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### Shakespeare's Souls with Longing

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## Shakespeare's Souls with Longing

*Bernard J. Dobski and Dustin A. Gish*

We discover in the works of William Shakespeare the wisdom of a poet whose art charms and entertains, even as it educates us. In the “eternal lines” of his plays and poetry, Shakespeare conjures a vivid gallery of characters for his audience and readers.<sup>1</sup> His representations of human beings are as true to life as any nature has conceived, perhaps more true. We may wonder if there is a Falstaff or a Hamlet or a Cleopatra living in our midst from whom we can learn as much as we can from the characters that inhabit Shakespeare’s works. Through sustained reflection on his characters, we become keenly aware of our humanity and thus come to know ourselves more profoundly. Audiences and readers, for centuries, have read Shakespeare’s poetry and beheld his plays with awe and pleasure, and still do.<sup>2</sup> Shakespeare indeed fascinates us, for he educates us even as he entertains us. A thoughtful editor once wrote that the works of this “poet of nature” constitute “a faithful mirror” of manners and life, and that Shakespearean characters “act and speak by the influence of those passions and principles by which all minds are agitated, and the whole system of life is continued in motion.”<sup>3</sup> His writings represent for us the grand spectacle of being human—a pageant of souls with longing in whose wake we ceaselessly follow.

Among the diverse aspects of the human condition on display in his works, we are drawn in particular to Shakespeare’s representations of dominant passions and soaring ambitions which are so compellingly rendered as to lead us to discover their causes and consequences in the soul. Our natural longings for both honor and love are two of the causes or principles that animate our souls and keep our lives in perpetual motion, while holding out to us the hope of respite and rest. Striving towards the honorable or beloved, we deem honor and love to be good insofar as each promises us a form of completion and self-sufficiency, satisfaction and transcendence. Through his representations, Shakespeare invites us to search out the subtle contours and grand arc of our own hopes and desires. In his plays and poetry, he reveals the cords that bind our souls to those objects which we long to possess, and which in turn we expect will nourish us. His works stage for our entertainment and consideration characters defined by how they conceive and pursue honor and love, yearnings that distinguish them as individuals. Shakespeare always reminds us as well of the context within which his characters—and we—seek honor and love.<sup>4</sup>

# I

What hath Shakespeare wrought? Why do we see ourselves and our longings, writ large and yet intimately familiar to us, in his figures? The abiding popularity of Shakespeare's works is evident in the influence of his plays on film and television, as well as the steady performance of his plays annually on stages in theaters and parks, in and beyond the English-speaking world.<sup>5</sup> Shakespeare remains one of our most cherished cultural touchstones. The representations he has made exert an undeniable, if perhaps not fully acknowledged, hold upon our romantic, moral, and political imaginations. Despite efforts to recast the human in modes derived from theoretical paradigms of modern and post-modern thought, we are yet unable to escape from our nature and therefore remain indebted to Shakespeare for his portraits of us.<sup>6</sup>

That the judgment of much contemporary scholarship on or about Shakespeare should be at odds with a popular taste for his plays and poetry is troubling. Running against the grain of scholarly opinion, a few commentators continue to declare Shakespeare the most creative person in history, the author of our modern conception of the human—and for good reason.<sup>7</sup> Evidence for this view is found in the extraordinary performative legacy of Shakespeare's substantial body of work, translated into more languages than even Shakespeare could imagine. But perhaps the greatest proof that Shakespeare's characters are alive and well is the vitality with which the full spectrum of human souls is observed in his work. Has a person yet been born whose soul has not, in some decisive respect, already found its pattern or form in one of his characters? The range of human possibility seems both revealed in and circumscribed by his wisdom and art: Shakespeare appears to be at once the creator and prophet of our humanity. What, we wonder, is the source of this Shakespearean wisdom, the font from which such genius springs?

If indeed Shakespeare has invented us—or rather, shapes and molds us through his poetry in the image of his own characters—we must imagine that he has done so without neglecting that inquiry into human nature that reveals to the poet the defining qualities and limitations of being human. To plumb the depths of human nature is to explore the human soul and its constitution, along the way grappling with the permanent questions associated with our humanity, those moral and political problems that define our lives in common. Such an inquiry, the fruits of which are apparent in his works, transcends the traditional distinctions separating poetry and philosophy. The richness of Shakespeare's characters reflects the quality of his intellect; his knowledge and understanding of the truth about what is, and therefore about human beings, renders Shakespeare as much a philosopher as a poet.<sup>8</sup> That knowledge reflects our nature and is translated through his poetic art into living images which simultaneously appeal to and educate the audience before the stage as well as the reader in his study. What, then, do we learn about ourselves and our world by observing and reading Shakespeare's works? Shakespeare, as artist and thinker, offers a comprehensive education. His wisdom rests upon the fundamental insight that all human beings *as* human beings have a share in our common humanity—a universalism which refuses to deny, and is highly attentive to, difference and distinction.<sup>9</sup> For what he teaches touches upon the whole of human affairs, upon what being human fully entails.

Shakespearean characters are no more or less fantastic or fictional than we ourselves are.

What issues from his poetic imagination does not exceed what we may fashion about and for our own lives through the working of our romantic, moral, and political imaginations. The world in which Shakespeare's characters dwell is one commensurate with our own, although it is perhaps superior insofar as the vicissitudes of fortune and randomness of chance can be traced back to an author's guiding hand and intellect. While a few characters seem to partake of an illusory being—Macbeth's witches, Ariel, Puck, or ass-headed Bottom—and thus would appear to exceed the bounds of the possible for human life, we nonetheless bear witness to the power of his art which works its true magic not by begging for a willing suspension of our disbelief, but by embarking on such flights of fancy in order to unsettle us; to test our conviction that we have a firm grasp on what is real and what is not about ourselves and the world around us. Shakespeare, by means of his art, projects his imaginings back upon our lived experience, letting us judge for ourselves the truth of what we have discovered about human nature in his works.<sup>10</sup> He thus ornaments the truth in order to reveal it; his abstractions from the familiar bring forth what is present but all too often concealed within our quotidian existence. By revivifying the mundane, Shakespeare shakes the ground of our preconceived opinions and prepares us to see and rethink ourselves.<sup>11</sup>

With his poetry, which educates our mind even more so than it caters to our imagination, Shakespeare carries us beyond the confines of the ordinary and thereby provides access to those aspects of ourselves and our lives in common that we might otherwise tend to forget or neglect. The power of his imaginative art is not only a function of creative genius, but implies knowledge of the fundamental alternatives available to us as human beings in our quest to live our own lives well. Through the unforgettable representations in his plays and poetry, Shakespeare reads us—perhaps better, and more definitively, than we read him or his creations.<sup>12</sup> But Shakespeare can only help us to know and understand ourselves in the fullest sense if his art works within those limits imposed by the human associations, moral and political, that we construct and inhabit. It is only through the recognition and observance of such limits that Shakespeare can illuminate those human longings—especially for honor and love—that drive us, literally and figuratively, into the arms of others.

## II

Shakespeare's works taken as a whole exhibit a variety of private and public alternatives around which we might orient our lives: religious piety, political greatness, the pursuit of honor, poetic expression, familial duty, romantic and erotic transports, philosophy or contemplation. Shakespeare's plays therefore survey the paths to happiness which beckon human beings. Yet his articulation of those possibilities are never presented abstractly, in a vacuum, but always within, and often in tension with, a framework of circumstance, whether political, religious, or social. As with the inescapable dramatic context of Shakespeare's texts, the choice of framework exhibits the richness and diversity of his inherited traditions: *political* (ancient Athens or Rome, republics or empires, divine-right monarchies or modern liberal states), *religious* (pagan, Christian, Jewish, Muslim, or secular), and *social* (civil societies grounded in classical virtues, Medieval feudalism, Renaissance humanism, or modern European liberalism).<sup>13</sup> Such backdrops set the stage for our reflections on the character of

great passion and ambition, and the manner in which our deepest longings are shaped by, and shape, the world around us.<sup>14</sup>

The dramatic context of each play highlights for the reader the impact of the longings for honor and love on marriages, families, religious belief, political activity, the law, justice, the role of prudence in politics, and the need for moderation in erotic affairs. Audiences and readers of Shakespeare are thus invited by the structure of his work to apply the principles, teased out and examined in his fiction, to their own existence. Shakespeare invites us to map out the psychology of his characters as it emerges from their experience—from what they say and do as well as from what is said and done to them—against our own experiences, and the experience of the longings in our own souls. His art stages, more clearly than we might see them for ourselves, our longings and their aims or ends, as implied by their trajectories—aims or ends perhaps intuited by passion, but grasped only dimly, if at all, by reason. By virtue of this art, Shakespeare helps us to evaluate the coherence of our passions, the character and integrity of our pursuits. Perhaps this helps to explain why some his most memorable characters live at the extremes, in one sense or another, as we see (for example) in his portraits of Cleopatra, Cordelia, Rosalind, Portia, Falstaff, Henry V, Caesar, Richard III, Macbeth, Iago, or Hamlet. Such extremes however are not to be confused with abstract ideals that are simply to be admired and emulated, or despised and shunned. Rather, these characters tend to embody grand expansions of admirable yet dangerous human qualities, or peculiar aberrations of otherwise healthy hopes and desires. These figures are much more than ideograms representing a single moral, political, or social perspective; they bring to life what is attractive as well as repulsive within us, and are so designed as to draw us more deeply into an engagement with ourselves through Shakespeare's works and thought.

The representations to which Shakespeare provocatively directs our attention demonstrate the power and allure of great passion and ambition whose modern currency is too often devalued, if not entirely collapsed by contemporary theories that diminish or ignore the purchase which such longings have upon our souls, by translating (or rather mistranslating) the pursuit of honor and love into reductive terms of self-interest, utilitarian calculation, individual preferences rooted in custom, prejudice, social Darwinism, or cultural materialism.<sup>15</sup> Whether in towering figures of ambition incarnate—Coriolanus, Julius Caesar, Henry V, Lady Macbeth, Richard III—or through pairs of tragic lovers who make themselves (especially in death) into lasting monuments of overwhelming passion—Antony and Cleopatra, Romeo and Juliet, the Phoenix and Turtle-dove; Shakespeare insists that our powerful longings for honor and love receive their due. Even his seemingly more moderate portraits of devoted honor-lovers (like Brutus, Portia, and Hotspur) or passionate lovers (like Lucentio and Bianca, or Desdemona and Othello), which can be and often are mistaken for stylized romantic images, contain the seeds of the unflinching critique of honor and love fleshed out in his figures of Iago or Falstaff—the latter an exemplar of that materialism and hedonism which, in the name of realism, makes a mockery of both honor and love.<sup>16</sup>

Shakespeare's representations invite us to seek a more coherent account of our longings and thereby to moderate and reconcile (insofar as possible) the hopes whence they arise. Such a response to Shakespeare's characters would be consistent with the longing for transcendence that inevitably draws human beings to meditate upon beautiful works of art. And so we are

drawn to Shakespeare's plays and poetry even as his work elicits and refines such longings. Our attention falls upon the tension evoked in those Shakespearean characters pursuing honor or love, and we are led to ponder the effect that the mutual influence and interplay of these longings have on the action of the play. Shakespeare does not propose to explain away or resolve this tension through his plays, however. He does not represent such longings for honor and love as mere "problems" in need of solutions—and, as a result, we flourish by engaging with and contemplating them, thereby seeing with greater clarity the architecture of the human soul. It is on account of this capacity for illumination that we see Shakespeare's characters—however perfect or deficient or excessive they may seem—as more vibrant and alive than even the audiences and readers whose self-understanding is being informed and interrogated by his representations.

The humanity of Shakespeare's compelling portraits of honor-seekers and lovers who fall into the embrace of others makes them even more attractive. Consider the "immortal longings" of Cleopatra, longings which at once occasion and impossibly complicate the consummation of her great love for Antony. Even while "eternity was in [their] lips and eyes," the lovers' embrace precipitates war with Octavian Caesar and the world of Rome—and ends in death.<sup>17</sup> Inseparable from their immortal longings, which are conceived as true elixirs for their souls, there is a darker potion whose toxin emanates from the interweaving of the love between Cleopatra and Antony, with their longing to have the honor which must attend their unrivaled amorous displays, even as it dooms their romance. For these lovers find the chief satisfaction of their private longing in their public display of romance; ever the political masters, they take as much pleasure from being honored for their love as they do from the invigorating charms of their beloved. The longings that bind them together in private also demand, for their fullest expression, the political stage afforded by Antony's rule over the Roman empire, which is to say, the known world.<sup>18</sup> Despite proclamations to the contrary, the immortal longings so radiantly represented by the intoxicating love between Cleopatra and Antony are not enough, are ultimately insufficient. As these lovers realize (perhaps one lover sooner than the other), the condition for satisfying their longing for immortal glory is purchased at the expense of their present love. To be free to love as they desire, they must conquer a world whose inhabitants (living or dead) will perpetually honor them for it.

Shakespeare thus embodies, through the tragic paradox in souls with such longings, the tension between, on one hand, the desire to transcend this world through private happiness and passionate love (*eros*) and, on the other hand, the desire to attain honor and immortal glory through a spirited attachment (*thumos*) to this world. For a reconciliation of this tragic antithesis, we might look to Shakespeare's representation of this tension within Christian marriage at least insofar as Christianity obscures or absolves the tragic demands made by politics for the here and now, not to mention the exalted hopes for erotic love in a hereafter. Love chastened by Christian marriage might escape pagan excess, but risks doing so at the expense of the public realm which loses its luster as our attraction to affairs in *this* world necessarily gives way to those of another. The prospects for a Christian resolution to the problem of *eros* are called into doubt by the grim endings—for lovers and their cities—in Shakespeare's romantic tragedies, especially *Romeo and Juliet*. What, then, are the prospects for honor?

In the character of Julius Caesar, Antony's great predecessor both in honor and in love, Shakespeare depicts an alternative path to Cleopatra's immortal longings. This route eschews the apparent contradictions that doom the Egyptian queen and her Roman lover. While Caesar, too, divines an apotheosis through a kind of martyrdom, he still chooses the path of politics, not love—and does so intentionally, with articulate constancy, hence not tragically. Pursuing honor in its most problematic aspect as a quest for glory,<sup>19</sup> the imperially minded Caesar seems to foresee in his sacrifice the means whereby he can achieve that undying fame which surpasses his rivals for republican honor (from the elder Brutus, founder of the Republic, or Coriolanus, to Cicero or his own “best lover” and assassin, Brutus). That Caesar's political pursuits are more consistent than Cleopatra's erotic yearnings however does not make them any less troubling. After all, his pursuit of glory is not limited to the private realm; his efforts to attain everlasting renown help to undermine the moral integrity of Rome, introducing an imperial calculus that robs the republican order of both its liberty and its law-abiding character. In considering Shakespeare's Roman plays in general, are we not led to wonder whether such longings, however conceived and directed, are at odds with life itself? Does such passion require the sacrifice of life? Is the individual quest for greatness always at odds with those limits that are necessary for healthy politics? Does the tragic character of the Roman plays reflect the “lust in action”—torn between highest aspirations and brutality in exhaustion—of an unrestrained classical pursuit of honor and love?<sup>20</sup>

Turning from Shakespeare's pagan plays to the Christian plays, we witness an expansion of Roman boundaries, as the old world yields to a new empire. Under the sway of universalizing religion, a world within beckons the spirited and erotic Shakespearean characters. The invitation to turn inward rather than to conquer the “world without”—the realm of politics—leads them to care for and cultivate both body and soul in the heavenly light of a “world above.” Shakespeare shows how Christianity can soften, if not resolve, tensions aroused by the “immortal longings” which were essential to the vitality of his pagans and yet, in the end, the source of their tragedy. Shakespeare's more ordinate, although still passionate, lovers (like Kate and Petruchio, Rosalind and Orlando, Portia and Bassanio, or Beatrice and Benedick) eventually retreat into the private realm of domestic pleasure and virtue, far from the public stage. Within the bounds of a Christian marriage, Shakespeare's heroines also rise as the educators and rulers of their husbands. But the prospects for the happiness of Christian lovers who marry and still anticipate or maintain a share in political rule—the Princess of Aquitaine and Berowne, Isabella and Duke Vincentio, Viola and Duke Orsino, Miranda and Prince Ferdinand, Katherine of Valois and King Henry V—are subjected to lingering doubts or tainted by great misfortune.

Even if Christianity demotes grand political ambition in favor of otherworldly devotions, Shakespeare seems to hold out hope for a greatness wedded to Christian piety—in the character of Henry V, arguably the greatest statesman to grace his stage, heralded by the Chorus as both a “conquering Caesar” and “the mirror of all Christian kings.”<sup>21</sup> Of course, this King Henry, unlike his unfortunate heir (Henry VI), is no Christian ascetic devoid of ambition; his greatness is in no small part due to this fact as well. In his English histories, Shakespeare depicts the emergence of such a pinnacle of princely ambition within the framework of a particular political order that challenges the demotion of political life affected by Christianity

and abetted by a corrupt clergy. Does the constitutional monarchy of Shakespeare's Christian England thus revive the possibility of political greatness entertained by the classical views of *eros* and *thumos*? The plausibility of this suggestion would need to be tested: The limited success of Christianity in the private realm to restrain erotic longing is represented in proportions both comic (Christopher Sly, Touchstone, Audrey) and tragic (Romeo and Juliet, the Poet and the "Dark Lady" of his Sonnets). When it comes to the public realm—whether due to the weak-willed moralism of Richard III's victims, the tortured consciences of Macbeth and his Lady or Alonso, the excessive piety and disdain for this-worldly rule of Henry VI, or the pensiveness of "good" Prince Hamlet—Shakespeare invites us to reconsider the tragic consequences caused by the inherent limitations of even Christianity to control and shape human ambition on a grand scale.

Such difficulties, grave as they are, do not lend Shakespeare's work an air of resignation. Rather, his works seem to offer for our consideration an alternative perspective—one which resists a strict adherence to the moral and political virtues associated with either the classical or the Christian models of human life even as it respects both the vitality of the classical world and the moral and ethical limits reflected in Christian piety. This perspective is one which is in tune with the moral and spiritual roots common to the classical and Christian worlds, but tries to find a home for our immortal longings within this world, without thereby reducing the beautiful or noble to the vulgar, or interpreting the high in terms of the low. Such a perspective, which is neither classical nor Christian but which seeks to do justice to what is true in both, emerges when we study the speeches and deeds of his more prudent or philosophical characters, such as Portia of Belmont, Duke Vincentio, Theseus, or Prospero.<sup>22</sup> Whatever conclusions we are tempted to draw about Shakespeare's own judgments with respect to these characters and the alternative modes they embody, he makes our pursuit of honor and love, and satisfaction of our longings, an abiding theme of his works.

### III

The authors of the chapters in this volume offer exemplary reflections on the education to be derived from studying representations of honor and love in Shakespeare, especially insofar as the lessons that are taught by his plays and poetry illuminate the yearnings which not only attend, but perhaps also embellish or distort, our very conceptions of honor and love. Each takes a direct approach to the works of Shakespeare, affirming a method of interpretation which has more in common with Hamlet (Shakespeare's own literary critic: "The play's the thing ...") than with the critics who predominate in the secondary literature and fashion readings based on contemporary literary theories. The contributors to this volume foreground Shakespearean characters for study, rather than push them into the background, as much Shakespeare scholarship today tends to do.<sup>23</sup> And their arguments attend above all, although not exclusively, to Shakespeare's representations of human beings whose souls yearn for distinction and fulfillment through honor and love.

We open the volume with wide-ranging reflections on honor and love which help to lay the foundation for the examinations of honor and love to follow. John Alvis studies the concern for honor in Shakespeare as a moral conundrum, since the benefits of cultivating reputation must



be balanced against the dramatized costs thereof. The profit margin so to speak, Alvis concludes, depends upon the character of the regime within which honor-seeking preoccupies the minds of the more spirited public figures in such different regimes as republics (Rome), monarchies (England, France), and commercial polities (Venice). John Briggs queries the plays to discover if we sufficiently appreciate the degree to which love and honor are bound to interact and become volatile, for example, in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. He explores the play's structure to see how its tragic force derives from a deep chemistry of love and honor working its way into our hearts and memories—and wonders whether in this play, or any other play, Shakespeare devises a curative remedy or a deleterious poison for what ails our souls.

The following two pairs of chapters, as well as the first, reflect upon the ideals and aims in our pursuit of honor and love, and how our longings are mediated by the conventions within which these pursuits inevitably take place. Paul Cantor reads *As You Like It* as a satire on courtly love and one of Shakespeare's most self-consciously literary works, one in which Shakespeare develops a critique of the Elizabethan pastoral and Petrarchan love poetry so influential in his day. By juxtaposing the three pairs of very different lovers in the play, he argues, Shakespeare shows how the problems posed to love might be better addressed by blending natural simplicity with a sense of courtly refinement. Laurence Nee in his chapter on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* focuses our attention on Theseus' political concern for the disorderly effect of erotic love, poetry, and the desire for self-sufficiency upon public peace and prosperity. When the young lovers and tyrannical Bottom return to Athens from the natural realm of the forest, the danger posed to the political order by their natural longing for transcendence must be governed not by anachronistic Christian imagery or Bottom's dream, but by Theseus' moderating statesmanship.

Carol McNamara highlights the relation of individual desires to the common good in her reading of *Troilus and Cressida* as an account of how political rule becomes disordered when private motives drive public ends. With reference to the invocation of Aristotle in the play, she shows how Shakespeare judges the immoderate loves of the three Trojan brothers, Hector, Paris, and Troilus—their love of honor, shame of dishonor, and reckless pursuit of their passions—to be the root cause of their tragic failure to adopt a prudent political and military course for Troy. Bernard J. Dobski, in his chapter on the character and career of Henry V, explores how Prince Hal's friendships with Falstaff and Ned Poins allow him to interrogate the nature of his own political ambitions. Through his representation of these two friendships, Shakespeare indicates the imperative by which this scandalous and deeply ambitious royal learns to cover himself in enduring glory: combine Machiavellian prudence with a Christian respect for the political and moral limits governing man.

The next three chapters illuminate darker dimensions of love and honor in Shakespeare, showing the problems with their pursuit when one attempts either to transcend human nature through Christian self-denial or to dominate a realm through the radical assertion of will. In his treatment of *Romeo and Juliet*, David Lowenthal explores the way Christian piety can distort the traditional or romantic view of love. The tragedy of this play's star-crossed lovers originates in the unbending piety of the friar whose ascetic insistence on sexual purity paradoxically gives rise to a Romeo torn between manliness and effeminacy, and a secular political order incapable of stiff opposition to the Church. Only Juliet, tutored by her nurse,

preserves a natural constancy in her love for Romeo, which is grounded in a properly ordered sexual love, free from the pietistic extremes of Christianity. In *Macbeth*, however, Carson Holloway finds no natural solution to the problem of demonic evil embodied by the play's protagonist and his Lady. In their irrational pursuit of political power, this couple ruthlessly seeks and obtains a "good" that destroys their souls and prohibits them from reliably securing their interests even as they fulfill their ambitious desires. Shakespeare's portrait of a tyranny that "repudiates reasoning" in favor of a willful and self-destructive violence anticipates by nearly four hundred years the blood-soaked ideologies that wracked the twentieth century. Leon Craig, in his chapter on *Richard III*, similarly exposes the deep wickedness arising from an inordinate love of honor inflamed by a deformed *eros*. He argues that the *eros* in the misshapen Richard is actually drained of all sexual desire, for women or men. Once untethered from the physical objects of erotic longing, the Duke of Gloucester hunts a cold, limitless tyranny over human beings as such, with an eye to the conquest of all of Britain, Ireland and France.

The final pair of chapters returns us to reflection on Shakespeare and his art, offering an explicit engagement with Shakespeare's own activity—and rule over his audience and readers—as an artist and thinker. In reading *The Tempest*, Dustin Gish sees Shakespeare working out in his Prospero the inherent limitations of even a benevolent, enlightened effort to resolve the political problem of rule over the unwise and irrational. Prospero's desire for justice, he argues, unbound by a respect for the limits of our human nature and united with the god-like power promised by natural science, distorts his love of wisdom into the basis for rule which is a species of tyranny. Only the education in being human that Prospero receives through the action of a play which he ostensibly controls frees him from that crime for which, in the end, he begs pardon. Glen Arbery guides us through the plays in a search for Shakespeare's own commentary on the performative aspect of his work. It is the theatrical dimension of the concern for public honor, he argues, that allows us to grasp the genius that defines Shakespeare over, against his representations of honor-loving characters. In seeing how Shakespeare, unlike his Brutus, Antony, Cleopatra, or Macbeth, survives the public shame of tragic honor through his willingness to play "a motley to the view," we gain deeper insight into the role played by the stage itself in his dramatic work.

Representations of honor and love in Shakespeare are not limited to the characters in his works for the stage, though these portraits are sketched out in compelling detail. Shakespeare also offers reflections on our longings in his poetry—and not only in lengthy works as *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, where the themes of honor and love are intertwined and openly on display. In the brief codas that appear in the Epilogue and conclude this volume, we hear the poetry of Shakespeare sounded on the question of honor and love. George Anastaplo interrogates the enigmatic lovers in Shakespeare's *The Phoenix and Turtle*, reminding us of the paradoxical attempt by lovers to satisfy their longing by the sacrifice of individuality in a union with another: to live and die in the arms of a beloved, and so to honor, in perpetuity, the virtue of love in the extreme. The intensity of such a constant love—one that "bears it out even to the edge of doom" (Sonnet 116)—while beautiful and true, may yet preclude the possibility of two becoming one in self-forgetting union, or their love bridging the gap between mortal and immortal. Scott Crider concludes the volume with a reading of Shakespeare's Sonnets and the

lyrical will which voices them. He contends that the effort by the Speaker to achieve a double securing of love and honor for his beloved (first the Fair Youth, then the Dark Lady) establishes a monument to both the flourishing and the shame of his loving. This lyricism testifies to the love of the beautiful that elevates souls and the carnal desires that drive bodies, and does so by preserving them together in a medium which defies the ravages of age and death: passion, poems, and poet merge and become immortal in a lyric state.

Through his representations of honor and love, Shakespeare brings to life before our eyes souls with longing, and through our study of such souls we gain insight into the human soul itself and come to a deeper appreciation of the motives and motions therein that compel us to embrace as well as rival one another. As the chapters in this volume bear witness, it is by examining these representations of honor-seekers and lovers in Shakespeare's works that we come to grips with, and better understand, our own expectations and desires with respect to our various associations and communities—ranging from the quotidian and the conventional, to the extraordinary and the extreme, from the private and intimate to the political and the grand. For as the plays and poetry of Shakespeare amply demonstrate, the study of such representations of honor and love is one means by which our own romantic, moral, and political imaginations can accomplish their work. Such studies therefore become a necessary prolegomena to the discovery of human nature itself, the ultimate ground of Shakespeare's own thought and wisdom.

## Notes

1. Shakespeare, Sonnet 18.
2. Ben Jonson's prefatory poem to the First Folio (see Appendix A) trumpeted Shakespeare's immortal glory: "He was not of an age, but for all time!" John Milton, in his first published poem, a sonnet attached to the Folio's second edition, declared that Shakespeare had constructed "a live-long Monument" for himself in his plays. John Dryden, in his *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* (1668), proclaimed "the Divine Shakespeare"—of all poets, ancient and modern—in possession of "the largest and most comprehensive soul."
3. Samuel Johnson, "Preface to Shakespeare" (1765), in *Johnson on Shakespeare: Essays and Notes Selected and Set Forth ... by Walter Raleigh* (London, 1908) 9–63, 11–12.
4. Allan Bloom, *Love and Friendship* (Simon and Schuster, 1993) 393: "The survey of the human spirit, which is what Shakespeare's plays taken together are, instructs us in the complex business of knowing what to honor and what to despise, what to love and what to hate."
5. One contemporary scholar attributes the dominant legacy of Shakespeare to his gift of poetic invention, the richness, originality, and astonishingly polysemous quality of his language, and his sway over generations of great writers, and not only in English: Jonathan Bate, "The Mirror of Life: How Shakespeare Conquered the World," *Harper's Magazine* (April 2007) 37–46.
6. William Faulkner, in his 1950 speech accepting the Nobel Prize for Literature, observed that the "young man or woman writing today" must leave "no room in his workshop for anything but the old verities and truths of the heart, the universal truths lacking which any story

is ephemeral and doomed—love and honor and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice.”

7. Paul Johnson, “Shakespeare: Glimpses of an Unknown Colossus,” in his *Creators* (Harper Collins, 2006) 49–76. See Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (Riverhead Books, 1998) xviii–xix: “[One] might contend that Shakespeare’s originality was in the *representation* of cognition, personality, character. But there is an overflowing element in the plays, an excess beyond representation, that is closer to the metaphor we call ‘creation.’” Shakespeare’s art, Bloom contends, is “so infinite that it *contains* us, and will go on enclosing those likely to come after us.” Allan Bloom argues that Shakespeare chooses not to “create” but rather to explore human nature and the wonders of nature itself; see A. Bloom 1993, 270, 393–394: “The movement” in his plays “is from nature to art to nature”—but in his writing them, Shakespeare accomplishes “a perfection of nature.” Samuel Johnson, in his “Preface,” remarked that his characters “are the genuine progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply, and observation will always find.” Ralph Waldo Emerson, in his *Representative Men* (London, 1850), concluded that “the wise Shakespeare” wrote in “his book of life ... the text of modern life, the text of manners; he drew the man of England, and Europe, the father of the man in America ... he read the hearts of men and women, their probity, and their second thoughts, and wiles, the wiles of innocence, and the transitions by which virtues and vices slide into their contraries” (130). Such exalted praise of Shakespeare seems outrageous, but may turn out to be “plain truth rather than effervescent hyperbole.” David Lowenthal, *Shakespeare and the Good Life: Ethics and Politics in Dramatic Form* (Rowman and Littlefield, 1997) ix.

8. See the “Introduction” to Allan Bloom, with Harry Jaffa, *Shakespeare’s Politics* (Basic Books, 1964; University of Chicago Press, 1986) 1–12. See also Allan Bloom, “Political Philosophy and Poetry” and “A Restatement,” *American Political Science Review* 54/2 (1960) 457–64 and 471–73; Howard White, *Copp’d Hills Toward Heaven: Shakespeare and the Classical Polity* (Martinus Nijhoff, 1970) 1–24, 141–53; Lowenthal 1997, vii–xii; cf. David Bevington, “A Natural Philosopher,” in his *Shakespeare’s Ideas* (Blackwell, 2008) 1–14.

9. Scott Crider, in *With What Persuasion: An Essay on Shakespeare and the Ethics of Rhetoric* (Peter Lang, 2009), argues that Shakespeare’s plays teach “a universal ethics of rhetoric” which holds to “the mean between universalism and difference,” such that the Shakespearean canon can become for contemporary culture a “shared text of virtue” and a “supplement” to the Bible and modern liberalism (1–7, 179–87). See Harry Jaffa’s “Foreword” to John Alvis, *Shakespeare’s Understanding of Honor* (Carolina Academic Press, 1990) vii: “Shakespeare’s plays, taken as a whole, provide us with what we might call a history of civilization.” See also Harry Jaffa, “The Unity of Tragedy, Comedy, and History: An Interpretation of the Shakespearean Universe,” in *Shakespeare as Political Thinker*, eds. John Alvis and Thomas West (Carolina Academic Press, 1981; ISI Books, 2000) 29–58.

10. Samuel Johnson argued in his “Preface” (14) that Shakespeare’s plays “are occupied only by men, who act and speak as the reader thinks that he should himself have spoken or acted on the same occasion: Even where the agency is supernatural the dialogue is level with life. Other writers disguise the most natural passions and most frequent incidents; so that he who contemplates them in the book will not know them in the world. *Shakespeare* approximates the remote, and familiarizes the wonderful; the event which he represents will

not happen, but if it were possible, its effects would probably be such as he has assigned; and it may be said, that he has not only shewn human nature as it acts in real exigencies, but as it would be found in trials, to which it cannot be exposed. This therefore is the praise of *Shakespeare*, that his drama is the mirror of life.” On the human limits to the pursuit of first principles, see Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* I.4 (1095b1–3): “One must begin from what is known; but this has two meanings, the things known to us because familiar and the things known simply. Perhaps we, at any rate, ought to begin from what is known to us.”

11. See A. Bloom 1993, 269: “Shakespeare seems to be the mirror of nature and to present human beings just as they are. His poetry gives us the eyes to see what is there.” See also C. S. Lewis, *An Experiment in Literary Criticism* (Cambridge University Press, 1961) 141: “My own eyes are not enough for me, I will see through those of others. Reality, even seen through the eyes of many, is not enough. I will see what others have invented. Even the eyes of all humanity are not enough.... [I]n reading great literature I become a thousand men and yet remain myself.... I see with a myriad eyes, but it is still I who see. Here, as in worship, in love, in moral action, and in knowing, I transcend myself; and am never more myself than when I do.”

12. See A. Bloom 1993, 269–70; H. Bloom 1998, xx.

13. On the variety of political regimes in Shakespeare, see A. Bloom 1964, 8–12; Howard White, “Politics in Shakespeare,” in *Antiquity Forgot: Essays on Shakespeare, Bacon, and Rembrandt* (Martinus Nijhoff, 1978) 5–30. See also the essays in: Alvis and West 2000, esp. John Alvis, “Introductory: Shakespearean Poetry and Politics,” 1–27; *Shakespeare’s Political Pageant*, eds. Joseph Alulis and Vickie Sullivan (Rowman and Littlefield, 1996); *Shakespeare’s Last Plays*, eds. Steven Smith and Travis Curtright (Lexington Books, 2002); *Perspectives on Politics in Shakespeare*, eds. John Murley and Sean Sutton (Lexington Books, 2006). To read Shakespeare as a political thinker is neither to politicize him or his work, nor to interpret his plays through the distorting lens of history, theory, or ideology: for example, cf. *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism*, eds. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Manchester University Press, 1985); Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Renaissance Politics* (Arden, 2003); *Shakespeare and Early Modern Political Thought*, eds. David Armitage, Conal Condren, and Andrew Fitzmaurice (Cambridge University Press, 2009); Robin Wells, *Shakespeare’s Politics: A Contextual Introduction* (Continuum, 2009, 2nd edition).

14. See Appendices B, C, and D.

15. See Paul Cantor, “Shakespeare—‘For All Time’?,” *The Public Interest* 110 (1993) 34–48; “Shakespeare At Liberty,” *The American Conservative* (April 2011) 38–41.

16. See Jaffa 1990, vii–viii; Alvis 1990, 5–6, 14–18. Harold Bloom (1998, 315–18) asserts that the want-wit, whored-out, besotted hero-villain of *Merry Wives of Windsor* is merely a false, pseudo-Falstaff. But the play unveils the debased farce of “Sir John in love,” and a Falstaff plagued and humiliated by his own harsh realism. Shakespeare would have us “Minding true things by what their mockeries be” (*H5* IV.Chorus.53). See Crider 2009, 66–68; cf. A. Bloom 1993, 401–10.

17. Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra* V.ii.273–274, I.iii.35–37. See A. Bloom 1993, 297–325, 396; see also Paul Cantor, *Shakespeare’s Rome: Republic and Empire* (Cornell

University Press, 1976) 155–83.

18. See Cantor 1976, 184–208; Jan Blits, *New Heaven, New Earth: Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra* (Lexington Books, 2009).

19. Alvis 1990, 10. See Aristotle, *NE* IV.3 (1123b15–21); cf. I.5 (1095b22–32), VIII.8 (1159a13–27), and IX.9 (1169b3–10).

20. Shakespeare, Sonnet 129. Shakespeare's "The Rape of Lucrece" and *Titus Andronicus* expose the savage extremes of heart and mind in Rome, and its crimes against nature or barbarism. See George Anastaplo, "Shakespeare," in his *The Artist as Thinker* (Swallow Press, 1983) 15–61. The philosophy found in Shakespeare's Athens may pose an alternative to Rome and to Christianity when it comes to arbitrating between *eros* and *thumos*; see White 1970, 23–24. This alternative has its problems, as we learn from the erotic mischief and uneasy conquests in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. For a survey of Shakespearean love-plots tempered by orthodox Christian views on sexual conduct and marriage, see Bevington 2008, 15–41.

21. Shakespeare, *Henry V* V.Chorus.23, II.Chorus.6. By kindling a national love of honor which conjoined Roman virtue and the pursuit of greatness with Christian piety and ceremony, Henry sought to found a modern monarchy. See Alvis 1990, 248–50.

22. To see Shakespeare's best regime, John Alvis points to Shakespearean rulers who personify the self-confident magnanimity of the commanding figure in Sonnet 94 and who also possess the requisite qualities of justice and self-knowledge (1990, 250; 2000, 138). See White 1970, 10: "What men honor, what men hold to be good, is the distinctive feature of any regime."

23. H. Bloom 1998, 737–45.