

Cambridge University Press
0521608635 - Shakespeare's Tragedies: Violation and Identity
Alexander Leggatt
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

SHAKESPEARE'S TRAGEDIES

Shakespeare's Tragedies: Violation and Identity traces the linked themes of violation and identity through seven Shakespearean tragedies, beginning with the rape of Lavinia in *Titus Andronicus*. The implications of this event – its physical and moral shock, the way it puts Lavinia's identity, and the whole notion of identity, into crisis – reverberate through Shakespeare's later tragedies. Through close, theatrically informed readings of *Titus Andronicus*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Othello*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth*, the book traces the way acts of violence provoke questions about the identities of the victims, the perpetrators, and the acts themselves. It shows that violation can be involved in the most innocent-looking acts, that words can be weapons, that interpretation itself can be a form of damage. Written in a clear, accessible style, this study provokes questions about the human implications of Shakespearean tragedy.

ALEXANDER LEGGATT is Professor of English at University College, University of Toronto. He has published extensively on English drama, mostly on the work of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, and has lectured on Shakespeare at conferences throughout the world. His books include *Shakespeare's Comedy of Love* (1974), *Shakespeare in Performance: King Lear* (second edition, 2004) and *English Stage Comedy 1490–1990: Five Centuries of a Genre* (1998). He is editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Comedy* (2001). He is a member of the International Association of University Professors of English, the International Shakespeare Association, and the Shakespeare Association of America. He has held the Guggenheim and Killam Fellowships, and has been given an Outstanding Teaching Award by the University of Toronto Faculty of Arts and Science.

Cambridge University Press
0521608635 - Shakespeare's Tragedies: Violation and Identity
Alexander Leggatt
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

SHAKESPEARE'S TRAGEDIES: VIOLATION AND IDENTITY

ALEXANDER LEGGATT



Cambridge University Press
0521608635 - Shakespeare's Tragedies: Violation and Identity
Alexander Leggatt
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/978052160863-3

© Alexander Leggatt 2005

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2005

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN-13 978-0-521-84624-0 - hardback

ISBN-10 0-521-84624-2 - hardback

ISBN-13 978-0-521-60863-3 - paperback

ISBN-10 0-521-60863-5 - paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this book, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press
0521608635 - Shakespeare's Tragedies: Violation and Identity
Alexander Leggatt
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

for Brian Parker

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>page</i> viii
<i>A note on the texts</i>	ix
Introduction	1
1 <i>Titus Andronicus</i> : This was thy daughter	8
2 <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> : What's in a name?	29
3 <i>Hamlet</i> : A figure like your father	55
4 <i>Troilus and Cressida</i> : This is and is not Cressid	84
5 <i>Othello</i> : I took you for that cunning whore of Venice	114
6 <i>King Lear</i> : We have no such daughter	145
7 <i>Macbeth</i> : A deed without a name	177
<i>Conclusion</i>	205
<i>Notes</i>	210
<i>Index</i>	226

Cambridge University Press
0521608635 - Shakespeare's Tragedies: Violation and Identity
Alexander Leggatt
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Acknowledgements

During the long gestation of this book, I was able to test my ideas in lectures delivered at the Folger Library, the British Institute Summer School at Stratford-upon-Avon, Trent University, the Stratford Festival of Canada and the Shakespeare Institute; in conference presentations at the Pacific Northwest Renaissance Conference in Vancouver and the International Association of University Professors of English in Copenhagen; and in seminars at meetings of the Shakespeare Association of America in Albuquerque, Los Angeles, Victoria and New Orleans. At the University of Toronto, I have presented parts of this work at University College, Victoria College, and at meetings of the English Students' Union, the Senior Alumni, and the Work in Progress in English Group. I am grateful to the University of Toronto for conference travel grants, to the organizers who made the occasions possible, and to the audiences for their questions, advice and reactions. I am also grateful to the University of Toronto for the sabbatical leave in which much of the writing was done.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to the students who have worked with me on Shakespeare over the years, especially the students in my graduate course in Shakespearean tragedy. Their challenging insights and fresh thinking have been invaluable. Alan Ackerman read an early version of the chapter on *Hamlet*; Karen Bamford, David Bevington, Brian Gibbons, Peter Holland and Alan Somerset read the entire manuscript at various stages, and I owe much to their criticism, advice and encouragement. Sarah Stanton has been, as always, a wise and patient editor. The follies and errors that remain are my own.

A note on the texts

References to Shakespeare are to the Arden editions, using Arden 3 when available. The principal texts are *Titus Andronicus*, ed. Jonathan Bate (London and New York: Routledge 1995); *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Brian Gibbons (London and New York: Methuen 1980); *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins (London and New York: Methuen 1982); *Troilus and Cressida*, ed. David Bevington (Walton-on-Thames: Nelson 1998); *Othello*, ed. E. A. J. Honigmann (Walton-on-Thames: Nelson 1997); *King Lear*, ed. R. A. Foakes (Walton-on-Thames: Nelson 1997); *Macbeth*, ed. Kenneth Muir (London: Methuen; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, revised 1962).