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SHAKESPEARE'S TREATMENT OF ELIZABETHAN IDEAS ABOUT DEATH

by

Loris Elaine Seibert

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Chapter One

Introduction

In the great burst of energy and imagination in the sixteenth century that is called the English Renaissance, there appears an element conspicuous in its evident opposition to this new worldliness and love of life: namely, the constant preoccupation with death during the Elizabethan period. Ideas about death are expressed in all kinds of literature, and often most vividly in the drama. A whole body of death literature grew up and flourished, especially in the second half of the sixteenth century and first half of the seventeenth. Some of these Elizabethan treatises on death were among the most popular reading material in the age. There were those that taught the reader the art of dying well: Thomas Becon's The Sicke Mans Salve; William Perkins' Salve for a Sicke Man; and Christopher Sutton's Disce Mori: Learne to Die, are three of the most important of these. There were also books of consolation for death, such as Cardanus Comforte and Robert Southwell's Triumphs Over Death. And many more.

This omnipresence of the idea of death in the Elizabethan period can be easily explained as part of the age's heritage from the traditions of the Middle Ages. But it is also notable that the growth of the emphasis on death almost parallels that of the new interest in affairs
of this world that was to become the Renaissance. In the later Middle Ages, the thirteenth century, there began an increase in intellectual activity. This small movement, however, seems to have caused pangs of guilt in the consciences of Christian men, who began writing a greater number of penitential books, reiterating just as the early church writers had before them exhortations to despise the world. In their persistence these writers became more realistic in their presentation of worldly evils and the results of sin, thereby unconsciously making men more aware of the worldly life. The inevitability of death was held up before the reader in all its horror as an end to a life of sin. But as often happens when a concept is overemphasized, the more contempt of the world was preached, the less it was practiced. Nevertheless, the morbid dwelling on death insistently continued.

An illustration of these contradictory medieval attitudes is the "juxtaposition of life and death in the churchyard of the Church of the Holy Innocents in Paris." Here on the cloister walls about 1425 were depicted murals of the Dance of Death. The Parisians, for whom the churchyard was a daily lounging place and rendezvous, could at the same time both view the gruesome and grotesque figures and read the verses accompanying them that were inscribed on the walls. St. Paul's Church in London had a similar set of murals on its walls, and the verses for
them were a translation-adaptation of those at the Holy Innocents made by the poet John Lydgate. The Dance of Death itself consisted of a succession of pairs of figures (thirty such pairs in Paris), one in each pair a mocking skeleton-like creature (the decayed body of a dead man) who personified death, leading a somewhat reluctant living human being who was representative of a particular rank or profession in medieval society. Considering Lydgate's English literary version as typical of the general nature of all versions of the Dance of Death, the following elements may be termed essential to it. There is satire in the idea that in death all men are equal—the king and the laborer, the pope and the parson. Another element is that of the living confronted with the dead, a development of a thirteenth-century French legend, The Three Dead and the Three Living, in which three youths hunting in a forest are intercepted by three hideous images of death, who lecture them on the vanity of human grandeur and warn them of their own impending death. The element of the dance itself is present and reinforced by repeated mention of it by those forced to learn Death's step.2

Also running through the verses are the three medieval ideas of de casibus, contemptu mundi, and the ars moriendi. All of them appear elsewhere in the Middle Ages as separate literary genres. The prototype of the first, from which its name is derived, is Boccaccio's
De Casibus Virorum Illustrium. This work was imitated by Chaucer in his Monk's Tale, and translated in full, with changes, by Lydgate, becoming in English The Fall of Princes. These works consist of stories of great and usually overly ambitious men who rise to fame and power only to fall suddenly and often ignominiously into death. The point is made again and again of the folly of striving for glory since after death all that has been achieved in life is absolutely to no avail. Fortune is declared the most fickle of goddesses, and when a man climbs upon her wheel, he must remember that once he has reached the top, the downward turn is inevitable. In the Dance of Death verses the de casibus idea appears frequently both implicitly and explicitly. The fact that those of high rank are lowered at death to the same level as those in humbler stations suggests the greater distance of their fall. Furthermore, Death often speaks of those who strive to climb too high, and who in so doing fail to remember death that comes just as they have reached the height of their ambition. In the introductory Verba Translatoris Lydgate says that Death will,

Make hem plownge from theire sees lowe
Maugre the myght of al these conqueroures
Fortune hath hem from her whele ythrowe.5

The Patriarch says when Death seizes him, "Hie clymbyng up a falle hathe for his mede."4 And Death warns the clerk against ambition saying, "Who clymbeth hyest somme-tyme
shal dessende."5 The de casibus theme was still an
important one in the sixteenth century as it was perpetuated in the very popular *Mirror for Magistrates*. Thus, it was ready at hand for incorporation by Shakespeare into his plays wherever it suited his dramatic purpose.

In *Richard III* Hastings, who has just been ordered beheaded, speaks in general *de casibus* terms of the fate of all like him:

> O momentary grace of mortal men,  
> Which we more hunt for than the grace of God!  
> Who builds his hopes in air of your good looks,  
> Lives like a drunken sailor on a mast,  
> Ready, with every nod, to tumble down  
> Into the fatal bowels of the deep.

The *contemptu mundi* idea derives from the sixth-century work *De Contemptu Mundi* of Pope Innocent III. Chaucer supposedly made a translation of it, which, if it once existed, is now lost. Farnham points out that in both these men piety and professed asceticism existed alongside a distinct concern with matters of the world. Petrarch's *Secretum* is another work in the *contemptu mundi* tradition, and in it the author is fully cognizant of the contradiction between the doctrine and the usual practices of men. Yet both aspects existed concurrently throughout the Renaissance, and of course also in Elizabethan England, in which many books *de contemptu mundi* were written and that of Pope Innocent translated. In the Dance of Death the idea appears in the many references made by Death to the vanity of accumulated wealth and worldly pleasures, both of which must come to an end when Death arrives. For instance, Death praises the pious
and simply-living Hermit for his practice of world-contempt.

The Hermit, in addition to dutifully denying the values of the world, has also devoted much of his life to the ars moriendi, the art of dying. Unlike most of the other of Death's victims, he knows how to die. Several other figures point out the necessity of dying well. For instance, the astronomer says, "Who lyveth aryght mote nedes dye wele"; the canon says, "To dei welle eche man shuld entende"; and the Sergeant admits his own unpreparedness: "Eche man is lothe to dye ferre and nere / That hath not lerned to dye a-forne." The book of the Ars Moriendi, written by an anonymous author, circulated in two versions during the late Middle Ages. It dealt with the practical business of preparation for death, "a method to be learned while one is in good health and kept at one's fingers' ends for use in that all-important and inescapable hour." It was also primarily a book of comfort and not intended to depress or frighten. The traditional Ars Moriendi was to engender a great many works in the same or similar vein. Caxton printed one of the versions of the original Ars Moriendi in English, and many writers followed him in writing books in the ars moriendi tradition. According to Farnham these became in the sixteenth century "the ubiquitous popular treatises on the art of dying." The literary culmination of this type of book in English
was probably Jeremy Taylor's *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Dying*, 1651, one of the last of the *ars moriendi* writings.

A final prominent element of the Dance of Death is that of the physical decay of the body after death. This is seen not only in cadaverous Death, but also in references in the verses to dead men becoming mere food for worms, another variation on the theme of the vanity of wealth and earthly glory.

Thus, it can be seen that the Dance of Death, in both pictures and verses, embodied and served as a vehicle of expression for all of the commonplace medieval ideas concerning death. And these very same ideas continued to persist during the English Renaissance, influenced by the Dance of Death and other forms of medieval expression of the ideas as well.

One such form was English morality drama, in which one of the principal themes treated was the coming of death. This theme involved all of the same elements that were present in the Dance of Death murals and verses. Four plays in particular deal with death: the "Death of Herod" play in the *Ludus Coventriae* mystery cycle, in which personified Death enters to wreak vengeance on the wicked Herod who has just conducted the Slaughter of the Innocents; the *Pride of Life*, a fragmentary morality play in which, according to the prologue, there is to be a battle between Death and the King of Life; *The Castle of Perseverance*, in which the coming of death is one of
three themes treated; and *Everyman*, which deals solely with abstract man's preparation for and encounter with Death. If death had proved effective dramatically in this early drama, it is no wonder that later dramatists still made use of its dramatic possibilities. Of course, as morality drama gave way to the entirely secular, and abstract figures to individuals, death itself became more particularized, although it still in many cases retained its overtones of universality. Moreover, other forms of popular literature continued to stress the fact of death as inevitable for all.

The prevalence of the idea of death manifested itself in still other ways during the Middle Ages. It almost goes without saying that death was a constant subject of the medieval pulpit. The physical side of death became involved in religion as the Passion of Christ was depicted more and more realistically and less symbolically. Thus, death came to be a prime focal point of Christianity, and as such, a chief concern of the reverent Christian layman of the Middle Ages. Of course, the contemplation of death was always somewhat of a religious matter, and this feeling was probably even emphasized by the increase in the cultivation of the fear of physical death. The medieval man was becoming increasingly fearful of physical death as he was constantly reminded of it by the recurring plagues that followed the Black Death in the fourteenth century, and the widespread exhibition of the death's
head or memento mori. The periodic visitations of the plague made real in more terrifying fashion the inevitabili-
ity of death, as well as its physical horror. The death's head was seen everywhere: in paintings, on sepulchral monuments, as architectural ornaments, in homes over fire-places, on jewelry (such as the death's head rings worn by prostitutes), in emblem books, in devotional books, and on rosary beads. In fact, it reached the height of its popularity in the sixteenth century. Falstaff in the Henry IV plays mentions it twice. In 1 Henry IV he makes fun of Bardolph's red face:

I make as good use of it as many a man doth of a death's-head or a memento mori: I never see thy face but I think upon hell-fire and Dives that lived in purple; for there he is in his robes, burning, burning. (III,iii,32-35)

And in 2 Henry IV he says to Doll Tearsheet, who has reminded him that he is an old man,

Peace, good Doll! do not speak like a death's head; do not bid me remember mine end. (II,iv,255)

The death's head was similar in motif to the Dance of Death, not only in that it had to do with the physical side of death, but also in its implicit message that death makes all men, whatever their roles in life, into mere skeletons, for all practical purposes indistinguishable from one another.

With this body of ideas behind him expressed in such various ways as to make the idea of imminent death not
just matter for literature, but rather as natural as eating and sleeping, it is to be expected that one can trace it in the plays of Shakespeare. Although the attitudes toward death retain a definite medieval coloring, they have become in Shakespeare's time truly Elizabethan with repeated treatment by sixteenth-century devotional writers of treatises on death. This study is a result of an investigation made of many of these death treatises and related writings to discover exactly what ideas and attitudes were most widespread or commonplace, and then to compare them with Shakespeare's use in his plays of the same ideas and attitudes. This investigation does not pretend to be exhaustive in that not all treatises dealing with death were considered, nor are all possible attitudes toward death that appear in the plays included. I have selected those attitudes I believe most typically Elizabethan or typically Shakespearean and have considered them as they are used to develop or illuminate situation and to reveal character. Study of Shakespeare's handling of this segment of contemporary thought provides insight into how much he was part of his age and to what extent he transcended it to view it with a critical eye.
Chapter Two
Elizabethan Attitudes toward Life and Death

In the fifth act of Macbeth, with a siege impending, Macbeth inquires of Seyton the cause of an outcry of women from another part of the castle. Seyton replies, "The queen, my lord, is dead" (v,16). Macbeth's response to this news is a re-expression of a commonplace Elizabethan attitude toward death:

She should have died hereafter; There would have been a time for such a word. (17-18)

He goes on to generalize about the inevitability of death, and to imply that resignation in the face of death is therefore necessary. Just as "all our yesterdays have lighted fools the way to dusty death" (22-23), the endless tomorrows will continue to do the same until time is no more. Lady Macbeth's death must take its place in this providential progression of life. It is notable, however, in the interpretation of Macbeth's character at this point, that he, the bereaved, is the one who voices this fatalistic idea; for in most Elizabethan books of consolation, and in those on the art of dying, this philosophy is propounded not by but for the benefit of the dying man and his friends so that in their fear or unreasoning grief they may be convinced that death is unavoidable, necessary, and indeed, preferable to life. Macbeth states a fact of life in his speech instead of trying to console himself for his wife's death; he is almost cynical and
certainly hardened. In a sense, he has now transcended mundane concern for the shock of death, his own or that of anyone else. More important matters are at hand. Macbeth thus expresses a conventional idea in a somewhat unconventional manner. This instance is only one illustration of Shakespeare's handling of contemporary sixteenth-century attitudes toward death.

Probably the most common of these attitudes toward the fact of death was this very one spoken by Macbeth:

death comes to all men. It is certain and unavoidable.

Since this is irrevocably true, man should accept the prospect of death and, as did Macbeth, face it with stoic fortitude. Macbeth's attitude is exactly that of Philemon in Thomas Becon's *The Sicke Mans Salve*. Philemon speaks to his dying friend Epaphroditus:

> We must be well content to dye as we wer to live, as well pleased to live the world, as we were to come into it. We are mortall, we therefore must needs dye. Let us not beare heavely that necessitie importeth. God created us that we should once dye, let us not therfore repugne and strive against the good pleasure of God. There shall none other thing chaunce unto us by death, then that hath heeretofore chaunced unto our predecessors, and shall likewise chaunce unto our posteritie. Who hath lived that hath not dyed? Who doeth now, or shall live, that shall not also taste death? One and the same way must needs be troden of all Adams posteritie. There is no mean to escape. . . . Every bodely creature that liveth on the face of the earth shal dye, whether the life be short or long, the end of it is death.

Comparing a passage from Gascoigne's *The Drome of Doomes Day*, we see that the phrase in Macbeth's speech, "dusty death," is closely connected to the idea of death's
inevitability:

...and whether he will or nay, there is a terme apoynted the which he shal not passe over. In the which earth shal return unto earth. For it is written. Thou arte earth, & into earth thou shalt goe.

Death is a returning to the earth whence man came, and this return is parallel to the similar idea of man as made of dust returning to dust, both ideas originally Biblical. Shakespeare has succeeded in calling up this entire association with only two words. When we turn to Christopher Sutton we find that Shakespeare could have even consulted *Disce Mori* when he wrote the lines he put into Macbeth's mouth:

...the dayly instances of death before us, doe evidently shew, what shal in lik maner shortly betide ourselves. The enterlude is the same, we are but new Actors upon the stage of this worlde. They which are gone, have plaid their parts; and wee which remaine, are yet acting ours, onely our Epilogue is yet for to end. ...Let fooles...say with the old Epicures...Why? what have wee to do with death? They shall one day find that death will have to do with them, when hee shall strip them into a shrowding sheete, binde them hand and foote, and make their last bed be the hard and stony grave.

Sutton in this passage discusses not only the certainty of death, but also makes the same association with it that appears in Macbeth's speech: men are only players on the stage of the world, and they enter, play their predetermined roles, and then exit. Jaques' famous speech in *As You Like It* comes to mind as another instance of Shakespeare's use of this metaphor. But Jaques says that a man plays many parts during his time, "His acts
being seven ages" (II, vii, 143). In this passage the figure might be construed to imply inevitable death, but Jaques does not mention it by name. Sutton, in a sense, makes Jaques' implication specific when he says that "They which are gone, have plaid their parts." The metaphor is given a slightly different twist by Macbeth. He calls life "but a walking shadow" (24), thereby making use of another familiar metaphor for life in relation to death. For example, Diego de Estella in his A Methode Unto Mortification says, "And this life is not the true life, but a figure of life, and the shadowe of death. It is not that which it seemeth to be, but a shadowe of truth." Macbeth then goes on to name it a player upon a stage (we are presumably safe in assuming that this is the stage of the world). By juxtaposing these particular metaphors of men as actors and their lives as shadows, Shakespeare has added another dimension to the meaning of life. If life is a shadow, it is, then, only a representation of reality; players, too, are representative shadows: that is, reflections such as those which appear in a mirror held up to nature. Macbeth's use of the acting figure in this particular way lends further insight into his state of mind. Now that his vaulting ambition has brought him to the brink of disaster and ruin, he sees that life is, after all, meaningless and without reality because it is just as transitory as a play upon a stage. The fruits of his exploits have not sat easily upon his conscience, and
although he is ready to fight for his life, he seems, here, to have come to terms with this essential and necessary transitoriness.

Macbeth speaks of the fools that have been lighted to dusty death, much as Sutton speaks of the fools who have questioned the fact that they must one day die. Says Sutton, "They shall one day find that death will have to do with them"; says Macbeth, fools have found in the past that death did have to do with them and are continuing to find it to be true day by day. Thus, Macbeth's speech is an exquisite synthesis of some of the commonplace Elizabethan ideas about death and life.

This point that death is certain was made over and over again in Elizabethan treatises on death. Gascoigne repeats it:

We must beleve (nay rather we know perfectly) that we must once dye, and yet we are altogether ignorant when we shall be called hence. . . .To conclude, what is this present lyfe but a continuall and most swifte course unto death?  

According to Estella, "That die thou shalt thou art sure."  

Perkins emphasizes death's relentlessness:

". . .the time will come when we must encounter hand to hand with tyrannous and cruell death."  

In The Zodiake of Life of Palingenius, Barnabe Googe's translation, death personified speaks:

The self same death am I, that with my syth do cut like hay,  
All things that live upon the earth, the rule and eke the sway  
Of all the world, hath Jove me delt, and biddes me none to spare. . . .
No kind of creature here doth live, but unto me is thrall.
The Wise, the Foolish dolt shall die, the little sucking will:
The young and old, the fayre and foule, with reason like I kill.
And he that younder I do see, approaching to my land,
When as his destinies permit, shall fele my deadly hand.

And again says Palingenius:

For of our fyrst beginning doth the fatall ende depende,
And certaine is the time decreed for all away to wende.

It also appears in a poem by Laurence Ramsey, "A Short Discourse of Man's Fatall End": "Borne all to dye, and dye we must, all flesh shall yelde to death." 

Even the books on medicine repeat the idea. Levinus Lemnius in his The Touchstone of Complexions says:

And it [death] is called natural because it is common to all men like, and not able by any meanes to be declyned. ...For this is natures decreed order, that all things having beginning must also have ending, and arvye to their finall decaye....

And Andreas Laurentius in On the Preservation of the Sight expresses the same idea in physical rather than metaphysical or religious terms:

I am only purposed to shew that it is of necessitie that every living creature must waxe old, that he fostereth within himselfe, the naturall causes thereof hanging about him, which cannot be avoyded.

That death is necessary and unavoidable is reiterated often in Shakespeare's plays. The idea was so commonplace, that in most cases it has the effect of a platitude, an empty phrase used, usually without success, to comfort the bereaved or dying. In Hamlet the Queen pleads
with Hamlet to cease his mourning. She employs comfort-
book jargon:

Do not for ever with thy vailed lids
Seek for thy noble father in the dust:
Thou know'st 'tis common; all that lives must die. . . .

(I,ii,70-72)

Hamlet replies, "Ay, madam, it is common," implying that
even so, he has a right to vent his deep sorrow for his
father's death. Her trite consolatory remarks do not
ease his grief. One cannot help wondering if the readers
of the many books concerning death published in Shake-
speare's time did not feel as Hamlet felt here; continual
preaching of fortitude and resignation is so often
ineffectual in the face of personal tragedy or sorrow.

In contrast to Hamlet's reaction to his mother's attempt
to resign him to his father's death is Capulet's attitude
toward the death of Tybalt, which is expressed through a
cant phrase similar to that which Gertrude used. He is
negotiating Juliet's marriage to Paris, and discussing
her grief at Tybalt's death:

Look you, she loved her kinsman Tybalt dearly,
And so did I:--Well, we were born to die. (III,iv,3-4)

And he dismisses Tybalt from his thoughts, being more
cconcerned with the practical matter at hand of assuring
Paris that Juliet will marry him. Capulet has obviously
been well versed in conventional attitudes toward death.
The phrase as used here, however, is especially signifi-
cant for the irony involved in it. Capulet is soon to
learn how correct he was. It is also interesting to note
that when he thinks his own daughter dead, although she is actually under the influence of the potion given her by Friar Laurence, he loses his self-control and seems to have forgotten his platitudes:

O Child! O Child! My soul and not my Child!
Dead art thou! Alack! My child is dead. (IV,v,62-63)

Friar Laurence must become the comforter and repeat the common remarks about death's inevitability and preferability.

A similar use of the idea that death is unavoidable occurs in a purely comic situation in 2 Henry IV. Justice Shallow and Justice Silence talk over old times and mutual acquaintances. Shallow laments that so many of his friends are now dead, to which Silence replies with the expected comment: "We shall all follow, cousin." And of course Shallow agrees: "Certain, 'tis certain; very sure, very sure; death, as the Psalmist saith, is certain to all; all shall die" (III,ii,40ff.). He repeats this sentiment two lines later and then asks about his friend Double. Upon learning that Double is dead, Shallow immediately laments his death, nevertheless interspersing his expressions of grief with inquiries about the price of sheep. The conversation ends with Shallow regretfully asking again, "And is old Double dead?" Justice Shallow is portrayed as an old man on the verge of senility. He, too, like old Capulet and Queen Gertrude, has been imbued with the platitudes of the comfort and death treatises.
But because he is an old man who sees his contemporaries dying around him, death seems all the more imminent, and the fear of it cannot be put off with stoical commonplaces. Shakespeare here, then, uses this Elizabethan attitude toward death for purposes of characterization.

In Julius Caesar Brutus, the stoic, characteristically suppresses his grief at the news that his wife Portia is dead, although his tension displays itself indirectly in the quarrel with Cassius. When Messala comes in, Brutus conceals that he has already heard the news even when Messala mentions Portia's death. Brutus merely responds, "Why, farewell, Portia. We must die, Messala: / With meditating that she must die once, / I have the patience to endure it now" (IV,iii,190-192). We can well imagine that Roman Brutus has meditated upon this fact so common to Shakespeare's audience, and resigned himself to its truth. He epitomizes the stoic fortitude implicit in almost all Elizabethan writings on death—his is the ideal reaction. For example, Paligenius explains why sorrow caused by a death is useless and unadvisable. In the following lines he speaks about the death of children:

And if that death will have them needes then use a patient minde,
Thou art not in this case alone, but fellowes shalt thou finde.
The griefe that we with many beare, we better may sustaine;
We all are borne to this intent, to render lyfe agayne.

Says Cardan: "Let us therefore show that death is neither
evil nor to be bewailed. . . ."\(^{14}\) And Southwell: "Thinke it no injury that she is now taken from you, but a favour that she was lent you so long, and shew no unwillingness to restore God his owne, sith hitherto you have paid no usury for it. . . ."\(^{15}\) And again he says, "Death is to ordinairie a thing to seem any novelty, being a familiar guest in everie house, and sith his comming is expected, and his arrant unknowne, neither his presence should be feared, nor his effects lamented."\(^{16}\) Guillaume Du Vair in *The Morall Philosophie of the Stoicks* says on the subject, "The contempt of death is the true and lively source of all noble and commendable actions."\(^{17}\) Later he also says, "If we love our children, let us love them as men, that is to say, as men subject unto infinit casualties of death, and then afterwards when they happen to dye, their deaths will be neither strange nor grievous unto us. . . ."\(^{18}\) Our reaction to Brutus, however, may not be one of complete sympathy—he can be accused of coldness; but he is nevertheless a character of great depth, and Shakespeare neither entirely condemns nor praises him. In any case, Brutus is ready to continue working out plans for the battle with Antony.

Even though everyone knew that death came unfailingly to all men, there was a conflict as to whether death is to be feared, or to be awaited as a release from the miseries of the world. On the one hand, death is a punishment for sin and a painful experience; on the other,
it is an escape from the clay prison of one's body, a
returning home after the wearisome journey of life. Most
of the treatises for the dying and the bereaved espoused
the latter view, since it was their avowed purpose to
comfort or to prepare their readers for death. They
explicitly attempt to counteract the first idea, probably
because it was widely held among the people, for whom
preachers' pleas to repent were colored by threats of
just such a horrible death. Moreover, recurrences of the
plague probably aided in intensifying fear of death among
the general public. Gascoigne's translation of *De
Contemptu Mundi* echoes this fear by depicting a terri-
fying death:

> whilst he [man] lived he bredde nittes and lyse,
> And being dead, he maketh putrefaction and stinke.
> One man defendeth another onely. But being dead hee
defendeth many wormes. Oh what is more filthy than
> the carkasse of a man? he whose embrasing had bene
> most amiable meeting him on lyve, even his looke
> will bee most terrible when hee is dead.

To be sure, death is, in this book, admitted to be an
entrance to new life for the good man, but there is
much more concern with the horrors of death such as
just quoted (and this is not the worst), and with detailed
descriptions of the posthumous fate of the reprobate. It
is also made clear that the road to salvation is not an
easy one. Estella, whose book is also *de contemptu
mundi*, likewise emphasizes the frightful experience that
death is:

> Terrible will that houre bee, when the bodie
of a worldlie man brought up deliciouslie, shall be separated from the soule, to bee devoured speedelie afterwardes of worms. 20

In a very early treatise on death, printed by Wynken de Worde in 1507, death is also seen as horrible by the dying man, who must on his deathbed strive to gain intercession in order to enter heaven. He laments:

Alas that ever I synned in my lyfe to me is come this day the dredfull tydynges that ever I herde; here hath ben with me a sergeant of armes whose name is Crewelte from the kyng of all kynges lorde of all lordes and Juge of all Juges syenge on me his mace of his offyce sayenge unto me I arest you. . . . 21

It is quite natural, then, that death is frequently conceived of as a frightful experience by Shakespeare's characters.

In the famous soliloquy, "To be, or not to be," Hamlet discusses fear of death in relation to suicide. In the sleep of death the dreams that may be dreamed "must give us pause" (III,i,68). These dreams of what may come after death are fearful enough to prevent men from ending their own lives. As a result, we all endure the miseries of life, rather than take a chance on the unknown after death, that undiscovered country. Hardin Craig in an article, "Hamlet's Book," 22 has pointed out that in this soliloquy these and other ideas here presented in dramatized form are similar to some he finds in Cardan's Comfort. One need only compare the following from Cardan with the soliloquy:

For there is nothing that doth better or moore truely
prophecie the end of life, then when a man dreameth that he doth travaile and wander into farre countryes, and that hee travaileth in countryes unknowne without hope of retourne, in such sort naturallye divyninge of that [which] shortlye wyll come to passe in deede.  

Craig also points out that both Hamlet and Cardan say that men's consciences tell them they are cowards. According to Cardan:

Calamity durst not come nere anye, but such as were of base minds, simple, and subject to effeminacy. But among such as were valiant and armed with vertue, shee durst not come. . . . Onelye honestye and vertue of mynde doth make a man happy, and onely a cowardlie and corrupt conscience, do cause thine unhappiness.

Hamlet does not talk specifically about the efficacy of virtue and fortitude as does Cardan, but the lines

And enterprises of great pitch and moment
With this regard, their currents turn awry
And lose the name of action. (III,i,86-88)

imply that the opposite of the "pale cast of thought" is preferable, and that opposite is the exercise of fortitude and virtue to combat the fear of death or any fears that prevent resolute action. Hamlet, then, speaks in this soliloquy of the fear of death in general terms, not really applying it to himself alone.

Perhaps Shakespeare's most outstanding presentation of the fear of death in dramatic form occurs in Measure for Measure. What Hamlet spoke of generally, Claudio, who is condemned to death, speaks of in particular terms: he himself is afraid of death. The Duke, disguised as a friar, has prepared Claudio for his approaching death (by execution) in true ars moriendi fashion. Then, after
Claudio has become resigned to his death, Isabella, his sister, arrives to tell him the condition by which he might be saved from death; that is, she must surrender her chastity to Angelo, the Duke's temporary substitute. Isabella, a wise young woman who knows her brother well, hesitates to give him this information, which would thereby present him with the alternative of choosing either death or a dishonoured sister. Her estimation of him proves correct, for Claudio begins to retreat from his resolution to "encounter darkness as a bride" (III,i,84), after he hears her news. Now that death is not necessarily at hand, his natural fears arise to dispel his earlier show of fortitude. Isabella continues, rather timorously, to try to prepare him for death, but her efforts are now to no avail. His imaginings of what death is like are similar to Gascoigne's description—they are in the same vein, even if the details differ:

Ay, but to die, and go we know not where;  
To lie in cold obstruction and to rot;  
This sensible warm motion to become  
A kneaded clod; and the delighted spirit  
To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside  
In thrilling region of thick-ribbed ice;  
To be imprison'd in the viewless winds;  
And blown with restless violence round about  
The pendent world; or to be worse than worst  
Of those that lawless and incertain thought  
Imagine howling: 'tis too horrible!  
The weariest and most loathed worldly life  
That age, ache, penury and imprisonment  
Can lay on nature is a paradise  
To what we fear of death. (118-132)

A close parallel to Claudio's speech are the following lines in Palingenius;
But many thinke soules never die, but after losse of breath
The dead they say doe live againe, and flesh forsaking quite
As cockels from the shell outdrawne to Pluto take their flight:
And downward hedlong fast they run in kingdome blacke to sayle.
There faine they woods of mirtle trees, where Wofull lovers wayle,
There rivers run with flaming flouds, and dredfull monsters be
That poyson some with gaping throtes, then places may you see
Of divers forme, where Infants crye, and where the guilty Ghosts
The furies fierce of Hell doe burne, and whipp fast lynckt to postes.

Googe makes clear in his gloss that this view ought not to be accepted by Christian men, but the torments Claudio imagines illustrate that to Shakespeare and even more likely to other men the picture of classical Hades was probably fused with that of Christian Hell, so that the greater vividness of the former made its traditional tortures predominate in most men's view of punishment after death. It is for just such a person as Claudio that the Elizabethan treatises were written. Because he prefers life to what he believes are the horrors of death, he must be convinced that death is to be desired—that he will be better off after death than he was in life. One wonders after reading this speech, whether the rules for holy dying and attempts to glorify death were as ineffectual in real life as they were in regard to Claudio. Of course, it must be remembered that Claudio is drawn as a weak man. After this speech Isabella becomes enraged that he would even consider that she dishonor herself; the Duke
Claudio immediately makes terms with his fears and assumes again a proper attitude toward death: "I am so out of love with life that I will sue to be rid of it" (174). Thus Shakespeare here uses an ordinary man's attitude toward death to develop the main conflict of the play: namely, which is more important, Claudio's life or Isabella's virginity. It is clear that the answer is, despite family ties, the latter. Yet one cannot help sympathizing a little with Claudio in his fears, since as Hamlet had implied in his soliloquy, such fears are common to all men.

Edgar in *King Lear*, Act V, also recognizes this prevalence among men of the fear of death. After having given Edmund his mortal wound, he explains his actions since being banished by his father. He speaks of fleeing and hiding from the proclamation against his life, and as a parenthesis to this act, says,

> O, our lives' sweetness!  
> That we the pain of death would hourly die  
> Rather than die at once!  

(V,iii,184-186)

His attitude here is more like that of Hamlet than of Claudio; that is, he can now view objectively and with a detachment similar to Hamlet's the fear he actually experienced earlier. Indeed, these lines serve almost as an epitome of Hamlet's soliloquy and also of what is implicit in Claudio's speech. The authors of the death treatises would have agreed with Edgar, and they strove
to combat just such common fear as he speaks of.

In 2 Henry VI Cardinal Beaufort dies on stage. In his deathbed delirium he sees Death, personified, approaching, and is fearful. He attempts to ward off Death with a bribe:

If thou be'st death, I'll give thee England's treasure, Enough to purchase such another island, So thou wilt let me live, and feel no pain. (III,iii, 2-4)

As this passage indicates, Beaufort is a bad man, and therefore he dies a horrible death. There is a hint of the Dance of Death idea here—Beaufort could be the reluctant Cardinal led away by Death in the murals. Furthermore, the scene is also reminiscent of the morality plays in which Death comes to lead away Everyman or his counterpart. The cardinal's lack of preparation prevents his making a proper end, despite the King's attempts to ask God's blessing on his soul. The Elizabethans would most likely feel that Beaufort's terror of death was deserved and to be expected. Death can be especially frightful for kings and courtiers because it signifies the end of all their earthly glory. In the Droome of Doomes Day this point is made all too clear:

He which earewhile sat glorious in his throne or chayre, lyeth now despysed in his Toombe. Hee which but lately florished in the Court, doth now lye filthily in his grave. Hee which but earewhiles did fare deintily in his parlor, is now consumed & tore with wormes in his Sepulchre.

Richard II echoes this sentiment when he learns that the support of armies and friends he had counted upon has
failed:

Let's talk of graves, of worms and epitaphs. . . .
Let's choose executors and talk of wills:
And yet not so, for what can we bequeath
Save our deposed bodies to the ground?
Our lands, our lives and all are Bolingbroke's,
And nothing can we call our own but death
And that small model of the barren earth
Which serves as paste and cover to our bones.

(III,ii,145,148-154)

He goes on to speak of Death the antic that keeps his
court in the king's hollow crown—again Death in the Dance
of Death now leading away the king. Richard in this
speech exhibits his characteristic propensity to give up
everything at any indication that the course of events is
unfavorable to him. He is here also typically self-
centered and consciously dramatic in both poetry and
imagery, even though he is concerned with beliefs about
death and the transitoriness of earthly pomp that were
generally held by all who saw the play. Where Gascoigne
dramatizes the effects of death on anyone in general,
Richard dramatizes the same kinds of effects with specific
reference to himself. In this way Shakespeare again
makes use of commonplaces about death in order to delineate
character.

Instead of stressing the terror death holds for most
men, most of the Elizabethan death books, as I have already
said, emphasized how welcome death should be after a life
of travail and misery. Most of these writers do take
man's normal fear of death into account, however, as does
Christopher Sutton in the following passage:
At first sight Death dooth fray our naturall weakness, and we beginne to shirkne from it: but having confidence in God, who hath willed us not to feare, we finde it a meane to divide the waters of many tribulations, to make us a passage from the wilderness of this world, unto a better land of rest.... Wheras Death is so farre from hurting them, who put their trust in God, as they shall rather find it a gentle guide, to bring them home to their own cittie, where they would bee, to remaie for ever. That which we call life is a kind of death, because it makes us to die: but that which wee count death, is in the verie sequele a verie life: for that indeede it makes us to live.27

Similarly, Phillipe de Mornay in A Discourse of Life and Death, translated by the Countess of Pembroke in 1592, writes,

Death makes an ende of this life. This life is a perpetuall misery and tempest: Death then is the issue of our miseries and entraunce of the porte where we shall ride in safetie from all windes. And should we fear that which withdraweth us from misery, or which drawes us into our Haven?28

This same contrast between the fear of death and its supposed actual felicity occurs in Measure for Measure. The Duke purposely deceives Isabella into thinking her brother has been executed. In his disguise as friar he tries to console her and bring her to accept this fact. His argument is as follows:

That life is better life, past fearing death,Than that which lives to fear: make it your comfort,So happy is your brother. (V,i,402-404)

With these words he convinces the pious Isabella that Claudio is happier dead, now that he no longer lives to fear death.

The idea that death is preferable to life is frequently found in both the death books and the plays.
In the books of consolation, in particular, death is made to seem attractive for the usual reason of extinguishing the fears of the reader by attempting to persuade him that death is to be wished for. The Axiochus of Plato, supposedly translated by Edmund Spenser, tells of Socrates' efforts to allay the fears of death of his dying friend Axiochus. The soul, which is enclosed in the earthly dungeon of the body, coveteth the use of that open and kind heaven out of which it was derived, and thirsteth for the wonted company & surpassing delights of that eternal fellowship; whereby it is evident, that the passage from life, is a change from much evil to great good. When Axiochus is still unconvinced, Socrates makes his argument more personal and immediate:

For being loosed and delivered out of the darksome dungeons of this body, thou shalt passe to that place where is no lacke nor complaint, but all things full of rest and devoid of evill. Moreover there is calme and quiet living without all knowledge of unrest, peaceable and still occupied in beholding the course & frame of Nature, and studying Philosophy, not to please the idle ignorant and common sort, but with upright and undeceivable truth.

Robert Hill in A Direction to Die Well lists among the arguments used to comfort the dying man the following:

That this life is so full of miseries, that, in comparison thereof, death may be thought rather a remedie, then a punishment. . . .

The felicity to be found in death is also set forth by Palingenius:

Death ends all pain, all bonds doth lose, death causes feare to flie,
And daungers all by death are forste to rest eternally.
And as no griefe nor paine thee vext before thy Syre thee got,
So shalt thou feel no griefe nor paine, when death her dart hath shot.

And the text of William Perkins' *Salve for a Sicke Man* is Ecclesiastes 7:1: "The Day of death is better than the day that one is born."33

As for the occurrence of this attitude in the plays, Friar Laurence in *Romeo and Juliet* employs it to console the Capulets when Juliet is thought dead after drinking the potion. He says,

Heaven and yourself
Had part in this fair maid; now heaven hath all, And all the better is it for the maid: ... And weep ye now, seeing she is advanced Above the clouds, as high as heaven itself?

(IV,v,66-68,73-74)

A few lines further he repeats the idea by saying that Juliet is well, a euphemistic phrase usually used to refer to the dead. In *Macbeth*, for example, Ross, in his hesitation to tell Macduff the news that his wife and children have been murdered, says twice that they are well. When Cleopatra's messenger returns from Rome to inform her of Antony's activities in Act II, he reports that Antony is well. Cleopatra's first reaction is to give him gold for bringing her good news, but then she remembers that the phrase could have another meaning:

But, sirrah, mark, we use To say the dead are well: bring it to that, The gold I give thee will I melt and pour Down thy ill-uttering throat. (II,v,32-35)

Luckily for the messenger, when Cleopatra finally lets him speak his piece, he can report that Antony is very much alive. The song in *Cymbeline* sung over the supposedly
dead Imogen is about the benefits of death that comes to all alike as opposed to the evils and miseries of life:

Fear no more the heat o' the sun,
Nor the furious winter's rages;
Thou thy worldly task hast done,
Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages;
Golden lads and girls all must,
As Chimney-sweepers, come to dust. (IV,ii,258ff.)

The frown of the great, the tyrant's stroke, the necessity to clothe and eat, the lightning-flash, the thunder-stone, slander, censure—all these need be endured no more by the dead. For the dead, it is implied, enter into an existence above and beyond both the ills of man's world and those in nature. The song serves no particular dramatic purpose in the play; it exists for its own charm. It expresses most prettily in a bitter-sweet lyric vein common ideas about death.

This same notion of the desirability of death is also utilized by petulant Roderigo in Othello, who is exactly the kind of person to justify suicide with a common platitude. He says he wants to drown himself because he sees that his suit for Desdemona is hopeless.

It is silliness to live when to live is torment; and then have we a prescription to die when death is our physician. (I,iii,309-311)

We have no reason to doubt that his life is miserable and that he sees death as an escape, indeed, as a physician that would cure his ills, but that he would ever carry out suicide is most questionable. He applies the death-book lore to himself here to vindicate the very act of
of suicide the books all explicitly opposed. That the
dying Hamlet also thinks of suicide as a means to gain
happiness is seen in his words to Horatio, who is about
to drink the last bit of poison,

Absent thee from felicity awhile,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,
To tell my story. (V, ii, 358-360)

Macbeth, after he has become king and has already planned
the murder of Banquo, thinks of the dead Duncan and envies
him:

Better be with the dead
Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace,
Than on the torture of the mind to lie
In restless ecstasy. Duncan is in his grave;
After life's fitful fever he sleeps well;
Treason has done his worst: nor steel, nor poison,
Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing,
Can touch him further. (III, ii, 19-26)

Shakespeare's use here of the peace-in-death idea is
dramatically essential to the play's conflict. At this
point in the play Macbeth begins to realize that his
ambition is driving him deeper into sin than he at first
thought it would. Moreover, in his new position as king,
he finds that he has responsibilities which are not always
pleasant nor easily dealt with. And it is not only the
physical miseries of life that Duncan or any man might
escape in death; death also provides a release from the
bonds of conscience, a fact Macbeth applies directly to
himself. Macbeth can imagine most clearly the bliss to
be enjoyed in death.

As these lines from Macbeth illustrate, the Eliza-
bethans very closely associated death and sleep: in death Duncan sleeps well. Although this association, naturally related to the idea that death is desirable, was made in classical literature, is found in the Bible, and continued to be made in literature during the Restoration and the eighteenth century, it occurs so frequently that it becomes in the Elizabethan period a commonplace. For example, Samuel Daniel and Bartholomew Griffin both have a sonnet beginning "Care-charmer sleep," in each of which sleep is termed the brother of death. In Sackville's Induction to A Mirror for Magistrates the abstraction Sleep is described in terms that point up explicitly the relationship that was thought to exist between sleep and death:

By him lay heavy Sleep, the cousin of Death,  
Flat on the ground and still as any stone,  
A very corps, save yelding forth a breath;  
Small keep took he whom Fortune frowned on  
Or whom she lifted up into the trone  
Of high renown; but as a living death,  
So, dead alive, of life he drew the breath.

(Lines 231-287)

And in Donne's poem, "Woman's Constancy," sleep is said to be "death's image" (line 10). In almost every death book the association appears. Cardan makes frequent use of the identification of sleep with death, as in the following:

Seyng therfore wyth such ease men die, what should we account of death to be resembled to any thynge better than sleepe, for as in sleepe and wakyng, be we never so hedeful, yet fele we not when it commeth: even so when from lyfe we passe to wardies death; our sences declining w'out al sence, at last we dye.

And again:
If the soule doth live and after death feeleth noth-
inge, then is it lyke unto a sound sleape because therein we rest without eyther feling or understanding, and after a while retorn to the same exercyses. Moste assured it is that such sleapes are most swete as be most sounde. For those are the beste, wherein lyke unto dead menne we dreame nothings. The broken sleapes, the slomber and dreames full of visions are commonly in them that have weake and sicklye bodyes. . . .But quiet and sound slepes and such as weary men commonly have, are accompted sweetest. So Homer doth call those slepes the best, that be most like to death.

Southwell, too, uses the association:

...night and sleep are perpetuall, mirrours, figuring in their darknes silence, shutting up of sences, the finall end of our mortall bodies, & for this some have entituled sleep the eldest brother of death. . . .

And also Sutton:

Hence is it that dying they are said since Christes resurrection to fall a sleepe. They that sleepe in Jesus, saith the Apostle, they lay them downe and take their rest, and God it is that makes them dwell in everlasting safetie. We should not then feare to fall a sleepe, for sleepe is a refreshing after wearesome labors. . . .How acceptable therefore may death be, when in dying we sleepe, and in sleeping wee rest from all the travels of a bylesome life, to live in joy, to rest for ever.

Thomas Coghan in The Haven of Health supplies a history of the association:

And for this imbecillitie, for that Sleepe after a sort maketh a man senselesse, and as it were liveless, it is called in Latine Mortis image as Ovid writeth. . . .And in Seneca, in Hercule Furente, Sleepe is saide to be the sone of Astrea, that is to say of Justice, and the brother of death. . . .And the holie Scripture in sundrie places doth cal death by the name of sleepe, which is meant in respect of the resurrection: for as after sleepe we hope to wake, so after death we hope to rise again.

Another occurrence of the sleep-death relationship is found in the dedication of Perkins' Salve for a Sicke Man:
When Lazarus was dead Christ said, He is not dead but sleeppeth: hence it followeth that the Christian man can say, My grave is my bedde, my death is my sleepe: in death I die not, but only sleepe.33

In the Common Places of Peter Martyr it also appears:

Besides this there is brought in the image of sleepers, the which is common with us. When a man sleeppeth, he ceaseth from actions, he walketh not, he dooth nothing: the same being afterward awaked, returneth straitwaie to his former busines. And the similitude is allowed by a forme of speech used in the scriptures, which calleth death a sleepe: and dead men they call sleepers.40

In answer to the hypothetical question, what is death? in A Direction to Die Well, Hill provides an answer in which among other things, death is said to be an eternal sleep and also the mother of sleep.41 Later on in the book, death is termed a sweet sleep to comfort the dying man.42 Palingenius says that although sleep is beneficial to men, "better farre away / Therfore is death than Picture his" (i.e., his picture or sleep), for sleep can be disturbed, whereas death cannot.43

Shakespeare, too, often has his characters talk about death as sleep or sleep as an image or imitation of death. In Hamlet's "To be or not to be" soliloquy the identification is developed significantly: "To die: to sleep; no more; and by a sleep to say we end the heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to" (III,i,60-63). He is analyzing the formula set up in the death-books, only he carries it a step further and reverses the meaning. If death is the same as sleep, it may then be possible to dream in death, and such dreams that are dreamed may make death fearful and actually worse
than life: "For in that sleep of death what dreams may come...must give us pause" (66-68). The thoughts in the soliloquy seem themselves to proceed by association rather than logic; therefore Hamlet's mention of the sleep-death pattern may arise from an ordinary application of it, but in his thought processes it comes to be treated with a difference.

In Act V of 2 Henry IV the close connection supposed to exist between sleep and death provides an effective dramatic situation. Prince Hal stays to watch by the bedside of his dying father, who is sleeping. He soliloquizes about the crown. Suddenly he thinks he sees that the king is not breathing, and so assumes him dead:

This sleep is sound indeed; this is a sleep That from this golden rigol hath divorced So many English kings. (IV,v,35-37)

He then takes the crown he now thinks his, and leaves. When the king awakens, he is surprised and somewhat angered at what the prince has done:

Is he so hasty that he doth suppose My sleep my death? (61-62)

This incident points up the closeness of the association of these two physical phenomena of human nature. Actual confusion is dramatically probable.

There are many more brief passing references to the sleep-death identification. Oberon in A Midsummer-Night's Dream speaks of "death-counterfeiting sleep" (III, iii,364). Iachimo in Cymbeline invokes "sleep, thou ape
of death" (II,ii,31) to prevent Imogen's waking while he steals a bracelet from her wrist. Lady Macbeth chides Macbeth's reluctance to return to the scene of his murder of Duncan to leave the daggers and smear the sleeping grooms with blood; she says, as did also Palingenius, "The sleeping and the dead are but as pictures" (II,ii, 53-54). The sleep of the grooms is so like death that Macbeth is foolish to fear that they might waken. Later when Macduff arrives and discovers that Duncan is dead, he arouses the household by shouting, "Shake off this downy sleep, death's counterfeit, and look on death itself!" (II,iii,81-82) He makes the association and then purposely distinguishes death from sleep to emphasize the great tragedy of what has occurred—the murder of the king. In Romeo and Juliet Balthasar announces to his friend, the banished Romeo, that Juliet is indeed well because she is now asleep in the Capulets' monument. And still another instance is found in Prospero's speech in which he vows to abandon magic and enumerates his powers. Among them is that by which, he says, "graves at my command / Have waked their sleepers" (V,i,48-49). Thus, the dead inhabitants of graves are only thought of as sleeping. Finally, Prospero's remark that "our little life is rounded with a sleep" (IV,i,157-158), epitomizes several of the ideas about death held by the Elizabethans. Death is inevitable, life is relatively insignificant (we are such stuff as dreams are made on), and the end of life is the sleep of death.
Not only did attitudes such as the three just discussed become commonplace and platitudinous in the Elizabethan period, but so also did certain metaphors used to refer to death or life in its relation to death. Shakespeare made abundant use of three such metaphors: death the extinguishing of a lamp or candle; death the payment of a debt; and death the end of the pilgrimage or journey of life.

The first of these metaphors was often repeated in the death books. It appears in Mornay's *A Discourse of Life and Death*:

Briefely, this whole life is but a death: it is a candle lighted in our bodies: in one the winde makes it melt away, in another blowes it cleane out, many times ere it be halfe burned: in others it endureth to the ende. Howsoever it be, looke how much it shineth, so much it burneth: her shining is her burning: her light a vanishing smoke: her last fire, hir last wike, and her last drop of moisture.44

And in Palingenius:

A fiery spirit doth raine,  
Which quickneth every living thing, in world which doth remaine.  
This heate doth lively moisture feede, as flame of Candle bright,  
(When Sunne withdrawes himself from us) the Dile preserves in sight: . .  
If that this fier by much of force and moysture equall here,  
As much as heate shall seeme to neede the increase shall great appere.  
At length it makes an end and stayes, when spent is all the heate,  
Which fading, body fades: as shewes in them whose yeares are great, . . .  
For fyre is gone, and lively heate, and moysture doth decay,  
Without the which no lyfe remaines: as Lampes no longer may  
Give out their light than oyle doth serve, but dies and darknesse brings.45
The figure of the lamp or candle seems to have derived from just such physiological explanations of life as the above, for Coghan in The Haven of Health uses it in a similar passage:

Yet by that moysture which commeth of nourishment, through meate and drinks, it is preserved and prolonged, so that it is not so soone wasted and consumed as otherwise it would be. Like as in a lampe by powring in oyle moderately, the light is long kept burning, yet it goeth out at the last.

And the same usage of the metaphor also appears in Bullein's The Government of Health:

And like as lampes doe consume the oyle, which is put unto them, for the preservation of the light, although it cannot continue for ever: so is the natural heate which is within us preserved by humiditie and moystnesse of blood and fleugme. . . .

This use by the physicians of the metaphor of the lamp was refined by devotional writers and poets. In another translation by the Countess of Pembroke, "The Triumph of Death," the figure is used, but with little originality:

Quoth I, when this our light to end doth growe, Which we calle life (for thow by proofe hast tryde) Is it such payne to dye?

Reminiscent of the passage from Mornay is Shakespeare's reference in Macbeth's speech to life as a mere candle and death as the snuffing of it. Dying Clifford in Henry VI also makes use of the figure, expanding it slightly to describe metaphorically his role in life:

Here burns my candle out: ay, here it dies, Which, whiles it lasted, gave King Henry light. (II,vi,1-2)
The metaphor of the lamp appears in Antony and Cleopatra in Act IV just after Antony's death. Cleopatra makes her decision to commit suicide so as to meet him in death, and thereupon immediately regains her spirits. She then tries to cheer her attendants with the idea of suicide, as she says happily, "Our lamp is spent, it's out!" (IV,xv, 85) For her the fact is not a sad or fearful one; Shakespeare has his classical heroine see death, especially death in "high Roman fashion" (87), as noble and uplifting. This is a rather uncommon application of such a familiar Elizabethan image. Othello, as he is about to smother Desdemona, also employs the metaphor of the lamp, and in so doing revivifies the figure as it was derived from the comparison of the heat or moisture necessary to the body for life with a lamp. When he says, "Put out the light, and then put out the light" (V,ii,7), he is contrasting the light illuminating Desdemona's chamber with the light of her life or soul, which he is about to extinguish. Desdemona's light is thought of in spiritual, not physical terms. Othello goes on to expand the metaphor: "...but once put out thy light, / Thou cunning'est pattern of excelling nature, / I know not where is that Promethean heat / That can thy light relume" (10-13). Othello has not only subdued his anger here, but is fully aware of the import of the deed he is about to perform. He speaks of putting out the light that is Desdemona's life with no regret or horror at the idea, but rather as
a matter of fact. After all, he believes at this point that to murder Desdemona will be to save her from herself by preventing her from betraying more men.

Death as the required payment of a debt to God occurs frequently in both the treatises on death and in the plays. This figure, too, was apparently a commonplace. It involves the notion that man's life was lent to him for a specified time, and God exacted payment at death. It is essentially connected with the idea that life is transitory and death certain. Cardan says, for example,

Wherefore sith this exceeding desire of life helpeth not thynges, yea though life were good, yet were it better without trouble to laye by this masse of cares and lyke a thynghful man restore that thou haddest borrowed.

The metaphor also appears in Southwell thus:

Natures debt is sooner exacted of some than of other, yet is there no fault in the creditor...

And again:

Think it no injury that she is now taken from you, but a favour that she was lent you so long, and shew no unwillingness to restore God his owne, sith hitherto you have paid no usury for it... It is a due debt to a more certaine owner than our selves, and therefore so long as we have it, we receive a benefit, when we are deprived of it, we have no wrong...

Robert Hill offers as another comfort against the fear of death,

That it is best, to offer that willingly to God, as a gift, which one day wee must else surrender as a debt, to wit, this spirit and life of ours.

The figure of death as payment of a debt is implicit in the following passage from Sutton's Disce Mori:
Be they well assured, that Death like a Sargeant sent from above, upon at action of Debt, at the suite of nature her selve, will sooner or later, attache and arrest them all.

The repartee between Prince Hal and Falstaff during the battle of Shrewsbury in 1 Henry IV comes to mind as an instance of Shakespeare's use of the idea:

Prince. Why, thou owest God a death.
Falstaff. 'Tis not due yet; I would be loath to pay him before his day. (V,i,127-129)

The Prince is rather flippant in his remark to Falstaff; he says it as if he does not care to be bothered with his companion of Eastcheap tavern at this moment of crisis for the kingdom he is due to inherit. Falstaff answers in the same vein using the same figure, but thereby also asserting his characteristic love of life. Falstaff is a man who would ignore for the sake of expediency the exhortations of the treatises on death. Instead of seeking death, he would have death seek him, for he is well aware that one day it shall—but not yet. Falstaff, we feel certain, will live until he dies without meditating on the prospect of death. In 2 Henry IV Feeble, a recruit drafted by Falstaff, decides to remain in the army instead of bribing his way out of it. He gives his reasons for remaining when he says,

By my troth, I care not; a man can die but once; we owe God a death. . . . (III,ii,50-51)

His attitude toward battle is the exact opposite of that of Falstaff; he cares little for life, but a bit more for the honor of serving his prince, though he is just a common
citizen. In the fifth act of Macbeth payment of a debt again appears as Ross tells Old Siward, "Your son, my lord, has paid a soldier's debt" (V,viii,39). Hamlet's line "When he himself might his quietus make / With a bare bodkin" (III,i,76-77) suggests the metaphor of settling a debt by death, since the word "quietus" itself means the acquittance of a debt. The figure is here used to refer to suicide, and is contrary to the implications involved in it in the death treatises. In them death as payment would only be paid when the term determined by God had expired. This idea was mentioned to show men the impossibility of living indefinitely. Hamlet says, however, that man could pay his debt before the expiration of the term to escape the toils of the world, thus taking advantage of the figure to suggest the desirability of suicide, a deed the comfort books opposed.

The third metaphor, that life is a pilgrimage or journey and death is the arriving at one's home or destination, also became platitudinous with incessant repetition in the Elizabethan books on death. Thomas Becon mentions the idea more than once:

> O immortall God, how is that pleasant & joyfull journey to be wished for, which being once done & past, ther remaineth no sorrow, no care, no pensiveness.

Again:

> In this world we are all but strangers and Pilgrimes, we have here no dwelling cittie, but looke for ane other that is to come.
And again one of the characters in the dialogue quotes Saint Cyprian on death:

For except wee depart from hence, the life everlasting cannot come. Death is no departure, but a passage, to the intent that this worldly journey once overrunne, we may come into eternitie.55

Robert Hill also mentions life's pilgrimage frequently: it is folly to be unwilling to think of death since we see that "the Travailer is merrie when his journey is ended." Life is troublesome in that it is "a pilgrimage, in which is uncertainty."57 The dying man should meditate and say to his sick soul, "Now, my pilgrimage is ended, mine harvest is inned, my journey is finisht," etc.58 Says Mornay,

This life is but a Penelopes web, wherein we are always doing and undoing: . . . a weary journey through extreame heates, and coldes, over high mountaynes, steepe rockes, and theevish deserts.59

According to Estella,

In this world thou art a pilgrime; thercfore labour with might & maine to come unto the possession of the caelestial countrie. . . .

And again, in a different vein, he says,

...the rich, and great men of the world they are woondered at so long as theie are journieng in this life, but then theie come into their grave, even th'end of their journie, their glorie leaveth them.61

In the Axiochus of Plato Socrates upbraids Axiochus for his fear and cowardice:

...and lastly should moove thee that common saying, which is worn in all mens mouths; That this our life is a Pilgrimage, which when we have ended with perfect measure and stedfast travell: it behoveth us with like constancy of minde, and joyfulness of spirit, and as it were singing a merry Paeon, to enter into the purposed place of rest.62
Primaudaye in The French Academie suggests the metaphor:

> If we consider that by death we are called home from a miserable exile, to dwell in our countrey, yea in our celestiall countrey, shal we not conceive singular consolation thereby?\(^5\)

And again, more exactly, he proposes the following to combat the fear of death:

> What traveller having passed many dangerous waies, rejoiceth not when he draweth neere to his countrie?\(^6\)

There are many instances of Shakespeare's use of the commonplace of death as the end of a life's pilgrimage.

In Measure for Measure Angelo pronounces the death sentence on Claudio:

> See that Claudio
> Be executed by nine to-morrow morning:
> Bring him his confessor, let him be prepared;
> For that's the utmost of his pilgrimage. (II,i,35-36)

Correct and proper and also hypocritical Angelo would quite appropriately use just such a cant metaphor to try to gloss over a death for which he was responsible. In one of the poems written to Rosalind in As You Like It Orlando mentions the "civil sayings" he purposes to hang on the trees in the Forest of Arden, some of which will say,

> ...how brief the life of man
> Runs his erring pilgrimage. \(\text{III,ii,137-138}\)

King Richard II upon hearing of Lancaster's death utters the appropriate remark as a mere formality:

> The ripest fruit first falls, and so doth he;
> His time is spent, our pilgrimage must be. \(\text{II,ii,153-154}\)

This sentiment is ostensibly a stoical resignation that
is supposed to supplant grief. But Richard's insincerity and real lack of grief become evident in his next words, "So much for that" (155). If Richard, who is portrayed as always extreme in his emotions, had truly grieved, he would have needed many more than two lines to overcome his sorrow. In the last scene of Othello when Othello himself reveals that he still has a weapon, he assures the others that he will not harm them, but will use it on himself. He says,

Here is my journey's end, here is my butt,  
And very sea-mark of my utmost sail. (V,ii,267-268)

He has elaborated the overused figure enough so as to give it real meaning, and in this way he relieves it of much of its emptiness. Besides, his life is a perfect illustration of the pertinence of the figure. After the virtual hell he has just been forced to go through, death can surely seem to him a goal that will prove restful and comforting.

Thus it is seen that Shakespeare frequently utilized these various ways that Elizabethans generally viewed death and also the very means of speaking about it that appeared in Elizabethan writings on the subject. All kinds of characters talk about death: the heroes who concern themselves with its deeper significance in relation to the essential meaning of life, and the minor characters who more often speak about death in the usual platitudes common in the Elizabethan period. When a major character uses a platitude, he either apparently recognizes it as
such and speaks it deliberately, or he is made to apply it unusually or develop it so that it loses the quality of being a mere commonplace. Shakespeare has skillfully managed to derive dramatic effect, sometimes briefly to be sure, from Elizabethan beliefs about death.
Chapter Three
Preparation for Death

In his plays Shakespeare expresses over and over again a concern with the necessity of preparing to die a good death. For example, when Angelo in Measure for Measure sentences Claudio to death by execution, he firmly reinforces his proclamation with the words "let him be prepared" (I,i,35). Later Isabella pleads that Claudio's life be spared, giving as one of her reasons, "He's not prepared for death" (II,ii,84). In Richard III Hastings unwittingly discusses with Catesby, one of Richard's supporters, his opposition to Richard's plans to assume the throne. Catesby knows, but Hastings does not, that Richard has already decided that Hastings must be killed because of his favoring the succession of the son of Edward IV. The conversation between the two men is thus full of irony, especially when Hastings declares that he plans to do away with some of his enemies who probably would not suspect his animosity. Catesby, tongue in cheek, replies to this, "'Tis a vile thing to die, my gracious lord, / When men are unprepared and look not for it" (III, ii,64-65). In one of his epistles of love to Rosalind, Orlando in As You Like It pleads with her to condescend to look with favor upon his suit. He declares that if she deny him love, there is nothing left for him but to "study how to die" (IV,iii,63). Othello, as he is about to murder Desdemona, gives her an opportunity to prepare
to die: "If you bethink yourself of any crime / Unreconciled as yet to heaven and grace, / Solicit for it straight" (V,ii,26-28). For the Elizabethans preparation for death was far from being a vague obligation to die truly repentant for a life of sin and with faith in God's mercy and grace. On the contrary, there was a prescribed ritual to be observed in order to die well; the art of holy dying was taken quite seriously by the people of Shakespeare's age. It would then be most unnatural if characters in his plays did not speak of the need of preparing to die well and did not, when dramatically appropriate, practice the *ars moriendi*.

As has been said, the Elizabethans inherited this tradition of the art of dying from the Middle Ages. The original orthodox Roman Catholic *Tractatus Artis Bene Moriendi* was widely known; the number of editions and versions increased as the Middle Ages passed into the Renaissance. After Caxton's English translation was published in 1485, devotional writers continued to write works that followed the same general formula as the original *ars moriendi*. For example, Thomas More's *Four Last Things* is an early sixteenth-century *ars moriendi*. The original *ars* was probably intended to instruct the dying when a member of the clergy was not available. It is, therefore, practical and straightforward. Its purpose is to comfort the sick man by reminding him of God's mercy, and to save him from temptation by the devil
in his dying moment. Its method is one to be learned in time of health so that it can be faithfully followed when the hour of death is upon one. The Tractatus, the longer of two medieval versions of the ars moriendi, is divided into six parts. In the first death is praised and instructions in holy dying are given to the sick man. Passages on death are drawn together from ecclesiastical writers and turned to the use of teaching the art of dying. The dying man is particularly instructed to give up his soul to God gladly and willingly. The second part deals with the method the dying man must employ to meet the five temptations with which the devil will test him on his death bed: unbelief, despair, impatience, vainglory, and attachment to relatives and material possessions. In the third part are two sets of questions called interrogations, which, if answered correctly, will insure the salvation of the dying man. In the fourth part he is taught the rules of patterning his dying after that of Christ, and is given a number of short prayers to say to himself. The emphasis shifts in part five from the conduct of the dying man to that of his friends gathered at his bedside. And in part six are provided prayers to be said by these friends for his safe departure. Sister O'Connor calls the ars moriendi a truly medieval book "in its reliance on the Scriptures and the Fathers for much that it says; in its recognition of drama in the juxtaposition of virtues and vices and its suggestion of the debat in
handling them; in the anomaly of schematization somehow combined with flagrant weakness in organization." But especially, she says, is it medieval in its almost total lack of the spirit of controversy. It is this last point that differentiates it from many of the sixteenth-century Anglican and Puritan books written in the *ars moriendi* tradition, especially those, such as Becon's *The Sicke Mans Salve*, which are outspokenly anti-papist.

In the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, books on the art of dying were different from the original *ars* in other ways as well. Most of them omitted the interrogations, or else varied them in some way. They usually added more prayers and more scriptural passages. Scripture rather than the Fathers was relied upon as a final authority. Most of them also stressed the importance of making a will, some even giving detailed instructions for doing so. The Elizabethan works devoted space to questions of predestination, of justification by faith, of suicide, and of the validity of deathbed repentance. They combined a strong sense of sin and of the baseness of man with a certain unmedieval worldliness that permitted them to enjoy the good things of this world with God's blessing. They stressed, more than the original *ars moriendi*, the importance of Christ's sacrifice and redemption, and less the life of Christ as a pattern for that of man. In a sense, the Elizabethan books were more highly developed than the *ars moriendi* of the Middle
Ages; and they often reached a high literary level, as did the *Disce Mori* by Sutton and the *Holy Dying* by Taylor.

Nevertheless, these books generally followed the old rules quite closely. Kathrine Koller has analyzed Becon's *Sicke Mans Salve*, a distinctly Puritan treatise, into its basic divisions so as to compare it with those of the original *Ars*:

I. Epaphroditus (the dying man) complains of illness, knows his end is near and calls his friends who urge him to consider the state of his soul. (*Ars I*)

II. They discuss his sins, urge his repentance and assure him of Christ's mercy. (*Ars III*)

III. He makes a will. (*Ars IV*)

IV. He advises his wife and children. (*Ars IV*)

V. They discuss the fear of death, the temptations of this world and the final temptation to despair of God's mercy. (*Ars II*)

VI. He confesses his faith and dies, saying "Lord Jesus take my Spirite. O heavenly father I commend my spirit into thy hands." (*Ars IV*)

VII. His friends make the proper prayers and arrange for the funeral. (*Ars V and VI*)

That a Puritan writer would follow a formula that was Roman Catholic in origin can only lead to the conclusion that all men in the Elizabethan period must have strongly believed that dying well was a great necessity and the key to eternal life, if performed according to the traditional rules. Many writers came to their aid with compendious little handbooks prescribing the method whereby one could die a good death.

In general these books dealt with the same matters as that by Becon, since most of them, too, followed the rules. From them we can learn to a certain extent how approaching death appeared to a dying Elizabethan
Christian. He was concerned above all with preserving his soul from eternal death; but he must be prepared to meet the inevitable death of his body and the separation of the body and soul it involved. He must be carried through his fear of judgment, hell, and damnation, and persuaded to maintain his faith against the possible temptations of Satan, especially those of pain, fear, doubt, and despair. The dying man's friends and minister must help him recognize his sins, confess them, and ask God's forgiveness. They must demonstrate the fact that God's mercy and grace are available to the repentant and true believer. Finally the minister or the friends are to administer Communion to the sick man, hear him recite his creed, and urge him to commend his soul into the hands of God with his dying breath. Some of the books, even while stressing God's mercy, do take pains to show the sick man how weak and corrupt he is. They attempt also to bring the dying man to regard the world with contempt, as a prison from which death will free him. He must be led to see that the ties with wife and children must be broken since they are a strong temptation to worldliness. He should be shown examples of the deaths of apostles and martyrs, and especially the example of Christ's death, so that his own faith will be strengthened. The joys of heaven which are promised him if he retains his faith in God's mercy are also to be demonstrated. To prevent the dying man from fulling back at the last
moment, prayers are recited and comforting passages of Scripture read.  

That such books were widely read can be illustrated by Langston's statement that there were recorded before 1600 twenty-six titles of treatises on the art of dying, and these were published in at least fifty editions. Becon's *The Sicke Mans Salve* was the most popular of this author's many devotional books. First published in 1561, it went through ten editions by 1600; by 1632 the number had increased to seventeen. It is probable that it was the preoccupation of almost every individual Elizabethan to die a good death that accounted for the popularity of such a book as Becon's. Christopher Sutton in *Disce Mori* provides a concise statement of this preoccupation:

To learne to Die, is a lesson worthie our best, and best disposed attention, being a speciall preparative unto a happie ende, wherein consisteth the welfare of all our being.  

Perkins is more insistent on the necessity of preparing for death: "...if death take him unprepared, eternall damnation followes without recoverie." Shakespeare, when his characters speak of preparing to die, only reiterates a commonplace of his age.

The characters in *Measure for Measure* exhibit more concern on the whole for the necessity of preparation for death than do those of any other play. Isabella and the Duke, in particular, try to make certain that Claudio will die well. Angelo also mentions that Claudio must be prepared. The Duke tries to prepare the lethargic
and indifferent Barnardine, but is rebuffed in the attempt. In scene one of Act III occurs the most detailed account of the formal ritual of preparation for death in Shakespeare. When Angelo orders Claudio, an ordinary and somewhat weak and fearful man, to be prepared for death, the Duke, disguised as a friar, undertakes the task. This passage constitutes, so to speak, the first part of the *ars moriendi* ritual: "To make the sick desirous of death."  

The preparation here consists primarily of convincing Claudio that since life is miserable in various ways, death can only be a change for the better; Claudio is exhorted to welcome death, not to fear it. The entire passage is a poetic reinterpretation and re-expression parallel in meaning to the central purpose of the following from Sutton:

> To drawe back when we are to goe most comfortably to take possession of the same, where the hope so long hoped for should most strengthen us in the way, is far from that Christian belief where of we make dayly profession. Often have we praid *Thy kingdom come*. Nowe when God is leading us into the same, our unwillingnesse to be gone cannot but argue great weakness of faith. . . . Oftentimes have we wished, that we were once freede from this worldes captivitie:nowe God is going about to free us, indeede our desire is to continue our captivitie still. . . . There is no Marriner but after many sharp stormes desireth the haven: and shall not we after so many tempests of the troublesome world, accept of our deliverance, when the time is come? We are given to love the world too much, and a great deale mor^4_ than we should, being only strangers in the same.

The Duke's speech exhibits many of the familiar attitudes and metaphors of the death books. The speech is basically *de contemptu mundi*, with the emphasis shifted in some
cases to the joys of death instead of being concentrated on the horrors of life and existence in the world. This change of tone is also characteristic of the *ars moriendi* treatises, in their tendency to comfort rather than terrify. Whereas *The Droome of Doomes Day* dwells on the vanity of man, especially as he seeks pleasure and wealth in the world, and the horrors of a sinful death, Sutton's *Disce Mori* constantly stresses the need for and the possibility of sincere repentance, and faith in God, Christ, and the bliss to be achieved by salvation of the soul despite death of the body. *Contemptu mundi* is never ignored by the Elizabethan *ars moriendi* writers, but the strong medieval ascetic tone of this general attitude is lacking in their works.

What is significant about the Duke's speech is that despite its general adherence to the pattern of the *ars moriendi* as handled by the Elizabethans, it fails to include any specifically Christian or religious statements. In this respect this preparation differs greatly from the death books, the purpose of which was always religious. Claudio is only asked to realize that death is in itself a release from a miserable world, and is not to be feared. Religious overtones are present in the speech, however, and it is likely, since the sentiments expressed were commonplace in the many books on death and were always associated elsewhere with religious beliefs, that the Elizabethans would have taken the implications
for granted and would not have missed explicit phrasing in religious terms.

The Duke begins by telling Claudio, "Be absolute for death; either death or life / Shall thereby be the sweeter." (III,i,5-6) This statement of the purpose of Claudio's preparation includes in two lines both the over-all tone and attitude of the following passage from Disce Mori:

The enemie that is often looked for, doth least hurt when he makes his assault. If this Basilisk Death, first see us before we it, there is some danger: but if we first descrie the Basiliske, then the serpent dieth, we neede not feare. . . .He that leaveth the world before the world leaves him, thinketh of the day of his dissolution: as the Sick man hearkeneth to the clocke, shall give Death the hand: like a welcome messenger, and with Simeon pray to depart in peace. . . .

The lines opening the Duke's speech also involve indirectly the idea of death's inevitability. Since death is certain to overtake Claudio at some future date, even if a reprieve might save him now, he will be in a better position to face it with courage (and faith) if he learns now to resign himself to this certainty. Moreover, he must not accept death passively, but with determination and fortitude. Life will be the sweeter if it should happen that he does not die at this particular time, because he will not fear, if prepared, the unforeseen death that will shorten it. All these ideas implicit in the Duke's first command to Claudio are also made explicit early in Hill's A Direction to Die Well in question and answer form:

Quest. And why ought you first to thinke often times of death?
Ans. 1. Because it is appointed that all must die. . . .
4. Death thus will be more welcome unto me; for dangers foreseen, are less grievous.
5. I shall more easily contemne this world, by often thinking that I am a stranger in it. . . .
9. As the day of death leaves me; so the day of judgement shall find me. . . .
12. It is the Art of all arts, and Science of all Sciences, to learn to die.

The Duke then apostrophizes life—he advises Claudio to view life (in the abstract) critically, and goes on to tell him why and how life is subject to criticism and censure. Addressing life, for Claudio's benefit, he says, "If I do lose thee, I do lose a thing / That none but fools would keep" (7-8). The rest of the passage elaborates and illustrates this general statement. First, life is a breath, "Servile to all the skyey influences, / That dost this habitation, where thou keep'st, / Hourly afflict. . . ." (8-11) Becon says similarly in The Sicke Mans Salve, "For what is our lyfe. It is even a vapore that appeareth for a lyttle time, and then vanisheth away, away, as Job saith." Next, life is "death's fool" (much as it was "time's fool" in 1 Henry IV) because of the irony that the harder we labor to flee death, the closer we approach it. This point is also brought out in the *ars moriendi* treatises, as in Becon: "So son as we be borne, so sone beginne we to dye." And Sutton in *Disce Mori* says, "That which we call life is a kind of death, because it makes us to die," but unlike the Duke, he goes on to complete his thought: "But that which we count death, is in the varie sequele a very life: for that
indeede it makes us to live." Sutton again expresses the same thought:

All our life long have we lived in a departure & farewel from the worlde; since our very first entraunce, wee were ever drawing towards our ende, our pilgrimage is almost over.

The idea also appears in *The Droome of Doomes Day*, not an *ars moriendi* book, but Gascoigne's translation of *De Contemptu Mundi*, thus:

Then we dye alwaies, as long as we lyve, I then (at length) we leave dying, when we leave to lyve any longer. Therefore it is better to dye unto lyfe, then to lyve unto death. . . .

Even though the Duke's next words about life are medieval in tone, this same attitude was voiced by Elizabethan authors. Becon again offers a parallel: "We are all now flesh, earth, dust, I ashes. . . ." The Duke says that life cannot be noble, for all its endeavors "are nursed by baseness" (15), thereby proclaiming by implication not only the dust and clay of which man is made, but also original sin by which all are hopelessly contaminated. The death treatises never let their readers forget the sin of Adam and its descent to all Adam's posterity; this, again, is a characteristic of the *contemptu mundi* attitude. In the next lines the Duke accuses life (or man) of cowardice because of fear of "the soft and tender fork / Of a poor worm" (16-17). Here Shakespeare, through the Duke, plays upon the common preoccupation of his age with death of the body providing food for worms. He transforms the concept so as to make fear or horror of
it seem ridiculous. Who could possibly be repulsed or frightened by a "soft and tender fork"? The idea is similar, but again lacks the specific religious application, to the subject of the following passage in Perkins, who answers the objection that after death men's bodies "must lie in dark and loathsome graves, and there be wasted and consumed by worms":

We must not judge of our graves, as they appear to the bodily eye, but we must looke upon them by the eye of faith, & consider them as they are altered & changed by the death and burial of Christ. . . . And by this means Christ in his own death hath buried our death, & by the vertue of his buriall, as with sweet incense, hath sweetned & perfumed our graves, & made them. . .beddes of most sweet and happie rest, farre more excellent then beddes of downe. And though the body rott in the grave, or be eaten of worms, . . .yet that will not be unto us a matter of discomfort, if we doe well consider the ground of all grace, namely our conjunction with Christ.25

The enumeration of the reasons why Claudio ought to eschew life and welcome death continues. The next point involves the commonplace association of sleep and death. Its appearance in an ars moriendi passage such as this one is almost inevitable. Sleep is welcome in the natural course of life; it is "the best of rest" (17). Then why fear death, which is no more than sleep? Perkins expresses the same association quite similarly:

And therefore also death in the old & new Testament is made but a sleepe, and the grave a bed, whereof the like was never seene; wherein a man may rest, nothing at all troubled with dreames or fantasies, and whence he shall rise no more subject to weaknesse or sickness, but presently be translated to eternall glory.

The reason that follows repeats explicitly the general
The metaphor is heightened and expanded in the Duke's words, however, so that it is more vivid, and would, we can imagine, have more effect on Claudio: "Thou art not thyself; / For thou exist'st on many a thousand grains / That issue out of dust" (19-21). He bridges the gap, so to speak, between man as he seems to himself and what seems to him to be a grossly improbable comparison, dust. A metaphor, taken from the Bible to be sure, and one that probably meant little to most men because of the disparity of the comparison, is here made more reasonable in the words "many a thousand grains," a simple but effective phrase. Still in the *contemptu mundi* vein, the Duke goes on to characterize life as a continual striving for the unattainable. Although this striving could be construed here as spiritual, it more likely meant to the Elizabethans the ambitious desire for wealth and glory that engenders an insatiable covetousness. And, of course, ambition is of absolutely no benefit to man at death when all men are equal regardless of their material achievements in life. The next point the Duke makes is that life is as variable as the constantly changing moon (23-25). He uses it to indicate again the state of calm and rest that exists in death after a life of troubles. He develops this fusion of two thoughts with a new figure in the next lines:

If thou art rich, thou 'rt poor;
For, like an ass whose back with ingots bows,
Thou bear' st thy heavy riches but a journey,
And death unloads thee. (25-28)
A passage from *The Droome of Doomes Day* points up these same thoughts less figuratively:

Be not a feard when thou seest a man made ritche, nor when the glory of his house is multiplyed. For when he dyeth, he shall cary none of them with him.

But Shakespeare adds to this notion of the vanity of worldly interests several more widely prevalent ideas. Man bears the miseries of life as a burden (compare Hamlet's words, "who would fardels bear, / To grunt and sweat under a weary life" [III,i,76-77]). Here, however, the riches that avail nothing make up the burden, thereby making them part of life's ordinary miseries. Sutton uses the figure of the burden of life and also suggests the same association of it with the journey of life that Shakespeare uses here: "Now therefore though the burden bee heavie, yet a lightsomnesse it is, to remember, the way is not long." And the end of the way is death at which, when reached, the burden is unloaded from man's back. The effect of these lines is again to remove the tone of outrage usually employed by contemptu mundi works when chastising men for accumulating wealth that passes from them at death, for by fusing this idea with death as a hard journey's end and the relieving man of the burden of a miserable life, death is made less fearful and more to be wished for.

The Duke goes on to de-emphasize for Claudio the felicity to be found in life and worldly possessions.
Man has no friends nor do his children love him; they wait only for his death and wish every disease to bring it. Moreover, life is short, and old age is quickly upon one; the diseases and decay of old age make the enjoyment of riches then impossible. The briefness of life was also a common idea in the death books, as in Hill, for example: "Our life is a point, & lesse than a point: a figure of one, to which we can add no Cipher; it is but a moment. . . ." The contemptu mundi point of view of these lines can also be seen in Hill. In answer to the question, "Why then do so few thinke of death, and put this evill day far from them," Hill gives as reasons,

4. Their ambition, in desiring the honors and preferments of this world, and being loth to leave them when they have enjoyed them.
5. Their covetousness, by which as Moles they would ever, by their good wille, live upon earth.
6. Their delight in the pleasures of sinne, from which they are taken at the day of death.

And so, the Duke concludes, "What's yet in this / That bears the name of life?" There is no reason to fear death when we see that in this life are hidden a thousand deaths. Claudio declares himself prepared to die and paraphrases this last statement made by the Duke.

Claudio does not long remain resigned to death. The Duke finds it necessary to intervene after Claudio has spoken to Isabella. He admonishes Claudio that despite the alternatives of which Isabella has told him, Angelo is not likely to reprieve him for any reason. Claudio
must re-prepare himself for death; says the Duke, "Go to your knees and make ready" (172). Claudio hardly needs to make the effort because his sudden remorse at what he has demanded of Isabella has had the effect of making him wish for death again, this time perhaps more sincerely.

There is another preparation for death in Measure for Measure, or at least an attempt at one. Again the Duke as the friar is the administrant; Barnardine is the man about to die, also by execution. He affords an interesting contrast to Claudio, for Claudio both requires and accepts the Duke's assistance in preparing for death, whereas Barnardine completely disdains the Duke's efforts at preparation. The provost describes Barnardine as follows:

A man that apprehends death no more dreadfully but as a drunken sleep; careless, reckless, and fearless of what's past, present, or to come; insensible of mortality, and desperately mortal. (IV, ii, 150-152)

He is, then, the very opposite of the fearful Claudio; he is indifferent to death. It is implied that his attitude is the more unusual of the two: how strange that a man about to die would not care to take the precaution that his soul might gain immortality. One wonders if perhaps Shakespeare might not here be satirizing slightly the Elizabethan excessive concern with death and proper ritualistic preparation for it.

Barnardine himself appears in scene three, and we see that he is indeed "insensible of mortality." Pompey and Abhorson have managed to wake him from a drunken
sleep so that he might be readied for execution. Abhorson tells him that he had better begin to pray since the warrant for his death has come. In response, Barnardine does not deny the efficacy of preparation, but instead declares that because he has been drinking all night he is not fitted to begin his penitent preparation now. He says that this is not the proper time for him to die because he has not been in an appropriate attitude to be prepared for it. When the Duke enters to comfort him and teach him the art of holy dying, he says,

Friar, not I: I have been drinking hard all night, and I will have more time to prepare me, or they shall beat out my brains with billets: I will not consent to die this day, that's certain. (IV,iii,56-58)

Even though this is a case of execution, Barnardine is in a way defying not only the often reiterated commonplace that death is certain and inevitable, but the corollary as well, that a man is powerless to say when the day of his death will arrive. Becon says, for example,

The continuance of our life is not certain, so much as one hour, neither is any man able to saye: I shall live till tomorrow. For albeit, nothing is more certaine then death: yet is nothing more uncertain then the hour of death. 9

The Duke tries to bring Barnardine to the correct attitude, by telling him in the familiar phrase, "Look forward on the journey you shall go" (61). Death, not life, is the journey here, but the figure is common also in this sense. (Compare Kent's statement in King Lear, "I have a journey, sir, shortly to go."[V,iii,321]) Estella in his de
contemptu mundi work uses it: "He which is to goe a journie [i.e. death] were better goe betime."

And Becon also:

O immortall God, how is that pleasant & joyfull journey to be wished for, which being once done & past, ther remaineth no sorrow, no care, no pensive-
ness.

That the phrase is so platitudinous insures its total lack of effect on Barnardine; it has no true emotional force behind it to stir his naturally lethargic sensibilities. Barnardine is adamant; he rejects the Duke's efforts, saying, "I swear I will not die to-day for any man's persuasion" (62). He overrides completely the Duke's entreaties, and leaves. The total result is to make the Duke, as the pious friar, appear ridiculous and wholly ineffectual in the face of this defiant ruffian. And surprisingly Barnardine's refusal to be prepared for death, indeed his refusal to die, is at least temporarily successful. The Duke is of two minds about him: he first in anger orders him brought to the block, and then to the provost he despairs that Barnardine must die in his state of unpreparedness. It is "damnable," he says, to transport him thus (73). The Elizabethan belief in the necessity of correct and formal preparation for death is strongly reflected in the Duke's attitude. He actually sees his failure to teach Barnardine how to die as a kind of sin, and he declares with greater determination that he is going to try again to "persuade this rude wretch
willingly to die" (85). Perhaps Barnardine represents a challenge to this lively and ambitious Duke, but it is more probable that the motive behind his keen desire to prepare Barnardine for death would be understood by the Elizabethans as a sincere feeling that every man must have the opportunity to repent his sins before death and to receive the ministrations of a priest so that he may be comforted in his fear of death and aided in dying with faith in God's mercy. Dramatically speaking, this incident is not organic in the plot of the play; Barnardine's indifference, however, does serve to point up Claudio's fear, and in so doing, the dilemma he faces in the alternatives. And Shakespeare may be incidentally satirizing excessive concern with the ritual of holy dying in Barnardine's almost comic apathy.

The dramatic possibilities of preparation for death are much more fully exploited in Othello, when Othello is about to murder Desdemona. In this most important episode in the play there is a curious combination of the Christian and un-Christian. The act of murder itself is blatantly unreligious, even anti-religious. But because of the stature built up throughout the play of Othello as a tragic hero, it is possible for him to endow the murder with a certain aura of sanctity. He regards Desdemona with tenderness, almost pitying her for necessitating his having to kill her. He even says, "This sorrow's heavenly; / It strikes where it doth love" (V,ii,21-22).
In a sense, Othello sees himself as the instrument of divine Justice, whose edict commands him to punish her for her misdeed. But it is Othello's insistence that Desdemona prepare to die, that lends as much as anything else to the Christianizing of his deeds. Othello is to be responsible for her physical death, and at the same time he feels compelled to save her from spiritual death. His preparation is not that of assuring the dying person of the comforts of death, but of the actual disposition of the body and soul before the moment of death. He, who is to be the agent of her death, is acting the role of the minister and friends of the dying man in the treatises on how to die. It is his use of ars moriendi phrases to her that gives Desdemona the first hint of his intent. The first thing he says to her when she wakes, ignoring the question she asks him, is, "Have you pray'd to-night, Desdemona?" (25) She answers yes, not yet suspecting why he asked her. He continues in the same vein: "If you bethink yourself of any crime / Unreconciled as yet to heaven and grace, / Solicit for it straight. (26-28). When Desdemona shows alarm at these words, he commands her to do as he says with no explanation except, "I would not kill thy unprepared spirit; / No; heaven forfend! I would not kill thy soul" (31-32). Desdemona's virtually automatic response, one probably any Elizabethan would give if he were placed in a similar highly tense and suddenly terrifying situation, is, "Then heaven / Have
mercy on me!" (33-34) Othello replies with "Amen..." again in his role as deathbed minister. He goes on to warn Desdemona against perjury on her deathbed, so that her soul will not be damned at the last minute; he again demands that she confess her sins. She begs God for mercy and Othello repeats his "amen." Desdemona pleads for her life by trying to explain her innocence; her dismay when Othello tells her Cassio is dead is misinterpreted, and Othello becomes more determined to kill her. Now it is she who asks for time to pray, and he refuses by saying, "It is too late" (84). His fury overcomes all his "Christian" considerations, and all that matters at this moment is that she die.

Even in the emotional intensity of this scene, the actual ritual of preparing to die is closely followed. According to William Perkins' *Salve for a Sicke Man*, the disposition is

nothing els but a religious and holy behaviour specially towards God, when we are in or nere the agony & pang of death. There are three duties in this behavior. The first is, to die in or by faith. To die by faith is, when a man in the time of death, doth with all his heart rely himselfe wholly on Gods speciall love & favour & mercy in Christ, as it is revealed in the word. . . .Begin now at length to lay aside the great overweening which thou hast of thine owne righteousnesse, acknowledge the hand of God upon thee for thy sinnes, confesse them unto him giving him the glory, pray for the pardon of them and end thy daies."

This passage states the requisite confession of sins concerning which Othello first advises Desdemona. And it implies the necessity of such a protestation of faith
as Desdemona's, "Heaven have mercy on me." Perkins goes on to the second duty, which is to die in obedience:

Now to die in obedience is, when a man is willing and ready and desirous to goe out of this world whensoever God shall call him, and that without murmuring or repining, at what time, where, and when it shall please God. . . .

This duty is not readily apparent in Desdemona's preparation for death. It is probably dramatically unfeasible in this particular scene. On the other hand, Desdemona is obedient for the most part, and when she asks only to pray, one feels that she is resigned to die despite her previous protestations of innocence; besides, she is helpless before Othello's rage. The third duty is that of rendering the soul into God's hands, in the words of Christ on the cross: "Father, into thine handes I commend my spirit." Othello does not give Desdemona the opportunity to say these words. But when she momentarily comes back to life, her very last utterance is a peculiar echo of the proper phrase to be said by a dying person: "Commend me to my kind lord: O, farewell!" (125) Her "lord" is not the Christian "God" but her husband, to whom she is dutiful, faithful, and loving until her death—the very death he causes. This paraphrase of a sentence the Elizabethans knew to be the appropriate last words of the dying heightens the tragedy of Desdemona's death. She deifies Othello by commending herself to him instead of to God. Her faith in Othello might parallel the faith of a Christian in a God whom he knows to be most cruel, but
who is believed to be merciful to a repentant sinner.

Christopher Sutton also provides directions for the disposing of the sick unto a Christian end, similar to those of Perkins:

Care is taken that the sick
First: 1. Now make a most sincere and humble confession of all his sinnes.
2. That he bee content with all his hart either to live or die, as it shall seeme good to God his divine pleasure.
3. That hee bee resolved to make a heartie reconcilation with the world, desiring forgivenes, and forgiving all offences whatsoever amongst men.
4. That he take in good part this visitation sent unto him, to prepare him to die. . .Gods servant.
5. That he wholie commend him to God his mercie. . . .

And there are many more rules, some of which are,

The demands may be proposed to the sick:
. . .Whether he be sorie for his sinnes, & aske God forgiveness. . . .
He may be requested. . . .
To mention the words of Christ upon the Crosse: Lorde into thy handes I commit my spirit.

Sutton also speaks generally about the last moments before death:

When wee approach towards the period of our course, what else remaineth, but a heartie commending our soules to God, and a comfortable expectation of a better life to come, when weaknes of humane nature doth not afforde habilitie to manifest our soules affections, God shall accept at our hands the sending upp of our sighes and desires to heaven, in these last extremities incident unto the state of man we may flie unto prayer, as unto a Cittie of refuge.

Desdemona's preparation then was the prescribed one, and therefore the impact of her death is the more forceful and tragic. She dies innocent and her noble murderer enhances this innocence for us by insisting that she confess her sins and give herself up to the mercy of God.
Again we see that Shakespeare is not explicitly Christian in his references to death, even though the tone is definitely religious. This fact probably testifies to the catholicity of the practice of death among the Elizabethans. The Christian basis of the ritual was assumed.

In *Henry V* Falstaff's death is not seen but is reported by the Hostess, who describes the old knight's last moments. According to Kathrine Koller, Shakespeare in this passage is satirizing the deathbed ritual through the Hostess's unconscious bungling of the formal procedure. She tries in her inept way to make Falstaff's death conform to the rules for holy dying. The satire results from the contrast of this supposed piety with Falstaff's debauched, sinful life. The Hostess declares that she is certain that Sir John is not in hell, but in Arthur's bosom, "if ever man went to Arthur's bosom" (II,iii,10). She probably means Abraham, not Arthur, but, of course, it is true that no man ever did go to Arthur's bosom. Therefore, the destination of Falstaff's soul is still highly questionable. In any case, she goes on to say that he made a fine end. As long as she is reporting the event, she is going to have him die well, since, as the death books all asserted, a man's death was his most important moment. The treatises on the art of dying recommended that psalms be read to the sick man to ease his pain or fear and encourage his meditation on God's mercy.
It is quite appropriate, then, that the Hostess should hear Falstaff babble of green fields as if he were repeating the Twenty-third Psalm. She describes her attempts to comfort him as any good friend at the bedside of a dying man ought. Her comforts, however, are conspicuously different in both tone and content from those of the death books. The authors of the *ars moriendi* treatises exhorted the sick man to think of death constantly and to look upon it as a welcome release from life. They try to encourage resignation to inevitable death. The Hostess does the opposite:

'How now, Sir John!' quoth I: 'what, man! be o' good cheer.' So a' cried out, 'God, God, God!' three or four times. Now I, to comfort him, bid him a' should not think of God; I hoped there was no need to trouble himself with any such thoughts yet. (18-24)

The sick man, according to the books on death, was supposed above all to trouble himself with God, think on Christ's death, and at the end commend his soul to God. If Falstaff's repeating of "God, God, God!" represented his attempt at this commendation, the Hostess was grossly in error in her so-called comforting statement. She may know instinctively the importance of a good death, but she confuses the rules. It is reported that Falstaff also cried out about sack and women, his two greatest vices. Indeed, the Boy says of him, "A' said once, the devil would have him about women" (38). Sir John seems here to have been clearly conscious of past sins and
desirous of some sort of repentance, even if a rather frantic one. In their report the Hostess and the Boy are not necessarily making Falstaff's death proceed according to the rules; they may be repeating exactly what happened. Falstaff may himself have actually been trying to die well, but most of the *ars moriendi* authors would not have given validity to such a repentance as Falstaff attempts. These authors believed that a deathbed repentance was usually not sufficient insurance to die well and attain salvation. They advise their readers that they must live well to die well. Sutton, for example, says that repentance must be made before death because,

> It is the generall practise of Sathan, to promise careless sinners time enough: as racking usurers are woont to give day to yong heires from time to time, until at last they wind their inheritance from them. 

Consequently, if these phrases attributed to Falstaff constitute a repentance, the value of it is doubtful. Falstaff's vision of the flea on Bardolph's nose as a "black soul burning in hell-fire" (43), says Miss Koller, may represent the devil's temptation to despair of the traditional *ars moriendi*. In any case, Falstaff experienced the usual fears of damnation of a dying man. The total picture of Falstaff's death as described by the Hostess is his struggle between heaven and hell, a vivid one for the Elizabethans, for Falstaff was the wicked man apparently trying to make amends with God for his past sins. It is interesting to speculate about the outcome of that struggle.
But then this question of whether a good death signifies salvation and a bad death damnation was not settled among the devotional writers. William Perkins says that the manner of death does not necessarily indicate the ultimate fate of a man's soul:

The common opinion is, that if a man lie quietly and goe away like a lambe (which in some diseases, as consumptions and such like, any man may doe) then he goes straight to heaven: but if the violence of the disease stirre up impatience, & cause in the party frantick behaviours, then men use to say, there is a judgement of God serving either to discover an hypocrite, or to plague a wicked man. But the truth is otherwise. For indeed a man may die like a lambe, and yet go to hell: and one dying in exceeding torments and strange behaviours of the body, may go to heaven. And by the outward condition of any man, either in life or death, we are not to judge of his estate before God.

Robert Hill takes the contrary point of view:

Quest. Yet you cannot deny, but many bad men have made a faire shew at the houre of death, have called upon God, and died like lambes?
Answ. Like lambes? why the most of them die like stones: they have lived a senselesse life, and so they die. . . .

Quest. And you know also, that many persons, who have lived a very strict life, have died in despaire, and blaspheming of God.
Answ. By the gates of hell they went into heaven: by the extreamitie of their disease they might speake they knew not what: and by the sense of Gods judgements they might say, My God why hast thou forsaken me? But knowe this, that he never dies ill, who hath lived well; and hee seldome dies well, who hath lived ill: We must judge men by their life, and not judge anie by their death.

Because this difference of opinion might seem to undermine the supposed efficacy of the *ars moriendi*, Shakespeare can good-naturedly point out in Falstaff's death the contradictions it could so easily involve.
Shakespeare has here made use of the *ars moriendi* ritual for comic effect, which is produced by the incongruity of Falstaff's dying according to the rules for holy dying combined with the Hostess's confused attempt to attribute the conventional piety and penitence to him. The satire against this ritual which would be known to every man in Shakespeare's audience is gentle; Shakespeare shows how it can be misused, but at the same time he is giving a typical and masterful final flourish to his greatest comic character.

Such a preoccupation with preparation for death would entail the possibility of dire consequences if preparation were neglected. In the scene in 2 Henry VI in which Cardinal Beaufort dies, Shakespeare reflects the viewpoint that a bad death can be the only result of a bad life. The King says,

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Ah, what a sign it is of evil life,
Where death's approach is seen so terrible!  
(III,iii,5-6)
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Obviously, the Cardinal has made no attempt to die well. He repents of no sins, but in his delirium only tries to justify his crimes, nor does he profess any faith in the grace of God. His death is violent in that he envisions an apparition of death coming to lead him away; he imagines himself being tortured for his murder of the Duke of Gloucester, and actually sees the decayed corpse itself. Warwick says of him, "See, how the pangs of death do make him grin!" (24) The gentle King tries his
best to make Beaufort's death more peaceful. He assumes the role of the minister at the bedside of the dying man, and prays for Beaufort's soul:

O thou eternal Mover of the heavens, 
Look with a gentle eye upon this wretch! 
O, beat away the busy meddling fiend 
That lays strong siege upon this wretch's soul 
And from his bosom purge this black despair! (19-23)

This prayer is in the familiar phrases of the death books: the King is trying to rescue Beaufort from the temptations of the devil, which were thought to be more intense just before death, and the worst of which was that of despair. After he speaks the prayer, King Henry continues his efforts to save the Cardinal's soul. He asks Beaufort to give a sign by holding up his hand if he has faith in the bliss that is in heaven. But, "He dies, and makes no sign" (29). The King then declares to those present at the Cardinal's bedside that Beaufort should be taken as an example of the results of a bad life and unprepared-for death, an example upon which all ought to meditate (31-33).

In Hamlet there are two cases in which lack of preparation is important in the central action of the play. The first appears in the figure of the ghost of Hamlet's father. One of the reasons he asks Hamlet to avenge his murder is that he is forced to wander in what seems to be Purgatory because of his dying without the proper deathbed ritual. He says that he was "at once dispatch'd":
Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,
Unhousel'd, disappointed, unaneled,
No reckoning made, but sent to my account
With all my imperfections on my head. (I,v,75-79)

Even though there are specific references to Roman Catholic ritual here, the belief that a man should be allowed to settle his account with God and the world before his death was equally important to the Anglicans and Puritans. In fact, Sutton, an Anglican, does feel that there is comfort and benefit in partaking of the Eucharist. Whether his unpreparedness had sent him to Purgatory or Hell, the Elizabethans when they had heard the Ghost's story would have felt with Hamlet, "O, horrible! O horrible! most horrible!" (80) That Hamlet's father was punished for his not being able to die a holy death causes Hamlet's hesitation to kill his uncle at prayers. In this case, Hamlet wants to make certain that wicked Claudius must also be punished after death, and so does not want him in the least prepared to die well when he at last can successfully carry out his revenge. If Hamlet were to kill Claudius at prayer, he would have sent his soul directly to heaven, thus making the revenge unsatisfactory and incomplete. Hamlet says,

He took my father grossly, full of bread;
With all his crimes broad blown, as flush as May;
And how his audit stands who knows save heaven?
But in our circumstance and course of thought,
'Tis heavy with him: and am I then revenged,
To take him in the purging of his soul,
When he is fit and season'd for his passage?
No! (III,iii,80-87)

Of course, there is irony in the situation because we
know that Claudius is finding prayer impossible for his guilty conscience. The usual care taken that a man about to die be properly prepared Shakespeare reverses in this play. Instead of its being important that preparation take place, it is more important for Hamlet that there be no trace of preparation in Claudius's case. This fact emphasizes the tradition of the revenge tragedy that is so prominent in Hamlet. Hamlet is not overly contemplative, but is the practical revenger who wants to make sure that his revenge be as complete as possible.

There is then a distinct correlation between the many *ars moriendi* treatises published during the Elizabethan period and the often repeated concern with preparation for death in Shakespeare's plays. That every Elizabethan shared this concern can almost certainly be said, and clearly it would be strange if Shakespeare's characters ignored this familiar idea. Shakespeare shows a ready acquaintance with the rules as set forth in the treatises. Nevertheless, he saw the ridiculousness of an obsession with the formal ritual, for he used it in comic as well as serious situations. In all cases where Shakespeare elaborates the *ars moriendi* motif, he achieves a dramatic effect that adds to the understanding of the play's conflict and to our general enjoyment of the play.
Chapter Four
Life After Death

In her well-known book, *Shakespeare's Imagery*, Caroline Spurgeon concludes after surveying the imagery used to describe death in the plays that Shakespeare generally regards death as follows:

> It is the key that unlocks the shackles of trouble and disease by which we are held fast in this world, that shuts up and makes an end of the day; but it is never the key that unlocks the door of a new life.

For the most part, what Miss Spurgeon says is true. Death is usually accepted with resignation rather than looked upon with hope. In this respect Shakespeare reflects the stoicism set forth by such authors as Cardan, Mornay, Southwell, and Du Vair in their books of consolation and comfort. Yet, since we have seen that Shakespeare's characters are keenly aware of the need to prepare to die holily, one might suppose that the reason for this preparation was the usual desire to gain eternal life for the soul and avoid damnation. It has already been noted, however, that Shakespeare does not always use explicit Christian terminology. This characteristic may be due not to a particular indifference to Christianity, but instead to a taking for granted of the basic Christian beliefs and doctrines, so that specific mention is unnecessary for clarity. The Elizabethan audience probably found nothing in Shakespeare's plays that would lead them to think him un-Christian. Besides, in regard
to life after death, there are enough specific references to heaven and its joys to indicate that Shakespeare did not willfully ignore the concept of salvation. At least, he realized that it was natural for his characters to mention it. Nevertheless, there are more instances in the plays of Shakespeare's use of common ideas about hell. The terrors of hell were frighteningly real to the Elizabethans, who were nurtured on devotional books and sermons in the contemptu mundi spirit. These terrors seem to have appeared more immediate to most people than did the remotely gorgeous and idyllic streets of heaven. Just as the religious writers hoped to steer men from sin by elaborating the tortures of hell, so could the dramatist arouse more thrilling emotions by vividly dramatizing hell in similar terms. Hell had actually appeared on the medieval stage, but perhaps in later drama the traditional stage hell was enhanced in its horror by the magic of words and verbal imagery. Related to this tendency to emphasize hell more than heaven, is Shakespeare's repeated reference to decay of the body after death. He is as concerned with what happens to the palpable remnants of what was man as with the fate of the soul. Moreover, that more attention is paid to both hell and physical decay of the dead than to heaven, illustrates Shakespeare's probable desire to arouse something akin to fear in his audience by the use of a certain amount of
sensationalism. Nevertheless, when Shakespeare takes pains to describe either hell or physical decay, the presentation of these elements is dramatically appropriate.

The decay of the dead body was one reason why death was so frightening to the Elizabethans. When burying space in Elizabethan cemeteries became scarce, old graves were dug up and the remains of the corpses deposited in charnel houses. As a result of this practice, most people had probably seen at some time in their lives a half-decayed corpse; they knew from actual observation that worms did eat the bodies of men in the graves. There are many references to these worms and other horrors of the grave both in Shakespeare and in the Elizabethan treatises on death. One would expect to find the subject treated extensively in *The Droome of Doomes Day*:

> And when man dyeth, he shall enherite, beasts cattell, Serpents, and wormes. For all those shall rest in dust, and wormes shall consume them. The worme shall eate them lyke a garment, and shall consume them as a moth consumeth wollen cloth.

Diego de Estella briefly speaks of decay in the conventional terms:

> It is a soveraigne medicine. . . to have death in remembrance, whereby the bodie shalbe turned into luste and ashes, and eaten-up of wormes.

Perkins speaks of the gruesome effects of death on the body, but makes an explicitly Christian application of the details:

> And though the body rott in the grave, or be eaten of wormes, or of fishes in the sea, or burnt to ashes, yet that will not be unto us a matter of
discomfort, if we doe well consider the ground of all grace, namely our conjunction with Christ."

Perkins also speaks of Christ's death having made possible the transformation of our graves from "stinking and loathsome cabbines" into princely palaces. Despite the comforts Christianity provided to alleviate man's fear of death, the image of what the body of man would visibly become after death remained of pre-eminent concern to most Elizabethans.

Shakespeare's Elizabethan characters share this concern. Often the reiteration of the suggestion of decay after death briefly emphasizes the tragedy or pathos of the situation. For instance, Mercutio in Romeo and Juliet, after being stabbed by Tybalt, curses the feuding families that brought about the fight, and adds, "They have made worms' meat of me" (III,i,112). His death is the first of a series of tragic incidents brought about by the feud; the uselessness of the dispute is poignantly intimated by Mercutio's words. In the last act of the play Romeo also alludes to the decay of the corpse, when he decides to die and thus remain in the tomb with the apparently dead Juliet. He says, "Here, here will I remain / With worms that are thy chamber-maids" (V,iii,108-109). The picture of the beautiful young Juliet about to be attended and consumed by worms certainly heightens the tragedy of the play. And Hamlet includes in his frequent musings on death a preoccupation with the fate of the corpse. His
flippant remarks to the king as to the whereabouts of
dead Polonius serve as an example. When Claudius
questions Hamlet's reply that Polonius is at supper,
Hamlet says,

Not where he eats, but where he is eaten: a certain
convocation of politic worms are e'en at him. Your
worm is your only emperor for diet: we fat all
creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for
maggots: your fat king and your lean beggar is but
variable service, two dishes, but to one table:
that's the end. (IV,iii,20-27)

The remark that Polonius has become food for worms suggests
a more general reflection that in the grave all men become
equal--the de casibus motif. Hamlet in his feigned
irrationality is voicing a serious idea in a half-comic
manner. It is possible that his words may be directed
at proud Claudius, whose criminal ambition to become king
will eventually gain for him only a grave where he, too,
will become a meal for worms. The decay idea is expressed
in Measure for Measure, though without the usual
reference to worms. Claudio's first fear in his long
list of fears of death is that of having "to lie in cold
obstruction and to rot; / This sensible warm motion to
become / A kneaded clod" (III,i,119-121).

The same association of decay with absolute equality
of all men in the grave appears again in the graveyard
scene in Hamlet. Hamlet speculates as to the profession
of the original owner of the first skull the gravedigger
throws up. He could have been a politician or a courtier,
but now he is only "my Lady Worm's; chapless, and knocked
about the mazzard with a sexton's spade" (V,i,95-97). The entire scene dwells on the contrast between man as he was alive and as he is now dead, a mere worm-eaten, fleshless skull. The gravediggers accept the fact of death and the subsequent effects of burial as a matter of course. Because they have seen these skulls and bones every day, they can jest about them and feel no fear about ultimately reaching the same state themselves. For instance, the first gravedigger discusses some problems attendant upon his occupation in answer to Hamlet's inquiry as to how long before a body becomes rotten:

I' faith, if he be not rotten before he die—as we have many pocky corses now-a-days, that will scarce hold the laying in—he will last you some eight year or nine year: a tanner will last you nine year. (179-184)

After Hamlet ponders Yorick's skull, he puts it aside with a comment on its foul odor, and says a bit wistfully, "To what base uses we may return, Horatio!" (223) In spite of this experience Hamlet never grows to fear death; he comes to accept it as necessary. He sees the endless cycle of life and knows he must take his place in it; "the readiness is all" (V,ii,233). All this preoccupation with various aspects of death in Hamlet, including this almost tragicomic one of decay, serve to intensify the tragic atmosphere of the play.

In 1 Henry IV Prince Hal witnesses Hotspur's death and finishes his last sentence:

Hot. ... no, Percy, thou art dust,
And food for--
Prince. For worms, brave Percy: fare thee well, great heart! (V,iv,85-87)

He goes on to comment on Hotspur's life as leaving him only "two paces of the vilest earth" (91), but he also gives due praise to his rival's valor. The Prince in his eulogy speaks not only of the fate of Percy's corpse, but also that of his soul. He carefully makes the distinction between that part which remains to rot in the grave and that which shall live eternally in heaven:

Adieu, and take thy praise with thee to heaven! Thy ignominy sleep with thee in the grave. . . . (99-100)

This same distinction is made in the Axiochus of Plato;

Socrates tells Axiochus not to worry about the possibility of being "resolved into dust and wormes," for:

. . . the frame of this earthly building is dissolved, and the soule being singled, is restored to his naturall place: this bodye which is then left an earthly masse and an unreasonable substance, is then no more a man. For we are a soule, that is to say, an immortall creature, being shut up and inclosed in an earthly dungeon.

Christopher Sutton does not distinguish between man's mortal and immortal parts, but he does contrast the fear of decay in the grave with the bliss to be gained by the soul which rises to heaven:

Now for these corruptible bodies, they take no damage at all by death. It is no harme to the seede, though it hath for the time, a little earth harrowed or raked over it, it shall spring againe, and florish, and bring foorth fruit in due season. No hurt is it to these our bodies, to be cast into the ground: being sowen in weaknesse, they shall rise againe in power, beeing sowen naturall bodies, they rise againe bodies spirituall, being sowne in dishonour, they rise againe in glorie.
Thus, according to Prince Hal, the decay of Hotspur's corpse need not be horrible, if his good deeds and courage comprise his calling card in heaven. Whatever ignominious acts he may have done can be relegated to the grave to rot away with his body. In a sense, this decay can be beneficial and necessarily terrible; here the Prince implies that it complements the happiness and reward to be found in heaven.

Almost all of the Elizabethan treatises on death discuss in detail these joys of heaven, usually to make death appear attractive and desirable. The pictures of heaven presented in these books are often extremely elaborate. The authors could give their imaginations free sway in such descriptions of heavenly splendor as the following from Thomas Becon's *The Sicke Mans Salve*:

> But after your departure from this vale of wretchedness, you shall have a building of God, an habitation not made with hands, but everlasting in heaven. You shall dwell in a citie that is of pure golde, like unto cleare glasse, and the foundations of the walles of this citie, are garnished with all maner of precious stones, the gates are of fine Pearle. Yea the streetes of this Heavenly Cittie are of pure golde. It hath no need of the Sun, nether of the Moone to lighten it, for the brightness of God doth lighten, & the Lamb is the light of it.

This account goes on to tell of the life to be lived in Heaven by those who are saved. They shall exchange their worldly apparel for incorruptible garments of white, and for a crown; they shall eat Manna; they shall enjoy unheard of pleasures and wealth, and associate with "glorious Angels and blessed spirits of Heaven."
There is no such detail in Shakespeare's plays. When heaven is mentioned it is simply as a place of happiness after death or as the resting place of virtuous and repentant souls. In Richard III, for example, when Clarence protests to the murderers that Richard could not possibly want him killed because he had even promised to deliver Clarence from prison, one of the murderers answers him,

*Why, so he doth, now he delivers thee From this world's thraldom to the joys of heaven.*

(I,iv,254-255)

This reference to heaven is made in a mocking tone since the murderer and Clarence both know that he is not likely to enjoy the pleasures of heaven after death. But the idea stated in the line is quite similar to that expressed seriously by Mornay:

No more shall we have in that glorious light, either sorrow for the past, or expectation of the future: for all shall be there present unto us, and that present shall never more passe. . . . No more shall we paine our selves in heaping togetherness these exhalations of the earth: for the heavens shall be ours, and this masse of earth, shall be buried in the earth. No more shall we overwearie ourselves with mounting from degree to degree, from honor to honor: for we shall highlie be raysed above all heights of the world: and from on high laugh at the folly of all those we once admired. . . . No more to be briefe shall we have combates in our selves: for our flesh shall be dead, and our spirite in full life: our passion buried, and our reason in perfect libertie.

Later in the same play Queen Elizabeth enters to announce the death of her husband, Edward IV. In her lament over this event, she says that those still living should, if they choose to die, do so quickly in order to follow him
as obedient subjects, "To his new kingdom of perpetual rest" (II,ii,46). Although the speech which this line closes is probably intended to portray her sincere grief, it is somewhat extravagant and the sentiment it contains seems too consciously formal to be convincing. The effect is that this last line assumes the quality of mere commonplace. The same figure is found in Sutton's *Disce Mori*:

> Againe, amongst men, the elder, or one onely doeth inherite: but with God, all sonnes are heires, all heires inherite; and the inheritance too is a heavenly kingdome, to raigne to rejoyce ever.

The Queen's application of the idea of heaven as a place of eternal peace does become something more than commonplace, however, since Edward is moving from a kingdom he ruled on earth to a kingdom in heaven. The arrangement of the words momentarily prevents the realization that the new kingdom will not be one in which Edward is still the king.

One particular belief about heaven that Shakespeare often makes use of is that of meeting friends and loved ones there after death. And this same notion also appears frequently in Elizabethan treatises on death as one of the means to combat the fear of death or to induce repentance. Robert Hill says,

> Meditate now that you must be loth...to leave your friends & acquaintance here, because you shall see them in glory hereafter.

Christopher Sutton also mentions this belief as fact:

> ...We leave the societie of men, and goe to that celestiall societie of Angels above in heaven, where
also a multitude of our good friendes expect us. Our seperation each from other here, is onely for a time, our continuance together in the life to come shall be for ever. 13

And in The Sicke Mans Salve Thomas Becon tells the dying man that he will meet his worldly friends who are Christians in the Kingdom of God,

where you shall both se them, know them, talk with them, and be much more mery with them ever you were in this world. 14

In 2 Henry VI Shakespeare expresses the idea that the dead meet in heaven. In the final scene Queen Margaret, who is held prisoner by King Edward and the Yorkists, looks on as Oxford and Somerset are led away to imprisonment and execution, and she says,

So part we sadly in this troublous world, To meet with joy in sweet Jerusalem. (V,v,7-8)

She combines the idea of the contrast between the joys of heaven and the ills of the world, previously discussed, with that of meeting after death. Becon also speaks of the heavenly Jerusalem where we shall see and know all the faithful and such figures as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Mary, and all the Apostles, Patriarchs, and Martyrs. 15 Queen Margaret's reference to life in heaven is, of course, more immediate to her situation. Like the traditional dying man or the bereaved, she is comforted by this thought that her separation from these close friends will be onely temporary and that their future meeting will be attended with more happiness than ever their association in the world attained. A similar
situation occurs in Richard III when Rivers, Grey, and Vaughan, kinsmen of Queen Elizabeth, are about to be executed at Richard's order. Rivers' last lines are,

Come, Grey, come, Vaughan, let us all embrace:
And take our leave, until we meet in heaven.  

(Ill, iii, 24-25)

The same motif is developed to a greater degree in King John. Constance is almost wild with grief at her son Arthur's capture by the English, for she fears that he will be executed. Her lamentation is quite extreme:

And, father cardinal, I have heard you say
That we shall see and know our friends in heaven:
If that be true, I shall see my boy again. . . .
But now will canker sorrow eat my bud
And chase the native beauty from his cheek
And he will look as hollow as a ghost,
As dim and meagre as an ague's fit,
And so he'll die; and, rising so again,
When I shall meet him in the court of heaven
I shall not know him: therefore never, never
Must I behold my pretty Arthur more.  

(III, iv, 76-78, 82-89)

Instead of Constance repeating this belief as a platitude, Shakespeare here has this character develop it for dramatic effect; he again proves that interest can be derived from the commonplace. Constance accepts the idea of meeting after death, but instead of its being a comfort to her grief, she sees it as augmenting her present grief by causing even more tragic circumstances when the actual time of meeting arrives. She conceives of Arthur wasting away in prison so as to become unrecognizable at death, and if he is in this state, she is certain their future meeting will be in vain. Therefore she can grieve all the more now, imagining this situation that will occur
later in heaven. Constance is a great deal like Richard II in her excessive, overly-dramatic emotion and especially in her insistence on the horrible effects of death.

Antony and Cleopatra both die for the expressed purpose of meeting each other after death; in this way they hope to make their love eternal. Even though this play is non-Christian, Shakespeare utilizes a belief propounded by Christian writers of his time. It is possible, however, that the idea comes originally from classical tradition. Du Vair in The Moral Philosophie of the Stoicks cites a brief classical story strongly suggestive of Cleopatra's death, to illustrate why death should not be feared:

> If Cato have any credit with us, he will persuade us to runne and meete her comming unto us: and so will Arria the wife of Petus, which dyed to keepe her husband companie, for feare of sundring their loves which were sodered together by chast and holie wedlocke.

But in the play Antony is the first to decide to commit suicide, upon hearing the false report that Cleopatra is dead. His words, "I will o'ertake thee, Cleopatra" (IV, xiv, 44), are reminiscent of those of Queen Elizabeth already examined, in Richard III. He goes on to describe their future life together after death:

> Stay for me: Where souls do couch on flowers, we'll hand in hand, And with our sprightly port make the ghosts gaze: Dido and her Aeneas shall want troops, And all the haunt be ours.

Antony's brief vision of this heaven is similar in some respects to the particular variety of life after death
Then they which in their life time were inspired and led with a good Angell, are received into the household of the blessed, where all seasons flowe with abundance of all fruits, where from the silver springs doe calmly run the Christall streames, where the flourishing meadowes are cloathed with changeable Mantles of glorious colors.

The meeting after death idea is no mere consolation in this play. Antony is a Roman and is therefore portrayed as a Stoic. He meets death actively and willingly, he will "run into 't / As to a lover's bed" (100-101); the expected meeting with Cleopatra is his incentive to do so. There is no question of resignation. And Cleopatra's death is precisely the same. She, too, runs to death as to a lover's bed, when she says, "Husband, I come" (V,ii, 290). After Iras suddenly dies, Cleopatra becomes more determined to die quickly; she apparently feels ashamed that she did not die first so as to prove to Antony the sincerity of her love. Indeed, she seems to be jealous of Iras for being able to meet Antony in death before she herself can:

This proves me base:
If she first meet the curled Antony,
He'll make demand of her, and spend that kiss
Which is my heaven to have. (303-306)

Cleopatra's love is a demanding one, but her death in "high Roman fashion" so as to join Antony enables her character to a great extent. Shakespeare's use of this common belief that the dead meet in heaven after death in this play serves to elevate the two characters whose
tragedy is that their truly noble love has overcome their feeling of public responsibility—a fatal error for Antony, one of the triple pillars of the world.

A corollary to the Elizabethan and Christian belief that after death the soul enjoys bliss in heaven, is that mourning for the faithful dead should therefore not be carried to excess. An obvious example of this in Shakespeare is found in *Twelfth Night* when the Fool chides Olivia for mourning her dead brother:

Clo. Good madonna, why mournest thou?
Oli. Good fool, for my brother's death.
Clo. I think his soul is in hell, madonna.
Oli. I know his soul is in heaven, fool.
Clo. The more fool, madonna, to mourn for your brother's soul being in heaven. (I,v,72-77)

The books on death generally exhorted their readers to use moderation in their mourning; they did not try to prove that mourning was entirely wrong or foolish. Robert Hill says that it is lawful and good to mourn for the dead, "Yet we must remember that we keep a meane in mourning. . . ." He cites Cyprian as an authority in his advice to the bereaved:

Why, sayeth hee, doest thou take it impatientlie, that hee is taken from thee, whom thou beleevest that hee shall returnes. He is but gone a journey, whom thou thinkest quite gone. He that goes before, is not to be lamented, but rather desired. . . . Why are thou grieved that he is gone, whom thou must follow? We ought not to lament them over much, who by the Calling of GOD are freed from miserie; they are not for ever sent away, but for a while sent before.

Southwell also advocates moderate mourning:

Much sorrowe for the dead is eyther the childe of
self-love, or of rash judgement: if wee should shead our teares for other's death, as a meane to our contentment, wee shew but our owne wound perfitt lovers of ourselves, if we lament their decease as their hard destinie, we attach them of evil deserving, with to peremmaratory a censure as though their life had been a arise [sic], and their death a leape into final perditiion, for otherwise a good departure craveth small condolling being but a harbour from stormes, and an entrance unto felicitie.

This passage could serve as a commentary on Olivia's kind of mourning. The Fool cleverly underlined her obvious folly. Mourning is also discussed in the Common Places of Peter Martyr:

Let our proposition be; that It is lav/ful to moorne for the dead. . . .It is not for Christians to have that mind bold of all affections, as the Stoicks would have it. . . .[But] Faults they be if thou moorne immoderatelic, that is, over-much. . . .

Cardan treats of mourning for dead parents:

Wherein fyrste commeth to memoyre the unyversall reason of all theym that bee deadde, or els in respecte of our selves. But if in consideration of them we lamente, eyther we beleve that their Soules do live, or elles together wyth their Bodyes they are perished. And if thou thincke that both the Soule and bodge be perished, then so thincking and lamenting the Death of an other, thus thou complainest. Alas Alas henceforth thou shalte not be thirstye, Hongry, Colde, Hot, Painefull, Sicke, subject to injuryes and Calametyes, yea (that is moste of all) henceforth thou shalt not dye, as I shall. 29

And Du Vair speaks similarly about mourning for the death of children:

. . .let us mollifie and sweeten our words as well as we can: for if one of our children chaunce to dye, say not I have lost one of my children: but this, I have restored one of my children to God, of whom I borrowed them.

Olivia's Fool, then, was perfectly justified in finding fault with her practice of ostentatious mourning,
even though he does so in a comic context. We remember again, too, Queen Gertrude's remonstrating with Hamlet to cease mourning for his father. In this instance, however, her guilty conscience dictates her discomfort at seeing Hamlet grieve so deeply at his father's death. She herself would prefer to forget the death. And so, of course, would Claudius, who also tries to reason with Hamlet about his mourning in terms similar to those found in the death treatises:

'Tis sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet, To give these mourning duties to your father: But, you must know, your father lost a father; That father lost, lost his, and the survivor bound In filial obligation for some term To do obsequious sorrow: but to persever In obstinate condolence is a course Of impious stubbornness. . . . (I, ii, 87-94)

He continues in the same vein for thirteen more lines. He is almost as extreme in his request that Hamlet no longer appear in mourning as he says Hamlet was in his sorrow. His concern in this matter is probably also indicative of his guilty conscience: the sight of Hamlet in his "inky cloak" would have continually reminded him of his crime. But whereas Olivia's mourning deserved chastisement, Hamlet's does not. The comfort book phraseology of Claudius' speech tends to make what he says the more ineffectual for its triteness. Grief such as Hamlet's cannot be extinguished by the mere words of an observer or outsider.

When the authors of the Elizabethan books on death describe hell, they hope to convince the reprobate that
he must repent to avoid suffering eternal damnation.

When Shakespeare speaks of hell or punishment after death, it is in terms of man's fear of such a fate. This fear demonstrated by characters in his plays is evidence that the death books probably succeeded in their purpose. Quite a few of their imaginings of what hell is like correspond to details in the death-book descriptions. For instance, all agree that there is everlasting, unquenchable fire in hell. The drunken porter speaks of "all professions that go the primrose way to the everlasting bonfire" (Macbeth, II, iii, 23). King Lear in his delirium imagines he sees hell: it is "the sulphurous pit, / Burning, scalding. . . ." (IV, vi, 130-131). The spirit raised in 2 Henry VI is ordered by Bolingbroke the conjurer to "Descend to darkness and the burning lake" (I, iv, 42). Claudio in Measure for Measure imagines that in the unknown destination after death the spirit will "bathe in fiery floods" (III, i, 122). The Ghost of Hamlet's father when he appears to Hamlet, says he must soon return to "sulphurous and tormenting flames," whence he came (I, v, 3). These are apparently the flames of purgatory, not hell, but the idea of punishment after death is nevertheless present here. As for the death treatises, Gascoigne speaks of falling headlong into everlasting fire, of the torments of hell fire, and of the fire of hell that is neither nourished with fuel nor kindled with bellows, but created by God unquenchable. 23 Palingenius also tells of
the terror of the wicked cast headlong into hell "where fier is fierce and hot."²⁴ George More in *A Demonstration of God in His Works* says that the body will be punished "with fire violent and unquenchable, still burning, still scorching, and never consuming."²⁵ In the *Treasure of Gladnesse* hell is where "the fire never goeth out."²⁶ Robert Hill cites Gregory as saying that the fire in hell is unquenchable, and the heat intolerable.²⁷

For Shakespeare's characters hell is also usually dark. Lear, in the passage just cited, identifies hell with darkness (130). The same identification is also made in the line from *2 Henry VI*. In the sleepwalking scene in *Macbeth*, Lady Macbeth interjects, "Hell is murky!" (V,i,40) Disguised as Sir Topas, the Fool in *Twelfth Night* asks Malvolio, who is imprisoned in a dark house to be cured of his "madness," "Sayest thou that house is dark?" Malvolio answers, "As hell, Sir Topas" (IV,ii,39). Again in *King Lear* Gloucester, in protesting to Regan and Cornwall their cruel treatment of Lear, speaks of the king enduring the treacherous storm in "hell-black night" (III,vii,60). To compare the treatises on death, we may first examine Gascoigne, who mentions the "merveilous cloudy darkness" of hell, and later, the "land of miseryes & darkenesse."²⁸ Palingenius speaks of those who vainly seek rest and peace in the "ever darkned lake."²⁹ And again in Gregory's description of hell, cited by Hill, is the characteristic of "palpable darkenesse."³⁰
Claudio's speech about his fearful imaginings of what his posthumous fate might be is actually an enumeration of some of the torments thought to exist in hell. He not only imagines that the spirit will bathe in fiery floods, but also that it may "reside / In thrilling region of thick-ribbed ice" (III,i,122-123). This concept seems to be derived directly from that which appears in the same citation of Gregory in Hill's A Direction to Die Well:

In hell there is intolerable cold, unquenchable fire. . . . There shall be a double hell: the one of intolerable heat, the other of surpassing cold.

A few lines further Claudio speaks of the howling inhabitants of what is presumably hell. Romeo also uses this idea in his protest against his banishment: "O friar, the damned use that word [banished] in hell; / Howlings attend it" (III,iii,47-48). These howlings are particularized, not generalized as those in Claudio's speech. The belief that howling occurs in hell is found, too, in the books on death. In one instance, Hill cites Augustine on eternal death:

From hell there is no redemption: there is weeping and wayling, and none to pity them: There is dolor and horror, and crying out, and none to hear them.

Another instance appears in The Droome of Doomes Day:

Doe thou thy selfe imagine to behold. . . . a lake full of all myserie, yea most brymfull of all despe-eration, trouble, crying, and howling. . . .

Claudio's fears, then, may be said to be derived for the most part from current Elizabethan ideas about eternal
punishment in hell. His fears, however, do not induce repentance, but rather more sin: his willingness to sacrifice Isabella's chastity to save his life.

On the eve of his death, Clarence in Richard III describes the vision of hell he experienced in a dream. After dreaming that he died by drowning, his dream continued so that he saw the fate of his soul. The hell portrayed in this passage is clearly classical Hades. The "grim ferryman which poets write of" transported Clarence's soul to "the kingdom of perpetual night" (I,iv,46-47). Clarence tells of meeting there those whom he had wronged on earth. Instead of being reunited with his friends in heaven, he must encounter his enemies in hell. Perhaps this idea is a deliberate reversal of the former common one. The ghost of Edward Prince of Wales, murdered by Clarence, invokes the Furies to torment him, and Clarence continues,

With that, methoughts, a legion of foul fiends
Environ'd me about, and howled in mine ears
Such hideous cries, that with the very noise
I trembling waked. . . .

(58-61)

That hell is the abode of the furies is also voiced in the Axiochus of Plato:

But they which being wrapped in wickednes have led an ungodly life, are snatched up by the Furies, and by them carried through the lowest hell into deepe darknes and utter confusion, where the place and abode of the wicked is.

Again in this speech an Elizabethan belief is transformed; instead of the tormented spirits howling, here the tormenters, the Furies, howl at the wicked spirits.
Palingenius also includes the Furies in his account of a pagan sort of hell, a "kingdome black":

...where the guilty Ghostes
The furies fierce of Hell doe burne, and whipp fast lynckt to postes. ...

The translator, however, is careful to point out the error in this belief. Another passage in Palingenius describes the kind of vision dreamed by Clarence in terms similar to those in the play:

Or that it [the soul] lurkes in lothsom lake, of Tartars griesly den:
And payses the paynes of his desert, and takes rewardes as then
Of former factes, ought none beleve, except his senses fade.
O fooles, it is your Poets pates that have these fables made... .
The yrkesome place they fayned have, of Stygian tiraut fell:
Where flames the flouds of Phlegeton that burnes with roaring yell:
Whereas the triple headed Dog, and Tisiphon doth dwell
With adders armde of paynted hewe, and griesly Gyaunts great:
Wyth dreadfull darkenes voide of light, and fyres whose flaming heat,
The bote, without the force of oke, here creeketh in this place,
Whilst her with soules doth overlode the aged Ferriman... .
Much more than I have heare declared these Poets peelde have taught
In hell to be, which are not true of children to be thought.

But it is dramatically probable that a man in an Elizabethan play could dream about such a hell, since descriptions were to be found in contemporary literature. Since the precise characteristics of Hades were more or less standardized, whereas those of the Christian hell were always to remain vague and undefined, it is more likely
that Clarence would dream of that which was more vivid to the general imagination. The dream itself is, of course, significant in the play. Clarence's total guilt is exposed through it in vivid images, and this guilt adds to the final compounded guilt of the Yorkists, which is to be ultimately purged by Henry Tudor.

The state of man and his soul after death is not, after all, neglected by Shakespeare in his plays. He could not very well do so, since this question was undoubtedly an important one for his audience. That Macbeth is willing to "jump the life to come" (I,vii,7) is quite uncommon; by this statement he is clearly characterized as a godless man. We find that the characters in the plays talk of heaven in generally conventional terms, but that when hell is mentioned, it is more often elaborated for purposes of sensationalism, characterization, or both. Shakespeare also pays considerable regard to the decay of the corpse after death, as what man can actually see of death, and sometimes contrasts the decay to the salvation of the soul in heaven. This motif usually enhances somewhat sensationally or tragically the total effects of death. Even though death itself is most often looked upon by Shakespeare's characters as an opportunity to gain peace and rest after the toils and troubles of life, Shakespeare uses the Elizabethan ideas about life after death in its various aspects, just as he has used other ideas about death, with successful dramatic effect.
NOTES

Chapter One


3 Ibid., lines 14-16.

4 Ibid., line 135.

5 Ibid., line 597.

6 Richard III, III, iv, 98-103 in The Complete Works of Shakespeare, Hardin Craig, ed. (Chicago, 1951). All quotations from Shakespeare's plays are taken from this edition and will be cited hereafter in the text.

7 Farnham, op. cit., pp. 43-45.

8 See Ibid., pp. 54-58.

9 Dance of Death, op. cit., line 296.

10 Ibid., line 328.

11 Ibid., lines 375-376.


13 Ibid.

14 Farnham, op. cit., p. 42.

15 Ibid.
Chapter Two


9. Ibid., p. 77.


16. Ibid., sig. D1v-D2r.


18. Ibid., pp. 116-117.

20 Estella, op. cit., p. 238.
23 Quoted in Craig, ibid., p. 22.
24 Ibid., p. 23.
25 Palingenius, op. cit., pp. 103-104.
26 Gascoigne, op. cit., p. 262.
28 Phillipe de Mornay, A Discourse of Life and Death, The Countess of Pembroke, tr. (London, 1592), sig. D2r.
30 Ibid., p. 56.
32 Palingenius, op. cit., p. 103.
33 Perkins, op. cit., p. 2.
34 Cardan, op. cit., p. 25v.
35 Ibid., pp. 26r-26v.
36 Southwell, op. cit., sig. D2r.
39 Perkins, op. cit., preface.
42 Ibid., p. 225.
43 Palingenius, op. cit., p. 103.
44 Mornay, op. cit., sig. D3r.
45 Palingenius, op. cit., p. 123.
46 Coghan, op. cit., p. 194.
48 Frances Berkeley Young, "The Triumphe of Death Translated out of the Italian by the Countesse of Pembroke," PMLA, XXVII (1912), 65.
49 Cardan, op. cit., pp. 24v-25r.
50 Southwell, op. cit., sig. C2r.
51 Ibid., sig. C1v.
52 Hill, op. cit., p. 229.
53 Sutton, op. cit., p. 27.
54 Becon, op. cit., p. 217.
55 Ibid., p. 228.
56 Ibid., p. 116.
57 Hill, op. cit., pp. 189-190.
58 Ibid., p. 250.
59 Mornay, op. cit., sig. A2r.
61 Ibid., p. 239.
62 Axiochus of Plato, op. cit., p. 42.
64 Ibid., p. 748.
Chapter Three


2. Ibid., p. 7-8.

3. Ibid., p. 10.


9. Ibid., p. 113.


13. A Fort Againste the Feare of Death, and Losse of Friends and all other commodities of this Worlde (1578), fragment—listed as chapter one in the table of contents.


15. Ibid., p. 12.


18. Ibid., p. 214.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid., p. 241.


23 Becon, op. cit., p. 214.

24 Cf. Ibid., pp. 213-214.


26 Ibid., p. 28.

27 Gascoigne, op. cit., pp. 244-245.

28 Sutton, op. cit., p. 115.

29 Hill, op. cit., p. 189.

30 Ibid., p. 188.

31 Becon, op. cit., p. 3.

32 Diego de Estella, A Methode Unto Mortification (London, 1586)), p. 159.

33 Becon, op. cit., p. 217.

34 Perkins, op. cit., pp. 87-90.

35 Ibid., p. 96.

36 Ibid., p. 97.

37 Sutton, op. cit., pp. 248-249.

38 Ibid., pp. 249, 255.

39 Ibid., pp. 237-238.

40 Koller, op. cit., p. 385.

41 See also Sutton, op. cit., pp. 184, 253.

42 Ibid., p. 313. See also Ibid., p. 332; and Hill, op. cit., p. 196.

43 Koller, op. cit., p. 385.

44 Perkins, op. cit., p. 17.
45 Hill, op. cit., pp. 197-198.
46 Sutton, op. cit., p. 236.
47 Ibid., p. 163.
Chapter Four

1 Caroline F. E. Spurgeon, Shakespeare's Imagery and What it Tells Us (New York, 1936), p. 185.


5 Ibid.

6 The Axiochus of Plato, ed. Frederick Morgan Padelford (Baltimore, 1934), p. 44.


9 Ibid., p. 233.


11 Sutton, op. cit., p. 88.


13 Sutton, op. cit., p. 216.

14 Becon, op. cit., p. 233.

15 Ibid., p. 236.


17 Axiochus of Plato, op. cit., p. 58.


22 Du Vair, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-118.


31 Ibid., pp. 318-319.

32 Ibid., p. 318.


35 Palingenius, *op. cit.*, pp. 103-104.

36 Ibid., p. 27.
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