



Shakespeare on Love and Friendship

Allan Bloom

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"No one can make us love love as much as Shakespeare, and no one can make us despair of it as effectively as he does." William Shakespeare is the only classical author to remain widely popular—not only in America but throughout the world—and Allan Bloom argues that this is because no other writer holds up a truer mirror to human nature. Unlike the Romantics and other moderns, Shakespeare has no project for the betterment or salvation of mankind—his poetry simply gives us eyes to see what is there. In particular, we see the full variety of erotic connections, from the "star-crossed" devotions of Romeo and Juliet to the failed romance of Troilus and Cressida to the problematic friendship of Falstaff and Hal.

This volume includes essays on five plays, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Anthony and Cleopatra*, *Measure for Measure*, *Troilus and Cressida*, and *The Winter's Tale*, and within these Bloom meditates on Shakespeare's work as a whole. He also draws on his formidable knowledge of Plato, Rousseau, and others to bring both ancients and moderns into the conversation. The result is a truly synoptic treatment of eros—not only a philosophical reflection on Shakespeare, but a survey of the human spirit and its tendency to seek what Bloom calls the "connectedness" of love and friendship.

These highly original interpretations of the plays convey a deep respect for their author and a deep conviction that we still have much to learn from him. In Bloom's view, we live in a love-impoverished age; he asks us to turn once more to Shakespeare because the playwright gives us a rich version of what is permanent in human nature without sharing our contemporary assumptions about erotic love.

"Provocative and illuminating." —Michiko Kakutani, *New York Times*

"A brilliant analysis of the erotic ugliness and the balancing erotic grace of *The Winter's Tale* . . . and Bloom makes more sense of [*Measure for Measure*] than anyone else I have read." —A. S. Byatt, *Washington Post Book World*

At his death in 1992, Allan Bloom was the John U. Nef Distinguished Service Professor in the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago. He is the author of several books, including *Shakespeare's Politics* (with Harry V. Jaffa) and *The Closing of the American Mind*.

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