

## *Introduction*

This book examines the interaction of two concepts. Both of them are messy. One is ostensibly a universal aspect of the human condition, the other a historically specific form of social organisation. Both are central to Shakespeare's work. Love, as the ordinary person exposed to the culture of the West in the twenty-first century would understand it, is the driving force in more than half his plays, his complete sonnet cycle, and, arguably, all of his nondramatic poems. Service is the informing condition of everything he wrote. If we put love and service together, every symbolic act that Shakespeare committed to paper or through performance may be said to be "about" this interaction. Shakespeare's mimetic art depends in the deepest sense of the word on the conjunctive play of love and service.

This fact involves two almost insurmountable difficulties for a scholarly monograph. First, it demands a principle of selection that cannot be determined by the concepts themselves, severally or jointly. Second, it presents a difficulty that is now the defining parameter of early modern scholarship: how do we relate a concept now so distant from Western, twentieth-century forms of social and personal life as to be barely recognisable to one that we instantly claim as our own?

### CONCEPTS

Before I answer that question, let me tackle the messiness of the concepts. Scientific or scholarly argument depends upon the organisation of concepts in a rational format such that the concepts themselves do not move or slide out of place. A recent study of an issue not unrelated to my own sets out to find a "common denominator" to explain why certain attitudes to concepts and their referents in early modern Europe – beggary and theatrical players – were systematically conjoined.<sup>1</sup> The author assumes that beggars

<sup>1</sup> Pugliatti, *Beggary*, 2.

and players were related in a series of criminal statutes because the concepts pertaining to each are united by a common factor or core meaning, or that their apparent differences may be reduced to a set of attitudes that discerned the same essential ingredients in each. I do not wish to criticise such an approach so much as point out the difference of its method from my own. Each has its virtues. In my attempts to trace the patterns of love and service in both Shakespeare's work and its context, I have found two things. First, that although the two concepts are inextricably imbricated both in literary texts and in their conditions of production, neither of the concepts can be reduced to the other in any universal or consistent way. This is to say, love cannot be shown to be the same as service, nor can service be said to be "really" love, even though, in almost every instance of their embodiment or representation, they can be shown to be coterminous in some way. Nor is there any set of sufficient or necessary conditions that can be shown to join the concepts through a common denominator. Both concepts are constituted by what Wittgenstein called "family resemblances": each is made up of different strands that overlap each other in different places and for varying lengths, their concurrence being constituted by multiple and varying conjunctions, like the fibres of a rope.<sup>2</sup> No unifying fibre runs along the whole length, joining them via a common core.

Wittgenstein's metaphor of the conceptual relations as the fibres that constitute a rope has synchronic and diachronic aspects. The continuity of the rope suggests a certain degree of historical connection: the strands continue from one point to another, in the ways that the words "love" or "service" are used in the twenty-first century, the sixteenth, the fourteenth, or in Greek in 300 B.C. The fact that neither the strands nor their precise points of overlap coincide at each of these diachronic points indicates that continuity is not so much disrupted as constituted by differences. The respective family resemblances that make up the relationships within and between the two concepts will not be the same at each point in time. This is rendered especially complex (or messy) by the fact that each diachronic point is likely to be marked by a *variety* of related uses of the same word. It is not merely a matter of figuring out what "love" meant in Plato's time and then relating that to what it meant when Petrarch was writing his *Canzoniere*, and then to what it meant when Shakespeare wrote sonnet 116, and, finally, what it means in a twenty-first-century sitcom; or what "service" meant to Aristotle, and then to Pope Gregory, and subsequently to Lord Hunsdon, or to George Bush, or what the relationship between these

<sup>2</sup> Wittgenstein, *Books*, 17 passim.

two terms (if any) might have been at each point. The words would have meant different things at each time because they would have *used* differently, although it would doubtlessly be possible to relate such uses to each other in some way. This is why I claim that these are two *messy* concepts, but they may be no messier than any other concept used in the hurly-burly of human life. Wittgenstein remarks that concepts have the indefiniteness of human life because it is in the messy interactions of human life that they receive and pursue their vivacity: in varieties of practice, use, and abuse – not in any ideal system or structure.<sup>3</sup> This book is an attempt to make some sense of that messiness in the work of one poet and dramatist who self-consciously represented himself as a lover and bowed to the necessity of being a servant.

#### SERVICE: THE WORLD WE HAVE LOST

Until the recent proliferation of books and articles on master-servant relations in Shakespeare's England, the topic was almost completely ignored. Even twenty years after the great theoretical and political turn in Shakespeare studies of the 1980s, the only sustained work on what is now beginning to be recognized as the *predominant* form of social organization and personal experience in early modern England – service – was largely confined to two critics. Mark Thornton Burnett led the way with *Masters and Servants in English Renaissance Drama and Culture*, a compendious, scholarly account of the master-servant relations chiefly in the non-Shakespearean canon and popular literature. Drawing directly on the prevailing currents of the new historicism and cultural materialism and an impressive array of primary archival material, Burnett's monograph appeared a full decade after the new, politically conscious forms of critical writing had been established. Michael Neill followed shortly with a rich and perceptive series of essays – more questioning of prevailing modes of historicism – in which he established the centrality of master-servant relations to Shakespeare's great tragedies, *King Lear*, *Othello*, and *Hamlet* and in imaginative literature and social experience more generally.<sup>4</sup> Then, simultaneously in 2005, three critics who had earlier published discretely, even tentatively, on the topic released significant monographs on service in Shakespeare's plays: David Evelt, with *The Discourses of Service in Shakespeare's England*; Judith Weil, with *Service and Dependency in Shakespeare's*

<sup>3</sup> Wittgenstein, *Psychology* 2, 652: "If a concept depends upon a pattern of life, then there must be some indefiniteness in it."

<sup>4</sup> Neill, *History*, "Servile Ministers", "His Master's Ass", and "A Woman's Service".

*Plays*; and Linda Anderson with *Shakespeare's Servants*. In the same year, the *Shakespeare International Yearbook*, with Neill as its guest editor, devoted its annual special section to "Shakespeare and the bonds of service". In a single year, the master-servant relation in Shakespeare's dramatic works had come of age – it was finally recognized as a major issue in its own right.

Critics and theorists may have overlooked the lived textures of these relations either because they seemed too obvious to deserve commentary or because an overriding concern with relations of power had obscured the possibility of affective interactions between masters and servants. In Shakespeare especially, master-servant relationships assume intimate, multifaceted, affective, and playful forms that cannot be reduced to mere relations of power and subordination or resentful resistance. In his recent study, Evett takes issue with the exclusive materialist interest in power, exploitation, and group politics by focusing on Shakespeare's representation of the individual subject's phenomenological experience of service as an act of will. He argues that a received theoretical and ideological inclination to discount personal aspects of what appear to be merely economic or legal forms of exploitation has rendered the human textures of Shakespeare's dramatic and poetic relationships critically uninteresting or even politically questionable.<sup>5</sup> The new recognition of the multilayered human quality of service has thus exposed a degree of theoretically induced myopia in prevailing assumptions and critical practice.

The need to find a place in our critical discourse for affect, ethics, and agency does not mean that we should abandon our search for the historical conditions of Shakespeare's texts, still less that we should ignore their embodiment of material conditions of existence and asymmetrical forms of power. Yet we do need to rethink the terms of our enquiry. The investigation of service in Shakespeare's England requires the recovery of what Laslett memorably calls "the world we have lost".<sup>6</sup> There is an otherness to the social and conceptual relations of that world that is in danger of being obliterated by our own historically and culturally conditioned experiences and professional preoccupations, despite the fact that historicism has been the major driving force of our discipline for at least twenty years. These are the questions: how do we best engage in that recuperation? What sets the "sociological imagination" in literary studies apart from what Laslett calls "statistical awareness", or rather, how may the two be combined to

<sup>5</sup> Interest in affect is growing, however, even if it tends to be confined to the recovery of the historical strangeness of the affective psychology of the early modern period. See Paster, *Body*, and Rowe et al., *Passions*.

<sup>6</sup> Laslett, *World*.

overcome the sense of acute alienation from and uncertainty about the *human* world of the past that he records from his position as a social historian (*World*, 88)?<sup>7</sup> Despite Laslett's scepticism about the capacity of literary texts to represent that world, the affective and imaginative scope of such texts as embodiments of what Raymond Williams calls the "structures of feeling" of a period invites us to inhabit them *as if* they were part of our lives. They demand a combination of historical imagination and present engagement.<sup>8</sup>

There is a paradoxical tendency to judge writers who are historically different from us from the perspectives of present political values. All too often, the question directed at such texts is whether they are genuinely subversive or not. This tendency is paradoxical because it insists in being ahistorical in the name of history. The text is expected to have leapt beyond its historical constraints to conform to our settled ideas of political progressiveness, in anticipation of unreasonable presentist demands.<sup>9</sup> Service and its strange connection with love in early modern England – and even more peculiarly in Shakespeare – needs to be taken on its own terms to be fully and critically appreciated. The otherness of the interaction between service and love marks our distance from Shakespeare and his world. We stand at a double remove from both concepts. Service has either been alienated by its reduction in a post-capitalist world to the faux choices of the hamburger emporium or the empty smile at the bank counter (as in the "service industry"), or it has come to be seen as the abstract embodiment of economic exploitation and abuse of power.

#### LOVE: THE WORD WE HAVE LOST

Love has not fared much better. Reduced to the mawkish sentimentality of popular journalism or appropriated by apolitical readings of Shakespeare in the middle of the twentieth century, love – the word and the concept – has all but disappeared from current critical discourse. When I asked a colleague why this should be so, he answered: "Because love is not a critical concept." He is right. The word is impossibly general and vague. It's messy.

<sup>7</sup> "The historical observer in an enquiry of this sort can only feel himself to be in the position of a scientist in his bathyscope, miles beneath the surface of the sea, concentrating his gaze for a moment or two on the few strange creatures who happen to stray out of the total darkness into the beam of light" (Laslett, *World*, 76).

<sup>8</sup> Williams, *Marxism*, 128 passim.

<sup>9</sup> For the current debate between "presentists" and "historicists", see Hawkes, *Presentist*; Fernie, "Presentism"; Grady and Hawkes, *Presentist Shakespeares*; and the current round-table discussion on presentism in the SHAKSPER discussion group: [www.shaksper.net](http://www.shaksper.net).

We are more comfortable with concepts such as power and desire, which, now thoroughly theorized, have promised to strip love of its obfuscating murkiness and mawkishness. They have enabled us to shift our attention from a relatively naïve and commonsense interest in feeling and morality to the structural conditions which allow such feelings to be manipulated in relations of power and subjection.

“Desire” and “power” thus promise entry into the history and politics of sexual relations that “love” positively debars. Their critical keenness gives them the capacity to reveal the structural reality underlying talk of love. We need to take care when we perform reductions of one concept to another, however. Such transformations, whereby one argues that “love is not love”<sup>10</sup> – it is actually desire, a formation of power, an ideological obfuscation of real relations, and so on – run the risk of simplifying or distorting the concept as it does its work in complex interactions, such as those in Shakespeare’s poetry and plays.<sup>11</sup> Such reductions may be analytically illuminating, but when they attain a certain level of generality and supplant the original concept, they lose more than they gain. Using a method committed to an historical understanding of texts, we have replaced words that Shakespeare uses with special frequency with ones that he does not use particularly often, the theoretical inflections of which he would have found strange.

It is important to see why in recent years we have tended to shun “love” in favour of “desire” or “eros”.<sup>12</sup> Apart from the critical softness of the concept, love has been tainted by its association with the uncritical sentiments of popular culture and, more specifically, by its idealist employment by Shakespearean critics writing before the 1980s: as a way of rising above the

<sup>10</sup> Marotti, “Love is not Love”.

<sup>11</sup> But see Rose, *Expense of Spirit*, who made this point twenty years ago: “‘Love is not love,’ writes a recent critic. . . . Yet to assume that political power is more real – more worthy of analysis – than sexual love and marriage is to ignore the equivalence given to an analogy and to overlook the mixed, complex, and overlapping nature of public and private experience. . . . whatever else it may be, love, definitely, is love” (11).

<sup>12</sup> There are plenty of works on “eroticism”, “desire”, or “sexuality”, but virtually nothing on love. Where love is used, it is soon transformed into desire and used as no more than an elegant variation. See, for example, Catherine Belsey, “Love in Venice” in *Shakespeare and Gender*, which promises a discussion of love in the title but soon replaces the word with “desire” in the body of the text, and Dymphna Callaghan, who, in “The Ideology of Romantic Love”, argues that romantic love is a signal instance of ideological misrecognition. Love in Shakespeare as a general topic or rubric has tended to be displaced by the concept of *gender*, as in *Shakespeare and Gender*, and it reappears in the title of many recent books as “eroticism”. Exceptions to this trend, and perhaps sign of a revival of the concept of love, are Maurice Charney, *Shakespeare on Love and Lust*, and Alan Bloom, *Shakespeare on Love and Friendship*. See also Mary Beth Rose, *Expense*, who declares in her 1988 book that “whatever else it may be, love, definitely, is love” (11).

trammelling conditions of social, political, and economic relations.<sup>13</sup> Yet this is no reason for more historically or materialistically inclined critics to abandon or shun the word or to substitute for its range of meanings other concepts that are related to but not identical to it. I explore ways in which love is indeed connected to social concerns – to the inequalities of political or economic power – to show that it offers no transcendental escape from these concerns. I also want to show, however, that love is concerned not just with the absences and inequities of desire. It also seeks the pleasures of intimacy, engages in the delights of reciprocity, and finds both pleasure and pain in living for another.<sup>14</sup>

In Shakespeare's time, this combination of reciprocity and subordination in love was part of a set of relationships that extended from the most menial master and servant to monarch and subject, including the most powerful figures within the peerage: service. One of the methodological strengths of combining love and service as the double lenses of analysis lies in the way the concepts complement each other in the weight that they give to what, with due care, we might call the public and the private, or the personal and the structural. Whereas love pulls us in the direction of individualized affect, service reminds us of the historical and social networks in which affect is shaped and has to find expression. Each negotiation happens at the intersection of these concepts. This reminds us, in the wake of sonnet 129, that the negotiations between power and powerlessness, desire and lack, involve not just "spirit" in the physical sense of the word but also its ramifying moral, affective, and volitional aspects.<sup>15</sup> The sonnet reminds us that "waste" is as much a bodily place as a lamentable diminution of humane resources, "heaven" and "hell" conditions in which the physical, moral, and spiritual cannot be separated from each other.<sup>16</sup>

One of the apparent advantages of reducing love to desire lies in the considerable narrowing and thus simplification of these relations in the reduced concept. Following Theodore Leinwand's exemplary discussion of affect in a different context, we need to see love not as a single state but as a complex of interwoven orientations to the self and the world, embodied in forms of action rather than confined to the inscrutability of an interior affect. Leinwand calls attention to Wittgenstein's argument that "a complex

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, John Russell Brown, *Shakespeare and His Comedies*, published in 1957, 2nd ed. 1962, and reprinted in 1964, 1968, and 1970, which treats love as a central, transcendent theme of the romantic comedies, and Alexander Legatt, *Shakespeare's Comedy of Love*.

<sup>14</sup> In doing so, I'm following the footsteps of Evett's pathbreaking study of service in Shakespeare.

<sup>15</sup> Evett, in *Discourses*, is a pioneering text in this respect.

<sup>16</sup> See Fernie, *Spiritual Shakespeares*.

emotion . . . is less an irrecoverable, private inner, state than it is a response deeply implicated in the social world, 'a pattern which recurs, with different variations, in the weave of our life'.<sup>17</sup> The "weave of our life" means for Wittgenstein the ways in which words are connected through the relational practices of social life. "Love" is not merely a value produced within an abstract system of differences but is constituted out of its changing, lived relations with concepts such as desire and friendship, as well as tenderness and anger, indignation and generosity, want and repletion, satisfaction and resentment, pleasure and pain, exultation and grief. To trace and recover the strands of this text is an enormous task, even in the manifold of a single speech, a couple of lines of dialogue, or a telling silence. The advantage of working with literary texts, especially drama, is that they have the capacity to mobilise the same weave of life and language that constitutes the lived world from which they draw their material.

It takes an effort of the imagination to recover and inhabit the relationship between love and service in Shakespeare's work. It requires the capacity to recover not only the original resonances of these concepts individually but also the ways in which peculiar modes of social organization and personal intimacy made them work together and sound off each other. Love and service informed Shakespeare's daily life in both his personal and professional relations; they characterized the realities and fantasies of the people around him; and they were passed on in differently inflected forms by literary, performative, and imaginary conditions that formed the traditions from which he drew both his imaginative and his social life. Being part of existence as it was lived and represented at a particular time and place, they share the indeterminacy – the play – of life itself. As the vehicles of meaning in a complexly transforming world they are inhabited, used, resisted, and changed in ways that are critical in their own terms rather than matching the fantasies or demands of historically specific political value.

My investigation of service in Shakespeare's plays is organised by conceptual affinities and differences as they are worked out in the dramatic contexts of interaction. It assumes that the practices that underlay the use of concepts such as service in both Shakespeare's society and his imaginative work maintain a connection with us via the historical continuity of language. It also examines the way in which, in both present and historical use, the concept of service is intertwined with other concepts with which it bears a family resemblance through common forms of social and linguistic practice. Exploring in the concept of service the simultaneous product of

<sup>17</sup> Leinwand, *Theatre*, 3.



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situated social practice and the *longue durée* of language as an inherited and changing system of relationships, I trace the ways in which its use in Shakespeare demonstrates its cognate affinities with other concepts with which it is intertwined in the same forms of social practice: love, of course, but also friendship and loyalty, resentment and hatred, humility and ambition.<sup>18</sup>

PLAYING THE SERVANT

I remarked in my opening paragraph that both the universal presence of love and service as conjoined concepts in Shakespeare's work and the messiness of the concepts make a principle of selection both imperative and difficult. In their examination of service, others have chosen dependency (Weil), personal volition (Evet), or material relations of exploitation (Burnett) to drive their respective arguments. I have turned to the concept or condition that informs Shakespeare's representation of love and service at every point: the fact that he was in multiple ways himself a servant and that the theatre through which he represented love and service depended upon the embodiment of players who were also servants.

The most significant servants on the early modern English stage were thus the players themselves. Defined as vagabonds unless they could display the livery of a master of noble birth by the 1572 Vagabond Act and earlier statutes, those who played the parts of servant or master on the stage found it difficult to discard the stigma of the "common player".<sup>19</sup> In an age when to be called someone's "man" indicated servility and dependency, the theatre companies would have proclaimed their subordinate status in the public nature of their names if not their liveries: the Lord Admiral's Men, the Lord Chamberlain's Men and, after James's accession, the Queen's Men and the King's Men. Technically members of the noble or royal household, players who had previously been classified alongside sturdy beggars or vagabonds – "masterless men" – because of their doubly unsettling and unsettled habit of "strolling" and "personation", now found themselves split across two arenas of service. They could be expected to provide entertainment for their master or even "swell a scene or two" by displaying themselves in his livery as part of his retinue, but at the same time they were increasingly beholden to the demands of a commercial theatre which imaginatively abrogated the hierarchical system upon which traditional service depended.<sup>20</sup> The

<sup>18</sup> See Engle, *Pragmatism*, chapter 1.      <sup>19</sup> Pugliatti, *Beggary*, 2 and passim.

<sup>20</sup> I am indebted to Don Hedrick, who has drawn my attention to the change in the meaning of "entertainment" at this point, from the feudal notion of accepting service to the modern concept of giving pleasure through performance.

Prologue's ingratiating solicitation of the audience of *Henry V* through the levelling appellation "Pardon, gentles all" places the Lord Chamberlain's man at the service of all who have paid, whether it be a penny or more, sitting on the stage or standing in the yard. The general shift from feudal bonds of service to cash relations in the society as a whole informed the theatre too, in the tension between an older relation of service to a patron and the newer commercial form of service to a paying audience. Even as the older bonds were being questioned on the stage by characters such as Iago and Bosola, new relations of dependency were being developed with a more unpredictable set of paying "masters".<sup>21</sup> These relations in tension exemplify the bond between master and servant as it is performed in Shakespeare's plays. Combining the ordinary, inherently histrionic dimensions of the roles of everyday life with the self-reflexive staging of such roles by the servants of the theatre, they allowed a degree of play (in both the ludic and flexible senses) in social and personal relationships that is both externally constrained and open to appropriation and adaptation by individual agents or actors.

The actor representing service on Shakespeare's stage thus looks in two directions and at two kinds of bond: as a liveried being, he embodies his enabling relationship to the master by whose grace his personations are permitted; as a member of a commercial theatre dependent on a paying audience, he enacts service in a more modern, market sense.<sup>22</sup> The performance of service on Shakespeare's stage is thus complicated and enriched by the fact that when the player personated either servant or master, he continued to embody himself as servant. For even when actors as professionals had managed to transform themselves from itinerant beggars to legitimate servants and, finally, in some cases, to masters and gentlemen in their own right, they continued to be excoriated as mere beggars and vagabonds who had illegitimately transformed themselves into creatures beyond their proper station. Meredith Skura writes that "disgust about the city player's wealth never did counteract the old image of the strolling player as less than a servant – as a beggar, always ready to humiliate himself in public to earn

<sup>21</sup> Gurr, *Shakespearean Stage*; Skura, *Playing*; Weimann, *Author's Pen*; and Pugliatti, *Beggary*. This development should not be seen as the mere replacement of one type of service with another. As Ingram observes: "Patronage, and the stability that accompanied it, must . . . have come increasingly to be seen by players operating out of London as the key to survival at about mid-century. As a result, the quest for patronage burgeoned, as local players sought to protect their livelihoods" (*Playing*, 85).

<sup>22</sup> Ingram, however, reminds us that the players were not considered to have been offering a "service" in the modern sense of the word because they offered nothing tangible ("Economics of Playing", 319).