

If you are applying for the MA/MFA Classical Course, please make sure that one of your monologue choices is a Shakespeare option from this list.

If you are applying for a Professional Acting or Cert HE course but would like to be considered for MA/MFA Classical as a secondary preference, please make sure that your classical selection is a Shakespeare option from this list.

Anya — The Cherry Orchard

I left just before Easter and it was cold then. On the way there Charlotte kept talking and doing those awful tricks of hers. Why you ever landed me with Charlotte, I can't imagine. It was cold and snowing when we got to Paris. My French is atrocious. I find Mother living on the fourth floor somewhere and when I get there she has visitors, French people—some ladies and an old priest with a little book. The place is full of smoke and awfully uncomfortable. Suddenly I felt sorry for Mother, so sorry, I took her head in my arms and held her and just couldn't let go. Afterwards Mother was terribly sweet to me and kept crying. She'd already sold her visa near Menton and had nothing left, nothing at all. I hadn't any money either, there was hardly enough for the journey. And Mother simply won't understand. If we have a meal in a station restaurant

she asks for all the most expensive things and tips the waiters a rouble each. And Charlotte's no better. Then Yasha has to have his share as well, it was simply awful. Mother has this servant Yasha, you know, we've brought him with us.

Bassanio — The Merchant of Venice — Act I, Scene I

In Belmont is a lady richly left;
And she is fair, and, fairer than that word,
Of wondrous virtues: sometimes from her eyes
I did receive fair speechless messages:
Her name is Portia, nothing undervalued
To Cato's daughter, Brutus' Portia:
Nor is the wide world ignorant of her worth,
For the four winds blow in from every coast
Renowned suitors, and her sunny locks
Hang on her temples like a golden fleece;
Which makes her seat of Belmont Colchos' strand,
And many Jasons come in quest of her.
O my Antonio, had I but the means
To hold a rival place with one of them,
I have a mind presages me such thrift,
That I should questionless be fortunate!

Beatrice — Much Ado About Nothing — Act II, Scene I

How tartly that gentleman looks! I never can see him but I am heart-burned an hour after. He were an excellent man that were made just in the midway between him and Benedick: the one is too like an image and says nothing, and the other too like my lady's eldest son, evermore tattling. With a good leg and a good foot, uncle, and money enough in his purse, such a man would win any woman in the world, if a' could get her good-will.

Lord, I could not endure a husband with a beard on his face: I had rather lie in the woollen. He that hath a beard is more than a youth, and he that hath no beard is less than a man: and he that is more than a youth is not for me, and he that is less than a man, I am not for him: therefore, I will even take sixpence in earnest of the bear-ward, and lead his apes into hell; and there will the devil meet me, like an old cuckold, with horns on his head, and say 'Get you to heaven, Beatrice, get you to heaven; here's no place for you maids:' so deliver I up my apes, and away to Saint Peter for the heavens; he shows me where the bachelors sit, and there live we as merry as the day is long.

Would it not grieve a woman to be overmastered with a piece of valiant dust? to make an account of her life to a clod of wayward marl? No, uncle, I'll none: Adam's sons are my brethren; and, truly, I hold it a sin to match in my kindred.

For, hear me, Hero: wooing, wedding, and repenting, is as a Scotch jig, a measure, and a cinque pace: the first suit is hot and hasty, like a Scotch jig, and full as fantastical; the wedding, mannerly-modest, as a measure, full of state and ancientry; and then comes repentance and, with his bad legs, falls into the cinque pace faster and faster, till he sink into his grave.

I have a good eye, uncle; I can see a church by daylight.

Benvolio — Romeo & Juliet — Act III, Scene III

Tybalt, here slain, whom Romeo's hand did slay;
Romeo that spoke him fair, bade him bethink
How nice the quarrel was, and urged withal
Your high displeasure: all this uttered
With gentle breath, calm look, knees humbly bow'd,
Could not take truce with the unruly spleen
Of Tybalt deaf to peace, but that he tilts
With piercing steel at bold Mercutio's breast,
Who all as hot, turns deadly point to point,
And, with a martial scorn, with one hand beats
Cold death aside, and with the other sends
It back to Tybalt, whose dexterity,
Retorts it: Romeo he cries aloud,
'Hold, friends! friends, part!' and, swifter than
his tongue,
His agile arm beats down their fatal points,
And 'twixt them rushes; underneath whose arm
An envious thrust from Tybalt hit the life
Of stout Mercutio, and then Tybalt fled;
But by and by comes back to Romeo,
Who had but newly entertain'd revenge,
And to 't they go like lightning, for, ere I
Could draw to part them, was stout Tybalt slain.
And, as he fell, did Romeo turn and fly.
This is the truth, or let Benvolio die.

Biron — Love's Labour's Lost — Act I, Scene II

Why, all delights are vain; but that most vain,
Which with pain purchased doth inherit pain:
As, painfully to pore upon a book
To seek the light of truth; while truth the while
Doth falsely blind the eyesight of his look:
Light seeking light doth light of light beguile:
So, ere you find where light in darkness lies,
Your light grows dark by losing of your eyes.
Study me how to please the eye indeed By
fixing it upon a fairer eye,
Who dazzling so, that eye shall be his heed
And give him light that it was blinded by.
Study is like the heaven's glorious sun That
will not be deep-search'd with saucy looks:
Small have continual plodders ever won Save
base authority from others' books These
earthly godfathers of heaven's lights That give
a name to every fixed star
Have no more profit of their shining nights
Than those that walk and wot not what they
are. Too much to know is to know nought but
fame; And every godfather can give a name.

Boy — Henry V, Act III, Scene II

As young as I am, I have observ'd these three swashers. I am boy to them all three; but all they three, though they would serve me, could not be man to me; for indeed three such antics do not amount to a man.

For Bardolph, he is white-liver'd and red-fac'd; by the means whereof 'a faces it out, but fights not.

For Pistol, he hath a killing tongue and a quiet sword; by the means whereof 'a breaks words and keeps whole weapons.

For Nym, he hath heard that men of few words are the best men, and therefore he scorns to say his prayers lest 'a should be thought a coward; but his few bad words are match'd with as few good deeds; for 'a never broke any man's head but his own, and that was against a post when he was drunk.

They will steal anything, and call it purchase. Bardolph stole a lute-case, bore it twelve leagues, and sold it for three halfpence. Nym and Bardolph are sworn brothers in filching, and in Calais they stole a fire-shovel; I knew by that piece of service the men would carry coals.

They would have me as familiar with men's pockets as their gloves or their handkerchers; which makes much against my manhood, if I should take from another's pocket to put into mine; for it is plain pocketing up of wrongs.

I must leave them and seek some better service; their villainy goes against my weak stomach, and therefore I must cast it up.

Brutus —Julius Caesar — Act II, Scene I

It must be by his death: and for my part,
I know no personal cause to spurn at him,
But for the general. He would be crown'd:
How that might change his nature, there's the question.
It is the bright day that brings forth the adder;
And that craves wary walking. Crown him?--that;--
And then, I grant, we put a sting in him,
That at his will he may do danger with.
The abuse of greatness is, when it disjoins
Remorse from power: and, to speak truth of Caesar,
I have not known when his affections sway'd
More than his reason. But 'tis a common proof,
That lowliness is young ambition's ladder,
Whereto the climber-upward turns his face;
But when he once attains the upmost round.
He then unto the ladder turns his back,
Looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees
By which he did ascend. So Caesar may.
Then, lest he may, prevent. And, since the quarrel
Will bear no colour for the thing he is,
Fashion it thus; that what he is, augmented,
Would run to these and these extremities:
And therefore think him as a serpent's egg
Which, hatch'd, would, as his kind, grow mischievous,
And kill him in the shell.

Cassius — Julius Caesar — Act I, Scene II

Well Brutus, thou art Noble: yet I see,
Thy Honorable Mettle may be wrought
From that it is dispos'd: therefore it is meet,
That Noble mindes keepe euer with their likes:
For who so firme, that cannot be seduc'd?
Caesar doth beare me hard, but he loues Brutus.
If I were Brutus now, and he were Cassius,
He should not humor me. I will this Night,
In seuerall Hands, in at his Windowes throw,
As if they came from seuerall Citizens,
Writings, all tending to the great opinion
That Rome holds of his Name: wherein obscurely
Caesars Ambition shall be glanced at.
And after this, let Caesar seat him sure,
For wee will shake him, or worse dayes endure.

Crispinella — The Dutch Courtesan

Faith, strive against the flesh. Marry? No, faith; husbands are like lots in the lottery: you may draw forty blanks before you find one that has any prize in him.

A husband generally is a careless, domineering thing that grows like coral, which as long as it is under water is soft and tender, but as soon as it has got his branch above the waves is presently hard, stiff, not to be bowed but burst; so when your husband is a suitor and under your choice,

Lord, how supple he is, how obsequious, how at your service, sweet lady!

Once married, got up his head above, a stiff, crooked, knobby, inflexible, tyrannous creature he grows; then they turn like water: more you would embrace, the less you hold. I'll live my own woman, and if the worst come to the worst, I had rather prove a wag than a fool.

Edmund — King Lear Act V, Scene I

To both these sisters have I sworn my love;
Each jealous of the other, as the stung
Are of the adder. Which of them shall I take?
Both? one? or neither? Neither can be enjoy'd,
If both remain alive: to take the widow
Exasperates, makes mad her sister Goneril;
And hardly shall I carry out my side,
Her husband being alive. Now then we'll use
His countenance for the battle; which being done,
Let her who would be rid of him devise
His speedy taking off. As for the mercy
Which he intends to Lear and to Cordelia,
The battle done, and they within our power,
Shall never see his pardon; for my state
Stands on me to defend, not to debate.

Goneril — King Lear, Act I, Scene III

Did my father strike my gentleman for chiding of his fool?

By day and night he wrongs me; every hour
He flashes into one gross crime or other,
That sets us all at odds: I'll not endure it:
His knights grow riotous, and himself upbraids us
On every trifle. When he returns from hunting,
I will not speak with him; say I am sick:
If you come slack of former services,
You shall do well; the fault of it I'll answer.

Put on what weary negligence you please,
You and your fellows; I'll have it come to question:
If he dislike it, let him to our sister,
Whose mind and mine, I know, in that are one,
Not to be over-ruled. Idle old man,
That still would manage those authorities
That he hath given away! Now, by my life,
Old fools are babes again; and must be used
With cheques as flatteries,--when they are seen abused.
Remember what I tell you.

And let his knights have colder looks among you;
What grows of it, no matter; advise your fellows so:
I would breed from hence occasions, and I shall,
That I may speak: I'll write straight to my sister, To
hold my very course. Prepare for dinner.

Gratiano — The Merchant of Venice, Act I, Scene I

Let me play the fool:
With mirth and laughter let old wrinkles come,
And let my liver rather heat with wine
Than my heart cool with mortifying groans.
Why should a man, whose blood is warm within,
Sit like his grandsire cut in alabaster?
Sleep when he wakes and creep into the jaundice
By being peevish? I tell thee what, Antonio--
I love thee, and it is my love that speaks--
There are a sort of men whose visages
Do cream and mantle like a standing pond,
And do a wilful stillness entertain,
With purpose to be dress'd in an opinion
Of wisdom, gravity, profound conceit,
As who should say 'I am Sir Oracle,
And when I ope my lips let no dog bark!'
O my Antonio, I do know of these
That therefore only are reputed wise
For saying nothing; when, I am very sure,
If they should speak, would almost damn those ears,
Which, hearing them, would call their brothers fools.
I'll tell thee more of this another time:
But fish not, with this melancholy bait,
For this fool gudgeon, this opinion.
Come, good Lorenzo. Fare ye well awhile:
I'll end my exhortation after dinner.

Hero — Much Ado About Nothing — Act III, Scene I

Good Margaret, run thee to the parlor;
There shalt thou find my cousin Beatrice
Proposing with the prince and Claudio:
Whisper her ear and tell her, I and Ursula
Walk in the orchard and our whole discourse
Is all of her; say that thou overheard'st us;
And bid her steal into the pleached bower,
Where honeysuckles, ripen'd by the sun,
Forbid the sun to enter, like favourites,
Made proud by princes, that advance their pride
Against that power that bred it: there will she hide her,
To listen our purpose. This is thy office;
Bear thee well in it and leave us alone.
Now, Ursula, when Beatrice doth come,
As we do trace this alley up and down,
Our talk must only be of Benedick.
When I do name him, let it be thy part
To praise him more than ever man did merit:
My talk to thee must be how Benedick
Is sick in love with Beatrice. Of this matter
Is little Cupid's crafty arrow made,
That only wounds by hearsay.
Now begin;
For look where Beatrice, like a lapwing, runs
Close by the ground, to hear our conference.

Hotspur — Henry IV Part I, Act I, Scene III

Revolted Mortimer!

He never did fall off, my sovereign liege,
But by the chance of war; to prove that true
Needs no more but one tongue for all those wounds,
Those mouthed wounds, which valiantly he took
When on the gentle Severn's sedgy bank,
In single opposition, hand to hand,
He did confound the best part of an hour
In changing hardiment with great Glendower:
Three times they breathed and three times did they drink,
Upon agreement, of swift Severn's flood;
Who then, affrighted with their bloody looks,
Ran fearfully among the trembling reeds,
And hid his crisp head in the hollow bank,
Bloodstained with these valiant combatants.
Never did base and rotten policy
Colour her working with such deadly wounds;
Nor could the noble Mortimer
Receive so many, and all willingly:
Then let not him be slander'd with revolt.

Jean — After Mrs Rochester

Have you noticed how it is always rich people who tell you that money isn't important. Sitting in their beautiful homes in their expensive clothes they tell you that money is nothing but a nuisance. Of course, if you talk to anyone who's ever wondered where the next week's rent is coming from they'll tell you the truth. How anyone can expect a decent human impulse, a single altruistic thought from someone with holes in their shoes I don't know. Poverty does not make you brave and resourceful it makes you jealous and angry and ashamed. In a world that tells you 'Spend. Spend. Spend and you'll be happy.' To be poor is to be nothing. And they wonder why there are thieves.

Juliet — Romeo & Juliet — Act III, Scene III

Come, civil night,
Thou sober-suited matron all in black,
And learn me how to lose a winning match,
Played for a pair of stainless maidenhoods.
Hood my unmanned blood, bating in my cheeks,
With thy black mantle, till strange love grow bold,
Think true love acted simple modesty.
Come, night, come, Romeo, come, thou day in night,
For thou wilt lie upon the wings of night
Whiter than new snow upon a raven's back.
Come, gentle night, come, loving black-browed night,
Give me my Romeo, and when I shall die
Take him and cut him out in little stars,
And he will make the face of heaven so fine
That all the world will be in love with night
And pay no worship to the garish sun.
O, I have bought the mansion of a love
But not possessed it, and though I am sold,
Not yet enjoyed. So tedious is this day
As is the night before some festival
To an impatient child that hath new robes
And may not wear them.

Juliet — Romeo & Juliet — Act II, Scene II

Thou know'st the mask of night is on my face,
Else would a maiden blush bepaint my cheek
For that which thou hast heard me speak to-night
Fain would I dwell on form, fain, fain deny
What I have spoke: but farewell compliment!
Dost thou love me? I know thou wilt say 'Ay,'
And I will take thy word: yet if thou swear'st,
Thou mayst prove false; at lovers' perjuries
Then say, Jove laughs. O gentle Romeo,
If thou dost love, pronounce it faithfully:
Or if thou think'st I am too quickly won,
I'll frown and be perverse and say thee nay,
So thou wilt woo; but else, not for the world.
In truth, fair Montague, I am too fond,
And therefore thou mayst think my 'havior light:
But trust me, gentleman, I'll prove more true
Than those that have more cunning to be strange.
I should have been more strange, I must confess,
But that thou overheard'st, ere I was ware,
My true love's passion: therefore pardon me,
And not impute this yielding to light love,
Which the dark night hath so discovered.

Konstantin — The Seagull - Checkhov (Simon Stephens adaptation)

It was such a pathetic failure. It must have been awful for you. And women, yes? They never forgive a failure do they? I burnt it. The play. Every page. Every copy. If you had the slightest idea how desperate I am. Every day you get colder and colder. It's started to scare me. It's like I've woken up and the lake has dried into the earth. You're wrong, you know. About people not being able to understand me. That's not the problem. The problem is that there's nothing about me for people to understand. Everybody hated my play. Even you. I thought you were my inspiration. But you clearly find me ridiculous. I mean, clearly. I'm insignificant. To you. I mean nothing. Do you know what I am to you? I'm ordinary.

I understand! I do! I really — I do understand. It's like there is a nail hammered into the centre of my brain. And that nail, that fucking nail, like my vanity and my pride, is sucking the blood out of me. Sucking it like a snake.

Now here. This is a real writer. Here he comes. Shh. Watch him. He's got his little notebook. Doesn't he? That's what real writers do. Like Hamlet. 'Words words words.' He doesn't even know you're here but look at you. The way you look at him. Your eyes light up. Don't worry. I won't get in your way.

Lady Macbeth — Macbeth — Act I, Scene V

Glamis thou art, and Cawdor; and shalt be
What thou art promis'd.—Yet do I fear thy nature:
It is too full o'th'milk of human kindness ,
To catch the nearest way. Thou wouldst be great;
Art not without ambition, but without
The illness should attend it: what thou wouldst highly,
That wouldst thou holily; wouldst not play false,
And yet wouldst wrongly win; thou'dst have, great Glamis,
That which cries, 'Thus thou must do,' if thou have it;
And that which rather thou dost fear to do,
Than wishest should be undone. Hie thee hither,
That I may pour my spirits in thine ear,
And chastise with the valour of my tongue
All that impedes thee from the golden round,
Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem
To have thee crown'd withal.

Osip — Wild Honey

Hot summer's day. Like today. In the forest here. I'm going along this track and I look round and there she is, she's standing in a little stream and she's holding her dress up with one hand and she's scooping up water in a dock leaf with the other. She scoops. She drinks. Scoops. Drinks. Scoops again, and pours it over her head. It's one of those days when you can feel the air heavy on you, and you can't hear anything but the buzzing of the flies...She pays no heed to me. Just another peasant, she thinks. So I go down to the edge of the stream, right close up to her, as close as I am to you now, and I just look at her. Like this, like I'm looking at you. And she stands there in the water in front of me, with her skirts up in her hand, and she bends, she scoops, she pours. And the water runs over her hair, over her face and her neck, then down over her dress, and all she says is: 'What are you staring at, idiot? Haven't you ever seen a human being before?' And she scoops and she pours, and I just stand gazing. Then suddenly she turns and gives me a sharp look. 'Oh,' she says, 'you've taken a fancy to me, have you?' And I say: 'I reckon I could kiss you and die.' So that made her laugh. 'All right,' she says, 'you can kiss me if you like.' Well, I felt as if I'd been thrown into a furnace. I went up to her- into the stream, boots and all, I didn't think twice- and I took her by the shoulder, very lightly, and kissed her right here, on her cheek, and here on her neck, as hard as ever I could.

Portia - Julius Caesar- Act II, Scene I

You've ungently, Brutus,
Stole from my bed: and yesternight, at supper,
You suddenly arose, and walk'd about,
Musing and sighing, with your arms across,
And when I ask'd you what the matter was,
You stared upon me with ungentle looks;
I urged you further; then you scratch'd your head,
And too impatiently stamp'd with your foot;
Yet I insisted, yet you answer'd not,
But, with an angry wafture of your hand,
Gave sign for me to leave you: so I did;
Fearing to strengthen that impatience
Which seem'd too much enkindled, and withal
Hoping it was but an effect of humour,
Which sometime hath his hour with every man.
It will not let you eat, nor talk, nor sleep,
And could it work so much upon your shape
As it hath much prevail'd on your condition,
I should not know you, Brutus. Dear my lord,
Make me acquainted with your cause of grief.
Brutus is wise, and, were he not in health,
He would embrace the means to come by it.

Portia — The Merchant of Venice — Act III, Scene II

I pray you, tarry: pause a day or two
Before you hazard; for, in choosing wrong, I
lose your company: therefore forbear awhile.
There's something tells me, but it is not love, I
would not lose you; and you know yourself,
Hate counsels not in such a quality.
But lest you should not understand me well,--
And yet a maiden hath no tongue but
thought, -I would detain you here some month
or two Before you venture for me. I could
teach you How to choose right, but I am then
forsworn; So will I never be: so may you miss
me; But if you do, you'll make me wish a sin,
That I had been forsworn. Beshrew your eyes,
They have o'erlook'd me and divided me; One
half of me is yours, the other half yours, Mine
own, I would say; but if mine, then yours, And
so all yours. O, these naughty times Put bars
between the owners and their rights! And so,
though yours, not yours. Prove it so, Let
fortune go to hell for it, not I.
I speak too long; but tis to peize the time,
To eke it and to draw it out in length,
To stay you from election.

Princess of France — Love's Labour's Lost — Act V, Scene II

A time, methinks, too short
To make a world-without-end bargain in.
No, no, my lord, your Grace is perjur'd much,
Full of dear guiltiness; and therefore this,
If for my love, as there is no such cause,
You will do aught- this shall you do for me:
Your oath I will not trust; but go with speed
To some forlorn and naked hermitage,
Remote from all the pleasures of the world;
There stay until the twelve celestial signs
Have brought about the annual reckoning.
If this austere insociable life
Change not your offer made in heat of blood,
If frosts and fasts, hard lodging and thin weeds,
Nip not the gaudy blossoms of your love,
But that it bear this trial, and last love,
Then, at the expiration of the year,
Come, challenge me, challenge me by these deserts;
And, by this virgin palm now kissing thine,
I will be thine; and, till that instant, shut
Raining the tears of lamentation
For the remembrance of my father's death.
If this thou do deny, let our hands part,
Neither intitled in the other's heart.

Romeo — Romeo & Juliet — Act III, Scene III

'Tis torture, and not mercy: heaven is here,
Where Juliet lives; and every cat and dog
And little mouse, every unworthy thing,
Live here in heaven and may look on her;
But Romeo may not: more validity,
More honourable state, more courtship lives
In carrion-flies than Romeo: they may seize
On the white wonder of dear Juliet's hand
And steal immortal blessing from her lips,
Who even in pure and vestal modesty,
Still blush, as thinking their own kisses sin;
But Romeo may not; he is banished:
Flies may do this, but I from this must fly:
They are free men, but I am banished.
And say'st thou yet that exile is not death?
Hadst thou no poison mix'd, no sharp-ground knife,
No sudden mean of death, though ne'er so mean,
But 'banished' to kill me?— 'banished'?
O friar, the damned use that word in hell;
Howlings attend it: how hast thou the heart,
Being a divine, a ghostly confessor,
A sin-absolver, and my friend profess'd,
To mangle me with that word 'banished'?

Sebastian — Twelfth Night — Act IV, Scene III

This is the air; that is the glorious sun;
This pearl she gave me, I do feel't and see't;
And though 'tis wonder that enwraps me thus,
Yet 'tis not madness. Where's Antonio, then?
I could not find him at the Elephant;
Yet there he was; and there I found this credit,
That he did range the town to seek me out.
His counsel now might do me golden service;
For though my soul disputes well with my sense
That this may be some error, but no madness,
Yet doth this accident and flood of fortune
So far exceed all instance, all discourse,
That I am ready to distrust mine eyes
And wrangle with my reason, that persuades me
To any other trust but that I am mad,
Or else the lady's mad; yet if 'twere so,
She could not sway her house, command her followers,
Take and give back affairs and their dispatch
With such a smooth, discreet, and stable bearing,
As I perceive she does. There's something in't
That is deceivable. But here the lady comes.

Silvia - The Two Gentlemen of Verona - Act IV, Scene III

O Eglamour, thou art a gentleman--
Think not I flatter, for I swear I do not--
Valiant, wise, remorseful, well accomplish'd:
Thou art not ignorant what dear good will
I bear unto the banish'd Valentine,
Nor how my father would enforce me marry
Vain Thurio, whom my very soul abhors.
Thyself hast loved; and I have heard thee say
No grief did ever come so near thy heart
As when thy lady and thy true love died,
Upon whose grave thou vow'dst pure chastity.
Sir Eglamour, I would to Valentine,
To Mantua, where I hear he makes abode;
And, for the ways are dangerous to pass,
I do desire thy worthy company,
Upon whose faith and honour I repose.
Urge not my father's anger, Eglamour,
But think upon my grief, a lady's grief,
And on the justice of my flying hence,
To keep me from a most unholy match,
Which heaven and fortune still rewards with plagues.
I do desire thee, even from a heart
As full of sorrows as the sea of sands,
To bear me company and go with me:
If not, to hide what I have said to thee,
That I may venture to depart alone.

Trofimov — The Cherry Orchard – Chekhov

All Russia is our orchard. The earth is so wide, so beautiful, so full of wonderful places. [Pause.] Just think, Anya. Your grandfather, your great-grandfather and all your ancestors owned serfs, they owned human souls. Don't you see that from every cherry tree in the orchard, from every leaf and every trunk, men and women are gazing at you? Don't you hear their voices? Owning living souls, that's what has changed you all so completely, those who went before and those alive today, so that your mother, you yourself, your uncle—you don't realize that you're actually living on credit. You're living on other people, the very people you won't even let inside your own front door. We're at least a couple of hundred years behind the times. So far we haven't got anywhere at all and we've no real sense of the past. We just talk in airy generalisations, complain of boredom or drink vodka. But if we're to start living in the present isn't it abundantly clear that we've first got to redeem our past and make a clean break with it? And we can only redeem it by suffering and getting down to some real work for a change. You must understand that, Anya.

Tusenbach — Three Sisters – Chekhov

A longing to work - oh, heavens, how well I know that feeling! I've never done a stroke of work in my life. I was born in Petersburg, that cold and idle city, and none of my family had ever known what it was to work, they'd never known care. When I used to come home from cadet school a servant would pull my boots off for me, while I played the fool. My mother regarded me with an indulgent eye, though, and she was astonished when other people took a different view. I was protected from work. But I only just managed it by the skin of my teeth! Because the time has come when the piled thunderclouds are advancing upon us all. A great healthy storm is brewing, and it's going to blow our society clean of idleness and indifference, clean of prejudice against work and rotting boredom. I'm going to work, but then in twenty years time, in thirty years time, everyone will be working. Every single one of us!

Edmund – King Lear . Act I SII

Thou, Nature, art my goddess; to thy law
My services are bound. Wherefore should I
Stand in the plague of custom, and permit
The curiosity of nations to deprive me,
For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines
Lag of a brother? Why bastard? wherefore base?
When my dimensions are as well compact,
My mind as generous, and my shape as true,
As honest madam's issue? Why brand they us
With base? with baseness? bastardy? base, base?

Who, in the lusty stealth of nature, take

More composition and fierce quality

Than doth, within a dull, stale, tired bed,

Go to th' creating a whole tribe of fops

Got 'tween asleep and wake? Well then,

Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land.

Our father's love is to the bastard Edmund

As to th' legitimate. Fine word-'legitimate'!

Well, my legitimate, if this letter speed,

And my invention thrive, Edmund the base

Shall top th' legitimate. I grow; I prosper.

Now, gods, stand up for bastards!