winter building up such a plausible case against Lopez that the attorney general had to take action. And then, impelled as much by anti-Semitic prejudice as hard evidence, the jury found Lopez, Tinocco and Ferrara guilty of plotting against the Queen's life,

and declared the appropriate punishment for treason.

There were crowds scurrying west, roaring, chewing bread and bits of garlic sausage, some armed with bottles against the summer heat, the plebs, the commons, the mob.

The nobles in their carriages move with some difficulty over the cobbles of the narrow streets with its toppling shops and houses; they could hear the confusion of the horses' feet, feeling their coaches jostled by the jeering crowds. The footmen shout abuse at those who come near enough to scare the horses or finger the gleaming brass and polished harness. The coachmen lash out! There are cries of pain and growls, but the under dog remains under.

At Tyburn they draw the curtains back to let light in, and a grim holiday vision appears; a whole clutter of noble's coaches, on some of which the gaily and richly dressed have climbed to the roof or ousted the footmen from their seat. The sober citizens sit, more soberly, inside their coaches. All wait.

There is the tree. Crouched on the platform the hangman's assistant is securing plank with busy hammer. The hangman himself, masked, with brawny arms folded, struts like an actor, but an actor who needs no glory of words.

From afar comes a roar. The hurdles are approaching, dragged over dry ground, raising a coughing dust. One of the draggers, with a toothless idiot's face, greets friends from a black and panting mouth. There are jeers. Men spit on the still figures roped to the hurdles. A young woman in front begins to jump, partly to see better, partly in a transport of expectancy.

A child is lifted onto his father's shoulders.

Other of the hangman's assistants bring a great metal bowl with four steaming kettles. The crowd cheers as the near boiling water is splashed into the bowl. One kettle carrier makes as he will pour a scalding stream over the spectators nearest the tree; they retreat in a scurry, screaming their laughter to his grin.

The hurdles have reached the end of their journey. And now, Tinoco (a foreign and heathen name) he is to be first. A dark, shivering man has his shirt stripped from him as he is roughly untied from the hurdle. Stumbling, falling in fear, and all to the crowds laughter, he is made to mount the ladder rung by slow trembling rung. Behind him, the hanger waits on a narrow crude podium. He is a young man, muscular; his mouth opens in some ribald pleasantry as he secures the hempen noose about his neck. The lips of the victim move as in prayer, the hands seek to join in prayer but can not. Of a sudden the noose is tightened; over the momentary inbreathed silence of the crowd the choking desperation of the hanged can clearly be heard. The second assistant pulls the ladder away sharply. The legs dangle, and the bulging eyes blink. Here is art: the hangman approaches with his knife, fire in the sunlight, and before the neck can crack, rips downward from the heart to the groin in one slash, quickly changes the knife from right to left, then plunges a mottled fist inside the body. The first assistant takes the bloody knife from his master and wipes it with care on a clean cloth, all the while his eyes on the artistry of the drawing. The right hand withdraws, dripping, holding up for all to see, a heart in its fatty wrappings. Then the left hand plunges to reappear all coiled and clotted with entrails. The crowd roars; the girl in front leaps and claps; the child on his father's shoul-

ders thumbsucks, indifferent, understanding nothing of all this - the adult world.

The ruined body is hoisted as the noose is loosened, and then plunked on the platform. The hangman throws the heart and the guts into the steaming bowl, freeing his arms from encrustations with quick fingers, drying them unwashed, on a towel. The crowd moans its pleasure, its excitement, for are there not two more victims to come? The hangman is handed a hatchet, squat and crude compared to that artist's instrument, but sharp, as it cracks through the bone for quartering - the arms, the legs, the head. The gaping torso is upheld a moment, then all the pieces of the man are shoved into a basket.

Next comes Ferrara, gross and heavy, the flesh shaking on his hairy chest, his three chins wobbling to the crowd's pleasure, his eyes rolling like those of some insentient doll. Here is comedy, a sort of Kemp. Ferrara squeals like a pig, going, "No, no, no, no!", as he is thrust up the ladder, groaning dismally from his belly's depths as the noose goes about his neck. This time the hangman is a fraction too slow with his knife: Ferrara is dead already as the point pierces. But there is a great fat heart, crammed like a goose's liver, dripping treason, treason, treason; the entrails are endless - an eternity of pink sausage; the crowd is a-roar with delight at the fatness of the chopped limbs.

And finally, the crowning course of this rich dinner: Dr. Roderigo Lopez, Jew, Machiavel, small and black, and chattering like an ape. "Let him not be granted the least dignity in his dying: strip all off!" There's a fair sized thursday for thee: mark, he is like all foreigners for the appurtenances of lust. Lopez prays aloud in a high screaming voice, then in ridiculous

foreigner's English, "I love deKvin. Ass mosh ass I loff Zhessoss Krist!" The crowd splits their sides with laughter but are, at the same time, most indignant: this naked foreign monkey saying the Holy Name, screaming with that smart filthy rod, of his love for the Queen. Dispatch, but not too slowly. And then articulo mortis. Parents shocked, cover the eyes of their children. Draw! Draw! Draw! The hangman's hands reek. Then he goes for the body with his hatchet as he would mince it fine. The crowd is sated, spent, purged, cleansed - splitting up into decent family groups, proceeding to the quiet of their houses.

In *Merchant of Venice*, written soon after this famous execution, Shylock the Jew, lends Antonio the Jew-hater, 3000 ducats. As a 'merry jest' the agreement states Antonio will owe Shylock a pound of his flesh if he misses the payback date. As the day for repayment nears and none of Antonio's merchant ships have yet returned to port, Shylock, who is angry for many reasons, wants Antonio's flesh. When asked why, Shylock responds with:

To bait fish withal: if it will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge.

He hath disgraced me, and hindered me half a million;

laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation,

thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine enemies;

and what's his reason? I am a Jew.

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?

If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that.

If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge.

If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example?

Why, revenge.

The villany you teach me, I will execute,

and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction.

And I think a pound of flesh carefully carved off of the living breast of a bond-breaker might just 'better the instruction' of the rather quick execution of a traitor.

So, the mirrors Shakespeare and his company held up for his audiences, not only reflected their personal behaviour, but their collective wills as well. A life, that never made it to the stage, but likely would have been judged ideal by most Elizabethans, was that of the eccentric, libidinous centenarian, Squire, Henry Hasting.

Henry Hastings, 1551 to 1650, son, brother and uncle to the Earls of Huntingdon, and my friend. He was an original of the age: English nobility in hunting, not warlike times. He was short, strong very active; with red hair and clothes always of plain green cloth, not worth 5 pound when new. His house was perfectly of the old fashion. it even had a large banquet hall built in a tree. He had a large park well stocked with deer, rabbits near the kitchen and fish-ponds. He had hounds that hunted deer, fox, hare, otter

and badger, long and short winged hawks and many nets for fishing. On his many walks he was very likely to carress a yeoman's wife or lower, and, if a woman were under forty, it were only her fault if she were not intimately acquainted with him. He was kind to the husbands, brothers and fathers and they were welcome in his house.

When visiting, they they found beef pudding and small beer a-plenty. The great hall was strewn with marrow-bones, full of hawks' perches, hounds, spaniels and terriers. Often two of the great chairs near the large stone fireplace had litters of cats in them, which were not to be disturbed: he always having three or four of them attending him at dinner, and a little white stick of fourteen inches near his plate, that he might defend such meat as he didn't want to lose. He had oysters supplied to him through all seasons, which he never failed to eat before dinner and supper. On various tables one might find hawk's hoods, bells, dice, cards, tobacco pipes; and three or four old green hats with their crowns thrust in so as to hold ten or a dozen pheasant eggs that he loved to eat.

The upper part of the room had a desk with a Church Bible and Book of Martyrs laid open on it. On the one side was a door to a closet where the wine and strong beer come from; but only in single glasses, that being a rule of the house, exactly observed, for he never exceeded in drink or permitted it. On the other side, was a door to an old chapel, not used for prayers, the pulpit being the safest place to hide venison pasty or great apple pie from the dogs. His hunting supplied all but beef and mutton, except Fridays when he had the best fish he could get, brought to him. Fridays was when his neighbors of best quality visited.

He were well natured, but soon angry, calling his servants, knaves and

bastards, which he often personally knew to be the truth. He lived to a hundred, never lost his eyesight, and got on his horse without help. Until eighty he rode to the death of a stag as well as any.

Henry Hastings.

Lastly, I think Shakespeare worked so hard at his mirror-making business to acquire wealth and stature. He did that; he earned his title of gentleman, retiring to the second largest house in Stratford, to briefly enjoy his two daughters and granddaughter. He became our greatest writer by realizing and writing:

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. At first, the infant,
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.
Then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like a snail
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,
Sighing like a furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then the soldier,
Full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard,
Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice,
In fair round belly with good capon lined,
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,

Full of wise saws and modern instances;
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slippered pantaloon,
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side;
His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide
For his shrunk shank, and his big manly voice,
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound. The last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.