

**A Conversation on David Schalkwyk's
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Abstract

David Schalkwyk talks about his latest book on *Shakespeare, Love and Language* (Cambridge University Press, 2018) with Silvia Bigliazzi.

KEYWORDS: Shakespeare; love; language; desire; eros

SB: As the other day I was walking down the street I found myself rehearsing in my own mind bits of speeches, fragments of memories, scattered sounds in Italian and in English, and this made me think about our bilingual experiment with *Antony and Cleopatra*.¹ I thought about Cleopatra's infinite variety but also about feelings of otherness and displacement with regard to Antony, and wondered to what extent being displaced sometimes also means being in one's own place, and how getting lost also means finding oneself. Perhaps also through language. So I started wondering whether our multilingual *A&C* could play with language in that way, perhaps experimenting on the possibilities of desire – for one-self and for the other(s) – through language swapping, or overlapping, or counterpointing, as if engaging with a very flexible musical score.

DS: These are wonderful, resonating and suggestive thoughts. I have now spent quite a bit of my life away from 'home' – to the point that I no longer know what home is or where it may be. When I was Director of Research at the Folger Shakespeare Library we had a seminar on Global Shakespeare, and thought it would be fun to replicate the Robben Island Shakespeare, and sign our names against our favourite passages in Shakespeare. I was startled by my choice, made instinctively, without deliberation: Antipholus of Syracuse's speech:

¹ Reference is to the workshop on a directorless performance of *Antony and Cleopatra* which took place in Verona from 24 to 28 February 2019. The Italian translation was by Silvia Bigliazzi and the performers were Hanna Arendzen, Monica Garavello, Michele Guidi, Eric Nicholson, Elena Pellone, Antony Renshaw, and David Schalkwyk.

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He that commends me to mine own content
 Commends me to the thing I cannot get.
 I to the world am like a drop of water
 That in the ocean seeks another drop,
 Who, falling there to find his fellow forth,
 Unseen, inquisitive, confounds himself.
 So I, to find a mother and a brother,
 In quest of them, unhappy, lose myself.
 (1.2.33-40)²

I've always been struck by Wittgenstein's suggestion that philosophy means no longer being at home (in one's language), no longer knowing one's way about. And that our task is to return language to its proper home. But everything he shows us about language is uncanny in the Freudian sense-unheimlich. The strangeness of home. And our struggle to find comfort in that strangeness. Is this what Eros is all about: finding comfort in strangeness; forging a home out of the other? And offering a home to the other in one's alien and alienated being?

SB: This tension between feeling at home and estranged, or comforted in strangeness, appears to me related to your major claim in *Shakespeare, Love and Language* that desire and love are opposite and complementary: the one being an emotion or affect resting on lack and metonymy (from Plato to Lacan), the other including emotion but going beyond it and relying on presence and uniqueness, the "finality of the you" Todorov talks about.

DS: Yes and no. I stalled for a long time on *Shakespeare, Love and Language* (it took me over ten years to write) because I was determined to find some way of distinguishing love and desire. All work on eros of the previous thirty years was obsessed with desire, a concept that had garnered increasing theoretical sophistication. Nobody had written about love in Shakespeare since the nineteen-seventies. This was understandable enough. It was a reaction to an earlier celebration of love in Shakespeare that was philosophically and politically uncritical. But something had been lost in the refusal to take seriously a concept that is at the heart of almost the whole Shakespeare canon. I tried to restore love as a concept central to Shakespeare's work, but also to his age. In *Shakespeare, Love and Service* I explored one of the senses of love, exemplified by Ariel's question to Prospero, "Do you love me, master?" (4.1.48) – the reciprocal bond between master and servant, monarch and subject that was not necessarily a deeply affective relationship. In what I consider its companion volume, *Shakespeare, Love and Language* I try to understand the same question asked by Miranda of Ferdinand. (This question, "Do you love me?", 3.1.80, occurs only twice in Shakespeare – both instances in *The Tempest*.) This proved to be much more difficult. *Eros* is much more complex and elusive than *nomos*. In short, I came to the conclusion, after reading Plato, the neo-Platonists, the Galenic psychologists, Freud and Lacan – and, of course, Shakespeare – that love and desire are not distinct but nonetheless different concepts. Love needs de-

² References to Shakespeare's works are to the Folger digital editions, edited by Barbara Mowat and Paul Wernstein (<http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org>).

sire (what a paradox! love wants desire – see how language infiltrates and complicates everything, rendering everything exciting!) but it cannot be reduced to desire, a reduction that seemed to be compulsory for a whole generation of Shakespeare critics and scholars. So I reworked Lacan’s algorithm for desire, as a metonymic movement based on a lack that will never end in identity (which is also essentially Plato’s, absent the latter’s ultimate teleology) to produce my own algorithm for love: it is driven by the reiterative need or want or absence, but obeying the rules of syntax, it can, miraculously, produce metaphorical identity. There is no statement (of identity) without syntactical movement. That identity is the reciprocity of love, achieved in a single moment between two singular subjectivities: what Todorov calls “the singularity of the you”. But there is no finally achieved stasis. Because it is the essence of language to be repeated (Wittgenstein, Derrida), and such re-iteration always opens up the possibility of *difference*, the metaphorical identity of love is always unstable, always open to disruption by new contexts. I hope that my algorithm manages to combine the fundamental insights of Plato and Lacan into the *needs* of and for desire with the more humanist focus on the singularity of identity that love makes possible but cannot guarantee.

SB: You tackle eros in Shakespeare as “an intertwining of emotion, thought, attitude and *linguistic action* that cannot be comprehended by any single theory or historical narrative, but which may be illuminated by the deep involvement of language in human subjectivity and its drives” (9-10). Appropriating Carson’s position, you insist on the fact that, albeit a noun, love acts as a verb. This brings in the question of language as performative action constitutive of the tension between eros and love as well as the construction of the subject linguistically through, and in relation to, the other.

DS: Yes. It should be apparent from my response above that I regard eros as deeply analogous to, or at least illuminated by, the operations of language. Just as literary studies and theory over the past three decades have neglected love as an active force in Shakespeare, it has tended to be fixated on a neo-Saussurean picture of language as essentially a *structure*. A very different strand of what we now call analytic or Anglo-American philosophy, following Ludwig Wittgenstein and J.L. Austin, however, see language primarily as a form of action, as a way of negotiating a way in the world, and of changing that world. In my first book, *Speech and Performance in Shakespeare’s Sonnets and Plays*, I argue that the sonnets are fundamentally forms of (attempted) action. For this book I found Stanley Cavell and William Reddy’s development of Wittgensteinian and Austinian ideas of the dynamism of language in use useful in teasing out the ways in which love is necessarily a negotiation or navigation of feeling between two people through the vagaries of interactive dialogue – what Cavell (2006) calls “passionate utterance”. In Shakespeare, love and desire are fundamentally linguistic – they are pursued, in their fullest instances, in conversation between two people in both fictional (imaginative and imaginary) and frictional ways.

SB: Shakespeare’s famous wordplay on I and eye/d in sonnet 104, “when first your eye I eyed” (2), seems pertinent to this erotic dynamic, in which the pun encapsu-

lates noun and verb, being and acting in a performative lyrical address to the you. Booth has underlined the phrase's capacity "to introduce witty and pertinent suggestions of a conceit it approximates structurally, the fusion and/or exchange of the identities of lover and beloved" (Shakespeare 1977: 333n2).

DS: Well, this is a complicated example. One of my reservations about a whole generation of sonnet critics, epitomized by the brilliance of Joel Fineman, is the way they tended to reduce the "I" to the "eye": vision, or the impossibility of vision, encapsulating the concomitant impossibility of accurate or fulfilling sight. The sonnet as, essentially, a failed picture. But the way you put it, with "eyed" as a verb that impacts upon the "I" in relation to another, changes that picture entirely. Cavell's "passionate utterances" are precisely what you call the "performative lyrical address to the you".

SB: You beautifully discuss how the uncertainties of desire, rather than the fullness of love, constitute the deep engine of Shakespeare's drama. Love too is a verb, implying acting rather than being, but, as you point out, Shakespeare does not engage with love as sustained action in romantic comedies. I find your definition of many Shakespeare's plays involving desire as "incessantly embodied and re-embodied as love" (8) very intriguing. I wonder to what extent this concept coalesces the separate ideas of desire and love. I also wonder to what extent dramas of desire, grounded in lack and substitution, correspond to an idea of *drân* as voluntary doing, and as such constituting the subject as a wilful and self-aware self, or instead to an idea of *páschein*, i.e. of suffering, being an estranged-self affected in a certain way, and how this relates to the idea of being comfortable in strangeness.

DS: Again, as Falstaff would say, "You have hit it!". For the relationship between desire and love, see my account of the algorithm in which the metonymy of desire may, through the necessary operations of syntax, turn into the metaphorical identity of love. The paradox of love (rather than desire) is that it is fundamentally *páschein*, or suffering, as you put it: one *falls* in love. But there is an ethical dimension to love (which desire *lacks* – I love it!), which is that once one has been struck, fallen, let oneself go, then to acknowledge love (rather than desire) entails a responsibility for one's behaviour, actions, continuing to love and care, *into the future*. One falls into this stranger, but one also takes responsibility for one's self in relation to that stranger. This combines an alienation of oneself in the falling, the *páschein*, with an ethical requirement that you do not become a "double self" (as Portia accuses Bassanio of doing; *The Merchant of Venice* 5.1.261). Shakespeare is absolutely fascinated by the performative ethics of oaths and promises. A certain, absolute integrity is demanded along with the falling into the other by falling in love. This is utterly different from the cruisings of desire.

SB: Dealing with love in Shakespeare entails both considering how he responded to historically-situated theories, and went beyond them, even anticipating modern philosophers. This not only allows us to penetrate the intricacies of eros in ways irreducible to individual theories, past or present, but also invites us to reflect upon our own approaches and critical stances, including critical eclecticism.

DS: I am aware of being in danger of being dismissed for such eclecticism. Indeed,

some of the reviews have already reproached the book for its critical incoherence. I see no reason why a certain openness to difference, even contradictory difference, should be regarded as a necessary sign of intellectual weakness. I approached my task with a single question in mind: how does the concept of erotic love make its way through Shakespeare's work? Eros. I had no predetermined approach. Despite my general inclination towards a certain strand of linguistic philosophy (which sees greater affinities between Derrida and Wittgenstein and Austin than most – see my *Literature and the Touch of the Real* – I did not wish to give any definitive reading: historicist, humanist, Wittgensteinian, Lacanian, Cognitivist, and so on. I read the texts, and what struck me – what I say in my opening pages – is that there is no single theory, or idea, or picture of love in Shakespeare. That said, there do seem to be certain trends: the idea that the beloved is singular and not fungible; that no-one can be commanded to love someone they do not; that love is both immensely powerful and fragile; that while fantasy may be immensely destructive, it is to some degree inescapable; that to claim to love someone incurs an ethical commitment that desiring someone does not; that the separate integrity of each lover has to be preserved – that the traditional ideal of fusion is both impossible and destructive; that love may be an a politically disruptive force; that lovers do not know why they love; that love is a projective force of bestowal of value; and that love is not an emotion but a dispositional form of behaviour that involves multiple, often contradictory emotions. I read all the classic Galenic humoural psychologists and found them both contradictory and inconsistent, and Shakespeare's attitude to them ironical and sceptical. I spent two years trying to understand Lacan, and found to my delight and surprise that Shakespeare had beaten me to it: he had read Seminar VII before he wrote *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, but had moved on to Todorov for *Romeo and Juliet* and Austin and Cavell for *Antony and Cleopatra*. I saw signs of Lucretius in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Derrida and Mauss in *The Merchant of Venice*, and the Catholic philosopher Jean-Luc Marion helped me to understand aspects of *Othello* and *Troilus and Cressida* I hadn't been able to make sense of before. It was fun.

SB: The five chapters into which your book is divided propose five main approaches to Shakespeare, love, and language. The first one deals with the function of subjective fantasies in channelling desire towards an object, and accordingly constructing it as desirable. Your argument leads to the conclusion that the love object is not fungible. Is this dependent on the origin of the projective power in the subject? How does the idea of feeling comfortable in strangeness accommodate with this projective subject-oriented perspective? Is the strangeness one may feel comfortable with a condition produced by the self in Shakespeare, or is this possibility evaded?

DS: This is a difficult question, and I'm not sure I can answer it adequately. There is absolutely no doubt that in Shakespeare love is not fungible from the perspective of the lover at the moment of love. There are many instances of this: Hermia's willingness to die rather than marry Demetrius in *Dream*; Juliet's similar refusal of Paris; Bertram's incapacity to love Helen in *All's Well*, despite acceding to marrying her. And *Dream* makes clear that this is a projective, but also involuntary, form

of bestowal by the lover on the beloved: “Love looks not with the eyes but with the mind” (*A Midsummer Night’s Dream* 1.1.240). At the same time, he is acutely aware of how vulnerable such singular bestowal is to change: compare Lysander’s transformed fixation on Helena, Romeo’s move from Rosalind to Juliet; Proteus’s transformed affection for Silvia. Hence my algorithm, which incorporates the singular metaphorical identity of love within the metonymic movement of desire, but always open to the disruptive difference of iterability. Your question is about feeling comfortable with strangeness. I’m not sure one is ever comfortable. There are moments of ecstasy, or movements of pleasure (cf. Kate and Petruchio’s initial and concluding interactions in *The Taming of the Shrew* or any number of interactions between *Antony and Cleopatra*) but never, in Shakespeare, the stasis of comfort. Perhaps this is just a characteristic of the genre – of theatre or drama. But I think not. His sonnets are the least comfortable, or comforting, love poems in English.

SB: Your reading of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* demonstrates the impossibility “to reduce fantasy either to language or the unreachable Real” (56), showing that the “anatomy of love as fantastical . . . is unparalleled in Shakespeare” (57). I recently discussed how in *Macbeth* desire becomes the origin of fear (2018). In what way does the fantastical share in the nature of other affects in Shakespeare, and may this sharing shed light on the nature of love and language?

DS: You ask such hard questions! My reading of *Gentlemen* is very specific, very particular to a historic form of love and a modern theory of desire: it combines Andreas Capellanus’s treatise on what we call “courtly love” – *De Amore* – with a pretty straightforward account of the play in the light of Lacan’s Seminar VII discussion of courtly love and the imaginary. The play concerns the ways in which a certain attitude to women, exemplified by “courtly love”, does not encounter them as people, but rather as what Lacan calls *vacuoles*: hollowed out fantasies that bear no real relation to the person desired and loved. This reading does not evade the attempted rape at the end, but argues that it makes perfect sense, as does Valentine’s ‘gift’ of Silvia to Proteus, since the fantasy that both men have sustained collapses, along with their attempts to find poetic expression of that fantasy in the Symbolic. Once Silvia collapses into a real figure, she is no longer of any interest to either of the men, who shift their desire onto the androgynous figure of “Sebastian”. Fantasy here is appalling. Worthy of excoriation by the #MeToo movement and all who sympathise with it. But that is not to say we can get rid of fantasy or the imaginary. It remains at the core of the bestowal of value at the core of love. But in Shakespeare, it seems to me, fantasy is channelled and ‘realized’ if I can use that word, through the friction, the resistance, the give and take of “passionate utterance” as an active, performative form of conversation. In this symbolic activity, where “other affects”, as you put it, are mutually engaged in what Reddy calls the “navigation” of feeling (2001), love mobilises a vast range of emotions, exemplified by the interactions of Shakespeare’s unsurpassed lovers, Antony and Cleopatra.

SB: The second chapter deals with what you call “Love’s Trouble Consummation”. With regard to *Troilus and Cressida* you explore how “the metonymical movement of desire may be transformed into the metaphorical identity of desire” (14). How is

the relation between metonymy and metaphor dramatised in this play?

DS: I think I have answered, at least in part, this question above. This chapter was the most difficult for me to write. And I still have misgivings about the argument. I offer a radical argument here (perhaps radically wrong). This was a case of following the argument where it led me. *Troilus and Cressida* is the first play I discuss that contains a real, extended conversational engagement between the lovers: a sustained “passionate utterance”. Following my algorithm, it struck me that it is impossible to determine any length of time for the metaphorical identity of love to be established. Aristotle maintains that friendship is tested by time. But how long is enough? If the metaphorical identity of love is established only momentarily through the metonymic movement of desire, and it is always open to the disruption of difference through the subsequent moments of repetition, no criterion is available for deciding how long is long enough for us to count this (momentary) identity as love indeed. All love may come to an end. To paraphrase Derrida, if only one such instance is possible, we need to account for that possibility. So I concluded that there is no way of determining the duration that love must meet to count as love. An instant, “momentary as a sound, / Swift as a shadow, short as any dream, / Brief as . . . lightning” (*A Midsummer Night’s Dream* 1.1.145-7), might serve. So that’s what I argued about Troilus and Cressida’s brief relationship, and it became a heartbreaking exemplum of all loves that break off, are disrupted, come to an end, no matter how long they’d managed to sustain themselves. The moment of difference, of differentiation, obliterates previous time. I’m still uncertain about this logic.

SB: In your third chapter, you focus on the ‘gift of love’. With regard to *As you like it*, you connect the ‘condition of otium’ experienced by the characters in the forest with “the playfulness of fiction” (14), while with regard to *The Merchant of Venice* you disclose bitter insights into the “impossibility of love as a gift” (ibid.).

DS: These are very different plays, but they are connected by what Derrida calls the impossibility of the gift. My discussion of *As You Like It* is informed, as all treatments of the play must be, by its pastoral character: by its bifurcated vision of pastoral as both a desirable fantasy and a harsh reality. The love forged between Orlando and Rosalind needs the otium of the pastoral, the fiction of gender play, to suspend the immediacy of desire. That suspension allows for play, in all senses of the word, totally absent from the rigid demands of war in both *Othello* and *Troilus and Cressida*, to negotiate or navigate feelings and attitudes, and test consistency of behaviour, without immediate consequences. Rosalind is thus able to give herself as a gift, both to her father and her lover without having to pass through the restrictions and demands that Portia is subject to, while also retaining relationships between others in her gift. The gift of love in *Merchant* is very different. Taking Mauss and Derrida’s argument that a real gift demands no sense of recompense, I argue that Antonio’s gift to Bassanio is in fact his heart, disguised as collateral for a loan to Shylock. Portia’s gift of his wealth back to him negates this impossible gift of love. How do we give to the people we love freely, without any expectation of recompense, even in the form of thanks? Does love demand this? Is it even possible? And if it is not possible, is love possible?

SB: In chapter four you resume the topic of love as service already discussed with regard to *The Two Gentlemen*, and more extensively in your book of 2008. Here the focus is on the retainer-band logic of *Much Ado about Nothing* and *Romeo and Juliet*. What prompted you to consider these two plays together?

DS: It's simple. They're both love stories, conditioned, if that is the right word, by the overwhelming ethos of patriarchal service, in which women are either distracting objects of desire once the manly pursuits of violence and aggression are put aside, objects of social exchange, or dangerous distractions from masculine solidarity. What is striking is the degree to which Beatrice, who loathes that masculine ethos, finds herself forced to save her cousin by appealing to Benedick's *service*. Although it is an earlier play, *Romeo and Juliet* is almost unique in Shakespeare's canon in eschewing the discourse of service between its youthful lovers entirely – within a social context in which service predominates. I argue that *Romeo and Juliet* exemplifies the recognition of the beloved as a singular person, loved for their specific irreplaceability. Romeo and Juliet forge a reciprocal relationship that eschews the demands of their society (as Petruchio and Katherine do in *The Taming of the Shrew*), whereas Beatrice and Benedick are reintegrated into the communal dance (even if it proves to be giddy).

SB: Chapter five tackles the question of love and emotion and culminates in an illuminating investigation of how *Antony and Cleopatra* offers evidence that love can be reduced neither to a single emotion, nor to simplified binaries, as it involves conflicting emotions which are expressed, produced, and tested through language. This raises the question of who Antony and Cleopatra are and to what extent they (de)construct themselves performatively through erotic speech acts.

DS: Hmm. One could just as well say that they construct themselves through erotic speech acts. It is important to remember that each of them has a history – within the time of the play, and extending before it. That history has constructed them in a particular way, and their interactions inevitably both deconstruct and attempt to reconstruct that history. I return to some degree to Freud in this chapter, following an excellent *Shakespeare Quarterly* essay by David Hillman in transference – both Antony and Cleopatra are the subjects of transference and are resistant to or fearful of it. But my main goal here is to investigate the degree to which love may be said to be an emotion. The interaction of the lovers in this play runs the gamut of emotions, some of them completely contrary of what we would consider love, and more important, they feel anger, exasperation, frustration, contempt, derision precisely *because they love each other*. In addition to exploring the idea that love is a behavioural disposition that involves emotions but is not reducible to them, the chapter explores the way that Cleopatra and Antony recognize or acknowledge love for each other retrospectively, in the manner of their respective deaths. If Lacan is right to say that love involves giving what one doesn't have, then Shakespeare's great tragedy shows that love is a promisory note on the future – something one doesn't have – but it is recognized only as something already given, in the past.

SB: “In Shakespeare the Imaginary always works with the Symbolic. In its most

traditional form it is a reprise on the poetic discourses of courtly desire . . . This means, in effect, that the Lacanian theory of the signifier that founds language on an essential lack or absence, and the theory of the subject that flows from that absence, stems from a confusion of langue and parole: language as system and language in use." (202). These remarks concern plays like *The Two Gentlemen*, *Much Ado*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Troilus and Cressida*. Reference to the signifier as related to desire also suggests to me a very peculiar example of how Shakespeare grounds Juliet's desire in absence before translating it into Todorov's "finality of the you": Juliet's ignorance of Romeo's face and name. The balcony scene confirms her love for a masked voice, now screened by the night. At the ball, Romeo's voice is, contrariwise, the signifier of an object to be hatred by Tybalt. His voice is a synecdoche of the eroticised object, a signifier of desire grounded in absence, and as such seducing Juliet through the sensuous power of what Kristeva calls the semiotic. But it is also what turns the potential for eroticism into Tybalt's aggressiveness. All this seems to suggest a subtle link between conflicting stances and passionate drives equally rooted in some form of lack.

DS: Well, there is no doubt that *Romeo and Juliet* displays in the most sure-sighted ways the erotic nature of hatred, and perhaps the potential violence of love. I'm uncertain about reducing both these impulses to a common lack, however. It's the obsession, since Plato, with the idea that love is essentially identical to desire, to wanting something one does not have (and will never have) that has impeded recognition of the difference between these concepts. In Leone Ebreo's wonderful *Dialoghi d'amore*, Sophia, the female interlocutor, counters Philo's Platonic definition of love by insisting that the love for children is not predicated upon any lack, and that this may be applicable to eros too. I guess that the problem is that lack is so much more interesting than fulfilment. It's Tolstoy's observation that all happy families are alike whereas each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way. The unhappiness of lack is a dynamic, driving force that makes for interesting and engaging stories. I wanted to write a chapter that dealt with two couples who may be said to be Shakespeare's happiest, erotically speaking, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth and Gertrude and Claudius. But it was too hard.

SB: Let us get back to our starting point and *fil rouge* of our conversation: the strangeness of home, finding comfort in that strangeness and forging a home out of the other, but from a different, perhaps plainer angle. In his latest novel, *The Only Story* (2018), Julian Barnes describes his young protagonist's falling in love with an older woman as a form of "complicity": "Not . . . as yet a complicity to do anything. Just a complicity which made me a little more me, and her a little more her" (11). I wonder whether this is in any way comparable to what we have said about Shakespeare. In Barnes, that mutual form of understanding and discovery of oneself through the other is presented as all the more exceptional because concerning an entirely unconventional relation. In this respect, a passage from your book is especially interesting as it gets to the core of the fundamental question of the position of the subject in relation to ideas of a free or socially-conditioned individuality:

In his insistence that love offers a Hegelian freedom “to be with oneself in the other” . . . Hegel’s . . . sense that freedom means achieving a completeness and autonomy of the self as an individual and finding oneself a home in a world that “makes the actualization of individuality and social membership possible”. *Romeo and Juliet* deals in the different ways in which love is split between the two “others” implicit in Hegel’s aphorism: the other of society, family ties, expected norms and compulsions (the big “Other” in Lacan-speak) and the singular other who is loved (what Lacan would call the “small other” or the *objet petit a*). The question is the degree to which each (for Lacan, the Symbolic and the Imaginary in their asymmetrical relation to the Real) is imbricated in the other. (192)

DS: I was trying to respond to an issue that Paul Kottman raises in an important *Shakespeare Quarterly* essay on the question of freedom in *Romeo and Juliet*. I wanted to avoid the Romantic idea that love transcends all social conditions and constraints. (Think of Matthew Arnold’s “Dover Beach” –

Ah, love, let us be true
 To one another! for the world, which seems
 To lie before us like a land of dreams,
 So various, so beautiful, so new,
 Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
 Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
 And we are here as on a darkling plain
 Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
 Where ignorant armies clash by night.)

But I was also unhappy with the idea that romantic love is merely an ideological construct designed to trap unwitting subjects into complicity with a capitalist and patriarchal hegemony. *Romeo and Juliet* seemed to me to show these two forces in tension. My inadequate way of expressing this tension was to say that we are all subjects of social forces over which we have little control, but love also makes individuals of each of us. That’s as much as I could do with this impossible subject. I often wish that I’d had the courage to withhold the book from publication. One should not inflict upon the world a piece of work that is so obviously and irredeemably flawed. If I were foolish enough to write on love in Shakespeare today, I would write a completely different book.

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