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Power, Profit, Poetry: Shakespeare & Co for Business Executives

WU Talks

WU Alumni Club

April 10th, 2008

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1. Introduction

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales[1] *and hills,*
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host,[2] *of golden daffodils,*
Beside the lake, beneath the trees
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous[3] *as the stars that shine*
And twinkle on the Milky Way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance
Tossing[4] *their heads in sprightly*[5] *dance.*

The waves beside them danced, but they
Out-did[6] *the sparkling waves in glee:*[7] *-*
A poet could not but be gay[8]
In such a jocund[9] *company:*
I gazed[10] *– and gazed – but little thought*
What wealth the show to me had brought.

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive[11] *mood,*
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss[12] *of solitude;*[13]
And then my heart with pleasure fills
And dances with the daffodils.

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[1] *vales* = 'Täler'
[2] *host* = (hier:) 'Menge'
[3] *continuous* = (hier:) 'aufgereiht'
[4] *toss* = 'schütteln'
[5] *sprightly* = 'munter'
[6] *to out-do* = 'übertreffen'
[7] *glee* = 'Freude'
[8] *gay* = (hier:) 'fröhlich'
[9] *glee* =' Freude'
[10] *to gaze* = 'starren'
[11] *pensive* = 'nachdenklich'
[12] *bliss* = 'Segen'
[13] *solitude* = 'Einsamkeit'

If it feels strange to you to be at an economics and business university and listen to lines written by William Wordsworth, one of the great English Romantic poets,[14] then let me assure you it feels equally strange to me. To be standing only a few feet away from the Rector's office, the centre of power of the largest business university in Europe, does not necessarily inspire thoughts of dancing daffodils, and less still, perhaps, of dancing hearts. Entrepreneurial dynamism and the bliss of solitude seem quite incompatible.

Indeed, when I was appointed to a chair in English Business Communication here at the WU[15] about eight years ago, nothing was further from my mind, at least professionally, than poetry. I was thinking corporate communication, advertising, the language of *The Economist* and *Business Week*. In teaching I would quite probably have subscribed to the view expressed in the opening lines of *Hard Times*, a novel by Charles Dickens.[16] The scene is set in a schoolroom and Mr Gradgrind, the school's founder and a dyed-in-the-wool[17] utilitarian, says :

> *"NOW, what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else."* (Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*, Chapter 1)

Not a bad motto, one would think, for an institution dedicated to educating business people. In many ways, of course, I myself always have been and still am committed to 'facts', as scholars necessarily must be. And although I hope I never was what Dickens elsewhere in the book calls "a monster in a lecturing castle" (*Hard Times*, Chapter 3, p. 54[18]), there is no disputing *the fact* that in economics, management studies and, indeed, modern linguistics, we generate insight through

[14] 1770 – 1850
[15] WU = Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien (Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration)
[16] Published in 1854.
[17] *dyed-in-the-wool* = 'waschecht, unverbesserlich'
[18] Penguin edition (1969)

systematic enquiry and build knowledge on empirical foundations, with intuition playing a mainly supportive role.

And yet, *and yet*: there is room for more. Better still, there is a *need* for more. The two worlds, of literature and business, are not quite as alien to each other as might appear at first sight. There is potential for enrichment, reflection, and unleashing the imagination in precisely the way that far-sighted business people need.

Why don't we have a quick look at the daffodils? What could a busy executive make of them? Executives might try to remember, first and foremost, when they last got a chance to "wander lonely as a cloud"; how many moments there are during a full working day when they are able to experience "the bliss of solitude" and have time for looking inward. What Wordsworth calls the "inward eye" is perhaps best glossed as heightened sensory perception, a level of awareness higher than what the humdrum of daily existence allows. Also, executives are likely to be stopped in their tracks, however briefly, at the mention of *wealth*, a word which in Wordsworth's time, too, standardly referred to material wealth but here clearly means something different. Last but not least, a poem like this says something very fundamental about the relationships between formal structures and creative leeway.[19] The metre[20] and, even more so, the rhyming pattern are very regular, and yet the poet manages to develop an original train of thought within these rigid structures. Business people are quite used to being reined in by a multitude of rules and regulations and constraints. Those that manage to be creative despite that are likely to be most successful, and earn a reputation as true entrepreneurs.

On and off, for a year or so, I have been thinking about what literature might contribute to executive education. And tonight I would like to share some of these thoughts with you.

I'd like to begin by looking at what other people have done in this area, and refer you to a few published sources on the subject. Next, I will give a few

[19] *leeway* = 'Spielraum'
[20] *metre* = 'Versmaß'

examples of what one might loosely call 'leadership lessons' to be drawn from works of literature. There won't be time for in-depth analyses, but I'll try and indicate the basic direction in which my approach is heading. I'll then move on to the second major point of contact between business and literature, namely the creative and persuasive use of language. Finally, I'd like to report on what my students have been making of all of this. Earlier this semester I taught a class called *Food for Thought: English Literature for Business Students*, and I thought as 'ex-students' you might be interested to find out how the next generation responded to this kind of thing. In addition, I'd like to raise a couple of more general points about what all this might mean for management education.

This may be the best moment to be honest about one of my ulterior motives[21] in talking about literature. English has become such a powerful, omni-present lingua franca of international business and politics that it often seems to be seen exclusively from a utilitarian perspective. For someone who loves the English language for what it *is* rather than only for what it can *buy* and *sell*, talking about poems, stories and plays is a welcome opportunity to show that English is not only useful (which of course it is) but also very beautiful.

So: how close or distant are business and literature? Are they strange bedfellows or a match made in heaven?

2. Business and literature: Strange bedfellows or a match made in heaven?

When I asked my students whether they thought good business executives and good poets had anything in common, they came up with a surprisingly long list of characteristics, including the following:

- Creativity
- New visions and new ideas
- Commitment

[21] *ulterior motives* = 'Hintergedanken'

- Perfectionism
- Charisma
- Have to communicate ideas, need to be "good with words"
- Need to be good observers of people, situations, processes
- Have a lot of responsibility ("because words can harm people")
- Have to deal with emotions

Of course, my students also mentioned some differences. Most notably, perhaps (here I quote from the notes I took during the brainstorming session), that businesspeople needed to have "an ability to compromise" and "were more interested in money" (no surprise there). Still, the list of similarities was longer, and certainly much more extensive than I had expected.

Turning now to published sources on the subject, let me point you to the bibliography. Many of the books and articles listed, it ought to be added, were not written by people like myself, with a background in the humanities, but by scholars from business, management and organisational studies, teaching at renowned institutions such as Harvard Business School or MIT. In the *Harvard Business Review*, for example, Joseph L. Badaracco, professor of business ethics at Harvard, talks about "Leadership in Literature" (Coutu 2006). In the *Journal of Applied Business Research*, Gary Benson writes about "Teaching Entrepreneurship Through the Classics" (Benson 1992). In a journal called *The Learning Organization*, Claire Cohen explains "How literature may be used to assist in the education of managers" (Cohen 1998a). Another paper by her, published in a journal called *Management Learning*, is entitled "Using Narrative Fiction within Management Education" (Cohen 1998b). In the *Journal of Management Education*, Gary Shaw and Karen Locke write about "Using fiction to develop managerial judgement" (Shaw and Locke 1993), and William Stevenson about "Teaching Shakespeare in the leadership course" (Stevenson 1996). In a magazine called *Chief Executive*, John Whitney, a professor emeritus at Columbia Business School and retired CEO, discusses "The bard [i.e. Shakespeare] in the boardroom" (Whitney 2000a). Examples could be multiplied.

Obviously, establishing a link between management and literature is not such an entirely exotic venture. In fact, elsewhere there is quite a tradition which, interestingly, is often nurtured by people who have no axe to grind – that is, who do not themselves have arts and humanities backgrounds and are thus not simply looking for arguments to justify their own existence.

What most of these writings share is an awareness that, despite being two very different and often separate life worlds, both business and literature revolve around humankind, its potential and limitations, desires, fears and disappointments, individual faculties and social relationships. A mere manager – in the narrower sense of the word – may get by without any deeper reflection on the human condition (*conditio humana*). True leaders, on the other hand, will not. For them, the big issues in life are big issues in leadership, and vice versa.

One such issue is **change**. "I believe", says Harold Bloom in the *Harvard Business Review*,

> "that literature does have a fundamental truth to teach in regard to change: change always arises out of the unexpected. (…) By reading imaginative literature, you can prepare yourself for surprise and even get a kind of strength that welcomes and exploits the unexpected" (Coutu 2001: 64).

Another key issue is **uncertainty**. In the *MIT Sloan Management Review*, Warren Bennis lists "thoughts on leadership", and these include the following:

> "Take a tip from John Keats[22] and let yourself experience doubt. Writing to his brothers in 1815 about why he so admired Shakespeare, Keats asserted that one of Shakespeare's most important qualities was negative capability – 'when man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason'".

Warren Bennis, just for the record, is professor of business at the University of Southern California at L.A., has held previous chairs at the MIT Sloan School

[22] An early 19th century English poet.

of Management and Boston University, has founded the renowned Leadership Institute at the USC and has been an advisor to four US presidents: not exactly a head-in-the-clouds type of guy.

As Bennis and many other scholars demonstrate, the link between business and literature goes far beyond cases where a novelist, poet or playwright writes, quite literally, about the business world, by using an industrial setting, for example, or discussing work-related themes. This does happen, of course. Dickens' *Hard Times* is a case in point, as are Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South*,[23] Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*[24] and, more recently, David Lodge's *Nice Work*[25]. Lodge's book shows us a clash between industry and academia. At one turn in the plot, the main male character, the executive director of a steelworks, and the main female character, a university lecturer in English literature, resolve their tensions by climbing into bed with each other. You will appreciate that I cannot resist mentioning that before they, well, get down to business, the female academic announces, "But I prefer to be on top".

On a more serious note, the business world even features in poetry. Not too often, admittedly, but there are some examples. In an anthology edited by Nicholas Coles and Peter Oresick (1995), called *For a Living. The Poetry of Work*, we find poems such as "The Business Man" by Gail Rudd Entrekin, where she compares a company to, and I quote, "a small herd of brilliant sheep" and the manager to a "sheepdog". The volume also includes Jeffrey Skinner's poem entitled "On a Bad Painting in the Lobby of IBM International". Or, perhaps most famously, there is W H Auden's poem "Night Mail", which is a poetic rendering of the mail distribution process – a celebration of logistics, if you will.

This is the Night Mail crossing the border,
Bringing the cheque and the postal order,
Letters for the rich, letters for the poor,
The shop at the corner and the girl next door.

[23] Published in 1855.
[24] Published in 1949.
[25] Published in 1988.

– and so on, with the metre imitating the sound of the train's steam engine.

However, these more obvious cases of literature dealing with business are not my main concern today; nor are they the main interest of the US American and British scholars I quoted earlier. The bigger and, arguably, more interesting challenge lies in drawing on literature to explore themes of more general relevance to executives.

So: what are these 'big issues' in life and leadership? And which literary works can we gainfully turn to? There would be dozens of themes with a vast number of novels, plays and poems to match. But because there's sparkling wine and snacks waiting, I've selected only the following six:

(1) Power and ambition
(2) Success and failure
(3) Self-doubt
(4) The role of the court jester[26]
(5) Personal transformation
(6) Social responsibility

3. Leadership lessons from literature

(1) POWER AND AMBITION

Shakespeare's plays, and the tragedies in particular, are full of archetypal characters, cataclysmic events and powerful emotions. *Macbeth* is a tragedy of ambition turning into obsession, and of ambition that is motivated by self-interest rather than a desire to serve the common good: a story all too familiar in the corporate world (Clemens and Mayer 1999: 174). The hero of the play, Macbeth, is a nobleman who wants to rise to the throne. But there are people in his way, such as

[26] *court jester* = 'Hofnarr'

The Prince of Cumberland! That is a step
On which I must fall down, or else o'erleap,[27]
For in my way it lies. Stars, hide your fires,
Let not light see my black and deep desires.
(Macbeth I.iv.49-51)

We can see that he is aware of the moral wrong he is about to commit, and yet he cannot and will not stop. One killing leads to another, including one carried out by his wife, who is ambitious for him. That, too, is a phenomenon not unknown today (the ambitious wife, I mean, not the killing).

With the king dead, and Macbeth named his successor, there is still no rest for him. Now it is Banquo, another nobleman, who is a threat. First because Banquo has children and thus heirs to the throne, which Macbeth does not. And second because Macbeth is becoming aware of Banquo's natural superiority. A painful realisation indeed. As it says in the text, Banquo has "valour"[28] and "wisdom". Most importantly, he has "royalty of nature".[29] So here is one who – unlike Macbeth, who has to fight to become king – is a natural born leader. No wonder Macbeth is scared and jealous:

Our fears in Banquo
Stick deep; and in his royalty of nature
Reigns[30] *that which would be feared. 'Tis much he dares,*
And to that dauntless[31] *temper of his mind*
He hath[32] *a wisdom that doth*[33] *guide his valour*
To act in safety. There is none but he
Whose being I do fear, and under him

[27] *o'erleap* = 'überspringen'
[28] *valour* = 'Tapferkeit'
[29] *royalty of nature* = (etwa:) 'natürliche Königswürde'
[30] *to reign* = 'regieren'
[31] *dauntless* = 'furchtlos'
[32] *hath = has*
[33] *doth = does*

My genius is rebuked[34] *as, it is said,*
Mark Antony's was by Caesar.
(Macbeth III.i.48-56)

Another flaw contributing to Macbeth's downfall, Clemens and Mayer (1999: 177) remind us, is that he "was a man of too little analysis and too much action" – and so is "led inexorably toward his doom":

I am in blood
Stepp'd in so far that, should I wade no more,
Returning were as tedious[35] *as go o'er:*[36]
Strange things I have in head, that will to hand;
Which must be acted ere they may be scann'd.[37]
(Macbeth, III.iv.135-139)

His thoughts become actions too quickly without having been properly studied ("scanned"). I wonder whether the Boston Consulting Group might be encouraged to read or re-read this passage and then re-consider their slogan "Denken ist handeln"[38] as well as the strapline addressed to potential job applicants: "Sie haben alles. Außer Lust zu warten":[39] May you be spared the consultant who acts before proper "scanning", or studying.

Anyway, back to Macbeth. Faced with the ultimate depravity and futility of his actions, Macbeth's mind disintegrates and deep depression descends upon him, voiced in what is probably the best known soliloquy in the play:

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps[40] *in this petty*[41] *pace from day to day*

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[34] *to rebuke* = 'tadeln, schelten'
[35] *tedious* = 'mühselig'
[36] *go o'er* = 'überqueren'
[37] *scann'd* = 'geprüft, untersucht'
[38] *Denken ist handeln* = 'To think is to act'
[39] *Sie haben alles. Außer Lust zu warten* = 'You can do anything. Except wait.'
[40] *creep* = 'kriechen'
[41] *petty* = '(klein)lich'

To the last syllable of recorded time,
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts[42] and frets[43] his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.
(Macbeth V.v.19-29)

Incidentally, the stage as a metaphor for life will also strike a chord with high-profile executives, because they often find themselves "on stage", either quite literally – at annual general meetings, press conferences, or, heaven forbid, in the courtroom – or metaphorically, as visible figureheads of their organisations, exposed to public scrutiny. They, too, have to play a multitude of roles which may or may not be in sync with their private selves. Another well-known exploration of this theme can be found in one of Shakespeare's comedies, *As You Like It*, where it is the character Jacques who says:

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. *At first the infant,*
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms;
Then the whining school-boy, with his satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. ***Then a soldier,***

[42] *to strut* = 'stolzieren'
[43] *to fret* = 'sich Sorgen machen'

Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,
Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth.
(As You Like It, II.vii.139-166)

"Seeking the bubble reputation even in the cannon's mouth":[44] a perfect metaphor of ambition so great that, in a tragic paradox, it leads to self-destruction. Macbeth's plight exactly, and that of many who want to rise to the top even at the cost of their own lives, health or happiness.

(2) SUCCESS AND FAILURE

My second theme is called 'success and failure', though as we shall see, in literature these are often bound up with many other issues, such as power and ambition. My next quoted piece, a well-known poem by Rudyard Kipling, reflects this variety of interrelated themes, of which 'success and failure' is only one. The poem is called IF (for very obvious reasons: not just in terms of content, but also structurally; it is most probably the longest if-sentence on record):

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance[45] *for their doubting too;*
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream - and not make dreams your master;
If you can think - and not make thoughts your aim;

[44] 'Der Soldat … sucht die Luftblase des Ruhms sogar – oder ausgerechnet – in der Kanonenmündung'.
[45] *to make allowance* = 'zugestehen'

If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors[46] just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves[47] to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop[48] and build 'em up with worn-out tools:

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,[49]
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew[50]
To serve your turn[51] long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'[52]

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,[53]
Or walk with Kings - nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes[54] nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And - which is more - you'll be a Man, my son!

Written more than a hundred years ago (in 1895), and in a world quite different in so many ways from our own, the poem's relevance and appeal remain unchanged. It is a powerful, almost haunting, statement of values, providing

[46] *impostor* = 'Betrüger'
[47] *knave* = 'Gauner'
[48] *to stoop* = 'sich bücken'
[49] *risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss* = 'es bei einem Glücksspiel riskieren'
[50] *sinew* = 'Sehne'
[51] *to serve your turn* = 'Dir dienen'
[52] *to hold on* = 'durchhalten'
[53] *virtue* = 'Tugend'
[54] *foe* = 'Feind'

admonition as well as encouragement. One could hardly wish for a better summary of what it takes to acquire and retain personal integrity in the face of a bustling, confusing and hostile environment – precisely the sort of environment, in fact, which business executives will be all too familiar with. Many of you, I am sure, on hearing and reading these lines, will have thought, "been there, done that". Witness these various needs:

- the need to remain calm at times of crisis (ll. 1-2: *If you can keep your head when all about you / Are losing theirs and blaming it on you*);
- to develop a vision without inflexibly becoming its slave (l. 9: *… dream – and not make dreams your master*);
- to be self-confident but never arrogant (ll. 3-4: *…trust yourself when all men doubt you, but make allowance for their doubting too*);
- to accept being misquoted (ll. 13-14: *…bear to hear the truth you've spoken / Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools*)
- to cope with failure and start again from scratch (ll. 15-16: *Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken, / And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools*);
- to walk the narrow line between popularity and populism (l. 25: *…talk with crowds and keep your virtue*);
- and, finally, the need to join power élites without becoming aloof[55] (l. 26: *Or walk with Kings – nor lose the common touch*).

If you permit me a brief comment on a small detail here, the comma before *broken* (line 15). Syntactically unnecessary, its purpose – which it clearly achieves, in an almost haunting sort of way – is to separate this essential word from the rest of the sentence and give it as much weight as possible. *Or watch the things you gave your life to, __ BROKEN*: you can almost hear the gasp for air, during a brief but very loaded emotional pause – and all because of that little comma.

[55] *aloof* = 'abgehoben'

Furthermore, there is the very moving combination of accepting loss and failure while also transcending them. Success and failure (*Triumph and Disaster*[56]) are to be met with the same equanimity[57] (ll. 11-12), and if you lose, you start afresh, and, perhaps more importantly still, *never breathe a word about your loss* (l. 21). You have to look forward rather than back – a home truth, certainly, but probably the hardest thing of all. Kipling also offers the most beautiful poetic rendering of endurance, of strength, will power and stamina (ll. 21-24): *If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew / To serve your turn long after they are gone, / And so hold on when there is nothing in you / Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'* No matter what your precise circumstances in life are, or what position you hold in your organisations, each one of you will, in one way or another, have found themselves having to draw on the very resources that Kipling describes here.

Incidentally, I read and discussed this poem in one of my ordinary lectures, a little escapade, if you will, tagged on to a course called Organisational Communication under the heading of "Something Extra". After class, I happened to overhear a student telling another student: "Na ja, die Vorlesung war halt eine Vorlesung. Aber bei dem Gedicht, da hätt' ma eine Stecknadel fallen hören."[58]

Surely, though, one cannot talk about success and failure and related issues without going back to the Great Bard of Stratford, William Shakespeare. To explore these themes, there would be so many plays to choose from that any particular choice must seem arbitrary, and I suppose mine is. A little arbitrary perhaps but not entirely without reason. I chose *Julius Caesar* because, on the one hand, it is one of the better-known plays and, on the other, because it gives us an opportunity to look at what must be one of the most famous examples of applied rhetoric, a skill of the utmost importance, of course, to business

[56] Note the capital initials, which contribute to the personification of triumph and disaster (as "impostors" ['*Betrüger*']). Incidentally, the two lines concerned are inscribed above the entrance door to the Central Court at Wimbledon.
[57] *equanimity* = 'Gleichmut'
[58] ["The lecture was, well, a lecture. But when we were doing the poem, you could have heard a pin drop."]

executives.

Naturally, the few remarks I have time for here cannot possibly do justice to the complexity of the play and, as with *Macbeth* earlier, I can only really attempt to make a few brief comments.

Julius Caesar shows us the tragedy of a man who has power and is ruined – killed, in fact – because he abuses it, as a dictator. At the same time, the play is the tragedy of another man, Brutus, who has power within his reach, but fails to attain it because he seriously misjudges both the political climate and his major opponent, Mark Antony. Here are two examples of this misjudgement. The first comes when Brutus assassinates Caesar in the belief that the Roman people wish to be liberated from tyranny, when in reality they have fully embraced authoritarian structures and are quite easily persuaded to see the assassins as murderers of "noble Caesar" rather than liberators. Initially, the citizens do say, *This Caesar was a tyrant*, and *that's certain, / We are blest that Rome is rid of him.*[59]

But then, and this is another of Brutus' fatal errors, he quite literally leaves the stage, by departing from the forum. And so allows Mark Antony to seize his chance, by launching into his famous funeral speech,[60] with the still blood-stained body of the recently stabbed Caesar at his feet. *Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears; / I come to bury Caesar not to praise him.* Of course, to praise Caesar and, in the process, to vilify[61] Brutus, is exactly what he has come for. Rhetorically, Antony pulls out all the stops.[62] He knows that, initially, the mood is pro-Brutus, and he plays along, making repeated references to Brutus as an *honourable man* (e.g. in lines 11, 16, 23 and 28 of the extract in the appendix). At the same time, he skillfully talks Brutus down by talking Caesar up: emphasising the riches that Caesar has brought home from his conquests, his apparent modesty in refusing to be crowned king, his faithfulness as a friend and his love for the Roman people. Mark Antony also uses some of

[59] 'Welch ein Segen, dass Rom ihn los ist'.
[60] See the Appendix for an extract.
[61] *vilify* = 'verteufeln'
[62] *pull out all the stopps* = 'alle Register ziehen'

the oldest rhetorical tricks under the sun. For example, pretending to have accidentally let slip a secret when, in fact, you wanted to give your audience exactly that hint all along (l. 94: *I have o'ershot myself*[63] *to tell you of it,* with *it* referring to Caesar's testament). Or, by saying that you can't say something, actually saying it (as in l. 83: *It is not meet*[64] *you know how Caesar loved you*).

Apart from his merely verbal skill, Mark Antony is also a master manipulator of visual effects (remarkably, entirely without Powerpoint). For example, he holds up Caesar's blood-stained cloak and points out exactly where whose dagger cut through the material before entering Caesar's body (ll. 131-133):

> *Look, in this place ran Cassius' dagger through:*
> *See what a rent*[65] *the envious Casca made:*
> *Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabb'd;*

Apart from those just mentioned, *Julius Caesar* also includes many other situations and insights that are easily transferable to modern organisational life, and the risks faced by executives. For example, in Act I, Scene II, Caesar ignores the famous warning by a soothsayer,[66] *Beware the Ides of March*,[67] (March 15th, that is, the day that Caesar was to be killed). Caesar peremptorily dismisses this; not, interestingly enough, on any factual grounds, but simply by not accepting the soothsayer as a credible source: *He is a dreamer,* Caesar responds curtly, *let us leave him. Pass.* And that, for him, is the end of the matter. How quickly and thoughtlessly powerful people can ignore what will later turn out to have been potentially life-saving signals.

Finally, many a present-day executive may sympathise with Caesar when he says, in Scene II of Act I:

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[63] *I have o'ershot myself* = 'ich war voreilig'
[64] meet = 'passend'
[65] *rent* = 'Riss'
[66] *soothsayer* = 'Wahrsager'
[67] *Beware the Ides of March* = 'Hüte Dich vor den Iden des März'

Let me have men about me that are fat;
Sleek-headed[68] *men and such as sleep o' nights:*
Yond[69] *Cassius has a lean and hungry look;*
He thinks too much: such men are dangerous.

Although the rather nice bit about fat men may be a consolation to some, it is unlikely to pass muster under the critical eye of modern dieticians, nutritionists and corporate health advisors. However, the bit about the danger posed by thinking people will no doubt resonate strongly with those of you who have the singular misfortune to lead and, more difficult still, control lots of intelligent people: a fate shared by all those who manage knowledge-based organisations such as high-tech companies – or indeed universities.

Julius Caesar and *Macbeth* are of course not the only Shakespeare plays to deal with power. Another very notable example is *King Lear*. The themes dealt with in *Lear* include power-sharing, succession, and the touchy issue of relinquishing power and yet wanting to hold on to it. As John Whitney from Columbia Business School is quoted as saying in one of his classes, Lear "made the transition to being an imperial C.E.O – he was a victim of flattery,[70] terribly flawed."[71]

In our first two sections, dealing with 'power and ambition' and 'success and failure' respectively, we have encountered several archetypal dilemmas and conflicts, as well as quite a breadth and depth of emotions. In the following section, we'll extend this range a bit further, addressing another key element of the human condition, namely self-doubt. The text I'd like to introduce to you is a sonnet, once again by Shakespeare.

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[68] *sleek-headed* = 'kahl(geschoren)'
[69] *yond* = 'dort drüben'
[70] *flattery* = 'Schmeichelei'
[71] Quoted in Herring (1998).

(3) SELF-DOUBT

SONNET XXIX

When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes
I all alone beweep[72] my outcast[73] state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless[74] cries,
And look upon myself, and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featured like him, like him with friends possessed,
Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least;
Yet in these thoughts my self almost despising,[75]
Haply[76] I think on thee, and then my state,
Like to the lark[77] at break of day arising
From sullen[78] earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;
For thy[79] sweet love remembered such wealth brings
That then I scorn[80] to change my state with kings.

The speaking persona, the "I" of the poem, is plagued by self-doubt. He pities himself to the point of self-contempt. He is dissatisfied with everything and envious of everybody: those with apparently better prospects in life, those who look different, have different friends, or different skills. There appears to be no remedy; the situation is well and truly hopeless, caught as he is in a downward spiral of misery.

However, the mood changes, and it does so at a point in the sonnet which is structurally marked and quite often represents a turning point in such poems,

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[72] *to beweep* = 'beweinen'
[73] *outcast* = 'ausgestoßen'
[74] *bootless* = 'sinnlos'
[75] *to despise* = 'verachten'
[76] *haply = happily* = 'glücklich'
[77] *lark* = 'Lerche'
[78] *sullen* = 'düster'
[79] *thy* = 'dein'
[80] *to scorn* = 'verachten'

namely the beginning of the third so-called 'quartrain', or group of four lines. In a Shakespearean sonnet, the compulsory 14 lines are divided into three quartrains and a couplet with two lines. Whereas the first two quartrains usually set the scene and present an argument, the third often introduces a different perspective. Here, *yet* in line 9 is the signal for this on the surface of the text. The mood change is reflected by a noticeable change in style. While the first eight lines were rather dry and factual, the six that follow are rich in poetic imagery, the lark flying high in the morning, singing at the gate of heaven. If you wanted to use a musical analogy, you could say that there is a change from minor to major key.[81] Crucially, the mood change is brought about by the speaker's realisation that love makes him wealthy in such a way that he wouldn't even want to swap places with a king – the ultimate symbol of power, 'richness' and glamour. Remember how the daffodils brought 'wealth' in Wordsworth's poem? There are about two hundred years between the two poems, and they were written in substantially different economic and political climates, yet the basic idea is the same.

The leadership lesson that can be derived from Shakespeare's sonnet is a two-fold one. Looking inward, executives may recognise self-doubt and envy in themselves, but they will also need to identify this well-known cluster of self-destructive emotions in their subordinates. And we all know the type, don't we? People who may actually have a lot going for them and could make a much more positive contribution if only they stopped doing themselves down, valuing what they have rather than what is, for some reason, beyond their reach. Helping others overcome self-doubt is key to motivation because it unleashes potential. Admittedly, you are unlikely to be able to achieve this by bestowing on all your employees the kind of 'love' that Shakespeare most probably had in mind. For romantic love, therefore, substitute appreciation, respect, praise, even a kind of friendship perhaps, and you can make the message work for you.

On quite a different, more 'meta' kind of level, the sonnet as a poetic form can teach us a lot about how creativity can flourish even within a very rigid

[81] *from minor to major key* = 'von Moll zu Dur'

structural framework. What a tight-fitting straightjacket Shakespeare was in: the number of lines he was allowed to use was prescribed, as were rules as to which lines had to rhyme with which, and about the number of stressed syllables per line. And yet he wrote a total of 154 sonnets, of which no two are alike. They are all inspired by creative originality of the highest order, and are all singularly and immortally beautiful. Next time your staff complain that they cannot be creative because you have given them too many rules (the type of moaning that professors, by the way, are quite good at), just tell them to follow Shakespeare's example. The success of this measure depends crucially, of course, on your staff being geniuses - but I'm taking that for granted.

That remark, ever-so-slighty cynical, ties in rather well with my fourth theme, the fool, or court jester.[82]

(4) THE ROLE OF THE COURT JESTER

Quite a few of Shakespeare's plays feature a fool. At royal courts, jesters enjoyed freedom of speech, a privilege as unusual at court as it is in present-day corporations. Under the guise of clownish behaviour, the fool may say uncomfortable things, and in doing so, look beyond day-to-day politics. As Regan says in *King Lear*,

> *Jesters do oft prove prophets.*
> (King Lear, V.iii.72)

The fool's position is a precarious[83] one. He has no money, formal power or protective networks, and his job description includes the dangerous task of contradicting his boss – which is something that people *inside* the hierachical power structures of the court are not allowed to do. In *Shakespeare on Management*, Paul Corrigan explains:

> "Somebody has to find a way of letting the king know he is doing absurd

[82] *court jester* = 'Hofnarr'
[83] *precarious* = 'unsicher, gefährdet'

> things that endanger not just his kingdom but his own health and happiness. Someone has to find a way, despite all his power and anger, of telling him the truth. (…) Telling the truth can be a dangerous business – which is one of the reasons senior managers often do not get told the truth. Their very power and position creates fear for those who want to speak out" (Corrigan 1999: 195-196).

The lesson, then, Corrigan argues, is that

> "for leaders to be told difficult messages, they need staff who are close to them, who have the telling of truth in their job descriptions. Such staff need to be outside the orthodox power structure and have a clear relationship with the leader with considerable opportunity for access. They may have to find unusual ways of getting the truth across to their leaders but they must always recognize, even under powerful pressure to lie, that this is their prime task. A wise leader will ensure that they have some sort of protection to encourage the truth telling – despite the power imbalance and despite the difficult experiences of truth telling, leaders will always need to hear the truth and devise a staffing organization that will ensure this happens" (Corrigan 1999: 205).

If you wish to read up on this theme, I would recommend the insightful and very readable volume by Wüthrich, Winter and Philipp (2002), entitled *Die Rückkehr des Hofnarren*.

It is time to move on now to Themes 5 and 6, personal transformation and social responsibility, which I can deal with in one go, because they both feature in the same story, *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens.

(5) PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

At the centre of Dickens' story we have – guess who – a businessman: Ebenezer Scrooge by name, successful, self-confident, dismissive of anything not

obviously useful to his business, and a miser[84] – so much so, in fact, that his name, Scrooge, was to become a synonym of *miser*. In his case, stinginess is not cool. Scrooge's *Geiz ist nicht geil*, nor is his blinkeredly utilitarian outlook on life. Effectively, he has become a recluse,[85] rejecting even very kind offers of human company, for example from his nephew. On Christmas Eve, Ebenezer Scrooge is visited by three ghosts, who make him look at the past, the present and the future. They hold a mirror up to him, and what he sees deeply unsettles him. For instance, in the past he sees that, when he was a young man, he was different; he loved someone and was loved back. In the future, not only does he see his own grave and realise that no one seems to miss him, he is also told that his employee's youngest child, Tiny Tim, has died. Tim, physically disabled and clearly ill, has died because his father's wages were so low that Tim could not be given the food and medicine he needed.

The first ghost to appear is that of Scrooge's former business partner, Jacob Marley, now deceased. Marley has heavy chains around his feet.

> *"You are fettered[86] said Scrooge, trembling. "Tell me why?"*

And the Ghost replies:

> *"I wear the chain I forged in life," (…)* [What a deep, deep psychological truth!] *"I made it link by link, and yard by yard; I girded it on[87] of my own free will, and of my own free will I wore it. Is its pattern strange to you?" (…) "Or would you know," pursued the Ghost, "the weight and length of the strong coil[88] you bear yourself? It was full as heavy and as long as this, seven Christmas Eves ago. You have laboured on it, since. It is a ponderous[89] chain!"*

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[84] *miser* = 'Geizhals'
[85] *recluse* = 'Einsiedler'
[86] *fettered* = 'gefesselt'
[87] *to gird on* = 'umgürten'
[88] *coil* = 'Drahtschlinge'
[89] *ponderous* = 'schwer'

Although the significance of this powerful visual metaphor, the chain, is beginning to dawn upon Scrooge, his old value system reasserts itself when he says:

> *"But you were always a good man of business, Jacob."*

To which the Ghost, however, replies:

> *"Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy,[90] forbearance[91] and benevolence,[92] were, all, my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business!"*

Finally Marley leaves, but not without having reminded Scrooge that he has his own future in his hands:

> *"I am here to-night to warn you, that you have yet a chance and hope of escaping my fate."*

Unlike Julius Caesar, Scrooge does listen. On Christmas morning, after two more visions, Scrooge wakes up and is a changed man. The self-reflection encouraged by the ghosts has fundamentally transformed him. Dickens leaves us in no doubt that this transformation was a painful one. He says of the waking Scrooge:

> *"He had been sobbing[93] violently in his conflict with the Spirit, and his face was wet with tears."*

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[90] *mercy* = 'Mitleid'
[91] *forbearance* = 'Nachsicht'
[92] *benevolence* = 'Güte'
[93] *to sob* = 'schluchzen'

And then Scrooge is overcome by a rapturous happiness and a sense of enormous liberation which reconnects him with his own emotions, with humanity, and with nature. Most importantly perhaps, he has learnt to laugh again:

> *"I don't know what to do!" cried Scrooge, laughing and crying in the same breath; and making a perfect Laocoön of himself with his stockings. 'I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a school-boy. I am as giddy as a drunken man. A merry Christmas to every-body! A happy New Year to all the world! Hallo here! Whoop! Hallo!*
>
> *It's all right, it's all true, it all happened. Ha ha ha!*
>
> *Really, for a man who had been out of practice for so many years, it was a splendid laugh, a most illustrious laugh. The father of a long, long line of briliant laughs!*
>
> *'I don't know what day of the month it is!' said Scrooge. "I don't know how long I've been among the Spirits. I don't know anything. I'm quite a baby. Never mind. I don't care. I'd rather be a baby. Hallo! Whoop! Hallo here!*
>
> *He was checked in his transports[94] by the churches ringing out the lustiest peals he had ever heard. Clash, clang, hammer, ding, dong, bell. Bell, dong, ding, hammer, clang, clash! Oh, glorious, glorious!*
>
> *(…) Golden sunlight; Heavenly sky; sweet fresh air; merry bells. Oh, glorious. Glorious!*

Remember the awakening described in the sonnet by Shakespeare? (*[M]y state, / Like to the lark at break of day arising / From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate?*) Scrooge seems to be in a very similar mood.

There is no indication in Dickens' story that Scrooge stops being a businessman, or no longer wants to make a good profit. Not at all. The story does

[94] *transports* = 'Verzückung'

say that Scrooge becomes "a good master" and "a good man", and that he raises his employee's salary to ensure that his family can be fed properly; but to all intents and purposes Scrooge remains the boss. Thus, Dickens' message here is not one of social revolution, but of personal transformation and the re-establishment of an equilibrium, or at least a more balanced relationship, between business and other value systems. Essentially, Scrooge faces up to a fundamental question of priorities. In *The Christmas Carol*, business is put into perspective. It is put into its place; no more and no less.

It is now time to leave my first section, on content and themes, and move on to my second and much shorter section, on language.

4. Linguistic creativity

Clearly, if we're interested in creativity in language, literature is one of the places to look. Metaphor, alliteration, rhythm (or "metre") and rhyme, to name but a few techniques, all contribute to the aesthetic quality and persuasive effect of language.

In this, there is an interesting parallel between literature and advertising, as well as other persuasive genres in the business world, such as motivational speeches and annual reports.

Creativity in advertising language is, by itself, such a vast and interesting topic that one could devote an entire lecture course to it. At this rather late hour, I daresay you would consider this a mixed blessing. So I'll confine myself to a few up-to-date examples and then move on to a literary text that uses the same techniques.

A recent example of linguistic innovation in advertising is the slogan for the new Fiat 500:

You are, we car

It is a bit of a mystery – quite deliberate, I'm sure – what exactly *we car* means; it could be anything from 'we make cars' to 'we are so passionate about cars that we have become like them' (a sort of variation on the *Toys 'R Us* idea). But what I am actually more interested in is the syntactic anomaly, because of course *car* is a noun, not a verb; it describes a thing, not an action. Or maybe I should say it wasn't a verb until the copy writers for Fiat used it as one. The jury is still out on whether this usage will catch on, in the way that *google* has become a verb, even though a huge dictionary published only eight years ago (the 2000 edition of the *Collins English Dictionary*) has no entry for it. We'll just have to wait and see whether in a few years' time you will 'car to work' rather than drive.

Occasionally, advertising uses language, or rather languages, creatively by mixing them. *Give Geld a Chance* says an insurer's ad, and *Form Follows Menschen* one by an office furniture manufacturer. And the blatantly macho advertising campaign by a Swiss watch manufacturer highlights the masculinity of its product by manipulating a core area of German grammar and calling one of its watches *Der Uhr*.

Ads like this immediately bring one of Ernst Jandl's[95] poems to mind. Entitled *Chanson*, it is trilingual, mixing German, English, and French:

CHANSON

l'amour
die tür
the chair
der bauch

the chair
die tür
l'amour
der bauch

der bauch
die tür
the chair
l'amour

[95] Austrian poet (1925 – 2000)

l'amour
die tür
the chair

le tür
d'amour
der chair
the bauch

le chair
der tür
die bauch
th'amour

le bauch
th'amour
die chair
der tür

l'amour
die tür
the chair

am'lour
tie dür
che thair
ber dauch

tie dair
che lauch
am thür
ber'dour

che dauch
am'thour
ber dür
tie lair

l'amour
die tür
the chair

On one level, the poem is a superb example of creative language play, as many of Jandl's poems of course are. On quite another level, though, it can be

read as a metaphor of change, which is such an inescapable and potentially disturbing part of present-day organisational reality that we ought to be grateful for anything that helps us achieve a better understanding of the processes involved, and of human reactions to them.

At the beginning of the poem we have a situation of complete order that we fully understand:

l'amour
die tür
the chair
der bauch

Jandl then starts to shuffle these four elements around a bit, putting *the chair* first, and then *der bauch*, but that's about it. He effects a minor restructuring, if you will, but we can still quite easily get our bearings;[96] we know where we stand. After four stanzas,[97] however, something rather weird happens. With utter disrespect for the historical link between the definite articles *le, der* and *the* and the nouns they rightfully belong to, he creates new combinations: *le tür*, *der chair*, and so on. But at least he leaves the units intact, *le* remains *le*, *der* remains *der*, and *bauch* remains *bauch*. Also, he leaves the articles where they belong in the three languages, namely in front of the nouns, so that, with a bit of effort we have no difficulty in coping with this second re-shuffle. Things may seem a bit odd, but they are still reasonably familiar.

Alas, this sense of security is not meant to last. After another four stanzas, all units are shattered to pieces and the pieces reassembled in haphazard ways that respect neither history and traditional structures nor our desire to understand the result: *am'lour, tie dür, che thair, ber dauch*. This isn't English, but it's not French or German either: it’s an arbitrary mixture that simply doesn’t make sense. A quote from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* springs to mind, from Act I, Scene V: *The time is out of joint*[98] – here it is structure which is quite clearly out of joint.

[96] *bearings* = 'Orientierung'
[97] *stanza* = 'Strophe'
[98] *out of joint* = 'aus den Fugen geraten'

Fortunately for the reader, Jandl is a kind poet and not a restructuring consultant. He offers relief in the last stanza, by putting the elements back where they belong. After all this linguistic mayhem,[99] to once again hear or read *l'amour / die tür / the chair* comes as an immense relief. At last, order has been re-established, and with it, understanding is once again secured. Nevertheless, we will remember the experience of having seen, heard and quite possibly physically felt the disorientation that comes with chaos and alienation, and will appreciate order and familiarity all the more for it. The disintegration and re-assembly could also be read as a reminder that man-made structures are essentially arbitrary. Jandl shows us combinations that might be possible, because of course there is nothing God-given about linguistic form, or the link between form and content. It is by no means absurd to imagine a language that has *ber* and *am* as definite articles, and *dauch* and *thür* as nouns. On a philosophical note, therefore, the poem is also an exercise in contingency. Things could be different: a hard lesson to learn for those brought up on a more mechanistic and simplistic diet.

5. Classroom experience and implications for management education

Finally, and very briefly, just a few comments on my experience introducing WU students to English literature as part of an elective.[100] The response was very positive indeed. Students' interest, enthusiasm and readiness to engage with rather difficult texts never faltered. Neither the relevance for their future careers, nor the raison d'être of the course, were ever called into question. At the beginning of the class, I had asked them to note down their expectations of the course and, on a piece of paper, to complete the sentence "I'll consider this course a success if…". One student had written, "if I leave with a smile on my face". Most of them did. One student told me a week later that he had actually gone and

[99] *mayhem* = 'Chaos'
[100] *elective* = '(freies) Wahlfach'

bought James Joyce's *Ulysses*. At which point I took a solemn oath never again to underestimate WU students.

Having said all that, there can be no doubt that our standard, core curriculum is extremely important, and that this must include honing[101] students' analytical skills. Believe me, I'd be the last person to deny this. On the other hand, the traditional body of knowledge, and the sort of conventional skills that tend to go with it, are increasingly seen as inadequate in coping with the challenges of a rapidly changing competitive and social environment. In their 1998 paper in the *Harvard Business Review*, a team of professors from MIT, Richard Lester, Michael Piore and Kamal Malek (1998), argue that attention ought to be shifted towards what they call "interpretive management". Instead of remaining "locked into the mechanical, engineering mind-set of the industrial age" (p. 87), "[t]he interpretive manager, unlike the analytical manager, embraces ambiguity and improvisation as essential to innovation. She [sic] seeks openings, not endings" (p. 89). Drawing conclusions for management education, the authors point out that

> "[t]he implication for education is clear: to train interpretive leaders, management teaching would need to be broadened, focusing on developing not only problem-solving skills but also the humanistic skills traditionally associated with the more interpretive fields of *literature*, history, and anthropology. Management would need to be viewed as much as a liberal art as a science" (p. 90, italics added).

Taking this argument one step further, we might want to consider what the implications are for the strategies pursued not just by individual program directors or in curriculum planning, but by entire business schools. According to Ken Starkey, Professor of Management – and, incidentally, Director of External Relations – at Nottingham Business School,

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[101] *to hone* = 'schärfen'

> "[t]he long-term viability[102] of the business school, as of the university, will depend upon the vigorous defence of its identity and social utility which will require that it engages (...) with concepts that might, currently, seem alien to its mission – *character, culture and the opening of the mind to more than the mere economic* (Starkey and Tempest 2006: 110, italics added)".

6. Conclusion

Let me conclude by returning to the question of why – and how – literature may be relevant for business. As Robert Brawer – an ex-CEO teaching at New York University – explains in the Introduction to his book *Fictions of Business*:

> "The fictions of business are indispensable to us because it is the business of fiction to recreate the world we know, or think we know, to make us see it – and ourselves – with new eyes. The examples I select to illustrate some of the universal human issues in business range across the centuries. In the kinds of insights they offer, though, they are equally current. Why? Because they do *not* traffic in the fashionable buzzwords and managerial ideologies of the day, but rather stimulate reflection on the motives, ideas, and principles that govern human affairs, regardless of time, place, and circumstances (Brawer 1998: 5-6, original italics).

This is not a mainstream approach. But then, when you travel, it is generally *off* the beaten track that the most inspiring discoveries can be made. As the American poet Robert Frost puts it, at the end of a poem entitled *The Road Not Taken*:

> *Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –*
> *I took the one less traveled by,*
> *And that has made all the difference.*

[102] *viability* = 'Lebensfähigkeit'

In choosing this topic, both for my class and for tonight's talk, I took the road less travelled by. And, in deciding to come here and listen, you did the same. I daresay that for you and me that has made quite a difference.

And who knows, next time you look at a chart showing breathtaking profits, maybe you, too, like the managers in a cartoon from *The New Yorker*,[103] will say "At times like this, I wish I were a poet".

Thank you for your attention.

[103] 10 October 2005

Appendix

From Act III, Scene 2 of *Julius Caesar* by William Shakespeare

ANTONY

Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;
I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.
The evil that men do lives after them;
The good is oft interred with their bones;
So let it be with Caesar. The noble Brutus
Hath told you Caesar was ambitious:
If it were so, it was a grievous fault,
And grievously hath Caesar answer'd it.
Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest –
For Brutus is an honourable man;
So are they all, all honourable men –
Come I to speak in Caesar's funeral.
He was my friend, faithful and just to me:
But Brutus says he was ambitious;
And Brutus is an honourable man.
He hath brought many captives home to Rome
Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill:
Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?
When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept:
Ambition should be made of sterner stuff:
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
And Brutus is an honourable man.
You all did see that on the Lupercal
I thrice presented him a kingly crown,
Which he did thrice refuse: was this ambition?
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
And, sure, he is an honourable man.
I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke,
But here I am to speak what I do know.
You all did love him once, not without cause:
What cause withholds you then, to mourn for him?
O judgment! thou art fled to brutish beasts,
And men have lost their reason. Bear with me;
My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar,
And I must pause till it come back to me.

First Citizen

Methinks there is much reason in his sayings.

Second Citizen

If thou consider rightly of the matter,
Caesar has had great wrong.

Third Citizen

Has he, masters?
I fear there will a worse come in his place.

Fourth Citizen

Mark'd ye his words? He would not take the crown;
Therefore 'tis certain he was not ambitious.

First Citizen

If it be found so, some will dear abide it.

Second Citizen

Poor soul! his eyes are red as fire with weeping.

Third Citizen

There's not a nobler man in Rome than Antony.

Fourth Citizen

Now mark him, he begins again to speak.

ANTONY

But yesterday the word of Caesar might
Have stood against the world; now lies he there.
And none so poor to do him reverence.
O masters, if I were disposed to stir
Your hearts and minds to mutiny and rage,
I should do Brutus wrong, and Cassius wrong,
Who, you all know, are honourable men:
I will not do them wrong; I rather choose
To wrong the dead, to wrong myself and you,
Than I will wrong such honourable men.
But here's a parchment with the seal of Caesar;
I found it in his closet, 'tis his will:
Let but the commons hear this testament –
Which, pardon me, I do not mean to read –
And they would go and kiss dead Caesar's wounds
And dip their napkins in his sacred blood,
Yea, beg a hair of him for memory,
And, dying, mention it within their wills,
Bequeathing it as a rich legacy
Unto their issue.

Fourth Citizen

We'll hear the will: read it, Mark Antony.

All

The will, the will! we will hear Caesar's will.

ANTONY

Have patience, gentle friends, I must not read it;
It is not meet you know how Caesar loved you.
You are not wood, you are not stones, but men;
And, being men, bearing the will of Caesar,
It will inflame you, it will make you mad:
'Tis good you know not that you are his heirs;
For, if you should, O, what would come of it!

Fourth Citizen

Read the will; we'll hear it, Antony;
You shall read us the will, Caesar's will.

ANTONY

Will you be patient? will you stay awhile?
I have o'ershot myself to tell you of it:
I fear I wrong the honourable men
Whose daggers have stabb'd Caesar; I do fear it.

Fourth Citizen

They were traitors: honourable men!

All

The will! the testament!

Second Citizen

They were villains, murderers: the will! read the will.

ANTONY

You will compel me, then, to read the will?
Then make a ring about the corpse of Caesar,
And let me show you him that made the will.
Shall I descend? and will you give me leave?

Several Citizens

Come down.

Second Citizen

Descend.

Third Citizen

You shall have leave.

ANTONY comes down

Fourth Citizen

A ring; stand round.

First Citizen

Stand from the hearse, stand from the body.

Second Citizen

Room for Antony, most noble Antony.

ANTONY

Nay, press not so upon me; stand far off.

Several Citizens

Stand back; room; bear back.

ANTONY

If you have tears, prepare to shed them now.
You all do know this mantle: I remember
The first time ever Caesar put it on;
'Twas on a summer's evening, in his tent,
That day he overcame the Nervii:
Look, in this place ran Cassius' dagger through:
See what a rent the envious Casca made:
Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabb'd;

And as he pluck'd his cursed steel away,
Mark how the blood of Caesar follow'd it,
As rushing out of doors, to be resolved
If Brutus so unkindly knock'd, or no;
For Brutus, as you know, was Caesar's angel:
Judge, O you gods, how dearly Caesar loved him!
This was the most unkindest cut of all;
For when the noble Caesar saw him stab,
Ingratitude, more strong than traitors' arms,
Quite vanquish'd him: then burst his mighty heart;
And, in his mantle muffling up his face,
Even at the base of Pompey's statua,
Which all the while ran blood, great Caesar fell.
O, what a fall was there, my countrymen!
Then I, and you, and all of us fell down,
Whilst bloody treason flourish'd over us.
O, now you weep; and, I perceive, you feel
The dint of pity: these are gracious drops.
Kind souls, what, weep you when you but behold
Our Caesar's vesture wounded? Look you here,
Here is himself, marr'd, as you see, with traitors.

First Citizen

O piteous spectacle!

Second Citizen

O noble Caesar!

Third Citizen

O woful day!

Fourth Citizen

O traitors, villains!

First Citizen

O most bloody sight!

Second Citizen

We will be revenged.

All

Revenge! About! Seek! Burn! Fire! Kill! Slay!
Let not a traitor live!

ANTONY

Stay, countrymen.

First Citizen

Peace there! hear the noble Antony.

Second Citizen

We'll hear him, we'll follow him, we'll die with him.

ANTONY

Good friends, sweet friends, let me not stir you up
To such a sudden flood of mutiny.

They that have done this deed are honourable:
What private griefs they have, alas, I know not,
That made them do it: they are wise and honourable,
And will, no doubt, with reasons answer you.
I come not, friends, to steal away your hearts:
I am no orator, as Brutus is;
But, as you know me all, a plain blunt man,
That love my friend; and that they know full well
That gave me public leave to speak of him:
For I have neither wit, nor words, nor worth,
Action, nor utterance, nor the power of speech,
To stir men's blood: I only speak right on;
I tell you that which you yourselves do know;
Show you sweet Caesar's wounds, poor poor dumb mouths,
And bid them speak for me: but were I Brutus,
And Brutus Antony, there were an Antony
Would ruffle up your spirits and put a tongue
In every wound of Caesar that should move
The stones of Rome to rise and mutiny.

All

We'll mutiny.

First Citizen

We'll burn the house of Brutus.

Third Citizen

Away, then! come, seek the conspirators.

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