

# Speak the Speech...

SHAKESPEARE ON RECORD (1888–2000)

*A Talk by David Timson for the Sunday Times Oxford Literary Festival*

RICHARD III *Act I, Scene 1*

DUKE OF GLOUCESTER (IRVING):

Now is the winter of our discontent  
Made glorious summer by this sun of York;  
And all the clouds that lour'd upon our house  
In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.  
Now are our brows bound with victorious wreaths;  
Our bruised arms hung up for monuments  
Our stern alarums chang'd to merry meetings,  
Our dreadful marches to delightful measures.  
Grim-visag'd war hath smooth'd his wrinkled front,  
And now instead of mounting barbed steeds  
To fright the souls of fearful adversaries,  
He capers nimbly in a lady's chamber  
To the lascivious pleasing of a lute.  
But I—that am not shap'd for sportive tricks,  
Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass,—  
I—that am rudely stamp'd, and want love's majesty  
To strut before a wanton ambling nymph—  
I—that am curtail'd of this fair proportion,  
Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,  
Deform'd, unfinish'd, sent before my time  
Into this breathing world scarce half made up,  
And that so lamely and unfashionable  
That dogs bark at me as I halt by them—  
Why, I, in this weak piping time of peace...

OTHELLO *Act 1, Scene 3*

OTHELLO (BOOTH):

Her father lov'd me, oft invited me;  
Still question'd me the story of my life  
From year to year—the battles, sieges, fortunes,  
That I have pass'd.  
I ran it through, even from my boyish days  
To th' very moment that he bade me tell it;  
Wherein I spake of most disastrous chances,  
Of moving accidents by flood and field;  
Of hairbreadth scapes i' th' imminent deadly breach;  
Of being taken by the insolent foe  
And sold to slavery; of my redemption hence,  
And portance in my travel's history  
Wherein of antres vast and deserts idle,  
Rough quarries, rocks, and hills whose heads touch heaven,  
It was my hint to speak—such was the process;  
And of the Cannibals that each other eat,  
The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads  
Do grow beneath their shoulders. These things to hear  
Would Desdemona seriously incline  
But still the house affairs would draw her thence;  
Which ever as she could with haste dispatch,  
She'd come again, and with a greedy ear  
Devour up my discourse. Which I observing,  
Took once a pliant hour, and found good means  
To draw from her a prayer of earnest heart  
That I would all my pilgrimage dilate,  
Whereof by parcels she had something heard,  
But not intentively. I did consent,  
And often did beguile her of her tears,  
When I did speak of some distressful stroke  
That my youth suffer'd. My story being done,  
She gave me for my pains a world of sighs;  
She swore, in faith, 'twas strange, 'twas passing strange;  
'Twas pitiful, 'twas wondrous pitiful.  
She wish'd she had not heard it; yet she wish'd  
That heaven had made her such a man. She thank'd me;  
And bade me, if I had a friend that lov'd her,  
I should but teach him how to tell my story,  
And that would woo her. Upon this hint I spake;  
She lov'd me for the dangers I had pass'd;  
And I lov'd her that she did pity them.

KING HENRY THE EIGHTH *Act 3, Scene 2*

WOLSEY (IRVING):

Cromwell, I did not think to shed a tear  
In all my miseries; but thou hast forc'd me,  
Out of thy honest truth, to play the woman.  
Let's dry our eyes; and thus far hear me, Cromwell,  
And when I am forgotten, as I shall be,  
And sleep in dull cold marble, where no mention  
Of me more must be heard of, say I taught thee—  
Say Wolsey, that once trod the ways of glory,  
And sounded all the depths and shoals of honour,  
Found thee a way, out of his wreck, to rise in—  
A sure and safe one, though thy master miss'd it.  
Mark but my fall and that that ruin'd me.  
Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away ambition:  
By that sin fell the angels. How can man then,  
The image of his Maker, hope to win by it?  
Love thyself last; cherish those hearts that hate thee;  
Corruption wins not more than honesty.  
Still in thy right hand carry gentle peace  
To silence envious tongues. Be just, and fear not;  
Let all the ends thou aim'st at be thy country's,  
Thy God's, and truth's; then, if thou fall'st,  
O Cromwell, Thou fall'st a blessed martyr!  
...O Cromwell, Cromwell!  
Had I but serv'd my God with half the zeal  
I serv'd my King, he would not in my age  
Have left me naked to mine enemies.

ROMEO AND JULIET *Act 4, Scene 3*

JULIET (ELLEN TERRY):

How if, when I am laid into the tomb,  
I wake before the time that Romeo  
Come to redeem me? There's a fearful point,  
Shall I not then be stifled in the vault,  
To whose foul mouth no healthsome air breathes in,  
And there die strangled ere my Romeo comes?  
Or, if I live, is it not very like  
The horrible conceit of death and night,  
Together with the terror of the place—  
As in a vault, an ancient receptacle  
Where for this many hundred years the bones  
Of all my buried ancestors are pack'd;  
Where bloody Tybalt, yet but green in earth,  
Lies fest'ring in his shroud; where as they say  
At some hours in the night spirits resort—  
Alack, alack, is it not like that I,  
So early waking—what with loathsome smells  
And shrieks like mandrakes' torn out of the earth,  
That living mortals, hearing them, run mad—  
O, if I wake, shall I not be distraught,  
Environed with all these hideous fears,  
And madly play with my forefathers' joints,  
And pluck the mangled Tybalt from his shroud,  
And, in this rage, with some great kinsman's bone,  
As with a club, dash out my desp'rate brains?  
O, look! methinks I see my cousin's ghost  
Seeking out Romeo, that did spit his body  
Upon a rapier's point. Stay, Tybalt, stay.  
Romeo, I come. This do I drink to thee.

DAVID TIMSON has made over 1,000 broadcasts for BBC Radio Drama. For Naxos AudioBooks he wrote *The History of the Theatre*, which won an award for most original production from the Spoken Word Publishers Association in 2001. He has also directed for Naxos AudioBooks four Shakespeare plays, including *King Richard III* (with Kenneth Branagh)—which won Best Drama Award from the SWPA in 2001—and in 2002 he won the Audio of the Year Award for his reading of *A Study in Scarlet*. He also reads *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes I–VI* and *The Return of Sherlock Holmes I–III*, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, *The Sign of Four*, *The Valley of Fear*, and *The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes I & II* for Naxos AudioBooks.

