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Shakespeare's Salutations: A Study in Stylistic Etiquette

By Carol Repogle

The significance of class distinctions in the sixteenth century is well-known. Yet strangely the importance of titles and forms of address, which minutely trace all the vagaries of the political and social hierarchy, has been neglected. The apparent assumption that salutations involved essentially simple and superficial considerations is implicit in the casual treatment they receive, often leading to superficial observations and even to serious misunderstandings.1

We have seen insults where there are none and have ignored them where they exist. We have agreed with a point of view which Shakespeare was mocking and have laughed where he was utterly serious. We have missed disparaging as well as flattering innuendos; revealing bits of character portrayal; subtle signs of emotional distress, elation, and compassion; and symbolic reflections of fluctuations—both actual and imminent—in rank and prominence, in relationships of amity and enmity.2

1 See, for example, Manfred Weidhorn, "The Relation of Title and Name to Identity in Shakespearean Tragedy," SEL, IX (1969), 303-19. Mr. Weidhorn speaks disparagingly of a "veil of titles and pretenses," and the "glittering and irrelevant parts" of Lear's title as king; he observes erroneously that Hamlet "loses" his title. Further, he speaks approvingly of the substitution of the form "Richard of Bordeaux" at the conclusion of Richard II for the title "King Richard," because the former is a "dignified title based on origin and inner worth," whereas the latter is based upon just "external status"—a puzzling distinction—because for Elizabethans there could be no more honorific a worldly title than that of king.

2 Only a few examples can be dealt with here. I hope soon to publish a more extensive treatment of the subject.
Salutations, of course, reflected the hierarchical class structure in which everyone except the king at the top and the manual laborers at the bottom had superiors, inferiors, and equals. The forms were determined both by the specific rank of a man and by his position relative to that of the person with whom he was dealing. For instance, it would have been considered polite condescension for a duke to be addressed with just his Christian name by a king, but it would have been impertinent familiarity by an equal, and unthinkable by an inferior. The forms, therefore, carried symbolic connotations far more significant than any limited denotation such as that of knight, esquire, or lord.

Furthermore, not all members of the same rank deserved equal portions of deference. As Thomas Wilson noted, “some [earls] daily decay, some encrease according to the corse of the world.” At the time he was writing “the Earl of Oxford... hath the first place amongst Earls,” but another, he explained, was “reckoned not much inferior to him in state.” A person’s relative position among those of the same rank was determined by the offices he occupied, the honors he held, the ancestry of his title, his wealth, his relatives, the favor he found with the king, and, theoretically, at least, his virtues. Those at the top of one station were, in effect, jostling those at the bottom of the next. Wilson pointed out, “Many of them [knights] equal the best Barons and come not much behind many Erles as... Sir John Peeter, Sir John Harington, Sir Nicholas Bacon and others.”

Whenever superiors were addressed the most honorific of the appropriate forms would be used together with an honorific adjective or two. As William Fulwood explained:

If we speak or write of or to our superiors, we must do it with all honour, humilitie & reverence using to their personages superlative and comparative terms: as most high, most mighty, right honorable, most redouted, most loyall, most worthy, most renowned, altogether according to the qualitie of their personages. And it is to be noted that of superlative, comparative, positive or diminutive termes, we must use but three at once at the most.*

*Wilson, p. 23.
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In the case of an equal, one would select a more abbreviated version.

If we address our speech to our equal, we must speak with a certain familiar reverence, using positive and comparative terms, and very few superlative, as wise, sage, honorable, worshipfull, discrete, renowned, &c."

The situation was different, however, when addressing an inferior, for though the regular forms could still be used, and in formal or public situations usually were, they could also be eliminated. If a great class disparity were involved, such as that between an earl and a knight, there would be no impropriety in this. If, however, there were only a slight disparity, offence might well be taken, especially if both men were noblemen.

Salutations varied in length and elaborateness from a simple "sir" or just the Christian name to lengthy superscriptions on letters to kings which make anything in the dramas resemble shorthand. Although most noblemen held a number of titles and dignities concurrently, in everyday usage they would be addressed with just a form correspondent to their highest honor. In formal or official situations, however, many or all titles and dignities held were apt to be used, as in the following dedication:

To the right honorable and his singular good lorde, Sir William Cecil, Baron of Burghleigh, Knight of the most noble order of the Garter, Lord high Treasurier of Englane, master of the courtes of Wardes and Liveries, Chauncellour of the Universitie of Cambridge, and one of the Queens Majesties privie Counsaile."

Unless it is realized that such stylized roll calls were read and heard with a combination of interest and awe by Elizabethans, their use can be easily misunderstood, as it is in a scene in 1 Henry VI.

After Lord Talbot's death Sir William Lucy asks rhetorically:

But where's the great Alcides of the field,  
Valiant Lord Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury,  
Created, for his rare success in arms,  
Great Earl of Washford, Waterford, and Valence;  
Lord Strange of Blackmere, Lord Verdun of Alton,  
Lord Cromwell of Wingfield, Lord Furnival of Sheffield,  
And thrice-victorious Lord of Falconbridge;  
Knight of the noble order of Saint George,

* Fulwood, sig. Bt-Bif.  
Carol Replogle

Worthy Saint Michael, and the Golden Fleece;  
Great Marshal to Henry the Sixth  
Of all his wars within the realm of France?

Joan of Arc then scornfully interjects,

Here is a silly stately style indeed!  
The Turk, that two and fifty kingdoms hath,  
Writes not so tedious a style as this.  
Him that thou magnifiest with all these titles  
Stinking and fly-blown lies here at our feet. (IV. vii. 61-76)

Today's audience agrees with Joan, but Shakespeare's did not. The audience would have relished this stately, appropriate, and highly conventionalized recital of the honors of their national war hero. This is not stylistic bombast to illustrate British pomposity. It is, instead, part of a stylistic tradition used here to remind the audience of the worth of the fallen warrior and to illustrate the ignorance and ill-breeding of Joan, a point which is stressed continuously throughout the play.

Since it was felt that "salutation is the first point of curtesie," the forms and the etiquette which developed concerning their use were learned in childhood and known by virtually all. Though the tanner or the apprentice or, indeed, even the young Shakespeare, might not know all the intricacies and niceties of proper address, he was familiar with proper general usage. The focus of this paper will be the associated rules of decorum, rather than the individual forms, because the latter requires lengthy explanation and qualification.

The forms were in constant use to begin conversations and letters and they were also scattered within them because, "it is good manners to repeat now and then the Title of his Honour or Worship." If the person addressed were of noble status, the speaker had "to repeat them as often, and as conveniently as we may," and the frequency with which vocative interpolations typically appear is remarkable. Cecil,

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for example, when writing to Queen Elizabeth made twelve such references in a letter some 230 words in length. Sir Christopher Hatton, writing a slightly longer letter to Cecil, uses eleven forms varying in length from a simple “your lordship” to “your good lordship” to “my honourable good lord.” This is typical and did not imply obsequiousness, but only fitting and proper respect.

Public acknowledgment of a man’s status by use of appropriate salutations was as automatic and essential then as an enlisted man’s salute to his officer is today. If a proper address were not given, an explanation was mandatory. Thus in a curious episode in 2 Henry VI Pistol comes bursting upon the scene, and circumspect Shallow, who does not know him, is at a loss about how to address him. He begins, “Honest gentleman,” and at once excuses his possibly inappropriate usage by his lack of knowledge, “I know not your breeding” (V.iii.3). His plight was a real one, and one with which courtesy writers were familiar.

For if wee meete with a man, we never sawe before: with whom, uppon some occasion, it behoves us to talke: without examining wel his worthings, most commonly, that wee may not offend in to litle, we give him to much, and call him Gentleman, and otherwhile Sir, although be he but some Souter or Barber, or other such stuffe: and all bycause he is appareled neate, somewhat gentleman lyke.

Positions in the social hierarchy were not absolutely fixed, nor were they invariably hereditary. A man could move up or down or successively do both, and the forms of address had to be adjusted accordingly. Such changes were obligatory, carrying, if not the weight of law, the heavier weight of established custom.

Deliberately to neglect using a new and more honorific form would have been a gross insult, as is illustrated with grim humor in 2 Henry VI. The imposter, Jack Cade, is leading his townsmen in an armed rebellion; and learning that Sir Humphrey Stafford is about to arrive with the king’s forces, he resolves, “He shall be encountered with a man as good as himself. He is but a knight, is

12 Thomas Wright, ed., Queen Elizabeth and Her Times: Original Letters (1838), I, 245.
13 Wright, II, 99-100.
14 Giovanni della Casa, Galateo or a Treatise of Manners, tr. R. Peterson (1576), P. 43.
a' . . . . To equal him, I will make myself a knight presently. [kneels] Rise up, Sir John Mortimer. [rises] Now have at him!" (IV.ii.124-9).

The implication that to be as good as another man it was necessary to be of the same rank is inescapable. Cade then speaks to Stafford without the deference he would necessarily owe to a superior, even going so far as to insult him with the term "sirrah." Not content with the dignity of the rank of knight, he then proclaims himself a lord and announces that he must be addressed with that rank's attendant forms of respect. "And now henceforth it shall be treason for any that calls me other than Lord Mortimer" (IV.vi.5-6). After the murder of one soldier for calling him merely "Jack Cade," the rebels all are careful to call him "my lord," and Cade is clearly infatuated with his new dignity. Dick the butcher approaches him, "I have a suit unto your lordship," and Cade replies, "Be it a lordship, thou shalt have it for that word" (IV.vii.4-6).

Such changes in titles and forms of address in the dramas which accompany changes in position were just reflections of actual and expected vocative etiquette. When a monarch ascended the throne, for instance, the form of address used to him at once became correspondent to the new degree. In an undated letter written to her older step-sister, the then Princess Mary, Elizabeth addresses her simply and familiarly as "Good Sister." But after Mary became queen such personal references cease and Elizabeth addresses her formally, "your majesty," "your highness," "your grace," "most noble queen." In Richard III the new king, Edward V, addresses his brother, the young Duke of York, "How fares our loving brother?" And the Duke, who is seeing him for the first time since his elevation, replies, "Well my dread lord—so I must call you now" (III.i.96-7). And the Duke is correct; he must now show additional deference to his elder brother.

16 The first and second quartos give the phrase, "my dread Lord," but the folio and quartos 3-8 give, "my deare Lord." Editors have preferred "dread" more frequently than "deare," though the latter is still common. But the phrase "my deare Lord" would have been appropriate from any younger noble to his elder, and the "now" would thus have no point, whereas the adjective "dread" is appropriate only "now" that the elder has become king.
"Dread" was an adjective particularly applicable to and appropriate for a king, and usage of it in a form of address is restricted to that degree.

A loss of position, on the other hand, was followed by a diminution of honor. A conviction of treason, for example, automatically made the offender and his posterity base and ignoble, and all lands were forfeited to the crown. The Earl of Southampton regularly signed his letters "H. of Southampton" or simply "Southampton." But while in the Tower following the Essex rebellion, he wrote to the privy council, signing his letter, "Your Lordships most humbly," and at this point the manuscript shows an erasure. The Earl had originally written his usual signature, "H. of Southampton," but afterwards he erased it and substituted the following, "of late Southampton, but now of all men most unhappy, H. Wriothesley." Much later when restored to his blood he resumed using the form befitting his rank, "H. Southampton." It is to be expected, then, that plays which deal with the fall of men from positions of power will reflect this in changes in names and titles. To do otherwise would be remarkable. In Richard II Henry rises and Richard falls, and their respective forms of address consequently reverse. Before the deposition scene Henry pays his cousin Richard the deference due a king and calls him "My gracious sovereign, my most loving liege," and "my gracious lord," while Richard familiarly and with condescension calls Henry "Cousin of Hereford," "Cousin," and "Fair Cousin." After the abdication it is Henry who familiarly calls Richard "fair cousin" and Richard who calls Henry "King." When the Earl of Northumberland then addresses Richard as "my lord," he denies the current propriety of the form,

No lord of thine, thou haught insulting man,
Nor no man's lord. I have no name, no title,
No, not that name was given me at the font,
But 'tis usurped. (IV.i.254-7)

Unused to the familiarity with which he is addressed by Henry and which, if used to an actual inferior, would be flattery, he picks up the form, repeats it questioningly, and muses with biting irony,

"Fair Cousin?" I am greater than a king.
For when I was a king, my flatterers
Were then but subjects. Being now a subject,
I have a King here to my flatterer. (IV.i.305-8)

At the beginning of the same play is an illustration of the way in which inappropriate usage can convey an insult. When the Duke of Hereford begins his accusation of the Duke of Norfolk he does not address him as the others do with "my Duke of Norfolk," "my lord," or any of the other forms befitting his rank which would normally be used by one duke to another. Hereford says with deliberate scorn, "Now, Thomas Mowbray, do I turn to thee" (I.i.35). This blunt use of the surname and not the place name of the ducal title, and without the addition of any titles or honors, is a gross insult. Hereford is denying Norfolk his right to dignity and respect because he is a traitor and he calls him by just his surname. Norfolk then accuses Hereford, a duke of royal blood, of treason, and returning the insult in kind, addresses him with simply the surname, "Bolingbroke."

Henry is banished as Hereford. Then his father, John of Gaunt, dies and his lands—those which Hereford should inherit—are confiscated by the king. When Henry returns to England it is ostensibly to claim his right as his father's eldest son, and he is adamant against accepting anything less than his due. A messenger from the king addresses him, "My lord of Hereford," and he refuses to reply, explaining,

My lord, my answer is—to Lancaster,
And I am come to seek that name in England,
And I must find that title in your tongue
Before I make reply to aught you say. (II.iii.70-3)

His intentions are crystalline. He is refusing any acceptance, even symbolic, of the present state of affairs. To accept the form of address which reflected his position as the king saw it would have been for him to admit he was in error.

In this play changes in titles and salutations act as political barometers, not only of actual happenings, but also of those which are felt to be imminent. Henry addresses the nobles properly as "my lords" but they to him use an unnecessary and unexpected amount of deference. Henry is young; his position ambiguous; he is not yet con-
firmed as Duke of Lancaster; and his very presence in England is treasonous. Yet he is addressed by the highest nobles of the land as “my noble lord,” “my good Lord,” “my gracious lord,” “most noble lord.” The political winds are clearly in Henry’s favor, and the aspirations of his followers belie Henry’s stated purpose. Later the Earl of Northumberland reveals this even more clearly when he refers to the king without any forms or titles, “Richard not far from hence hath hid his head.” The Duke of York, uncle to both Henry and Richard, cannot let this insult to the king pass without objection lest it appear that he agrees with its implications: “It would beseem the Lord Northumberland to say ‘King Richard.’”

There is abundant evidence that Elizabethans were punctilious in their use of titles and forms of address to strangers, friends, even members of their families in private life as well as in public. The numerous etiquette books ordained this, and all letters, recorded snatches of conversation, and even diaries and other personal memorabilia reflect it.

This constant attention to decorum can be seen, for example, in the voluminous correspondence of the Sidney family and friends. Philip Sidney, the Earl of Leicester’s nephew, was married to the daughter of Sir Francis Walsingham. Walsingham and Leicester were on intimate terms even before the marriage, and their mutual love and respect for Sir Philip made this relationship a still closer one. Yet in the numerous letters which passed between them over the years the forms of address remain the same. “My verry good Lord” writes Walsingham; “Mr. Secretarye” replies the Earl. Even the trauma of Sidney’s untimely death made no change in their observation of the usual formalities, “I humbly beseeche your Lordship that this bearer may receive your honorable assistance in the recovery of such imprests as have bene made by his late master unto such as served under him. Sir Philip hath left a great number of poor creditors.” Note also the automatic insertion of the “Sir” in the reference to Sidney. The period of Sir Henry Sidney’s intimacy with his brother-in-law, Leicester, was of even longer duration and strengthened as Sir Philip grew to manhood. But even so, Sir Henry continues to address Leicester as “my derest Lord,” or “my good lord.” These same
forms are used without exception to his son-in-law, the Earl of Pembroke.18

Since the stylistic norm was highly codified and well known, deviations from it made natural vehicles for dramatic emphasis which Shakespeare assumed his audience understood and which he fully exploited.19 When Prince Hal, in 1 and 2 Henry IV, addresses his father, "Your grace," "my good lord," "your majesty," "my gracious liege," and "my thrice gracious lord," he is being properly circumspect; the prince's brothers do likewise. In Act IV, scene v, Hal is alone on the stage with his sleeping father, whom he fears is dead. Only then can Hal, in the freedom of soliloquy, reveal his discomposure and address the king familiarly, "O dear Father" (IV.v.40). When the king awakens Hal then resumes using the forms of address befitting the dignity of a king, "My liege," "my most royal liege," "your majesty."

Only to the sleeping Lear can Cordelia speak intimately, exposing the warmth of her affection for him: "O my dear Father" begins Cordelia; but as Lear awakens her form of address changes: "How does my royal lord? How fares your Majesty?" (IV.vii).

1 and 2 Henry IV focus to a large extent upon the curious camaraderie of Falstaff and Prince Hal. If the enormity of Falstaff's behavior in this relationship is not fully realized, then his rejection will seem unsatisfactory. Dover Wilson, for example, has contended that "Falstaff for all his familiarity and impudent sallies is circumspect, even at times deferential."20 To the contrary, beginning with his opening words, Falstaff is scandalous. He, a man merely knighted on the field, continuously addresses the heir apparent to the throne as merely "Hal" or worse—"lad," "boy," "wag." Although a superior could with propriety speak familiarly to an inferior, this gave the inferior no license to address his superior informally. Elizabethan courtesy books continuously stress this:


19 Though the examples here are from Shakespeare, other playwrights were also aware of the dramatic possibilities of unexpected usage. See, for example, 1 Tamburlaine, 3.3.1164-9; 5.1.

And let this stand for a general rule; that whatsoever familiarity a nobleman shall show to any his inferior, yea, though he professe to make him his equall friend: let the inferior still beware of using himself rudely, saucily, or carelessly, especially in the presence of others.  

And Falstaff speaks in this way not only when the two are alone or with their friends at the tavern, but he presumes to do so in public, even in the presence of the highest nobles of the realm. Such actions reveal a great deal about Falstaff, and they also reveal a great deal about the prince, for it was assumed that “as the inward cogitations of a mans hart are publikely revealed by his speech, and outward actions, so it is plainly demonstrated to such as are wise, what motions do chiefly rule, and raigne in a man, by the dispositions and qualities of those, with whom he doth in familiarity converse.”  

The acceptance of this incredible degree of familiarity from anyone, particularly from an inferior of so low a degree and questionable a background, would have shown that the prince was weak, dissolute, and a fool—a potential disaster for the country. Falstaff’s addresses to other members of the nobility are properly circumspect: “My lord of Westmoreland,” he addresses the earl; “your lordship” he says to the chief justice; and he properly repeats additional forms of respect within his speeches.

When in the dramatic scene at the end of 2 Henry IV, Falstaff, with his usual presumption, addresses the new monarch merely as “King Hal,” “my royal Hal,” and “my sweet boy,” he is rebuffed. “My lord Chief Justice, speak to that vain man,” orders the king. And all Falstaff has done here is address Hal with his customary familiarity. A lack of understanding of the symbolic ramifications of salutations has made this famous rejection scene seem to many to be precipitate, unmotivated, and even cruel. Falstaff’s salutations which are the immediate cause of the rejection carried outrageous and dangerous connotations. They symbolized in just a few words the de-


Cadent position Hal had been occupying—a position which he must now reject. An Elizabethan audience would have welcomed Hal’s rejection. It would have seemed sufficiently motivated and long overdue.

Omission of the expected form of address frequently indicates extreme distress and a consequent lack of self-possession. Queen Margaret in 2 Henry VI is formal and reverent in her addresses to King Henry, “Great King of England, and my gracious lord,” “mine alder-liefest sovereign.” Only twice does she omit the forms of respect. Brought the news of his uncle Gloucester’s death the king swoons, and the queen is afraid he has died. “Oh Henry, ope thine eyes!” she pleads. When he revives and speaks, she regains her composure and asks, “How fares my gracious lord?” (III.ii.35-7). A second instance occurs when she is distraught because the life of her lover, the Duke of Suffolk, is endangered, “O Henry, let me plead for gentle Suffolk!” This innuendo of her intimacy with Suffolk is at once recognized by the king, who answers her with unusual asperity, “Ungentle Queen, to call him gentle Suffolk! / No more, I say. If thou dost plead for him, / Thou wilt but add increase unto my wrath” (III.ii.289-92). Shakespeare often made use of this device of inappropriate forms to intensify emotional situations.

A character’s typical attitude toward the forms of address can be revealing. Mistress Quickly, for instance, in 1 and 2 Henry IV is impressed by titles and forms and she never omits them. Doll Tearsheet, Falstaff, Pistol, and the prince might address each other as “Doll,” “Jack,” “Pistol,” and “Hal,” but Mistress Quickly does not choose to do so. They remain to her “Sir John,” “Captain Pistol,” “my lord,” or “your grace.” She calls Mistress Tearsheet “Doll” only when distressed over Falstaff’s departure. Her frequent repetition of the titles within her speeches is proper but incongruous with the grotesquely familiar speech of the others. At times her deference is, in fact, obsequious. Ancient Pistol, an ensign or second lieutenant, she calls “Captain.” Not only is the neighborhood silkman called “master,” a term reserved for esquires, gentlemen, and substantial businessmen, but so is Fang, the sheriff’s officer and his yeoman. She even calls the chief justice “ your grace,” a title proper only for royalty,
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for dukes and duchesses, and archbishops and their wives. Mistress Quickly is a social climber whose goal is the more honorific appellation, “Madam,” and Falstaff exploits this fully. How could she refuse him anything when he promises, as she says, “to marry me and make me my lady thy wife” (2 Henry IV, II.i.99-100), a form, which contemporaries knew, “then which there is no Epetheton (to a woman) more sweet or graceful.”

The relative importance of salutations in the stylistic milieu of a play varies greatly with the type of play involved. In the history plays and in Twelfth Night and The Merry Wives of Windsor Shakespeare's salutations reflect current usage with all its inherent connotations and denotations. Although Shakespeare used perfectly suitable forms of address in these plays, he generally chose the simplest and the shortest available, and he used them the minimum number of times that he could and not violate decorum. In actual usage the forms would usually have been repeated more frequently within the longer speeches and would have been used at the beginning of virtually every speech in a dialogue, particularly in public situations. Had Shakespeare constantly repeated the forms in this way, though, it would have necessarily slowed down the pace of his action.

Shakespeare was clearly aware that stylistic etiquette varied from time to time and from country to country. He has Polonius advise Reynaldo to be careful about such geographical considerations:

... be assured
He closes with you in this consequence;
Good sir, or so, or friend, or gentleman,
According to the phrase or the addition
Of man and country. (Hamlet, II.i.44-8)

But Shakespeare made little use of this knowledge himself, limiting his attempt at topicality in vocative usage to the plays with an English setting. In the Italianate comedies “signior” often replaces “sir” or “master”; in the Roman plays Roman salutations such as “reverend tribune” or “noble patricians” jostle comfortably with the typically Elizabethan “my gracious lord,” “dread queen,” or “your grace.” The attempt at topicality here is superficial.

**Francis Markham, The Book of Honour (London, 1625), p. 68.**
Still, Shakespeare assumed that a sensitivity to propriety in appellative etiquette felt by his contemporaries would also be appropriate for characters in a play set in Rome or Illyria. But there, of necessity, vocative emphasis focuses upon the use of first and last names. More condescension was implicit in addressing a man by the former than by the latter, and recognition of this subtly heightens the dramatic tension in Coriolanus. When Coriolanus meets Aufidius, his arch enemy, Coriolanus is a banished man, but he is still arrogant. In this scene it is “Tullus,” the praenomen or personal name with which he addresses Aufidius, and without any honorific addition. Aufidius, on the other hand, obsequiously addresses his former enemy: “O Marcius, Marcius,” he begins, and his speeches have a plethora of such honorific phrases as “all noble Marcius,” “Thou noble thing!” “Worthy Marcius,” “most absolute sir.” Neither here nor elsewhere does Aufidius presume to use Coriolanus’ praenomen or personal name, Caius, in direct address as Coriolanus does when addressing him. Neither, of course, does he use the agnomen, Coriolanus, the name which the Romans had added as a mark of honor for his victory at Corioli. Aufidius calls him by his cognomen, or family name, for as he observes later, Coriolanus “bears himself more proudlier, / Even to my person, than I thought he would” (IV.vii.8-9). Only in an ominous apostrophe to the absent Coriolanus will he use the personal name he dares not use in Coriolanus’ presence: “When, Caius, Rome is thine, / Thou art poor’st of all, then shortly art thou mine” (IV.vii.56-7).

Just once does Coriolanus demean himself to plead for anything. At the conclusion of the play he wants Aufidius’ approval of his peace agreement with the Romans, and his humiliating discomposure is reflected in a diffident use of the surname and is emphasized by repetition: 24

\[
\text{Aufidius, though I cannot make true wars,} \\
\text{I'll frame convenient peace. Now, good Aufidius,} \\
\text{Were you in my stead, would you have heard} \\
\text{A mother less? Or granted less Aufidius? (V.iii.190-3; italics mine)}
\]

24 Some editors have suggested that these repetitions are compositors’ errors and have therefore omitted them. See A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare, ed. Horace H. Furness et al., II, 280.
In the plays without an English setting the forms are more abbreviated, more informal, and even more familiar than in the plays with one. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Love's Labor's Lost*, for example, the Christian names alone, without any honorific additives, are used in conversation among the nobility. The unrealistic usage there, in fact, tends to emphasize the unworldly quality of the context. Although the forms are unrealistic in these plays, they are still useful in outlining the general social hierarchy in each situation as well as various dramatic relationships. Some confusion may occur about the specific degree of a person. In *Love's Labor's Lost* and *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, for example, the same characters are referred to as king, duke, and count. But the relative position of a character can always be determined by noting the appellative schemata. In *The Merchant of Venice*, for instance, Bassanio's status is ambiguous; he is called "my lord," "signior," even "master." But the deference in address shown to him by everyone, including his friends, Antonio and Gratiano, makes it clear that he is superior in degree to all the Venetians except the Duke.

We have here, then, an aspect of the linguistic milieu reflecting basic distinctions, as well as the transitory nuances of the social milieu, which was of direct and symbolic importance to Elizabethans. Shakespeare used the forms of address judiciously as a convenient and plausible means of immediately identifying the often bewildering array of characters to the audience as they appeared and reappeared on stage; yet he did not allow them to impede his tempo. Moreover, it is clear that he manipulated them with careful discrimination for a wide variety of dramatic purposes.

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Etiquette has been defined as a code of laws which binds society together -- viewless as the wind -- and yet exercising a vast influence upon the well-being of mankind. These laws were instituted during the days of ancient chivalry, but as years have flown they have been modified in a great degree, many of them being quite obsolete and others entirely changed. Some, however, have been but slightly varied, to suit the times, being governed by the laws of good taste and common sense, and these not only facilitate the intercourse of persons in society, but are also essential to their ease and composure. Meaning: In Shakespeare’s day, this originally referred to a kind of horse race rather than hunting wild geese. Today, it refers to a pointless exercise, where the outcome will be fruitless (can you imagine how impossible trying to catch a wild goose would be?!). Green-eyed monster. Want to learn more about how you can study in the United Kingdom and experience Shakespeare’s homeland? Check out some of Kaplan’s General or Intensive English courses and find out what it’s like to learn English in the UK. MORE. A Reader in the Language of Shakespearean Drama Vivian Salmon and Edwina Burness [Studies in the History of the Language Sciences 35] 1987 – pp. 101–. Shakespeare’s Salutations. A Study in Stylistic Etiquette. Carol Replogle. Published online: 01 January 1987 https://doi.org/10.1075/sihols.35.10rep.