

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-61768-1 - 'Think on my Words': Exploring Shakespeare's Language

David Crystal

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'Think on my words'

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Preface

The title of this book means what it says: it is an exploration of Shakespeare's language, not a comprehensive survey. It is an introduction from a particular point of view. Books and anthologies with the words *Shakespeare* and *Language* in the title are numerous, and they represent a coming together of several traditions in theatre, literary criticism, philology, and linguistics. Mine is basically a nuts-and-bolts approach, governed by one basic principle – that one should never examine a linguistic nut or bolt without asking 'what does it do?' And 'what does it do?' means two things: how does it help us understand the meaning of what is said (a semantic explanation), and how does it help us appreciate the dramatic or poetic effect of what is said (a pragmatic explanation)? I have found my own understanding immensely enhanced by the kind of approach I employ. I just hope I have managed to convey something of that insight in these pages.

I have used three First Folio sources: the edition of the plays held at the Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia Library, my copy of the 1910 Methuen facsimile, and the Norton facsimile. For my statistical data, I have used the concordance which was compiled to accompany the *Shakespeare's Words* website (www.shakespeareswords.com). The spelling of quotations is modern in Chapters 1 and 2, but after the description of Elizabethan orthography in Chapter 3, most quotations come from the First Folio or contemporary texts.

Hilda Hulme, my Shakespeare teacher at university, said in her insightful book *Explorations in Shakespeare's Language*: 'it is not easy to argue about Shakespeare's meaning without being excited by it'. Or explore it, even, now that we have such powerful electronic

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search capabilities. Every time I do even the most menial search of my Shakespeare database, I discover something I have never noticed before. It is an excitement open to anyone who wishes to increase their understanding of Shakespeare and his works.

DAVID CRYSTAL

Holyhead, March 2007

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Play and poem abbreviations

<i>Ado</i>	<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>
<i>Ant</i>	<i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>
<i>AWW</i>	<i>All's Well That Ends Well</i>
<i>AYLI</i>	<i>As You Like It</i>
<i>Cor</i>	<i>Coriolanus</i>
<i>Cym</i>	<i>Cymbeline</i>
<i>Err</i>	<i>The Comedy of Errors</i>
<i>Ham</i>	<i>Hamlet</i>
<i>1H4</i>	<i>Henry IV Part 1</i>
<i>2H4</i>	<i>Henry IV Part 2</i>
<i>H5</i>	<i>Henry V</i>
<i>1H6</i>	<i>Henry VI Part 1</i>
<i>2H6</i>	<i>Henry VI Part 2</i>
<i>3H6</i>	<i>Henry VI Part 3</i>
<i>H8</i>	<i>Henry VIII</i>
<i>JC</i>	<i>Julius Caesar</i>
<i>John</i>	<i>King John</i>
<i>KE3</i>	<i>King Edward III</i>
<i>Lear</i>	<i>King Lear</i>
<i>LLL</i>	<i>Love's Labour's Lost</i>
<i>Lover</i>	<i>A Lover's Complaint</i>
<i>Luc</i>	<i>The Rape of Lucrece</i>
<i>Mac</i>	<i>Macbeth</i>
<i>MM</i>	<i>Measure for Measure</i>
<i>MND</i>	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>
<i>MV</i>	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>
<i>Oth</i>	<i>Othello</i>
<i>Per</i>	<i>Pericles</i>
<i>R2</i>	<i>Richard II</i>

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<i>R3</i>	<i>Richard III</i>
<i>Rom</i>	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>
<i>Shr</i>	<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>
<i>Sonn</i>	<i>Sonnets</i>
<i>STM</i>	<i>Sir Thomas More</i>
<i>Temp</i>	<i>The Tempest</i>
<i>TGV</i>	<i>The Two Gentlemen of Verona</i>
<i>Tim</i>	<i>Timon of Athens</i>
<i>Tit</i>	<i>Titus Andronicus</i>
<i>TN</i>	<i>Twelfth Night</i>
<i>TNK</i>	<i>The Two Noble Kinsmen</i>
<i>Tro</i>	<i>Troilus and Cressida</i>
<i>Ven</i>	<i>Venus and Adonis</i>
<i>Wiv</i>	<i>The Merry Wives of Windsor</i>
<i>WT</i>	<i>The Winter's Tale</i>

OTHER ABBREVIATIONS

a	adjective
adv	adverb
int	interjection
n	noun
<i>OED</i>	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
pr	preposition
v	verb