Shakespeare's Weird Words

#3: Ways of expressing time, space, and logic

There are many words in Shakespeare's plays for relationships with here and now. These can be literally about time or location, or more figuratively, about ideas.

Words about time

Weird word	Meaning	Example
anon	soon	**I'll talk with you more anon.** In *All's Well that Ends Well*, the Countess dismisses the talkative Lavatch in this way.
apace	quickly	**The charm dissolves apace.** In *The Tempest*, a spell cast by the magician Prospero is wearing off.
aye	always	**They willfully exile themselves from light And must for aye consort with black-browed night.** In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Puck describes the ghosts who only appear at night. *For aye* means *forever* (as in, *for always*).
ere	before	**I have loved ere now.** In *As You Like It*, the old shepherd Corin explains something important to the young shepherd Sylvius.
forthwith	immediately	**You must part forthwith.** In *Richard the Second*, Northumberland is separating King Richard from the Queen.
henceforth	from now on	**This babble shall not henceforth trouble me.** In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Julia expresses frustration at Lucetta's teasing about a love letter.

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Words about place and location

Weird word	Meaning	Example
hence	from this place	**Once more, take her hence.** In *The Winter's Tale*, Leontes demands that the palace guards remove Paulina, who's speaking truth to power.
hither	to this place	**Seek him and bring him hither.** In *Antony & Cleopatra*, the Egyptian queen, Cleopatra, calls for the Roman general, Antony.
thence	from that place	**What, were you banish'd thence?** In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, an outlaw finds out why Valentine is on the road outside Milan.
thither	to that place	**We'll lead you thither.** In *As You Like It*, Celia helps the woozy Rosalind home.
whence	from what place	**Whence are you, sir? What may I call your name?** When they first meet in *The Taming of the Shrew*, Baptista asks where Petruchio is from.
whither	to what place	**Whither is he going?** In *King Lear*, Cornwall asks Gloucester this question about the King.

Words about logic

Weird word	Meaning	Example
therefore	for that reason	**I cannot be a man with wishing, therefore I will die a woman with grieving.** In *Much Ado about Nothing*, Beatrice expresses frustration that society won't let her challenge Claudio to a duel for dishonouring her cousin Hero.
wherefore	why, or for what reason	**You foolish shepherd, wherefore do you follow her?** In *As You Like It*, Rosaline asks Sylvius about following the disdainful Phoebe.

Sources for definitions:
Shakespeare's Words: A Glossary & Language Companion, by David Crystal and Ben Crystal (Penguin, 2002).
Oxford English Dictionary Online, accessed through the Vancouver Public Library (2020)

bard EDUCATION

Explore

Using your newfound knowledge, see if you can figure out what each of these lines means:

O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo?	**Come hither.**
My gracious lady, go; And thither bear your treasure and your goods.	**Whither are you going?**
Mine eyes smell onions; I shall weep anon.	**Whence is that knocking?**
Go get thee hence, and find my dog again, Or ne'er return again into my sight.	**Throw it thence into the raging sea.**
My ships are ready and My people did expect my hence departure Two days ago.	**Wherefore weep you?**
'Twill be supper-time ere you come there.	**Henceforth carry your letters yourself!**
In my chamber-window lies a book: bring it hither to me in the orchard.	**'Twill be two days ere I shall see you.**
Our queen and all her elves come here anon.	**The future comes apace.**
Then whither he goes, thither let me go.	**Tell me how far 'tis thither.**



Create!

Now that you're familiar with these words, try using them in your own writing.

So, who says these lines?

Here's who says each of the quotes on page 3, and in which play.

O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo?
Juliet in *Romeo & Juliet*

Come hither.
Amiens in *As You Like It*
(just one example of this phrase)

My gracious lady, go;
And thither bear your treasure and your goods.
Cardinal in *Richard the Third*

Whither are you going?
Second Citizen in *Julius Caesar*

Mine eyes smell onions; I shall weep anon.
Lafeu in *All's Well that Ends Well*

Whence is that knocking?
The title character in *Macbeth*

Go get thee hence, and find my dog again,
Or ne'er return again into my sight.
Proteus in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*

Throw it thence into the raging sea!
Julia in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*

My ships are ready and
My people did expect my hence departure
Two days ago.
Polixenes in *The Winter's Tale*

Wherefore weep you?
Ferdinand in *The Tempest*

'Twill be supper-time ere you come there.
Katherina in *The Taming of the Shrew*

Henceforth carry your letters yourself!
Speed in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*

In my chamber-window lies a book:
bring it hither to me in the orchard.
Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing*

'Twill be two days ere I shall see you
Bertram in *All's Well that Ends Well*

Our queen and all her elves come here anon
A fairy in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

The future comes apace.
Flavius in *Timon of Athens*

Then whither he goes, thither let me go.
The Queen in *Richard the Second*

Tell me how far 'tis thither.
Leonatus in *Cymbeline*